

“Regular Faculty” and Citizen Participation: Re-framing the Narrative of Higher Education

Vialla Hartfield-Méndez and Karen Stolley

Vialla Hartfield-Méndez is professor of pedagogy in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Emory University. Karen Stolley is professor of Spanish in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Emory University.

Preface

ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2012, just after we completed what we thought were the final revisions of this article, the faculty of Emory’s College of Arts and Sciences gathered for the first meeting of the 2012–13 academic year, at which the dean of the college, Robin Forman, announced that numerous cuts and other measures were to be announced in the coming days. Two days later Forman released a letter outlining some of the changes: the elimination of several entire programs or departments and the suspension of two other doctoral programs. These decisions had implications for both the undergraduate and graduate schools and occasioned significant faculty and student consternation and resistance. As a result, faculty governance structures are under intense scrutiny, and there is still considerable uncertainty and tension in the college, in the Laney Graduate School, and extending into the rest of the university.

Many important questions have arisen: Going forward, how will the liberal arts be defined in institutions of higher education like Emory University? What role will the humanities play in that definition? What are the rights and responsibilities of faculty members in major decision-making processes? How viable are current structures of faculty governance? Central to the focus of this article is whether the gains made over the last twenty years for lecture-track faculty members at Emory and, more importantly, their synergistic relationship with tenure-track faculty members are undermined by the decisions announced in fall 2012. Forman has said both privately and publicly that he is committed to the “the idea and the reality” of lecture-track faculty at Emory. Nevertheless, several lecture-track faculty members will lose their jobs at the end of their current contracts, and in general the lecture-track faculty members are feeling very unsettled, even betrayed. The assimilation of this new reality has consumed an inordinate amount of faculty energy across the ranks. In this ongoing process, the governance, representation, appointment, and promotion structures for lecture-track faculty members in Emory’s College of Arts and Sciences that have been put in place over the last fifteen years are now part of the scaffolding needed to address these questions. This article, originally written in the spring 2012 semester to describe the emergence of these structures and then revised during the summer before these events began to unfold, was initially framed as a somewhat exemplary tale; now it must be read, at least in part, as a somewhat cautionary one. Events are still unfolding, and so time will tell which characterization ultimately best fits the narrative.

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Introduction

We find ourselves at a “crucible moment” for higher education in the United States. The imperative to reimagine our mission and our praxis has become increasingly urgent in the context of shrinking resources, seismic shifts in student populations, a changing faculty profile, and debates about how to organize and evaluate teaching, learning and scholarship for the twenty-first century. These debates often center on the role that education plays in building civic culture, and a recent report urges us to “embrace civic learning and democratic engagement as an undisputed educational priority for all of higher education” (*Crucible Moment 2*).¹ But if higher education is to embrace that mission, we faculty members must first consider our own understanding of civic engagement and democratic process within the colleges and universities in which we teach and research. In other words, it is impossible to “do” democracy in the curriculum if it is not practiced in the professoriat.

The challenges facing higher education were in evidence in January 2012 when the New Faculty Majority, an advocacy group for adjunct and contingent faculty members—“over 1 million of the 1.5 million people teaching in American colleges and universities” and, according to Gary Rhoades, almost 70 percent of all faculty appointments (Bérubé)—hosted a national summit in Washington, DC. The summit provided an opportunity for participants to share information and discuss strategies for addressing systemic inequities in how faculty labor is viewed and compensated (Schmidt, “Summit”). Current discussions about the professoriat—including those at the New Faculty Majority summit—often take as their starting point a stark binary between two unequal and nonoverlapping faculty subsets: on one side, tenured or tenure-track faculty members who enjoy job stability, full participation in governance, decent salaries, and a range of perks related to their working conditions; on the other side, non-tenure-track colleagues in adjunct or contingent positions that are precarious and poorly compensated and who, for the most part, are without access to the basic workings of faculty governance. Growing attention to this binary has led to important and long-overdue efforts to address the inequities in working conditions for faculty members off the tenure track—efforts that are described by contributors to this special issue and that must continue. Ongoing debates about working off the tenure track, the crisis in higher education (and, especially, in the humanities and in foreign language departments),² and the role of language and literature studies in higher education converge to create either a perfect storm or the proverbial teachable moment.

