ALFP STATEMENT: POINT/COUNTERPOINT

Debating the Effectiveness and Necessity of Tenure in Pharmacy Education

Scott Asbill, PhD,^a Aisha Morris Moultry, PharmD, MS,^b Anne Policastri, PharmD, MBA,^c
Carrie A. Sincak, PharmD,^d Lisa S. Smith, PharmD, BSPHarm,^e Timothy R. Ulbrich, PharmD^f

^a Presbyterian College School of Pharmacy, Clinton, South Carolina

^b Texas Southern University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Houston, Texas

^c University of Kentucky College of Pharmacy, Lexington, Kentucky

^d Midwestern University Chicago College of Pharmacy, Downers Grove, Illinois

^e Wingate University School of Pharmacy, Wingate, North Carolina

^f Northeast Ohio Medical University College of Pharmacy, Rootstown, Ohio

Submitted August 31, 2015; accepted February 2, 2016; published August 25, 2016.

Academic tenure is a controversial and highly debated topic. Is tenure truly outdated or does it simply need to be reformed? On one hand, the tenure system has shortcomings including de incentivizing productive faculty members, inconsistent application of tenure policies and procedures, and the potential for discrimination during tenure decisions. On the other hand, the tenure system is a long held tradition in the academy, essential in higher education to ensure academic standards and values are upheld in the best interest of students. It provides faculty members with the academic freedom to try innovative teaching strategies and conduct research and assists with faculty retention and recruitment. Regardless of one's opinion, the tenure debate is not going away and warrants further discussion. This paper represents the work of a group of academic leaders participating in the 2014-2015 AACP Academic Leadership Fellowship Program. This work was presented as a debate at the 2015 AACP Interim Meeting in Austin, TX in February 2015.

Keywords: tenure, debate, promotion, pharmacy education

INTRODUCTION

So, where does tenure come from? What about the notion of academic freedom? The Greek philosopher Plato promoted the concept of academic freedom at his Academy, a "community of thinkers drawn together in the logical quest for truth" and "dedicated to the art of critical debate." Medieval European universities (eg, Oxford, Cambridge), steeped in influence from the Greek and Roman philosophers, extended the notion of academic freedom by establishing security for self-expression in one's role. The colonization of America by Great Britain brought a model of higher education, and therefore the notion of academic freedom, to the first American universities, including Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale. At these institutions, faculty members entered into contracts based on time, creating the beginnings of the concept of "permanent employment." This evolved into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where faculty members at colleges and universities worked to establish tenure for continuous employment to protect them from an administration that could infringe upon their freedom of personal expression, research, and/or teaching.¹

In 1900, an economist at Stanford University, Edward Ross, lost his job because of his views regarding immigrant labor building railroads. These views differed from those of Jane Lathrop Stanford and her then late husband, Leland Stanford, the founder of The Leland Stanford Junior University (today Stanford University) and former president of the Central Pacific Railroad. Jane Stanford would influence the university president to remove Edward Ross from his job.² The removal of Edward Ross from his position for his personal views was noticed by other faculty across the country, including Arthur Lovejoy from Johns Hopkins.³

In 1913, in light of the events surrounding Edward Ross and others around the country, nine faculty members came together from the American Economic Association, the American Political Science Association, and the American Sociological Society to discuss academic freedom and academic tenure. This would eventually lead to the formation of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).⁴ Additional cases, similar to that of Edward Ross, occurred in 1915, including 17 faculty members from the University of Utah resigning after the president and board of trustees abruptly terminated four of their colleagues.

Later in 1915, a list of charter members of AAUP was published that included more than 900 professors from

Corresponding Author: Timothy R. Ulbrich, 4209 State Route 44, Rootstown, OH 44272. Tel: 330-325-6124. Fax: 330-325-5951. E-mail: tulbrich@neomed.edu

61 institutions. The AAUP would go on to develop the 1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure.⁵ This landmark document stated that “once appointed, the scholar has professional functions to perform in which the appointing authorities have neither competency nor moral right to intervene. The responsibility of the university teacher is primarily to the public itself, and to the judgment of his own profession.” The 1915 Declaration defines academic freedom in three areas: (1) inquiry and research, (2) teaching, and (3) freedom of expression of one’s opinion outside the university and/or to engage in political activities. From the 1930s to the 1950s, tenure became widespread across US academic institutions, and the AAUP would go on to create the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure.⁶ In 1957, the first version of the Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure were published and were updated thereafter, with the last update in 2013.⁷

The origins of tenure in higher education in the United States are well-documented and, many would argue, well-intended. However, higher education has evolved since the early 1900s, and the application of the tenure system to the current education model is regularly debated. In a climate where educational institutions are being asked to do more with less, the question of productivity, and inherently the impact of tenure on productivity, arises. On one hand, tenure is a necessary and foundational part of higher education to ensure academic freedom. The academic freedom of an institution allows faculty members to express their opinions in the context of teaching and research in a way that protects them from those who may not agree with that opinion. Additionally, with the rapid increase in the number of schools of pharmacy—from 80 in 2000 to 132 in 2015—tenure plays an integral role in faculty recruitment and retention. Many junior faculty members have little experience coming into a faculty position. Tenure serves as a structure to provide mentorship from senior, experienced faculty members. This can be crucial to the development of junior faculty members.

