

# Faculty Members, Tenure and Precarity

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## *2016 Membership Survey, Report #3*

From April 27 – May 25, 2016, members of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) were invited to participate in an online survey regarding their personal demographic information, career trajectories, current professional situation and association membership. Invitations were sent via email to 9,218 current AAA members, of whom 1,988 (21.57%) successfully participated in the survey.

This report focuses on the 925 AAA members (46.53% of survey respondents, and 67.42% of employed respondents) who indicated that they are currently employed as faculty members in higher education. The previous report ([Ginsberg 2016](#)), a profile of non-academic survey respondents, also described this population in comparison to their peers in higher education, giving an overview of employment status across all survey respondents. In this report, the focus shifts to the higher education sector, and deals specifically with issues regarding contingent faculty. The hope is that these results will contribute to the Association's efforts to support and advocate for anthropology faculty off the tenure track.

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## **Key Findings**

- Among AAA members responding to the survey, the proportion of tenure-line faculty, that is, tenured and tenure-track combined (76%), far exceeds the overall proportion in the US academic workforce (33.8%).
- Non-tenure track faculty respondents tend to be younger than their tenure-line peers, but have more years of experience in non-tenure track appointments. This reflects the increase in non-tenure track faculty in recent decades.
- A majority of survey respondents are affiliated with research universities and baccalaureate colleges. At these types of institution, more faculty members have the possibility of being granted tenure, and non-tenure track faculty tend to have longer-term appointments, than at less research-intensive doctoral universities, master's-granting colleges and two-year schools.
- Among non-tenure track faculty, full-time positions pay better than part-time; among full-time faculty, tenure-line appointments pay better than those off the tenure track. While respondents do tend to earn higher salaries later in their careers, this finding persists independent of age.

## Tenure and employment status

This section reports on the relative numbers of tenured, tenure track and non-tenure track faculty among survey respondents, and compares these numbers to the overall state of the academic workforce.

To establish the distribution of tenure status, faculty respondents were asked to categorize their appointment type as *Non-tenure track professor / lecturer / adjunct*, *Tenure-track associate professor or equivalent*, *Associate professor with tenure or equivalent* or *Full professor with tenure or equivalent*. 873 respondents chose one of these, while an additional 47 chose *Other*. These responses were recoded as *Tenured*, *Tenure track* or *Non-tenure track*. Final counts are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Tenure status

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of responses	Cumulative Percent
Response				
Tenured	486	52.5	53.4	53.4
Tenure track	206	22.3	22.6	76.0
Non-tenure track	218	23.6	24.0	100.0
Total	910	98.4	100.0	
No response	15	1.6		
Total	925	100.0		

The “Other” responses that were recoded as “Non-tenure track” reflect a diversity of non-tenure track (NTT) appointment types. Beyond typical term faculty, visiting assistant professor, part time and adjunct appointments, NTT faculty include postdoctoral fellows who are members of the teaching faculty, as well as full professors at non-tenure granting institutions. If what interests us is contingent employment, tenure is an imperfect proxy, as a permanent full-time faculty member on a multi-year contract has a much less precarious status than a part-time adjunct with a one-semester assignment.

While less-than-full-time employment is rare among tenure-line faculty (less than 2%), non-tenure track appointments often provide only part-time work. Table 2, which breaks down NTT respondents by employment status, shows that barely more than half are employed full-time by one employer, compared to over 98% of their tenured and tenure-track colleagues.

Table 2: Employment status, non-tenure track respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Employed full time by one employer	117	53.7	53.7
Employed by multiple employers to reach full-time employment	25	11.5	65.1
Employed at least half time but less than full time	44	20.2	85.3
Employed less than half time	27	12.4	97.7
Self-employed or freelance	5	2.3	100.0
Total	218	100.0	

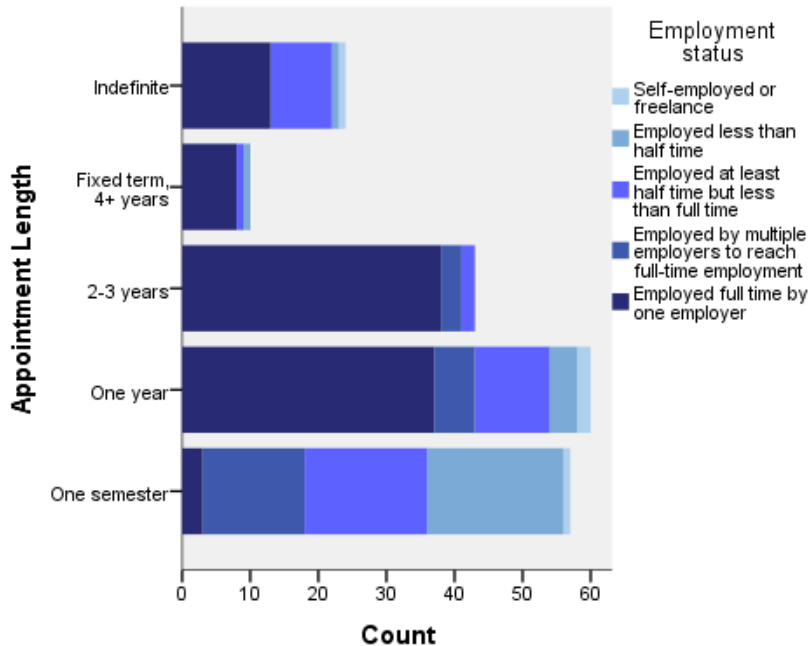


Figure 1: Full-time / part-time NTT jobs, by appointment length (see Table 7 in appendix)

