DATE: January 22, 2018
FROM: Eric J. Barron
TO: Matthew Woessner

I am writing in response to the Advisory and Consultative report, Revision to AC-21 Definition of Academic Ranks—Provision of Multi-Year Contracts, which was passed by the University Faculty Senate on December 5, 2017. At that time the Senate recommended revisions intended to strengthen stability for full-time, fixed-term faculty members and to improve communication and understanding between the faculty and administrators if there are factors that inhibit the offering of long-term contracts.

We stand in strong support of the intent of this revision. Penn State is committed to strengthening stability for Penn State’s non-tenure-line faculty and believes that, upon promotion, each should be considered for a multi-year contract. As we have shared with the Senate leadership on several occasions, we cannot in good conscience, however, support the mandated length of the contracts specified in the Advisory and Consultative report. Given that the majority of non-tenure-line faculty are supported with temporary funding, and given that temporary funding does not allow for the provision of a contract longer than three years, it would be unconscionable to support a proposal that is, in essence, unable to be implemented. To do so would create expectations on the part of non-tenure-line faculty that cannot be fulfilled and put academic administrators in the position of being unable to implement this recommendation.

We suggest that points 5 and 6 be modified as recommended in the edits below.

5. Once it has been determined that a full-time fixed-term faculty member in the second rank at Penn State will be offered a new contract, the faculty member shall be considered for a multi-year contract of three or more years. If a multi-year contract of three or more years is not granted, then factors that shaped this decision shall be communicated to the fixed-term faculty member at the time when a new contract that is of shorter duration is offered.

6. Once it has been determined that a full-time fixed-term faculty member in the third rank at Penn State will be offered a new contract, the faculty member shall be considered for a multi-year contract of five years. If a multi-year contract of five years is not granted, then—
factors that shaped this decision shall be communicated to the fixed-term faculty member at the time when a new contract that is of shorter duration is offered.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this item.

cc: Kathleen Bieschke
    Dawn Blasko
    Nicholas P. Jones