

Dear colleagues,

As Provost Wentle [reported](#) earlier today, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 205 has withdrawn its petition to unionize non-tenure track (NTT) faculty in the College of Arts and Science.

This development marks a significant moment for the College. NTT faculty, simply put, are a fundamental part of the A&S community and are critical to helping us achieve our academic mission. When the SEIU filed its petition in February 2017, the College's ability to address the concerns of NTT faculty was effectively frozen. Once a union files a petition, any actions to address concerns or make any improvements are prohibited by law and could result in the filing of "unfair labor practice" charges. That means for the last 21 months our hands have been tied. With the withdrawal of the SEIU petition, we can move forward together to make meaningful and needed changes.

I personally have learned a great deal from the unionization discussions, the COACHE survey that included NTT faculty, and my many conversations with all faculty since becoming dean in July (and prior when I was Vice Provost). I look forward to working with all of you—tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty alike—to ensure we are effectively supporting our NTT faculty.

As a first step, I invite all NTT faculty to attend one of two **College of Arts and Science Non-Tenure Track Faculty Town Halls on January 14 or 17** (exact times and place TBD). Our discussions will focus on identifying recommendations and next steps to enhance and improve opportunities for, and representation of, NTT faculty as well as the climate and culture for NTT faculty in the College.

As a second step, I am forming an advisory group of A&S NTT faculty to build from the Town Hall. Together, we will develop concrete recommendations to ensure all colleagues are valued and have opportunities to pursue a rewarding career at Vanderbilt. I will communicate further details about the composition of that advisory group before the winter break.

It is important to note that the Arts and Science Faculty Council has already started exploring the possibility of NTT faculty serving on the Faculty Council and the Faculty Senate. I fully supported this potential change when they proposed it, and am hopeful that the Council can move quickly with a College-wide vote to give NTT faculty representation on these vital governing bodies.

Since becoming dean, I have been looking for opportunities to further engage NTT faculty. For example, I have announced a new program called "Immersion Scholar Grants," which is open to ALL full-time faculty to support creative work in our new undergraduate Immersion initiative. I hope to see many NTT faculty participate. In addition, we have hired a number of Immersion Coordinators to help develop Immersion projects for students, many of which are NTT faculty. These are admittedly modest advances; but, with the SEIU petition withdrawn, we can now think bigger.

I truly look forward to working with all of you to build on the progress outlined above and what Provost Wentle described in her message today. There is much to do.

I encourage all NTT faculty to attend one of the Town Halls in January, and I welcome hearing ideas from all faculty as we start this new chapter. Please have a great end of the semester and a wonderful holiday season.

Sincerely,

John Geer
Dean, College of Arts and Science