Non-tenure track appointments also vary in length, ranging from one-semester contracts up to multi-year or indefinite-term appointments. Respondents who reported a “Non-tenure track / lecturer / adjunct” appointment were asked the length of their appointment, from one semester to over five years or indefinite. As Figure 1 shows, respondents with one-semester appointments are much more likely to be employed part-time, while appointments of two years or more typically offer full-time work.

If we aggregate all part-time faculty regardless of tenure status, we can compare AAA survey data to Federal data from the IPEDS Data Center, as compiled by the American Association of University Professors for inclusion in their [Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession](#) (Shulman et al. 2016, 14). AAUP includes graduate student employees as a segment of the academic labor force; Table 3 reproduces their figures as well as recalculated numbers that show the percentage distribution of faculty specifically. Comparing these numbers to the results of the AAA member survey, we see that part-time and non-tenure track faculty make up a much greater proportion of the workforce overall than of survey respondents or, presumably, of AAA members. For this reason, the findings presented in this report apply to AAA members, but are unlikely to reflect the academic workforce more broadly.

Table 3: Academic Labor Force vs. AAA Membership

	IPEDS data	Recalculated IPEDS data	AAA survey respondents
Full-time tenured faculty	21.45	24.61	52.31
Full-time tenure-track faculty	8.05	9.23	22.31
Full-time non-tenure-track faculty	16.73	19.19	12.86
Part-time faculty	40.93	46.95	12.52
Graduate student employees	12.83		

In spite of these results, I hesitate to say that part-time and NTT faculty are underrepresented within AAA membership, because it is potentially the case that anthropologists have relatively more secure employment than other academics. For example, departments such as English and mathematics tend to offer more general-education requirements, which could conceivably result in more frequent hiring of

adjuncts. Federal data sets are not helpful here: IPEDS does not disaggregate human resources data by academic field or department, and the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) does not collect data on tenure status. In the coming months, AAA will conduct a survey of US university departments that grant degrees in anthropology, and the results of that future research may help to contextualize the data presented here.

### Faculty demographics

As the previous survey report showed ([Ginsberg 2016](#)), faculty respondents show no statistically significant difference from other employed respondents (i.e., omitting students and retirees) with respect to gender, race or age.

While Federal data show that women and members of underrepresented racial groups are more likely to hold part-time and non-tenure track appointments ([Finkelstein, Conley, and Schuster 2016](#)), this

pattern does not hold true among survey respondents. There was no significant relationship between tenure status and gender (Spearman's  $\rho = 0.051$ ,  $p = 0.127$ ) or between tenure status and race ( $\rho = 0.055$ ,  $p = 0.11$ ). Similarly, full-time vs. part-time employment status among faculty showed no correlation with gender, race or age.

Age is a significant predictor of tenure status, however. While it is logical to predict that faculty would move from tenure-track to tenured to full professor status over the course of their career, this result persists even when tenured and tenure-track respondents are collapsed into one category ( $\rho = 0.163$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). As Figure 2 shows, NTT faculty skew younger than their tenure-line colleagues, whose aggregate mean age is about 51 years.

If non-tenure track faculty members are managing to earn tenure later in their careers, then this result does not necessarily reflect the increasing prevalence of non-tenure track appointments in recent decades. To resolve this ambiguity, respondents were asked how many years they had spent working in various categories of employment; average responses are shown in Figure 3 below. While tenure-track faculty have worked an average of 1.32 years in NTT positions and tenured faculty report an average of 1.47 years, current NTT faculty average 5.35 years' experience as NTT, despite being younger on average. This suggests that NTT faculty tend to persist in NTT employment, rather than transitioning into

