

2007-2008 Group on Faculty Affairs  
AAMC Listserve Queries & Responses

**Query: Faculty from Industry rankings**

*Question from Mary Moran, Drexel University (mary.moran@drexelmd.edu):*

I'm writing to ask if your institutions have objective criteria for academic ranks for non-traditional faculty, i.e. faculty who do not have an academic background, who teach your students. Our A & P Committee is currently struggling with deciding what an appropriate rank is for individuals from industry who are teaching our students. Our practice has been to try to give the faculty member a rank that seems commensurate with their standing in the company. For example, a well-published senior VP in a pharmaceutical company might come in as an adjunct *Professor*.

I'd appreciate any guidance you could offer.

**Responses:**

*Victoria Mulhern, University of Pennsylvania (vmulhern@exchange.upenn.edu):*

I would say we have the same struggle and have the same practice.

*Marcie Weiss, Northwestern University (mbweiss@northwestern.edu):*

Same goes for Feinberg/Northwestern.

*Lois Geist, University of Iowa (lois-geist@uiowa.edu):*

We have taken the tack that someone cannot be made a professor if they have no previous teaching experience at all. Often these people have but it is not traditional and we can finesse. But if they cannot demonstrate teaching, they need to come in as an assistant professor.

*Linda McLaughlin, Stanford University (deasy@stanford.edu):*

We do much the same at Stanford. We have a specific track (which is not a faculty track) called "Consulting." Individuals holding these titles are qualified for the various ranks, but their primary professional involvement is in business, industry, or government (e.g. Geological Survey), and their primary involvement continues during their Stanford appointment. Since they're not faculty, however, they don't go through an A&P review.

*Susan Scott, University of New Mexico (sscott@salud.unm.edu):*

We struggle with this also and often get some impressive push back if we do not automatically give Professor level appointment to someone who has never been in academics but held a high level administrative role within their business. We usually send this type of "promotion request" to our ad hoc committee on promotion. They state the person has no evidence of the experience that would allow for assigning an academic rank that high....I work with the Chair and the Leadership (Dean) to stay true to the concept that everyone picked a route. Those who chose academics should be honored by not having someone cut to the head of the line "just because" they were a big wig in a business.

Most of the time, the logic and commitment to our faculty argument are enough to protect the process of promoting those who have worked within the system and kept us whole and growing. And then, sometimes it does not. If the person coming on board will have significant leadership roles, then the provision of a higher rank allows some leverage for getting things done and sometimes, the "promotions" just happen also...