

Committee on Rank, Tenure and Promotion
Proposal on the Tenure Process
February 4, 2011

Brief History of the Problem

Around the year 2000, President Ed Glynn, S.J., called for the Faculty to begin a study of the tenure process, leading to greater Faculty involvement. In the fall semester of 2004, the Faculty Forum Committee on Rank, Tenure and Salary presented a report to the Forum that listed twelve alternative tenure processes, but the committee did not make a specific recommendation, presumably because of lack of consensus.

In the fall semester of 2008, the “McCourt/Hagedorn Report” was distributed to Faculty by the Academic Vice President. Among the recommendations in this report was that John Carroll should establish a university tenure committee. During the 2008-2009 academic year, the Committee on Rank, Tenure and Salary discussed this issue, but discussions were put on hold in the spring due to the impending financial crisis.

In the fall of 2009, RTS held open hearings on the tenure process, and in the spring semester of 2010, RTS solicited additional Faculty input by way of a survey on perceived problems with the current tenure process. In April, 2010, the Faculty Council voted “to direct RTS to formulate a proposal to institute a college-wide or university-wide tenure model.”

In the fall of 2010, the Committee on Rank, Tenure and Promotion surveyed the Faculty a second time, this time to gauge support for six alternative tenure process scenarios. RTP then formulated a draft proposal based on the results of this survey and previous Faculty input. The committee then presented the results of the most recent survey, and also the draft proposal, in a hearing at the Faculty Meeting of November 17, 2010. The proposal below represents a refinement of that draft proposal, and incorporates some changes made as a result of opinions expressed at the November 17 meeting.

Recommendations

By a vote of 4 to 3 the Committee on Rank, Tenure and Promotion moves that the Faculty adopt the tenure process described in the following sections. It is understood that a favorable vote on this proposal will constitute a request by the Faculty to the Faculty Handbook Committee to draft, and present for Faculty action, such amendments to the *Faculty Handbook* as are necessary to make the *Handbook* consistent with this new process.

Proposed Tenure Process at John Carroll University

Department Tenure Committees

- Department tenure committees will consist of all tenured Faculty members of the department, unless there are fewer than six such Faculty.
- In cases where a department has fewer than six tenured Faculty members, a department's tenure committee will be expanded to six members by inclusion of faculty from cognate disciplines. In selecting the faculty to serve on such a tenure committee, the candidate will submit a list of twice as many faculty as the number needed for the expansion, and the tenured department members will select those who will serve on the tenure committee. In this selection, there will be no more than two added members from any one department.
- Department tenure committee expansion, if necessary, will take place no later than the academic year of the candidate's mid-term review. The expanded committee will remain in place until the tenure decision has been made, except as noted below.
- In the event that other tenure decisions increase a department tenure committee size to more than six members, the candidate may choose whether to retain the "outside" faculty on the committee, and which "outside" faculty to retain.
- The tenure committee of Grasselli Library is constituted in the same manner as those of departments.

College/School Tenure Committees

- The College of Arts & Sciences and the Boler School of Business will each have a Faculty Tenure Committee consisting of six tenured Faculty members from the College/School.
- The six members will be chosen by lot by the Faculty Council, from the pool of all tenured members of the College/School.
- The term on the College/School Tenure Committee will be six years, with one Committee member being replaced each year by lot. (Initial Tenure Committee members will serve 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 years, as determined by lot. Committee members may also need to be replaced when they retire, go on leave, etc. Any vacancies will be filled as soon as possible, by the Faculty Council drawing lots. Faculty members selected to fill a vacancy will serve for the remainder of the term, rather than replacing a member only for the period of unavailability.)
- No Faculty member can serve two consecutive terms on the College/School Tenure Committee.
- The College/School Tenure Committee, as described above, will have no more than one Faculty member from any one department in A&S, and no more than two from any one department in BSOB.