The other side of the tenure debate holds that tenure is outdated and should be removed all together or undergo significant reform because institutions apply unclear or inconsistent tenure policies and procedures and tenure decisions can potentially discriminate against individuals. Moreover, the current system creates unproductive tenured faculty members, and a lack of collegiality and teamwork can arise between tenure-track and nontenure-track faculty members, and/or between tenure-track faculty members and administration.

While much is published regarding tenure in higher education in the United States, literature regarding the

tenure process and application in pharmacy education is sparse. The purpose of this paper is to provide a point/counterpoint of the inclusion and application of tenure in US colleges of pharmacy.

METHODS

This topic was debated at the 2015 AACP Interim Meeting in Austin, Texas in the session “Key Issue Debate.” Positions were supported by the existing literature in the fields of pharmacy, allied health, and pharmacy/allied health education. A literature search was conducted using PubMed, ERIC, and EBSCO databases with the following combination of search terms: “faculty AND tenure” and “college teachers AND academic tenure.” To capture all relevant references, dates were not limited in the search. There were 303 references identified initially, and results were further streamlined to 56 in the areas of history of tenure, legal cases/controversies, tenure process, evidence for/against tenure, and tenure in the pharmacy literature.

POINT: IN SUPPORT OF THE CURRENT TENURE SYSTEM

The 1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure⁵ was revised in 1940 and again in 1969 when a joint committee of the AAUP and the Association of American Colleges met to reevaluate this key document. What resulted were interpretations of the policy after nearly 30 years of experience and adaptation to the times. These interpretative comments were then incorporated into a document that the Council of the AAUP adopted in 1970. The ongoing review and evolution of these guiding principles on academic freedom and tenure demonstrate a need for a constant review and update of policies in an ever-changing academic environment, while maintaining the fundamental notion of protecting academic freedom.

The academic freedom afforded by tenure allows faculty members the ability to teach and conduct scholarly activity without fear of penalty. This includes the freedom to conduct research for discovery and advancement of knowledge and truth, as well as innovation in the classroom without fear of consequence from student course evaluations. It grants faculty members the ability to attempt and adjust new teaching and learning strategies, which allow students more freedom in learning.⁸ The ability to innovate and focus on scholarly teaching not only for those tenured, but also for junior faculty members, can lead to increased student comprehension and learning and foster education-based scholarship.⁹ Ceci et al’s multifactorial experimental survey of 1004

randomly selected faculty members at top-ranked institutions found that full professors were more likely to submit an article for publication on a controversial topic than assistant professors, who felt less comfortable submitting work.¹⁰ Additionally, Pfeifferberger et al's survey of pharmacy faculty members, which examined pharmacy faculty perceptions of tenure and tenure reform, revealed that 60% of respondents believed tenure was doing what it was intended to do: provide academic freedom and allow for innovation in the classroom.¹¹

In addition to promoting academic freedom, tenure also supports the retention and recruitment of faculty members. It fosters an atmosphere of commitment and motivates faculty members to not only achieve success, but also gauge excellence. Results from the Pfeifferberger study revealed that 70% of respondents believed tenure was a way to motivate faculty members to achieve success, while 72% strongly agreed or agreed that tenure assisted in retaining faculty members. When comparing perceptions of clinical vs nonclinical faculty members, 55% of clinical faculty members vs 88% of nonclinical faculty members believed tenure positively influenced faculty recruitment.¹¹ This reiterates the point that different desires cause faculty members to pursue a tenure-track vs a nontenure-track position, supporting the need to maintain tenure-track positions as an option for those who desire it.

Retention of faculty members can in turn allow for a successful and sustainable mentorship program to develop junior faculty members.¹² A 3-year mentorship program developed for nursing faculty members with novice-level experience in scholarship and research demonstrated success in advancing desired career outcomes as a result of scholar-mentoring collaborations with senior faculty members. In turn, it enhanced retention as a result of professional fulfillment and led to a mentoring relationship that extended past the program period.¹³ The retention of productive tenured faculty members helps foster sustainability of the school by minimizing the time and resources needed to allocate toward recruitment, while facilitating consistency in resources available to support the school in achieving goals outlined in its strategic plan. This sustainability is also supported by the innate succession plans at academic institutions that involve the movement of tenured faculty members into administrative roles. Antony and Raveling's comparative analysis of tenure and faculty productivity noted that tenured faculty members spend more of their time engaged in administrative duties compared with all other types of faculty members, implying that tenure allows individuals to more fully engage themselves in administrative activities that better institutions and communities.¹⁴

The arguments for eliminating and/or revising tenure are well known, including the potential for tenure to lead to unproductive faculty members, inconsistent policies and procedures that may be applied during tenure and/or posttenure review, the potential for discrimination during tenure-based decisions, and the divide that can exist within a university, school, or department that has tenure and nontenure-track faculty members. Arguments supporting the elimination of tenure do not diminish the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure. These guiding tenets were never meant to serve as a static document but used to set a framework to guide adaptations to the changing times and circumstances in academia.