As members of the MLA who teach and study language, rhetoric, discourse, and textual analysis, we can probably agree that language is powerful, grammar provides scaffolding for thought, and terminology can influence attitudes and action. Perhaps the most egregious example of language that impedes our ability to work together is the frequency with which one still hears tenured colleagues speak of “real faculty” as a way of differentiating tenured or tenure-track faculty members from those off the tenure track. The terms *adjunct* and *contingent* carry implications of structural and intellectual subordination that resonate even in the most enlightened efforts to address issues of economic and contractual parity. The MLA’s *Professional Employment*

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Practices for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members: Recommendations and Evaluative Questions, for example, is implicitly predicated on the limitations and legitimacy of a two-tiered system for faculty, as are expressions of concern that increasing numbers of non-tenure-track faculty members weaken the larger faculty body, compromise faculty governance, and pose a threat to our academic mission.

Yet we address here another dimension that is often overlooked: the assumptions embedded in our thinking about who does what work in our colleges and universities and about how that work is valued. Without minimizing the very real inequities of pay and working conditions that affect a significant number of our colleagues, we want to suggest that approaching the issues of non-tenure-track faculty members solely as a matter of redressing these inequities is too narrow a response. A recent study shows it may even be less effective. Researchers at the University of Southern California found that “adjuncts had made the most progress at colleges where they tried to transform the campus climate to be more inclusive of them, rather than simply fighting to change one employer practice at a time” (Schmidt, “When Adjuncts”). How might we reimagine the different components of the professoriat as something other than the result of a mere accident of hiring circumstances or, worse, as the justifiable enshrinement of long-cherished hierarchies that are increasingly called into question? What if instead we were to imagine a larger body of “regular faculty” composed in an intentional way of tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty members (think of a Venn diagram with two overlapping and complementary subsets)? In this new paradigm, we are not arguing for the abolition of tenure; we are arguing for a partnership, a different way of thinking that will permit us to reimagine a faculty as a community of college or university citizens with collective rights and responsibilities who must function as a whole to meet the challenges of undergraduate and graduate education in the twenty-first century.

We use Emory University as a case study, focusing on Emory’s College of Arts and Sciences and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. We understand our experience as “radical incrementalism”—an ongoing process in which gains, as they are made, reveal the need for continued change and adaptation. The process is not so much reformist as evolutionary and emerges from a particular institutional context, one which (as noted in the preface) has changed over the past year at Emory. It may not, therefore, prove a compelling model for every case or persuasive to those seeking more immediate change. But it has made it possible for us at Emory—at least within the College of Arts and Sciences—to develop alliances across faculty lines to work together as “regular faculty” to reframe our narrative. Although this process takes place in a particular institution, we suggest that reframing the narrative of faculty roles in higher education in terms of citizenship participation is both possible and necessary in the profession at large.

Lecture-Track Faculty in Emory College: A Narrative in Progress³

Emory University in the early 1990s was similar to many American universities and colleges, exhibiting significant growth in the number of faculty members off a tenure path without the institution’s demonstrating clear goals or strategic planning. And as

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in many other research universities, Emory had and still has disparate appointment patterns and policies across its units. According to the latest diversity report, the total number of full-time faculty members (including tenure-track and non-tenure-track) increased by approximately 35 percent from 1999 to 2009, and the total number of non-tenure-track faculty members increased by almost 50 percent (*Diversity Profile* 6–7). That is, in 1999 approximately 50 percent of the total faculty at Emory was not on the tenure track, and by 2009 that percentage had increased to almost 58 percent. Here we focus on the development of the lecture track in Emory’s College of Arts and Sciences, which is related to but quite distinct from other units.⁴

Terminology emerged as critical in reform efforts at Emory. Recent discussion in the academy about the role of faculty members described as “adjunct” or “contingent” does not capture the circumstances of many with multiyear contracts, established positions within departments, and increasingly consequential positions beyond their departments. For the last ten years at Emory’s College of Arts and Sciences, non-tenure-track faculty members are not necessarily employed in contingent positions. Early in the process of regularizing this track, we clearly delineated the lecture track from adjunct and visiting appointments and began working on defining rights and responsibilities within that track, while working to avoid adjunct or contingent situations whenever possible.⁵ Changes in the college policy have been gradual and are driven by collaboration across tenure-track/non-tenure-track lines and with administrators, reflecting a broad commitment to university citizenship.

