

Proposal for a new designation -
Professor of Practice

Background

Our current practice of meeting shortages in teaching faculty is to hire adjunct faculty using a combination of funding sources, ex. enrollment management funds, faculty time release on research grants, etc. To fill these adjunct positions, our departments generally employ local industry professionals on a course-by-course basis. The college of engineering, for example, is spending around \$400k per year in the recent years toward these temporary positions. The college of health and social service is spending around \$510K per year. Although industry professionals bring several distinct advantages to our teaching mission, adjunct faculty designation and semester-long commitments prevent them from being completely engaged in our teaching enterprise. With long-term commitments, they can help us in several ways:

- Bring real-life experiences to classrooms on a continuous basis, which will help in our design courses (ex. capstone design);
- Provide ongoing assistance and guidance in building industry partnerships for outreach and extension;
- Help us identify industry needs in terms of educational programs (minors, certificates, professional masters, etc), and develop these programs in collaboration with regular faculty members;
- Lead our professional masters program offerings (ex. Master of Engineering), primary goal of which was to meet industry demands; and
- Meet the accreditation requirements of continuous assessment by industries and practitioners.

Rationale

Several academic institutions have adopted the title of *Professor of Practice* to hire industry professionals in full-time, non-tenured, positions for a prescribed period of time whose primary responsibilities are in line with those described above. Cornell University recently adopted this faculty designation due to a concern of being at a "competitive disadvantage" and also to "enrich the experience" of their students (Cornell University, 2015¹). The title, *Assistant/Associate/Full Professor of Practice*, is now viewed by ABET and other agencies as a higher level of commitment by the University to bring real-world experiences and industry expertise to our classrooms. Current designation of adjunct and college-track are not helping us retain outstanding individuals. For example, in 2015, the Civil Engineering department hired Dr. Methaq Abed as an adjunct professor on a part-time basis to teach mechanics courses. Dr. Abed is recently hired as an *Associate Professor of Practice* in the Mechanical Engineering Department at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). In the UTEP Department of Civil Engineering, there are two faculty members listed as *Clinical Professors*, a designation equivalent to *Professor of Practice*.

¹ Cornell University (2015). "Professor of Practice – College of Engineering Guidelines."
<https://www.engineering.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/departments/main%20area/pdf%20files/COE-Professor-of-Practice-Guidelines-final-9-16-2015%202.pdf> (March 10, 2019).

With the growing shortage of graduates required to enter the workforce, higher education is faced with the challenge to build capacity, grow enrollments, and retain students until degree completion. With a finite number of State funded tenure-track faculty lines, we can achieve this only by hiring more faculty to teach more classes and sections, using other sources of funding. One obvious source is from our industry partners who demand these graduates in order to keep businesses alive.

Policy

The Professor of Practice designation may be added to the current ARP 6.35-*Non-Tenure Track Faculty Appointments* as “Part XX: Professors of Practice and Clinical Professors”. The titles of Professors of Practice and Clinical Professors are used for non-tenure-track faculty hired primarily to teach courses for the university and serve as a liaison to the university regarding their profession’s educational needs. They may also serve to recruit, assist with experiential learning opportunities, and serve as career advisors.

- A. Professors of Practice and Clinical Professors must have master’s degrees or equivalent experience in the field.
- B. Professors of Practice and Clinical Professor appointments are renewable annually based on available funding
- C. Professors of Practice and Clinical Professors do not hold ranks
- D. Salaries are proportionate to market salaries of their profession and title
- E. Professors of Practice and Clinical Professors are listed in the university catalogs under their assigned departments and are eligible for privileges accorded other faculty, such as ID cards, library and parking.