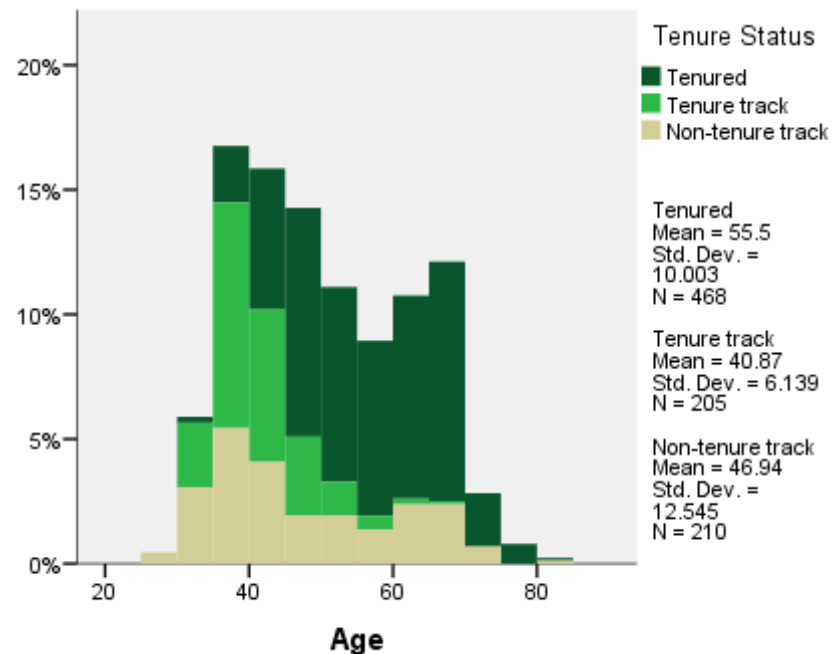


Figure 2: Tenure status across age groups

tenure-track jobs, so the difference in age is most likely due to recent changes in the academic labor market. That is, while most tenure-track faculty members eventually earn tenure, NTT faculty stay NTT, and the difference in age results from the increasing number of NTT jobs.

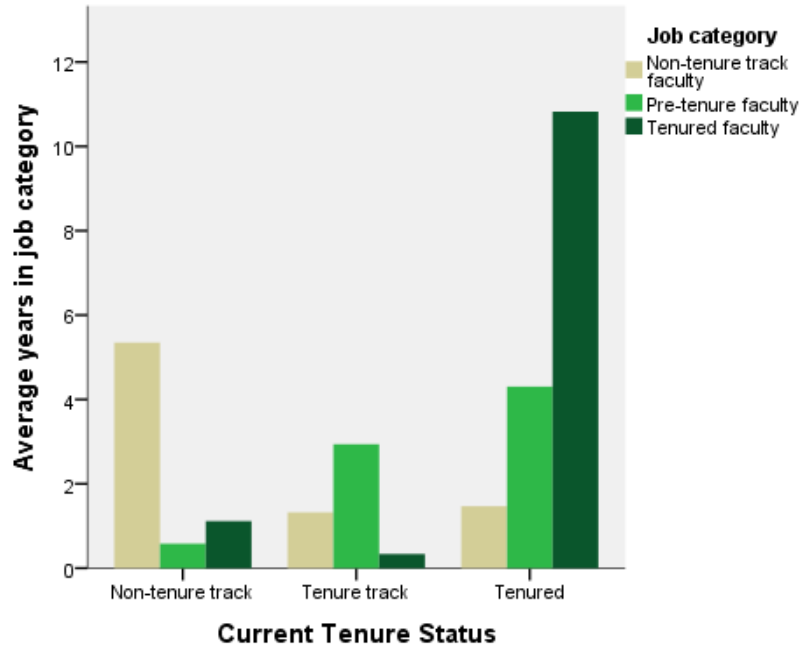


Figure 3: Movement across tenure categories (see Table 8)

### Differences across institution type

Respondents were asked to identify their current institutional affiliation, and US colleges and universities were coded for institution type and control (i.e., public vs. private), according to the [Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education](#). The resulting frequencies are provided in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4: Institution control, faculty respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Public	445	63.1
Private not-for-profit	254	36.0
Private for-profit	6	.9
Total	705	100.0

Table 5: Institution type, faculty respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Doctoral Universities: Highest research	329	46.6
Doctoral Universities: Higher research	92	13.0
Doctoral Universities: Moderate research	31	4.4
Master's Colleges & Universities	96	13.6
Baccalaureate Colleges	106	15.0
Associate's Colleges	38	5.4
Special Focus Four-Year	13	1.8
Tribal Colleges	1	.1
Total	706	100.0

Tenure-line appointments are not distributed equally across institution type ( $\chi^2 = 23.96$ ,  $df = 14$ ,  $p = 0.046$ ) and control ( $\chi^2 = 17.66$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). As Table 6 shows, the main difference between public and private is that for-profit schools do not grant tenure, although tenure-line appointments are marginally more common at public than private nonprofit institutions.

Table 6: Tenure status, by institution control

		Tenure Status					
		Non-tenure track		Tenure track		Tenured	
		Count	% within Control	Count	% within Control	Count	% within Control
Public	101	22.9%	98	22.2%	242	54.9%	
Control Private not-for-profit	67	26.8%	61	24.4%	122	48.8%	
Private for-profit	5	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>24.9%</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>22.8%</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>52.3%</b>	

Types of institution seem to fall into three general categories with respect to tenure:

- first, associate’s and special focus colleges, where some 45% of faculty are ineligible for tenure;
- next, master’s and R3 universities, with approximately 30% NTT appointments;
- and finally, the more elite R1, R2 and baccalaureate (mainly arts and sciences) institutions, where over 50% of respondents have been granted tenure.