Of paramount importance is the role that non-tenure-track faculty members played in pushing for changes. Beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s, several pioneering faculty members in non-tenure-track appointments from across the disciplines began meeting and laying the foundations for governance structures that eventually created new avenues for participation in decision making. At the time, many non-tenure-track faculty members were, according to their one-year contracts, “visiting faculty.” From this tenuous position several leaders began organizing meetings of the non-tenure-track faculty, which in time became the Lecture-Track Faculty Group. As this group coalesced, several things became clear: a significant number of faculty members had previously been, for the most part, invisible, both to one another and to the faculty members in the tenure track; there were striking inconsistencies in the conditions of appointment and employment across the college; coming together to raise these issues—an act of university citizenship—made it possible to address them; and there were sympathetic interlocutors among members of the tenured and tenure-track faculty and the administration.

The lack of any clear and consistent policy regarding non-tenure-track appointments and employment was one of the first issues addressed by this group. In 1996, the college created a policy on the appointment and review of lecturers and senior lecturers, ultimately approved by the provost and the board of trustees. An important step, this policy regularized the appointments of all those “visiting” faculty members as lecturers or senior lecturers, created multiyear contracts and a promotion mechanism, and established lecturers as regular members of the faculty with access to many of the benefits accorded those on the tenure track (e.g., office space, retirement programs, professional development funds). This new policy stabilized

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the more than ninety faculty members on the lecture track and affirmed their full investiture in the faculty body. With stability, it became easier for lecturers to play key roles within their departments and in the college and university.⁶

Concurrent with this policy-revision process was a series of publications and campus conversations regarding important issues facing the university. Beginning with a 1994 report from the then provost, Billy Frye, and others titled *Choices and Responsibility: Shaping Emory’s Future*, the university community was challenged to seriously consider five issues facing higher education and Emory in particular: the balance between teaching and research; the need for a stronger sense of campus community; the reordering of university resources and processes to encourage interdisciplinarity; the balance of infrastructure needs with resources; and the university’s civic responsibility, beyond the campus. Following this “call to action,” Frye and William Chace, the president at the time, established the Commission on Teaching, which issued its report in 1997 with an introduction that strongly emphasized the importance of teaching:

We want to get beyond the notion that excellence in research must preclude excellence in teaching and that universities cannot support, evaluate, and reward teaching and research in equivalent ways. . . . An equivalent commitment to research and teaching does not mean a quantifiable measure from every program nor an equal portion of each for each faculty member at all points in his or her career. It means that we want the culture and structures necessary to ensure an institution in which both teaching and research flourish. (Teaching)

The report did not address the question of tenure-track versus non-tenure-track faculty members (in fact, its unacknowledged assumption is that the faculty members in question are on the tenure track). Nevertheless, this important document opened up the space to talk about the value of teaching. Since lecture-track faculty members were most closely associated with teaching, it became possible to present the value of their work as equivalent to the value of the work of a faculty member whose main focus is research. It also opened up the possibility of conceiving of lecture-track faculty members as pedagogical leaders on campus. And since the deliberations of the Commission on Teaching were informed by Ernest L. Boyer’s 1990 *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, among other documents, there was increasingly space in campus conversations to understand scholarship more broadly and to value the scholarship of teaching.

The distribution of the new policy to department and program chairs in the college in 1996 signaled important progress, but it also pointed to work ahead. An article published later in the campus faculty magazine about lecture-track-faculty noted, “Departments sometimes do not understand the potential contribution of these faculty members, and the resulting lack of communication, professional development, and collaboration represents a lost opportunity” (Hartfield-Méndez, Marsteller, and Patterson 9). By the spring of 2004, under the leadership of a new president, James Wagner, and a new college dean, Robert Paul, Emory was well into a multiyear strategic planning process. There was growing interest among lecture-track faculty members in their role in this new environment, especially since the strategic plan would profoundly influence the allocation of resources. In a meeting in March 2004 with

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the Lecture-Track Faculty Group, Paul drew a direct line from the ideas in *Teaching at Emory* to the strategic plan, emphasizing that the role of teaching would be central to the plan and asserting that Emory should strive to be one of the best undergraduate teaching institutions among top-tier research universities. He projected that lecture-track faculty members would continue to constitute about 20 percent of the faculty in the college and recognized the need to find ways to acknowledge and better reward their work. Several changes that ultimately were approved were discussed formally for the first time in this meeting. In the discussion of how to bridge the gap between teaching and research, even within the lecture track, Bobbi Patterson eloquently advanced the idea that the “bridge between scholarship and teaching has to be constructed conceptually and might include the idea of pedagogical scholarship and design, and that this could become part of the criteria for evaluation of [lecture-track faculty]” (qtd. in Kelley). In addition, the participants in the meeting contemplated the creation of a third tier in the lecture track and a college standing committee for promotion and evaluation of lecture-track faculty members.

