Cross, John G. and Goldenberg, Edie N. (2009). *Off-Track Profs: Nontenured Teachers in Higher Education*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Pages: 196. Price: 30.00 USD (cloth).

Reviewed by Richard L. Wagoner, Assistant Professor, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

The number of people working in academic positions in colleges and universities without the benefits and protections of tenure has been increasing at a steady, and some would argue alarming, rate for the past 30 years. In their book *Off-Track Profs: Nontenured Teachers in Higher Education* John Cross and Edie Goldenberg investigate this phenomenon as it currently exists in elite research universities in the U.S. Both academic administrators at the University of Michigan, where Cross is Dean and Goldenberg is Associate Dean of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, the authors approach and conceive of the problem from this perspective, one that ultimately is the source of the book's strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps the book's greatest strength is that the authors are academic administrators, as arguably most research on this topic is not conducted by practitioners in active leadership roles. As such Cross and Goldenberg's work complements and adds nuance to the growing literature focused on nontenure-track faculty.

The book is written in a clear and accessible style and follows an organizational logic that reinforces its findings and central arguments. After two introductory chapters that explore the current representation of nontenure-track faculty in U.S. higher education, then situating these faculty in the overall organization and culture of postsecondary instruction, Cross and Goldenberg present six chapters that elucidate the six "dilemmas" they argue must be addressed regarding nontenure-track faculty. These dilemmas offer a succinct perspective on the overall strength of the book; Cross and Goldenberg situate nontenure-track faculty within the complex organizational reality of research universities, one in which decisions are never as simple or one-dimensional as some authors suggest. The authors best capture this complexity when they state: "Accepted wisdom—that the numbers of non-tenure track faculty have increased because university leaders decided to hire cheap, temporary labor to save money—is an oversimplification of reality that misidentifies decision makers, assigns nonexistent motives to those decision makers, and suggests changes in policy that will not produce desired results" (p. 139).

While the limited scope of this review does not allow for a thorough discussion of each of the six dilemmas, it can list them and offer a brief explanation of each. (1) Whether to invest in management information systems; here the authors argue that accurate and detailed data about nontenure-track faculty are not available to campus leaders and decision makers and that without it, it is not surprising that less than optimal decisions are made. (2) Whether to review campus governance. Given the increasing percentage of nontenure-

track faculty, traditional governance structures come under additional stress by increasing expectations on individual tenure-track faculty and excluding and marginalizing those without tenure, neither of which is desirable. (3) Whether to compete. Essentially the competition for elite status, however one might judge it, is highly resource intensive and perhaps diverts resources and attention away from the teaching mission of universities. (4) Whether to emphasize investment returns to education. If the argument for why to value university education is categorized only in monetary terms with decisions based on returns on investments for students, their families and governments, then the traditional value of liberal education is lost, negating an argument that would highly value classroom instruction. (5) Whether to borrow business models from the private sector. Simply, universities are not and never have been private firms and cannot be managed as such. (6) Whether to professionalize nontenure-track faculty. In most cases nontenure-track faculty are marginalized on campuses and have little status. This is as destructive for institutions as it is for the individual faculty members.

At the conclusion of their final chapter Cross and Goldenberg argue that specialization as it applies to faculty roles defines where the problem of nontenure-track faculty takes shape. Tenured and tenure-track faculty are teacher-scholars and tenure is granted to them because they inhabit those roles simultaneously. Academic positions that consist entirely of one of those roles, both teaching faculty and research scientists alike, are not offered tenure. There is, however, one critical distinction between the two non-tenured roles. Research scientists are involved in work that can bring both resources and status to institutions in the form of research grants. More importantly, no research scientist will continue to be employed without such grants. Teaching faculty on the other hand do not. It is here, Cross and Goldenberg argue, that academic professions have become out of balance, a situation that may be difficult to reconcile given the status and resources that research can offer an institution and the individuals responsible for the research.

As a scholar who struggles with capturing and communicating the complexity of higher education institutions and the role their faculty play, I was impressed by the perspective that Cross and Goldenberg bring to their work, but I was also troubled by their seeming reluctance to place responsibility for the increased use of nontenure-track faculty on administrators who are decision makers, even if decision-making is a complex and frequently loosely coupled process, while at the same time to admit that in many cases, intended or not, nontenure-track faculty are exploited and marginalized, a reluctance that may rise from two sources. First, as administrators Cross and Goldenberg understandably are wary to place blame at their or their colleagues' feet, but the complex problems they explore in this book do perhaps warrant at times harsh assessment of their peers. Secondly, no matter the organizational necessity that influences the decision to hire nontenure-track faculty, it is nearly impossible to ignore that many of these faculty members are second-class citizens, at best, in

academe. Undoubtedly these two tendencies are also influenced in part by the fact that Cross and Goldenberg only examine 10 of the most elite research universities in the U.S., where the enterprise is most complex and arguably many nontenure-track faculty are offered relatively stable employment.

Off-Track Profs does not include any Canadian universities, but there is no doubt that many Canadian institutions face the dilemmas Cross and Goldenberg identify. Given the economic challenges Canadian higher education institutions encounter, how will they meet these challenges, and how will the resulting decisions impact the use and situation of contract and sessional faculty members? In that sense the themes developed by Cross and Goldenberg are highly applicable and will continue to be of relevant to Canadian institutions.