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Official Report

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What Does Having Tenure Mean? When I think of faculty members having tenure at the work place, I think of them having a stable, consistent, and lengthy position. Tenure officially is the act, right, manner, or term of holding something (such as a landed property, a position, or an office) especially: a status granted after a trail period to a teacher that gives protection from summary dismissal. The financial burden that institutions endure because of tenured faculty members can be resolved with the hiring of more adjunct instructors or part-time teachers. According to Clayton Browne, tenured faculty positions are, in some sense, seen as “jobs for life”. (Browne, C., 2017) I personally know that the former President at Eastern Arizona College, Mark Bryce began his tenure as president in February of 2002 making him the longest serving CEO of a university or community college in Arizona. (Eastern Arizona Courier, 2019) In this official report, I will introduce my assertion or idea on the use or continuation of tenured faculty within the colleges or universities.

There are many challenges and benefits that occur when tenured faculty are used in these institutions. One of the major challenges is the cost-benefit concerns of university administrations and board of trustees have led them to trim faculty salaries by reducing the proportions of tenured faculty, who can be replaced by adjunct, part-time, and nontenured full-time teachers at considerably less expense. (Wrong, D.H., 1998) Tenure has both costs and benefits according to Richard Vedder. (Vedder, R., 2018) Taking the latter first, tenure was created to protect faculty members from losing their jobs because of unpopular positions taken. (Vedder, R., 2018) Not every professor receives tenure. When a university offers a position to a teacher, that teacher is first called an “assistant professor”. This means they are on the path to tenure, and must spend the next 7 or more years proving themselves. It means they must prove their teaching abilities and the value of their research. After that period, school administrators

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and other tenured professors in the same field decide if the candidate should receive tenure.

Then, if approved, that person becomes an “associate professor”. (Voa, 2017) The classic recent story is Fresno State professor Randa Jarrar, who tastelessly and gratuitously criticized the much loved late Barbara Bush, causing an uproar, leading her to loudly proclaim her tenure protection (Fresno since has appropriately affirmed it is taking no action against Jarrar; the First Amendment applies even to grotesquely unpopular viewpoints). (Vedder, R., 2018) This writer, often a contrarian, was fiercely and publicly attacked in the 1980s by top politicians in Ohio (including the Governor and a powerful House Speaker), however attempts to uproot him failed because of tenure. (Vedder, R., 2018)

Faculty members that usually qualify for tenure are full-time faculty members. These full-time faculty members can consist of professors, administrators, faculty with office hours, faculty that aid students, faculty that serve on committees, faculty that fully participate in campus activities and faculty that make sure the curriculum is current with the development of courses and programs that meet the needs of the community and local businesses. The American Association of University Professors also known as the AAUP holds that all full-time faculty members, regardless of rank, are to be considered eligible for tenure. (AAUP, 2019) However, the AAUP also supports tenure for part-time faculty members. (AAUP, 2019) The AAUP’s report on *Tenure and Teaching-Intensive Appointments* recommends “fractional positions, including fully proportional pay, that are eligible for tenure and benefits, with proportional expectations for service and professional development.” (AAUP, 2019) Part-time faculty members would be adjunct instructors, freelancers or an employee of a college or university not signed to a full-time contract.

Cost has been one of the main reasons for the discontinuation of the tenured faculty members. A author for The Harvard Business Review, James Wetherbe, offers an insight into the

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benefit of the sheer amount of monetary value higher education institutions can save by dissolving tenure:

Tenure locks in big costs and makes it difficult for universities to explore more productive teaching techniques. Mark C. Taylor, chair of Columbia University's Department of Religion and author of a book critical of tenure, estimates that a college ties up between \$10 million and \$12 million of its endowment to support a single tenured professor for a 35-year career. A 2011 study of teaching practices at the University of Texas at Austin indicated that UT Austin alone potentially could save \$266 million a year if it could get half its professors to be as productive in teaching as the top 20%, fire its least productive faculty, and shift their small workload to other professors. (Wetherbe, 2014)

The reality is that it's common for tenured faculty members to be terminated on a regular basis. Sometimes the outcome will indicate termination because of negligence, incompetence, immoral or personal conduct, and financial hardship. According to Cailin Crowe, two tenured professors, a husband and wife, was dismissed because of their outspoken criticism of the administration. (Crowe, C., 2018) The faculty group also wrote that the terminations contributed to an environment of "abysmal" academic freedom and a lack of shared governance at St. Edward's University. (Crowe, C., 2018) George Leef stated that in 2015 at Louisiana State University a female professor violated the school's policy against sexual harassment by using vulgar language in class. (Leef, G., 2018) I project that with the personal conduct, negligence, and incompetence behavior displayed from tenured faculty members, one could only predict that with the financial hardships added to the list, colleges and universities will discontinue to use or have tenured faculty members.