In fall 2004, Paul appointed a task force wisely made up of a mix of tenured faculty members, administrators, and senior lecturers, charged with making recommendations regarding the lecture track and empowered to think boldly. Emory’s affirmation in its mission statement that it is an “inquiry-driven, ethically engaged” institution also helped frame the task force’s discussions on how to forge productive and ethical faculty relationships. Four working principles informed the group’s deliberations:

1. Emory College [of Arts and Sciences] has a strong group of *regular faculty* of which there are two subsets, namely Tenure-Track Faculty (TTF) and Lecture-Track Faculty (LTF), and these are distinct from faculty on temporary appointments. These subsets are full partners in forwarding the vision of Emory as an institution that combines the opportunities of a tier-one research university with a small liberal arts college experience, which makes possible the inquiry-driven, ethically responsible practice of engaged citizenship to which we aspire for ourselves and our students. The synergy of including faculty of both subsets permits attainment of the vision of the College and the University.
2. Emory College can and should lead its peer institutions on the issue of how best to integrate regular faculty who are, by both individual and institutional choice, in positions that offer no possibility of tenure. Although LTF experience less pressure to conduct research and publish findings in top venues, they are clearly in positions that indicate a long-term relationship with the university, strongly supporting the teaching aspect of the university’s mission.
3. Emory College places value on the complementary relationship between teaching and scholarly activity. Lecture-track faculty can and do play an important role in defining that relationship, putting into practice the broadened concepts of scholarship advanced by Ernest L. Boyer . . . and others. These concepts are referenced in the 1997 Report on Teaching at Emory, which expressed the clear aspiration to “an Emory in which there is a balance between teaching and research” but without demanding that every faculty member maintain that balance all the time. The Task Force

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acknowledges the important role of lecturers in teaching, and also the integration of scholarly activities that many bring to that role.

4. Any system of evaluation of LTF should be predicated on the LTF having value and voice. In Emory College, LTF are and should be highly valued, with full rights and responsibilities in faculty governance. (Task Force 1)

To fulfill its charge, the task force required an inventory of the lecture-track faculty, which was completed using various sources of information including a survey of the lecture-track faculty members and college records. An important survey question regarded the roles occupied by lecture-track faculty members at the departmental, college, and university levels. At that point (and even more so today), they taught at all levels—from introductory undergraduate courses to graduate seminars—and were actively engaged with students as advisers to student organizations and in directing honors theses, coordinating and training graduate teaching assistants, and serving on dissertation committees. The task force noted the significant number of teaching awards among lecture-track faculty members. They served then, as they still do, in key administrative roles at the department and program levels and were consistently representatives on the Governance Committee and other important college committees. A few had become leaders at the university level, especially in the areas of community engagement and sustainability and in issues of race and difference. Several had played large roles in Emory’s strategic-planning process. The results of this inventory were revealing, even surprising.

First, it was surprising to several members of the task force (and later to many members of the faculty at large, when the *Academic Exchange* article about the task force’s recommendations was published [Hartfield-Méndez, Marsteller, and Patterson]) that lecture-track faculty members’ level of commitment and activity was so high, given that regularization of the lecture track had occurred only a decade earlier. Second, it was revealing that this high level of integration for some in the life of departments and the college did not extend to all. Many faculty members in lecture-track appointments did not see clear paths for themselves to go beyond teaching introductory courses, were excluded from departmental governance, and were discouraged from seeking expanded roles for themselves outside their departments.

In addition to its internal inventory, the task force gathered information from other institutions in search of best practices and comparison points. After considering all this information, the task force came to consensus on its recommendations, which were grounded in the key statement from the 1997 report *Teaching*, which called for a revised view of the value of teaching in relation to research. Finding that the work of lecture-track faculty members, while not excluding research, is organized around the teaching mission of the university, the task force explicitly connected the value that the institution places on teaching and the value of the work of those on the lecture track. This connection was seen as one of several avenues open to the university to act on the earlier mandate to value its teaching mission.