Within this third group, R1 schools stand out by their relatively high level of NTT faculty (25.8%). These results are illustrated in Figure 4. (From here on, the analysis will leave out special focus [e.g., medical, engineering, art and design] and tribal colleges because of the small number of respondents.)

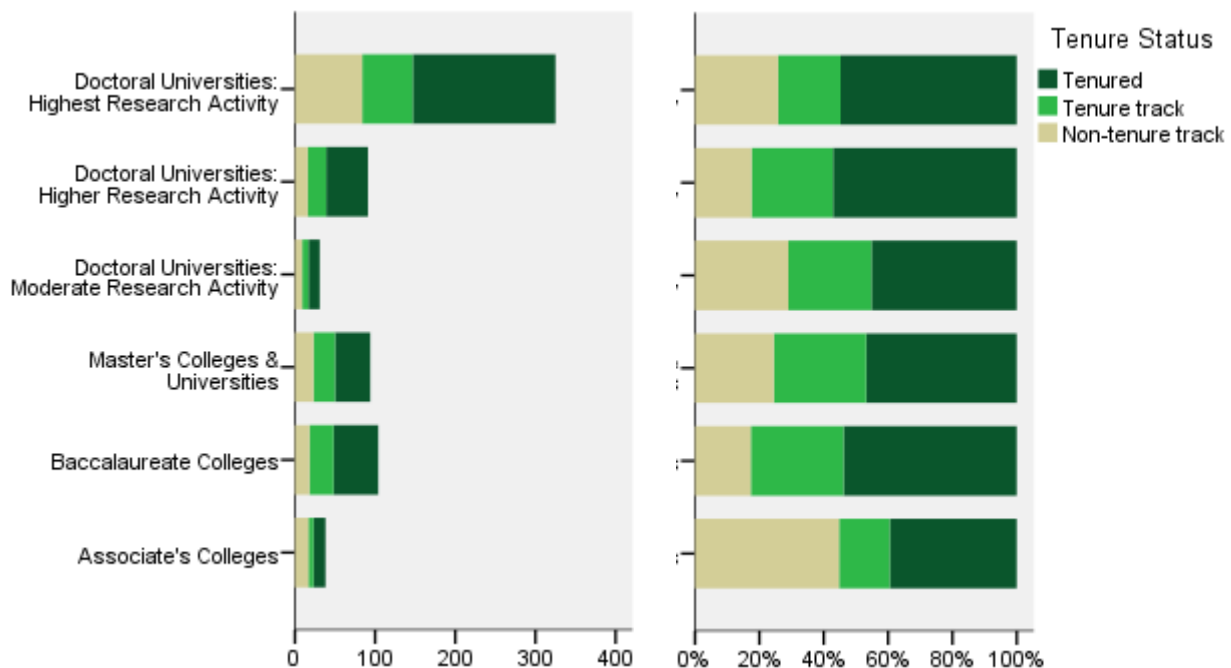


Figure 4: Tenure status, by institution type: (a) absolute count; (b) percentage (see Table 9)

Looking at NTT appointments specifically, a similar pattern is replicated at a smaller scale level with regard to appointment length. Overall, 62.2% of NTT respondents are in appointments lasting one year

or less, while 37.8% have appointments lasting two years or more. Disaggregating responses by institution type, as shown in Figure 5, we see that this result overestimates the duration of NTT appointments across different institutional types. Nearly 50% of NTT respondents teach at R1 schools, where longer-term NTT appointments are available. At the opposite end of the range are two-year schools, where 80% of NTT respondents are on one-semester contracts, and over 85% have appointments lasting one year or less.

