

The Steering Committee

Suggested Agenda Item

September 7, 2021



MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

The Secretary for Academic Governance received the following communication from Assistant Dean Bethany Laursen of The Graduate School on July 19, 2021:

By defining tenure stream faculty, librarians, and the principal administrator of each MAU as the "regular faculty" (GSRR Article 8), our policy language reinforces the problematic hierarchy at MSU that devalues academic specialists, staff, and fixed term faculty. Often these are termed "non-regular" faculty. The terms "regular" and "non-regular" are divergent, value-loaded terms. In the Grad School, we have tried to find a different term for the "non-regular faculty" because we approve members of this group to sit on graduate committees (per Academic Programs), and we need a succinct adjective to describe them and we have heard repeatedly that "non-regular" is demeaning and offensive. We have tried and failed to find a suitable alternative. Our current attempt is to describe them with an awkward phrase such as "Graduate School Approved Faculty Committee Member." A better term is needed that is both practical and affirming. I am asking Steering Committee to take up the issue of how the "regular" faculty are named to find better terms. I propose the terms "core" and "elective" faculty.

Of course, perhaps the conversation that really should be had is whether we still need this distinction at all. At least when it comes to service on grad committees, perhaps there ought only to be one faculty--the Graduate Faculty--and everyone has to go through some vetting process to become part of that. Such a process would go some way to ensuring only those good at mentoring would be approved to mentor as committee members.

The matter is referred to the Steering Committee for further action.