The recommendations included the creation of the following:

1. a third tier in the lecture track, promotion to which would “link teaching and scholarship through new pedagogies in and across disciplines and

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between the university and the community, all hallmarks of excellent teaching and research” (Hartfield-Méndez, Marsteller, and Patterson 10), thus providing a clear path for advancement and aspiration while also acknowledging excellent work

2. clearer and more consistent policies for hiring and contracts at each level in the lecture track that were more uniform across the college, making three-year contracts available to lecturers with the possibility of promotion to senior lecturer after two terms and longer-term contracts at the senior lecturer and third-tier levels
3. detailed procedures for evaluation and promotion
4. a national search for all hires, with the possibility of hiring at any level
5. more equitable compensation policies
6. regular professional leaves

Institutional wheels driven by faculty governance tend to move slowly, but in the grand scheme of things, the college and university acted fairly quickly to implement many of these recommendations. A new policy was written, the college bylaws were changed after debate and a faculty vote, and a standing committee for evaluation and promotion of lecture-track faculty members was created. Perhaps the most important shift was that the majority of the faculty members approved the notion of regular faculty with two subsets, from which the rest of the changes flowed logically. Just as important was the alliance between members of the tenure-track and lecture-track faculties. A critical group of tenure-track faculty members worked tirelessly alongside their lecture-track colleagues, leveraging crucial and complementary institutional knowledge and experience. The associate dean of faculty guided the discussions. Of particular importance was the participation of a cochair of the Commission on Teaching from a decade earlier. Several faculty members in the lecture track had long-established relationships of mutual respect with faculty members on the tenure track. The task force’s recommendations and the resulting changes would not have occurred without this alliance. At the same time, it was essential that members of the lecture-track faculty stepped up to leadership roles, for them to exhibit a breadth and diversity of involvement and leadership and to begin to see themselves as active citizens of the university, assuming commensurate rights and responsibilities.

Lecture-track faculty members can now present themselves for promotion to professor of pedagogy, performance, or practice, depending on the emphasis of their work. The creation of this third tier has been an important mechanism for recognizing and rewarding lecture-track faculty members whose scholarly accomplishments are visible throughout and beyond the university. The significance of such a promotion goes beyond simply acknowledging excellent teaching; in fact, the new promotion policy explicitly requires evidence of excellent teaching, service, and contributions to their respective fields, especially as related to teaching, beyond Emory. Scholarship, defined broadly, is an essential piece of the portfolio that must be submitted for promotion. Evidence of leadership on campus but also beyond the campus in the area of teaching innovation and in the scholarship of teaching has been important in the consideration of candidates for promotion. Traditional scholarship in their respective fields is also considered valuable, particularly when the candidate demonstrates

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linkages or complementarity between such scholarship and his or her teaching. Consequently, several members of the lecture-track faculty are now acknowledged campus leaders in questions of pedagogy, enhancing the enterprise of teaching and claiming leadership in an arena that the university has set forth as critical to its mission.

Lecture-track faculty members serve on the standing promotion committee, and now that three cohorts of professors in the lecture track have been promoted, they also serve on committees for promotion to the third tier. Contracts for lecturers are for three years, with the possibility (but not requirement) for promotion to senior lecturer after two terms. Lecturers who do not present themselves for promotion are not penalized with the loss of their jobs; they may continue to serve as lecturers, depending on departmental needs. The term for senior lecturers is five years; senior lecturers may present themselves for promotion to professor after one term but are not required to do so. Promotion to professor is viewed as a special distinction, not necessarily appropriate in every case. Clear procedures are in place for evaluation and promotion, and national searches are required for new hires (“Appointment”).

Among the lecture-track faculty, there has been significant advancement in terms of rank (with a growing cohort of professors of pedagogy, practice, or performance) and aspirations. The promotion process makes visible the accomplishments of the lecture-track faculty and the multiple paths to professional development. The presence of lecture-track faculty members in administrative leadership positions at the highest levels makes their voices more audible and their advancement more evident. It has sometimes been the case that visibility at those levels opened a path for reimagining the role of lecture-track faculty members within departments and across the university. Accelerated possibilities for professional development have also resulted, particularly in emerging areas of institutional investment such as sustainability, engaged scholarship, and digital humanities. Institutional structures have morphed to accommodate the new faculty reality. The Emory College Language Center has become a space for empowerment, collaboration, and coalition building among all lecture-track faculty, not just among those teaching in language and literature departments. For example, in November 2011 the center hosted a panel discussion for all lecture-track faculty members on the lecture-track-faculty promotion process.