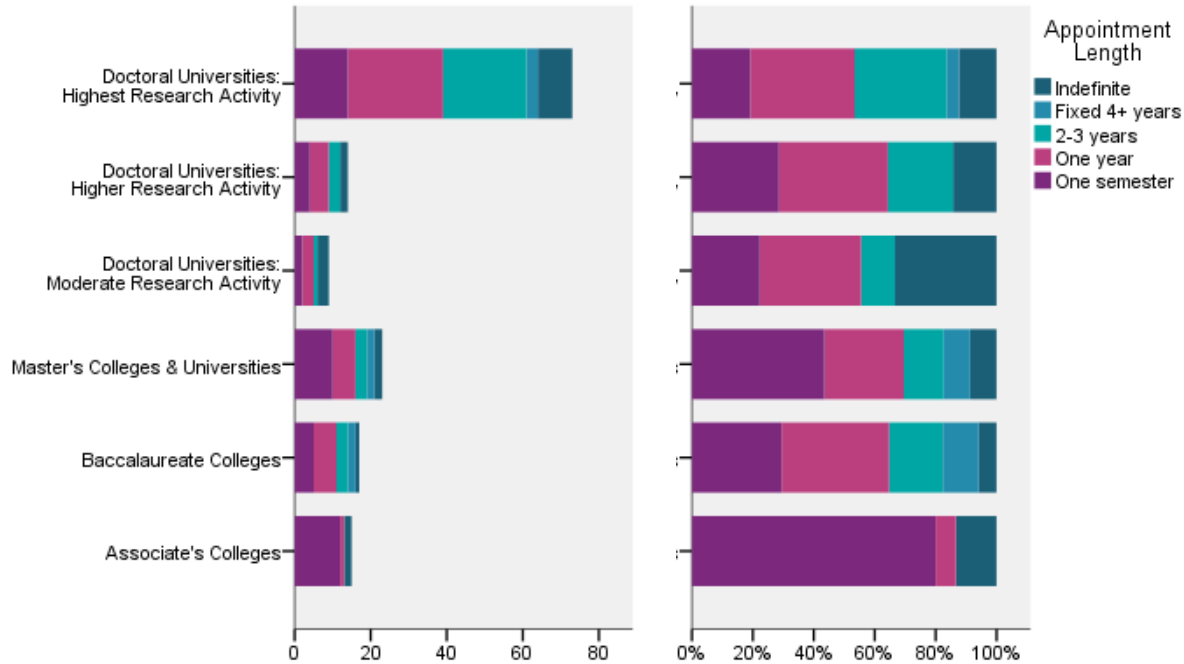


Figure 5: Length of NTT appointment, by institution type: (a) absolute count; (b) percentage (see Table 10)

These findings provide important context for future AAA advocacy on contingent employment issues, particularly if they are considered in the context of current advocacy and activism around issues of faculty working conditions, such as the work of the [Coalition on the Academic Workforce](#) and [New Faculty Majority](#). While advocates highlight problems of “adjunctification” in the academic workforce, AAA members seem to fit a different profile. To begin with, most academic AAA members—over 60% of survey respondents—teach at R1 or baccalaureate institutions, which tend to have the best tenure protection and the bulk of full-time, longer-term NTT appointments. Among NTT respondents specifically, more than half are employed full-time by one employer. The modal NTT respondent, accounting for 47 (30.1%) of 156 NTT respondents, has a one- to three-year appointment at an R1 university. Out of these 47, only six are adjuncts, while the rest are full-time lecturers, research associates, program directors, teaching fellows, postdocs, visiting and non-tenure-track professors.

## Faculty salaries

Comparing the salaries of non-tenure track faculty to their tenure-line peers, the frequency of part-time NTT employment would tend to bias the results. For this reason, this section includes salary comparisons between part-time and full-time NTT faculty (excluding tenure-line faculty), as well as comparisons between full-time tenure-line and NTT faculty (excluding part-time). Unsurprisingly, Figure 6 shows consistent increases as employment status approaches full-time.

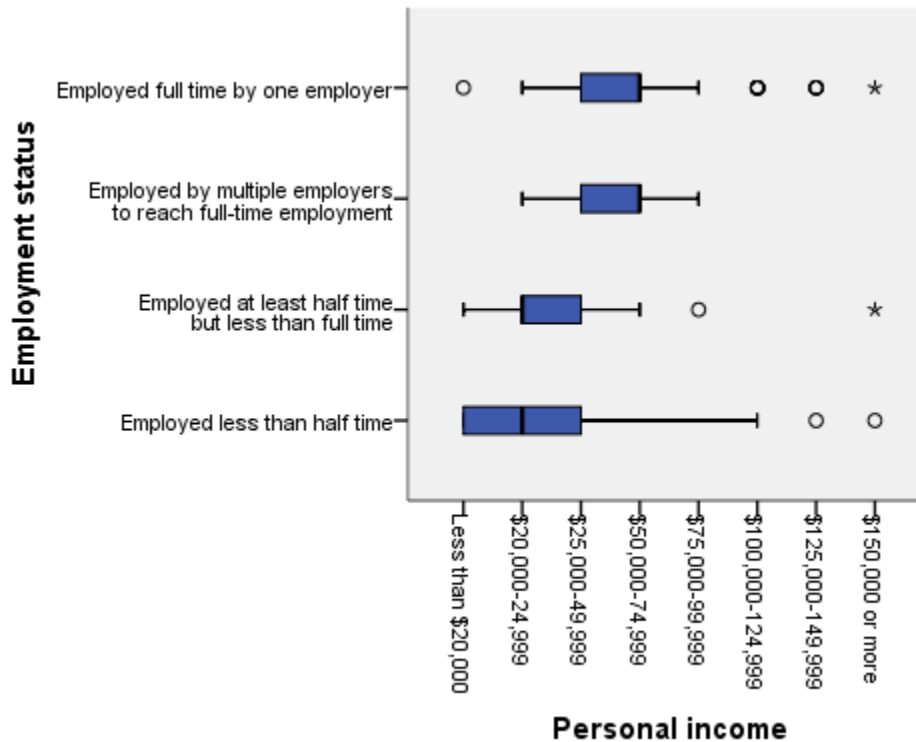


Figure 6: Non-tenure track faculty income, by employment status ( $\rho = 0.522$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )

Similarly, Figure 7 below shows that full-time faculty salaries increase from non-tenure track, to tenure track, to tenured appointments, a result that persists even when correcting for age.

