

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

September 9, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: University Committee on Academic Governance

FROM: Teresa Cuellar

Secretary for Academic Governance

SUBJECT: Definition of Fixed-Term Faculty in Bylaw 1.1.1.2

Purpose:

This memo asks UCAG to review whether Bylaw 1.1.1.2 still accurately defines the fixed-term faculty group, especially given how the University now classifies academic positions and ranks. This issue could affect faculty status, voting rights at the University level, and who can serve in academic governance.

Relevant Bylaw Provisions:

Bylaw 1.1.1.2: "The fixed-term faculty shall consist of all persons holding the rank of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, or instructor, but not appointed under the rules of tenure."

Bylaw 1.1.2.1 includes full-time fixed-term faculty within the voting faculty for elections of University-level councils and committees. Full-time is defined as a workload of 0.9 FTE or greater.

Bylaw 1.1.2.2 permits unit bylaws to extend voting participation in department, school, or college matters to additional groups, including lecturers, research associates, and assistant instructors.

Bylaw 1.1.2.5 permits a full-time fixed-term faculty member to be elected to an academic governance body, except the University Committee on Faculty Tenure, as a representative of a unit in which the person holds faculty status.

Current University Classification:

The Academic Hiring Manual makes a distinction between ranked faculty and academic staff. Ranked faculty includes titles like Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Senior Instructor, Instructor, research faculty, and other appointment types. Academic staff includes roles such as Assistant Instructor, Lecturer, Postdoctoral Scholar, and Senior Research Associate.



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For reference: [Academic Hiring Manual](#)

UCAG Request to Interpret:

The terms for human-resources classification and academic governance definitions do not have to match exactly. Still, the current wording raises questions about whether positions with similar names or new roles get the governance status the bylaws intended.

Central distinction:

Instructor and Assistant Instructor are separate University titles. Instructor is expressly included in Bylaw 1.1.1.2; Assistant Instructor is not. An Assistant Instructor may be included in local governance voting if unit bylaws provide for it under Bylaw 1.1.2.2, but the title is not expressly included in the University-level definition of fixed-term faculty.

The Office of Academic Governance needs guidance on how to interpret and apply Bylaw 1.1.1.2. In the past, Assistant Instructors have served on academic governance committees. However, they are considered academic staff, not fixed-term faculty, and do not appear on the faculty voter lists we receive. This difference between past practice, the bylaw's wording, and HR classifications has led to confusion about whether Assistant Instructors can vote in academic governance elections or serve in roles meant for fixed-term faculty. We are asking UCAG to clarify how the bylaw should be interpreted.



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Sincerely,

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Secretary for Academic Governance, Office of Academic Governance

cc: Diana Bello-DeOCampo, Julia Ezzo