Still left unaddressed are the issues of equitable compensation and regular professional leaves. Since 2003, lecture-track faculty members can apply for a semester leave through the competitive Winship Award for Senior Lecturers. This was a major institutional advancement in the support of lecture-track faculty members, but only two awards are offered annually, making it unlikely that most eligible members will be granted a leave within the foreseeable future. Lecture-track salaries are significantly lower than those for faculty members with comparable tenure-track status and seniority. And although there is a merit increase in salary at the point of promotion to senior lecturer and to professor of pedagogy, practice, or performance, these increases do not match those given to tenure-track faculty members at points of promotion. Thus the current salary structure amounts to an institutionalization of inequity and undervaluing of the teaching mission of the institution.

Furthermore, as recent events have signaled, the four core principles that undergirded the work of the 2004 task force, as well as the gains that were made as a result,

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have been undercut. Since the cuts, suspensions, and reorganization were announced, questions about the status and role of lecture-track faculty members and their relationship with the tenured and tenure-track faculty members have resurfaced—in other words, the notion of “regular faculty” is frayed. And in the communications about the decision-making process regarding which programs would be eliminated or suspended and how, there was a reversion to previous conceptualizations of the faculty on the basis of contract definitions rather than contributions to the shared missions of the college and graduate school. Fortunately, the structures and practices now in place (a strong executive committee of the Lecture-Track Faculty Group with open lines of communication to the dean and senior associate dean for faculty; representation by lecture-track faculty members on the college’s governance committee, in the Faculty Senate and in other committees; habits of shared responsibility, mutual respect, and sharing of information among lecture-track and tenure-track faculty members) are proving to be useful avenues for addressing these questions.

The Department of Spanish and Portuguese: A Case Study in Implementation

Policies are only guideposts; change in institutional culture is where real transformation occurs. Once new policies regarding appointment and review of lecture-track faculty members and the college’s guidelines for promotion to professor of pedagogy, practice, or performance were in place, an important educational process began for faculty members. Lecture-track faculty members, tenure-track faculty members, and administrators all had to understand the details of the new landscape and then work together to create appropriate pathways for constructing a new reality. For the new structure to become real, changes in the college bylaws were necessary, which required majority votes by the entire faculty. Bylaws changes occurred on several occasions throughout the restructuring process, providing faculty members with opportunities for debate and ultimately for demonstrations of broad support. It is fair to say that the College of Arts and Sciences, the university as a whole, and especially individual departments are still digesting these changes. The regularization and thoughtful reconfiguration of the lecture track has opened up further questions but has also created a pathway for all members of the faculty to grapple with them.

Arguably the last frontier for implementation is at the departmental and program level. Best practices of faculty governance often break down at this level, for many reasons. Effective departmental governance relies on strong, engaged leadership that explicitly recognizes the linkages between college governance and departmental processes, and happily the Department of Spanish and Portuguese benefitted from this kind of leadership during the years immediately following the restructuring of the college’s lecture track.

Spanish has for a number of years been the largest language program at Emory. After a period of expansion in the late nineties (Gold 77), enrollment leveled off. In the 2011–12 academic year, according to reports from the registrar, 1,075 students enrolled in Spanish, and 116 in Portuguese. Lecture-track faculty members currently constitute more than 50 percent of the departmental faculty and teach a majority of the undergraduate curriculum, especially in the lower division but also in upper-

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level courses. Graduate pedagogical instruction and supervision is under the purview of a senior lecturer, and multisection undergraduate courses are usually supervised by lecture-track faculty members. Thus all courses taught by graduate students are informed by the perspective of a colleague whose work is closely identified with the university’s teaching mission.

As a result of the regularization of the lecture-track faculty in the 1990s, by 2005 there was already a sense of limited enfranchisement for lecture-track faculty members in the department, who had office spaces, mailboxes, access to departmental communications, multiyear contracts, annual evaluations, and access to opportunities for professional development through pedagogy seminars and workshops.⁷ That is, the positioning of lecture-track faculty in the department very nearly mirrored the recommendations of the MLA’s 2003 “Statement on Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members.” Missing was the full integration of the lecture-track faculty members in departmental decision making, which made for an unbalanced departmental life and created barriers for their seeing themselves and being seen as fully responsible and capable. Changing those perceptions required a change in the terms of engagement in the department. There had long been an articulation point in the curriculum where members of the lecture-track and tenure-track faculties (and graduate students) collaborated productively (in the “gateway” course to the major), but points of articulation in our departmental governance were less clearly defined.