Finally, Figure 8 shows a significant relationship between institution type and salary, which persists when correcting for age and tenure status. As this graph shows, while most faculty tend to earn less than \$125,000 per year, it is not uncommon for professors at R1 and R2 universities to earn \$150,000 or more.



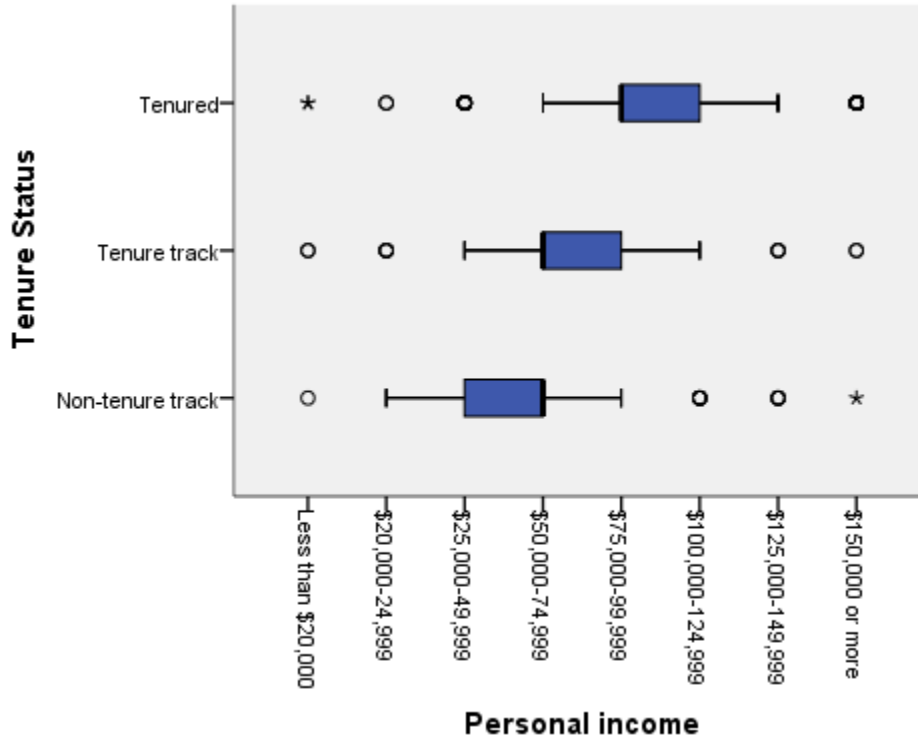


Figure 7: Full-time faculty income, by tenure status ( $p = 0.507$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )

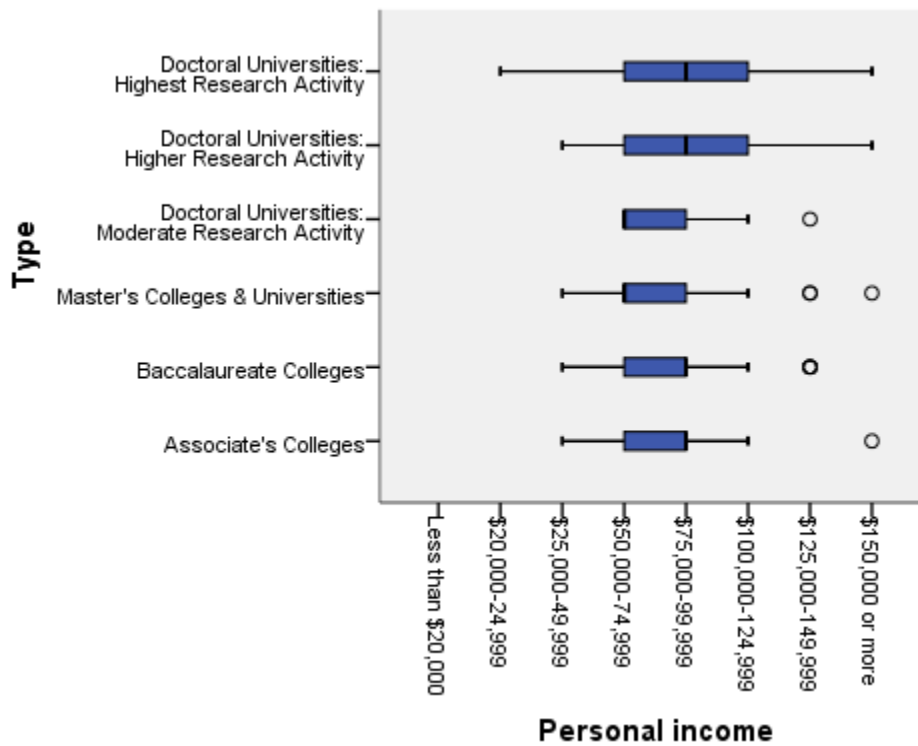


Figure 8: Full-time faculty income, by institutional type ( $p = 0.181$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )

### Professional goals

Non-tenure track respondents were asked a multiple-response item about their professional goals. Responses show that, despite their contingent status, a majority of NTT respondents are committed to academic careers. Out of 189 respondents, 101 indicated that they plan to stay in their current position, 101 plan to move to a tenure-track position, 57 plan to move to a more stable NTT position, and 58 plan to leave the academy, while no respondents indicated that they plan to leave the workforce altogether.