Analyzing the American Association of University Professors and other national trends, I came to the realization that many factors see tenure as being a good thing. Frank A. Franz believe that a well-administered system of tenure is beneficial to a college or university, and to

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its constituents. (Franz, F.A., 1998) In addition, Franz generally supports the AAPU policies and procedures in these matters. (Franz, F.A., 1998) According to Malcom Kline, colleges and universities where tenure does not exist find that students and faculty alike survive and even thrive. (Kline, M., 2015) Academic freedom in higher education is what students gravitate to because they can express new ideas without regulations. Who does benefit from tenure? Many cases have shown that tenured faculty members being stripped from employment at various institutions. In the article titled “*Why College Professors Need Tenure*”, with the National Association of Scholars written by Russell Eisenman, the author offers his objectives to support tenure. (Eisenman, R., 2015) Agree or disagree with Eisenman, his ideas that are in favor of tenure are ideas that are not as popular as they once may have been.

Many universities across the country are putting forth efforts to dissolve tenure policies/programs. According to John Warner in his article for Inside Higher Ed titled, “*Tenure Is Already Dead*” “...Wisconsin, Kentucky, Arkansas – have already made explicit policy moves to weaken tenure. Legislators in Iowa and Missouri have introduced proposals, which would effectively end tenure that ultimately didn’t get far, but would’ve been unthinkable a generation ago. (Warner, 2018) University of Michigan Medical School is one such institution that does not offer a tenure track for its faculty, but rather a promotion benchmark program that allows faculty to promote from Associate Professor to Professor. You can find Michigan’s 2019 Promotion Benchmark at <https://faculty.medicine.umich.edu/promotion-benchmarks>. With the growing loss of interest in tenure among universities, it begs the question “Does the security of tenure still mean what it used to for long time faculty members?” At Oklahoma University, geology and geophysics professor David Deming had all of his courses taken away from him and the school moved him to a basement office after he wrote a letter in the school newspaper advocating gun

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rights. Ultimately, tenure did not save him from unemployment as a federal judge and an out-of-court settlement did when he sued his employers. (Kline, M., 2015)

Employers who use limited term employment contracts can minimize their risk of damages by hiring with contracts that limit entitlements or benefits upon termination but the disadvantage is that this type of contract can be dismissed before its expiration date. (Velocity Global, 2017) Jason Fertig debates on the pros and cons of tenure. According to Fertig, pro-tenure position states that professors need protection in order to truly have academic freedom, while the anti-tenure position involves presenting evidence of how professors' work ethic stagnates once achieving tenure, leading to poor teaching and minimal scholarship. (Fertig, J., 2010) Critics of the system, which provides job security, say that tenure promotes mediocrity and sloth among an aging academy, blocking opportunities for young scholars, and encourages useless research as tenure candidates vie to be published in jargon-filled journals that no one reads. (Nelson, C., 2010)

It is the proposal of this report to introduce a new tenure system within our institution, which does not end all tenure practices, but rather introduce limited tenure. After a faculty member has achieved all the milestones on the benchmark scale and is up for review of tenure the review committee has the option to offer a 5-year tenured contract to said faculty member. At the end of the 5-year contract, the committee will again evaluate the teaching styles and dedication of the employee, choosing to offer incentive options for the instructor if limited tenure is not offered again. The instructor then has the choice to accept a 1-year contract with the institution, which at the end of that contract may be eligible for limited tenure once again. Though not every contingent faculty member would be eligible for such positions, these alternative models can change the incentive structures inherent in the academic profession. They may be able to remove the negative stigmas surrounding teaching in the academy and may eliminate the class-based distinctions between research and teaching faculty that have resulted from the traditional tenure model. (Lynch, 2017)

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