The department did not have bylaws, and the lack of a well-defined process for departmental governance was becoming increasingly evident, especially in the light of changes in the college bylaws. There was clearly a need to formalize the participation of all members of the department in shared governance. Thus writing departmental bylaws became a laboratory for acting on the spirit of inclusion of lecture-track faculty members that had guided the college’s bylaws changes and policy revisions. It was helpful that the chair of the department and a member of the lecture-track faculty (the authors of this article) had served on the college task force. The bylaws conversation was intentionally constructed as a space in which lecture-track faculty members and tenure-track faculty members would have equal voice and privileged as an important process that required the presence of all faculty members.

The process was guided by the principles set forth by the task force, especially the ideas that evaluation of lecture-track faculty members should be predicated on their having value and voice and that they should have full rights and responsibilities in faculty governance. Several meetings were devoted to the discussion and writing of the bylaws, culminating in their approval by vote of all regular faculty in the department. The process of writing the rules was exemplary of the rules ultimately put in place; in these conversations, lecture-track faculty members were called to step into a new role, and tenure-track faculty members were bound by the newly revised college bylaws to respect that new role. We found that these changes in our departmental governance, initially performative, became increasingly consequential.

This new governance structure informs administrative and teaching decisions in the department, such as how to distribute teaching assignments and administrative tasks equitably and creatively. One challenge is how to move beyond the traditional tagging of certain jobs as appropriate for lecture-track faculty (e.g., director

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of undergraduate studies, study-abroad adviser, Casa Hispana adviser) and others for tenure-track faculty (e.g., chair, director of graduate studies). We strive to think about our teaching assignments departmentally as well as individually not only in terms of coverage but also as opportunities for faculty conversation, collaboration, and development. Put bluntly, we are challenging the traditional thinking of lecture-track faculty members as warm bodies to be plugged into a curricular sequence and tenure-track faculty members as free agents who teach whatever and whenever they want, toward a situation in which all faculty members will work as equal partners to realize the department’s mission and leave behind the hierarchies and value assumptions of the past. What has become clear over the last year, however, is that there is a tension between this process, to which we remain fully committed, and the broad context of the college and graduate school.

Looking Forward

Our experiences at Emory reveal that while there has been much progress, much work remains to be done. Even as we wrote this article, administrative decisions whose ramifications are still emerging appeared to pose unforeseen challenges for the collaborative vision we have just described. The challenges ahead—nothing as simple as revising a single set of documents—must be seen as opportunities for all faculty members to engage together in what is still very much a work in progress of rethinking the academic labor force. An underlying concern is job security for both lecture-track and tenure-track faculty members in the current climate of contraction and reorganization. Other issues are conversion of tenure lines, inter- and intrauniversity portability of appointments, graduate education, and research.

The MLA’s *Professional Employment Practices for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members* seems to imply that non-tenure-track lines should be converted to the tenure track whenever possible and to assume that conversion to the tenure track will be the desideratum of all those working off it. But this may not necessarily be the case. To what degree are these recommendations driven by the fundamental material and symbolic inequities that define our profession? If the working conditions and remuneration of lecture-track faculty members corresponded to their role in the institution, would there still be a pressing need for conversion? The importance of the conversion of tenure lines might become moot if the goal of symbolic and material parity were achieved. Focusing on conversion of lines as a goal, in addition to reinforcing existing hierarchies, may lead us to overlook other, more transformative possibilities for thinking about the larger body of the faculty.

The issue of portability arises when lecture-track faculty members contemplate moving from one institution or unit to another. The portability of a lecture-track appointment becomes problematic because there is no interinstitutional or cross-institutional context for a common understanding of what a lecture-track appointment means. There is often little parity in terms of conditions of employment and wide variance in titles. There is a need for greater standardization, particularly across similar kinds of institutions (e.g., community colleges, four-year liberal arts colleges, research universities).

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The role that lecture-track faculty members play in graduate education is another area that will require concerted and innovative effort. At Emory, as at many research universities, lecture-track faculty members serve most visibly but not exclusively at the undergraduate level. In the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, they are deeply involved in the pedagogical training and mentorship of graduate teaching assistants, including the teaching of the required graduate seminar on pedagogical methods. Yet they are not members of the graduate faculty (as some are in other departments at Emory). As a result, graduate students in Spanish and Portuguese are trained by LTF in ways that are invisible and not legitimized; correspondingly, lecture-track faculty members’ contributions to our graduate program are also invisible. These issues play out across the spectrum of American universities.