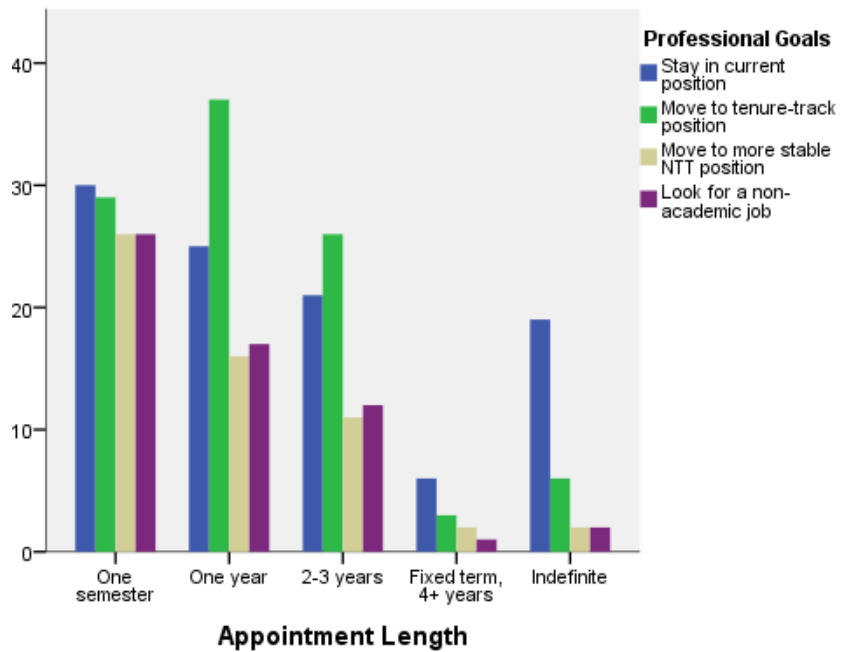


Figure 9: Professional goals vary by length of appointment (see Table 11)

Responses to this question did not show notable variation across institutional type or full-time / part-time employment status, but a pattern did emerge with regard to appointment length (Figure 10): respondents with appointments of indefinite duration generally intend to stay, while respondents with one- to three-year positions plan to move to jobs on the tenure track. A similar pattern appears across

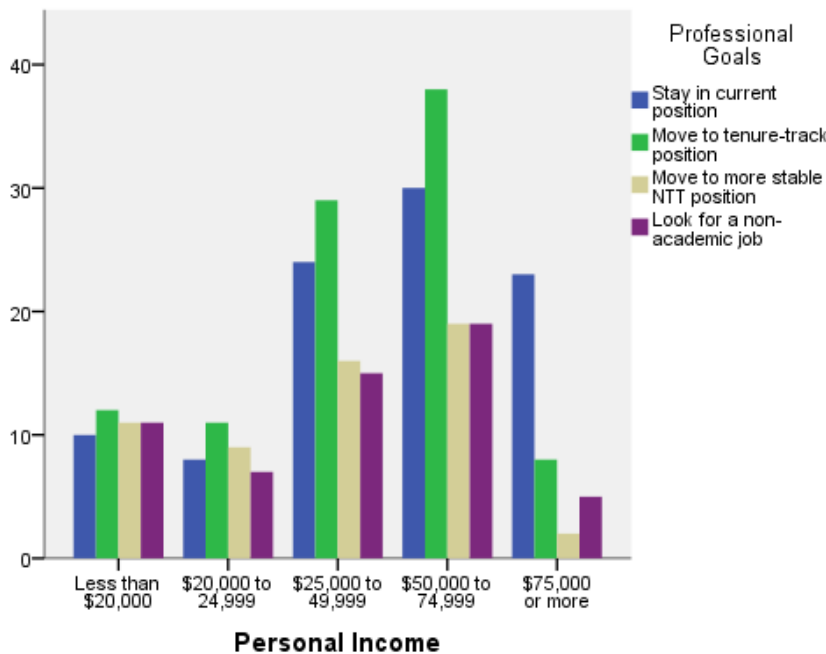


Figure 10: Professional goals vary by income (see Table 12)

income levels (Figure 10), as respondents earning less than \$75,000 are more likely to aim for tenure-track jobs, while those earning over \$75,000 plan to stay where they are. These results seem unsurprising from the perspective of academic hiring—to reduce faculty turnover, offer longer NTT appointments and higher salaries—but it is worth remarking that seven out of ten NTT respondents plan to stay in academia despite their relatively low salaries and insecure status.

