Tenure

Vice Provost Alan Boyette
February 18, 2015
TODAY WE’LL DISCUSS

1. Popular conceptions of tenure versus what it really is
2. How a professor gains and maintains tenure
3. Tenure’s benefits to the individual, institution, and society
4. Myths about tenure
WHAT IS TENURE

Merriam Webster’s definition --

The act, right, manner, or term of holding something (as a landed property, a position, or an office); especially, a status granted after a trial period that gives a teacher protection from a summary dismissal
ORIGIN OF TENURE

1158. Emperor Frederick Barbarossa issues *Authentica Habita*
First formal document guaranteeing various protections to scholars

Development of Tenure in America:

Late 1800s – Early 1900s. Collective action to secure protections
Efforts on part of legislators, donors, and others to dismiss faculty due to political and social views leads to faculty labor organizing activity

_Prominent cases at Stanford, Cornell, Chicago, Texas & Wisconsin._
ORIGIN OF TENURE

1900. Declaration by presidents of Harvard, Columbia, and Chicago Donors could no longer dictate faculty hiring, promotion, or termination decisions

1915. Founding of American Assn. of Univ. Professors (AAUP) Declaration of Principles, which leads to development of tenure systems on American college campuses

1940. Statement by AAUP & the Association of American Colleges Principles on Academic Freedom & Tenure, becomes foundational document for definition and widespread adoption of faculty tenure in America
PURPOSE

“The role and purpose of tenure in American higher education is to protect academic freedom in order to promote the discovery and dissemination of knowledge and thus serve the common good.”

Gregory Scholtz, Ph.D.
Director, AAUP Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Governance
ACADEMIC FREEDOM

“[Without Tenure] the entire teaching profession is intimidated.”

Robert Hutchins, President (1929-1945)
The University of Chicago
REPRESSION OF SCIENCE
Dr. Trofim Lysenko
Soviet Agronomist Favored by Stalin

• Fostered unsubstantiated agricultural theories attractive to Leninist-Marxist leadership, 1930-65

• On political grounds, resisted Western-backed science of heredity and emerging field of genetics

• Soviet politics and propaganda replaced scientific experimentation and analyses of results . . .

• But it could not hide the fact of declining crop yields and agricultural crisis; Lysenko eventually failed
How could this happen in a developed nation with educated citizens?

Why weren’t legitimate Soviet scientists presenting contrary evidence -- going to the media or exposing this hoax in classrooms? Many tried . . .

- **Most of these scientists were executed or sent to labor camps for life**

- **Opposition to Lysenko’s theories was officially outlawed in 1948**

- **In the same year, all geneticists were fired from their jobs by Communist Party mandate – many jailed – and all Soviet genetic research discontinued**
LEGACY OF SOVIET REPRESSION OF SCIENCE

• Caused serious, long-term harm to Soviet knowledge of agriculture, delaying agricultural practice by over 50 years

• “Lysenkoism” is used today to describe the manipulation of the scientific process to reach a predetermined conclusion, as dictated by ideological bias, often related to social or political objectives
REPRESSION OF SCIENCE: LESSONS LEARNED

• Interference with the free progress of inquiry can have real, long-lasting, and negative implications for society. Tenure prevents this.

• There are times when we are well served by challenging conventional thinking . . . and faculty members are among those most qualified to do so.
CHALLENGE OF CONVENTIONAL THINKING

“Some of the smartest thinkers on problems at home and around the world are university professors.”

-Nicholas Kristof, “Professors, We Need You”
TENURE IN OTHER ARENAS

Tenure held by a federal judge provides protection from perverse dismissal by powerful officials who disagree with the judge’s legal opinions.
TENURE PROCESS
TENURE CRITERIA

Generally speaking, the tenure review seeks to confirm:

• High Quality Teaching/Advising/Mentoring of Students

• National/International Impact of one’s Research/Creative Activity

• Documented Impact of one’s Public/Professional Service, Outreach/Community Engagement
STEP INTO THEIR SHOES

STEPHEN SANDERS, Ph.D.  FLORENCE ALEXANDER-ESTEVEZ, Ph.D.
STEPHEN SANDERS, Ph.D.

• Dynamic assistant professor, Environmental Science
• Entering academia after earning the doctoral degree
• Seeks to attain tenure as he pursues long-term career in academics
FLORENCE ALEXANDER-ESTEVEZ, Ph.D.

- Tenured professor in her 8th year, Bioethics
- Published multiple articles in peer-reviewed journals; author of three highly acclaimed books
- Work has brought acclaim to her institution
- Protected by tenure from potential backlash by groups speaking out against the nature of her stem cell work
Dr. Stephen Sanders is applying for tenure.
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Dr. Stephen Sanders is applying for tenure.
Dr. Stephen Sanders is applying for tenure.
Dr. Alexander-Estevez has earned tenure.
Dr. Alexander-Estevez has earned tenure.
BENEFITS OF TENURE

UNIVERSITY

INDIVIDUAL

SOCIETY
BENEFITS TO THE INDIVIDUAL

Academic Freedom
Economic Security
BENEFITS TO THE INSTITUTION

Attraction and maintenance of a corps of high-achieving scholars

Institutional financial benefit
Advancement of arts and sciences, leading to improvements in quality of life

Stimulation of public discourse on important topics of the day, ensuring full consideration of disparate viewpoints
MYTH VS. REALITY
MYTH #1: TENURE IS A LIFETIME JOB GUARANTEE
REVOCATION OF TENURE

• May occur after negative post-tenure review
• Grounds may include:
  o Neglect of Duty
  o Misconduct
  o Financial Exigency
  o Program Curtailment/Discontinuation

➢ Tenure represents a right to due process
MYTH #2: RESEARCH REQUIRED FOR TENURE DOESN'T RELATE TO TEACHING

THE EVOLUTION OF INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

BEFORE GRAD SCHOOL

GRAD STUDENT

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

TENURED PROFESSOR

EMERITUS PROFESSOR

"Research in Peace"

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UNCG: Teaching = Research

• No distinction between teaching faculty and research faculty
• Our best teachers are also research award winners; research informs teaching
• Today’s research-in-progress becomes the class readings of tomorrow
• Researchers producing new knowledge are the best ones to teach it to the next generation
MYTH #3: TENURE IS A PERFECT INSTITUTION WHICH NEEDS NO CHANGE
MYTH #4: TENURE IN K-12 IS THE SAME AS TENURE IN HIGHER ED

Are you sure you can afford this grade, Ms. Grommet?
I'd hate to see you have to take a pay cut....

The students quickly caught on to the new merit pay system.
OUT
WITH
A
BIG
BANG