- In the event that any Tenure Committee member identifies a conflict of interest in serving on the committee for a specific candidate, that committee member should make this known to the Associate Academic Vice President as soon as possible after being notified of selection to be a Tenure Committee member. If the AAVP agrees that there is a potential conflict, the Associate Academic Vice President will then request that the Faculty Council select another Faculty member to serve as a replacement for the Tenure Committee's deliberations on that candidate only. This replacement member will serve for the same period of time as the member being replaced.
- Within a reasonable time after the Tenure Committee has been constituted, each tenure candidate whose case is to be reviewed by the committee during the upcoming year will be notified by the Associate Academic Vice President of the committee membership. If a candidate identifies a conflict of interest on the part of any one of the committee members, then he/she should appeal to the Associate Academic Vice President. If the AAVP agrees that there is a potential conflict, then the AAVP will request that the Faculty Council select another Faculty member to serve as a replacement for the Tenure Committee's deliberations on that candidate only. This replacement member will serve for the same period of time as the member being replaced. The candidate is limited to requesting only one committee member replacement in a given year.
- Each tenure candidate will choose one member of his/her department tenure committee to serve on the College/School committee as it evaluates the candidate's mid-term review—both credentials and the departmental process— and makes the final recommendation for or against tenure. (Therefore, each Tenure Committee consists of seven members, with one member varying for each candidate.)
- The chair of each Tenure Committee will be elected by the committee from among the six members chosen by lot. The member chosen by the candidate may not serve as chair.
- The Associate Academic Vice President will convene each Tenure Committee near the beginning of each academic year, and conduct the election of the chair.
- At the time of the midterm review and the tenure decision, the College/School Tenure Committee receives the candidate's dossier, the department tenure committee's recommendation, and all other relevant documents pertaining to the candidate's progress toward tenure. A 2/3 majority (5 votes out of 7) is required for a favorable recommendation for tenure. The recommendation of the College/School Tenure Committee is communicated to the Academic Vice President.
- At the same time, the Dean of the College/School receives all of the same documents. The Dean's recommendation is communicated to the Academic Vice President, independently of the College/School Tenure Committee's recommendation.
- The Academic Vice President notifies the candidate, the department tenure committee, the dean and the College/School Tenure Committee of his/her decision.

University Tenure Committee for Faculty Librarians

- No later than the year of the first midterm review of a Faculty librarian after this process is in effect, a University Tenure Committee for Faculty Librarians will be constituted as follows, with the Faculty Council selecting by lot:
 - two members of the Library Tenure Committee
 - three members of the CAS Tenure Committee
 - one member of the Boler School of Business Tenure Committee.
- In the event that there is an insufficient number of tenured Faculty librarians to fill the committee slots, the needed additional member(s) will be chosen by lot from among the CAS and BSOB Tenure Committees.
- Members of the Library tenure committee serving on the University Tenure Committee for Faculty Librarians will serve terms of six years. (Initial members from the Library Tenure Committee will serve 5 or 6 years, as determined by lot). Members serving by virtue of membership on the CAS or BSOB Tenure Committees will serve until the completion of their terms on those committees, and will be replaced by lot as necessary.
- No Faculty member can serve two consecutive terms on the University Tenure Committee for Faculty Librarians.
- The University Tenure Committee for Faculty Librarians will have no more than one Faculty member from any one department in A&S.
- Each tenure candidate from the library will choose one additional tenured Faculty member to serve on the University Tenure Committee for Faculty Librarians as it evaluates the candidate's mid-term review—both credentials and the process—and makes the final recommendation for or against tenure. (Therefore, each tenure committee consists of seven members, with one member varying for each Faculty librarian candidate for tenure.)
- Details concerning operation of the University Tenure Committee for Faculty Librarians will be as described above for the College/School committees of CAS and BSOB.
- At the time of the midterm review and the tenure decision, the University Tenure Committee for Faculty Librarians receives the candidate's dossier, the Grasselli Library Tenure Committee's recommendation, and all other relevant documents pertaining to the candidate's progress toward tenure. A 2/3 majority (5 votes out of 7) is required for a favorable recommendation for tenure. The recommendation of the University Tenure Committee for Faculty Librarians is communicated to the Academic Vice President.
- At the same time, the Grasselli Library Tenure Committee's recommendation is communicated to the Academic Vice President, independently of the University Tenure Committee for Faculty Librarians.
- The Academic Vice President notifies the candidate, the Grasselli Library Tenure Committee, and the University Tenure Committee for Faculty Librarians of his/her decision.