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## Appendix of data tables

Table 7: Appointment length and employment status of NTT respondents

		7. Employment status:					Total	
		Employed full time by one employer	Employed by multiple employers to reach full-time employment	Employed at least half time but less than full time	Employed less than half time	Self-employed or freelance		
Appointment Length	One semester	Count	3	15	18	20	1	57
		%	5.3%	26.3%	31.6%	35.1%	1.8%	100.0%
	One year	Count	37	6	11	4	2	60
		%	61.7%	10.0%	18.3%	6.7%	3.3%	100.0%
	2-3 years	Count	38	3	2	0	0	43
		%	88.4%	7.0%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Fixed term, 4+ years	Count	8	0	1	1	0	10
		%	80.0%	0.0%	10.0%	10.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Indefinite	Count	13	0	9	1	1	24
		%	54.2%	0.0%	37.5%	4.2%	4.2%	100.0%
Total	Count	99	24	41	26	4	194	
	%	51.0%	12.4%	21.1%	13.4%	2.1%	100.0%	

Table 8: Movement across tenure categories

Years' experience in job category	Current Tenure Status					
	Non-tenure track (N=218)		Tenure track (N=206)		Tenured (N=486)	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
Non-tenure track	5.35	7.181	1.32	1.745	1.47	3.406
Pre-tenure	.58	1.966	2.94	2.654	4.30	4.098
Tenured	1.11	5.301	.34	1.417	10.82	11.034

Table 9: Tenure status, by institution type

		Tenure Status					
		Non-tenure track		Tenure track		Tenured	
		Count	% within Type	Count	% within Type	Count	% within Type
Institution Type	Associate's Colleges	17	44.7%	6	15.8%	15	39.5%
	Baccalaureate Colleges	18	17.3%	30	28.8%	56	53.8%
	Master's Colleges & Universities	23	24.5%	27	28.7%	44	46.8%
	Doctoral: Moderate Research	9	29.0%	8	25.8%	14	45.2%
	Doctoral: Higher Research	16	17.6%	23	25.3%	52	57.1%
	Doctoral: Highest Research	84	25.8%	63	19.4%	178	54.8%
	Special Focus Four-Year	6	46.2%	3	23.1%	4	30.8%
	Tribal Colleges	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	100.0%
Total		173	24.8%	160	23.0%	364	52.2%

Table 10: Length of NTT appointment, by institution type

		Appointment Length					Total
		One semester	One year	2-3 years	Fixed term, 4+ years	Indefinite	
Associate's Colleges	Count	12	1	0	0	2	15
	%	80.0%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	13.3%	100.0%
Baccalaureate Colleges	Count	5	6	3	2	1	17
	%	29.4%	35.3%	17.6%	11.8%	5.9%	100.0%
Master's Colleges & Universities	Count	10	6	3	2	2	23
	%	43.5%	26.1%	13.0%	8.7%	8.7%	100.0%
Doctoral Universities: Moderate Research Activity	Count	2	3	1	0	3	9
	%	22.2%	33.3%	11.1%	0.0%	33.3%	100.0%
Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity	Count	4	5	3	0	2	14
	%	28.6%	35.7%	21.4%	0.0%	14.3%	100.0%
Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity	Count	14	25	22	3	9	73
	%	19.2%	34.2%	30.1%	4.1%	12.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	50	47	32	7	20	156
	%	32.1%	30.1%	20.5%	4.5%	12.8%	100.0%

Table 11: NTT professional goals, by appointment length

			Professional Goals				Total
			Stay in current position	Move to tenure-track position	Move to more stable NTT position	Look for a non-academic job	
Appointment Length	One semester	Count	30	29	26	26	57
		%	52.6%	50.9%	45.6%	45.6%	
	One year	Count	25	37	16	17	57
		%	43.9%	64.9%	28.1%	29.8%	
	2-3 years	Count	21	26	11	12	42
		%	50.0%	61.9%	26.2%	28.6%	
	Fixed term, 4+ years	Count	6	3	2	1	10
		%	60.0%	30.0%	20.0%	10.0%	
	Indefinite	Count	19	6	2	2	23
		%	82.6%	26.1%	8.7%	8.7%	
Total	Count	101	101	57	58	189	

Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

Table 12: NTT professional goals, by personal income

			Professional goals				Total
			Stay in current position	Move to tenure-track position	Move to more stable NTT position	Look for a non-academic job	
Personal Income	Less than \$20,000	Count	10	12	11	11	23
		%	43.5%	52.2%	47.8%	47.8%	
	\$20,000-24,999	Count	8	11	9	7	19
		%	42.1%	57.9%	47.4%	36.8%	
	\$25,000-49,999	Count	24	29	16	15	49
		%	49.0%	59.2%	32.7%	30.6%	
	\$50,000-74,999	Count	30	38	19	19	60
		%	50.0%	63.3%	31.7%	31.7%	
	\$75,000 or more	Count	23	8	2	5	30
		%	76.7%	26.7%	6.7%	16.7%	
Total	Count	95	98	57	57	181	

Percentages and totals are based on respondents.