

Esteemed colleagues of the Faculty Senate,

Howard University's lecturers are presently subjected to the "seven year rule." This rule states that lecturers, who already work on one-year contracts at the university's discretion, may not be rehired by the university after their seventh year of employment. **The Howard University Full-Time Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Union, in alliance with the SEIU Local 500, calls upon the Faculty Senate to demand the removal of the "seven year rule" from the Faculty Handbook.**

This rule is destructive in the ways that it restricts the ability of departments and programs to maintain a skilled teaching faculty, vetted by student evaluations and department review, whose courses are already fully aligned with the ethos, research, and curriculum that best scaffolds students towards major and minor fields of study. Furthermore, the rule drives away excellent, credentialed instructors and mentors after relationships with students have been constructed and at critical points when students tend to lean on them most. The rule disincentivizes prospective new hires, disincentivizes lecturers' contributions to the betterment and growth of the university, disrupts and distracts departmental faculty through a yearly routine of hiring, training, and grooming new teaching faculty, and broadly undermines Howard University's mission of social justice and equality by creating greater instability for contingent faculty and by suggesting that those who teach Black students are more disposable than similar faculty at PWIs.

No other college or university in the region employs such a rule. [In 2018, rules such as this were described by the Modern Language Association as being among the "worst practices" in the employment of full-time contingent faculty.](#) Howard University's administration argues that the "seven year rule" gives the university more control in maintaining the best teaching staff. How this rule produces more control by restricting university and departmental staffing choices for faculty who already work at the university's discretion is unclear. **Despite the administration's insistence that this rule must be upheld to maintain the quality of full-time contingent faculty, this same administration made the choice to no longer implement the "seven year rule" on part-time contingent faculty in 2015.**

In the face of an ever-growing student body, it is increasingly clear that the "seven year rule" impedes departments from maintaining a full staff of skilled teaching faculty. At the same time that departments are being called upon to provide more class sections, they are being forced to push away time-tested faculty members, already established in the unique culture of this university. The only option to allow the university to rehire full-time contingent faculty past seven years is in the form of a promotion, limited to small percentages of the full-time contingent faculty in CoAS and the School of Communications and to even smaller percentages in all other colleges of the University.

For the sake of the university and its departments, faculty, and students, it is time for the "seven year rule" to end. **We call upon the Faculty Senate, as a body of highly respected scholars and educators, dedicated to the betterment of this university and its historic mission, to pass a resolution to amend the Faculty Handbook to remove the "seven year rule."**

In truth and service,

The Howard University Full-Time Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Union