New models are needed for training graduate students in a changing academy, as Russell Berman, in his former role as MLA president, noted in a call to rethink doctoral education. Graduate students need, for example, expertise in digital scholarship, technology-based instruction, and engaged scholarship. To be successful on the job market, they need the skills and expertise that many lecture-track faculty members have developed. Given that a shrinking percentage of jobs are tenure-track, we need to make available to our graduate students stellar models in both tracks—because it is likely that they will be working with (if not as) lecture-track faculty members in the future. Thus mentors from the lecture track need to be not only invested in graduate education but also fully enfranchised. As they play an increasingly important role in the training of graduate students, boundaries and assumptions that once seemed self-evident become less so. Who counts as graduate faculty, serves on the Graduate Studies Committee, teaches graduate seminars, serves on dissertation committees, or directs dissertations? Answers will vary depending on the department or program. A positive recent development in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Emory is the appointment of a lecture-track faculty member to the graduate faculty, mirroring a similar previous appointment in the Department of Religion.

The role of lecture-track faculty members in graduate education relates to another important question—research. The initially clear divide between lecture-track faculty members, whose focus was on teaching rather than research, and tenure-track faculty members, whose contributions to the university involved research as well as teaching (with research often valued over teaching), no longer obtains. This is not surprising if one takes seriously the ways in which teaching and scholarship are said to nurture and support each other or if one considers the ways in which traditional definitions of scholarship have expanded in recent years. On a practical level, nontenure-track faculty members must have access to professional support and development. But as our definitions of scholarship and teaching evolve to meet the needs of the twenty-first century and the sharply drawn lines between the different faculty bodies within the body of “regular faculty” become increasingly blurred, we might productively reimagine their relation.

Currently the driving force behind the expansion of the nontenured faculty is economic. Were that imperative to go away (or be mitigated by other economic forces) and in the face of radical and far-reaching changes in higher education, might we envision a tipping point at which the distinction between lecture-track and tenure-

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track faculty is no longer intellectually or professionally viable? Where, then, are the spaces for continuing these conversations about the professoriat? These pages are one important space for defining and animating the discussion, as are MLA publications, panels, and workshops. MLA leadership is key, and former president Michael Bérubé has used his position as a bully pulpit to play an important advocacy role:

[N]on-tenure-track faculty members will have to learn . . . to assert themselves as faculty members, to comport themselves as if they have every right to be treated with the respect accorded the tenure-track faculty—which they most certainly do. And tenure-track faculty members, for their part, will have to learn not to be such jerks—and, more ambitiously, to learn to challenge cultures of jerkdom where they exist.

Conclusion

We believe that thinking of the professoriat—the “regular faculty”—in terms of university citizenship will free us to move beyond a division of tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty that thwarts our progress toward shared pedagogical, intellectual, professional, and institutional goals. In his generous and provocative discussion of global citizenship, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, Kwame Anthony Appiah identifies two intertwined notions that in his view must guide our engagement in the world: “universal concern and respect for legitimate difference” (xv). By this he means that we share mutual obligations that go beyond narrow notions of cohort or community and that we must take seriously the activities and beliefs of others. If we apply these notions to the world of the twenty-first-century university, it becomes clear that we must work together to make it possible for all of us to claim and exercise the full set of rights and responsibilities that pertain to all citizens in that world. Recognizing this reality, we believe, is not a luxury but rather a necessary first step toward reaching our shared goals of civic learning and democratic engagement—toward responding to our crucible moment.

Notes

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1. The report continues, “two-year and four-year colleges and universities offer an intellectual and public commons where it is possible not only to theorize about what education for democratic citizenship might require in a diverse society, but also to rehearse that citizenship daily in the fertile, roiling context of pedagogic inquiry and hands-on experiences” (*Crucible Moment* 2).

2. The MLA’s report *Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World* concludes that “[t]he two-tiered configuration has outlived its usefulness and needs to evolve.”

3. In this section we draw on Hartfield-Méndez, Marsteller, and Patterson.

4. This distinction is one of the particularities of a leading research university and may not be the case in other institutions. It is within colleges (whether or not they are part of larger universities), however, that most non-tenure-track faculty members in English and other languages work.

5. Every effort is made to limit adjunct and temporary hires, although there are still occasional instances of them, in response to either academic or economic considerations.

6. In discussing the Emory experience, we use the language that has evolved at Emory: lecture-track faculty and tenure-track faculty.

7. The standard teaching loads for tenured and tenure-track faculty members in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese is 2-2; lecturers teach 3-3; and senior lecturers and professors of pedagogy teach 2-3.

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