Alternatives Considered

Many alternatives to this proposal have been considered over a period of several years. The scenario of unit-specific tenure committees (CAS, BSOB, Library) is the one that garnered the highest level of support in the Fall, 2010, survey (58% of respondents approving). The alternative of having departmental tenure recommendations go to an expanded Committee of Academic Deans received the second-highest level of approval (46% approving). Many of the details contained in the current proposal have been influenced by the feedback the Committee on Rank, Tenure and Promotion has received from surveys and hearings. However, there are many views on this issue among the Faculty, and it is not possible to incorporate all of those views.

In particular, one suggestion made at the November 17 Faculty Meeting was to shorten the length of the terms on the various tenure committees, perhaps to 3 years. Another was to have Faculty members run for election to these various committees, rather than select the committee members by lot. The Committee on Rank, Tenure and Promotion carefully considered these suggestions, and voted unanimously not to incorporate them, for the following reasons. Six-year terms provide some degree of stability in the tenure committee between the year of the candidate's midterm review and the year of the tenure decision. If the terms were only three years, then, in the cases of many candidates, the only tenure committee member at the time of the tenure decision who was also involved with the candidate's midterm review would be the one chosen by the candidate. Concerning the suggestion of electing tenure committee members, we note that the driving force behind the idea of Faculty tenure committees is the belief that tenure should be a *Faculty* matter. The RTP Committee feels that selection by lot is the best way to assure that the process is owned by the Faculty as a whole, and that every tenured Faculty member should stand ready to be a part of the process.

Results Expected

If the proposal is approved by the Faculty, this approval will be understood as a request by the Faculty to the Faculty Handbook Committee to draft, and present for Faculty action, amendments to the *Faculty Handbook* as are necessary to make the *Handbook* consistent with this new process. Those amendments, as any amendments to the *Handbook*, would require approval by a majority of Faculty eligible to vote, in order to become effective. If this approval is obtained, and if the Board of Directors approves the revision, then Appendix J to the *Faculty Handbook*, titled *University Tenure Procedure and Guidelines*, would require revision.

After these revisions are approved, the new tenure process would apply to Faculty whose initial date of hire is after the revisions are effective.

Minority Report

We oppose the proposal to institute college/school-wide tenure committees as a revision to the tenure process. We believe that any adjustment to the current tenure model should be precisely tailored to established shortcomings. Survey data from JCU faculty show that while a majority of respondents (61 to 44) see a problem with the current tenure process, the most commonly cited problems deal with small tenure committees in a small number of academic departments (42/61) and the reduced (to two members instead of three) size of the Committee of Academic Deans (COAD) (54/61).

We acknowledge that the administration, along with some faculty members, have endorsed the idea of implementing broader committees in the tenure process as a means of encouraging greater faculty involvement. Among this group, it is often asserted that such broader committees are a good idea because many other institutions use them. However, while this recommendation for broader committees was echoed in the “McCourt/Hagedorn Report,” a careful reading of that report readily reveals that there was no evidence of any problems with the current process for which such committees would be justified. Indeed, our recent survey of JCU faculty revealed that the main problems with the current system deal with the small size of tenure committees in some departments and the small size of COAD, not the lack of faculty involvement in the process. Clearly, the main problems identified in the survey can be addressed without the wholesale changes to the entire process recommended in this proposal. In our view, this proposal is tantamount to using a chain saw to remove a splinter (instead of a pair of tweezers), simply because this is what happens at other universities.

We further believe that the greatest deference in the tenure process belongs to the departmental colleagues with whom a tenure candidate works, and the dean of that respective academic unit. Tenure is a credentialing process establishing that a faculty member has made significant progress in professional norms and standards regarding teaching, scholarship, and service. Due to the vast differences in these norms and standards across academic disciplines, that assessment can be most accurately made by those in the same department. While some outside assessment can be helpful in preventing bias, we already have outside review by the dean of the other academic unit and the AVP; we also have a grievance committee. In short, we have no substantive evidence that we are tenuring faculty who should not be tenured, or not tenuring faculty who should be. A proposal that imposes the burden of tenure decisions on those not ideally situated to make such an assessment creates burdens that are not tailored to the specific problems that have been identified, and as a result, not outweighed by any projected benefits.