The tenure process is not outdated based on the guiding principles of academic freedom and tenure. It is a system of due process not only for tenure, but also for dismissal of faculty members for cause, not for gender, race, views, or research. One can argue that the tenure process or the posttenure review process and its development and/or implementation should be adapted or modified, but the fundamental framework is sound. The tenure debate always has been and probably will always be considered "controversial." Controversy is at the central core of academic freedom that the entire statement is designed to foster.

Regarding productivity, the majority of tenured faculty members contribute in a productive manner to the academy at large by creating a track record of research that can be referenced for further development of ideas. They also promote positive reputations for universities by acquiring grant funding and public recognition. A study designed to assess scholarly activities of the most productive clinical laboratory science faculty members and schools found that seasoned tenured researchers are most apt to gain external funding and present internationally as a result of their previous research and reputations in their respective professional community.¹⁵

To address arguments for eliminating tenure based on unclear or inconsistent application of tenure policies and procedures and the potential for discrimination of individuals in tenure decisions, the solution is tenure reform to include the provision of clear and objective criteria. A school of medicine that implemented a nonpunitive, posttenure review process, had positive outcomes. Although nonpunitive, they had a clear plan of objectives, goals related to deficiencies, and faculty development opportunities for improvement. Resources also were provided to faculty members to ensure success with the review process. What resulted was increased research productivity, faculty commitment and participation in the institution, and a sense of revitalization in faculty

careers.¹⁶ Many debate that tenure protects poorly performing faculty members from termination, but the tenure system allows for these provisions as long as there is due process, which typically involves documented notification followed by an opportunity for appeal. Adequate reasons for dismissal may include insubordination, incompetence, or failure to perform proficiently, as well as program termination. The posttenure review process also may assist in due process if tenure elimination is warranted.¹⁷ Lastly, to address the divide that can exist between nontenure and tenured faculty members, the solution is revisiting policy to recognize faculty members based on rank status as opposed to tenure status. Again, reform in the area of policies and procedures is the solution, not the elimination of tenure in its entirety.

COUNTERPOINT: IN SUPPORT OF TENURE ELIMINATION OR REFORM

Tenure was implemented as a means of providing academic freedom for those in academia but has evolved over the past 75-plus years into a political hot button. At times, it can be unfair, inconsistent, result in unproductive faculty members, and hamper the collaboration and innovation needed for optimal teaching, service, and scholarship. Articles and legal cases provide evidence on why tenure needs to be removed from higher education or at least reformed.

One major concern with the tenure system is that granting tenure can lead to unproductive faculty members. Once a faculty member has achieved tenure and been promoted, the incentive to perform at a high level may be significantly reduced. In fact, the tenure system may promote complacency and allow faculty members to underachieve while leaving the institution no recourse. In addition, tenured faculty members are the highest paid faculty members, leaving universities with less money to hire new faculty members and adjust to the changing academic climate. Tenure is a long-term commitment of the institution to a faculty member.¹⁸ With the age limit for retirement being eliminated with the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, tenured faculty members technically never have to retire. It is a guaranteed job for life with no guarantee of productivity or continued contribution to research and education.

The timeframe of tenure decisions requires hard work from faculty members early on to achieve tenure and de-incentivizes long-term productivity. Once a faculty member achieves tenure, unless there is a robust posttenure review process, there is no continued incentive to excel. And even if there is a posttenure review process and annual reviews for faculty members, these “formal evaluations” can be considered nonpunitive because the faculty member

is already tenured. The merits of a posttenure review are debatable as to whether it saves the tenure system.¹⁹ In the Pfeifferberger et al study referenced above, approximately one out of every three surveyed faculty members strongly disagreed/disagreed with the statement that “tenured faculty members remain current and active in teaching.” There was also a consensus that tenured faculty members did not stay active in the areas of research (30%) and service (25%). Overall, 63% agreed that tenure reform is needed in academic pharmacy.¹¹

Another concern with the tenure system is unclear or inconsistent application of tenure policies and procedures. The Pfeifferberger study revealed that 22% of respondents strongly disagreed/disagreed that “my institution’s faculty governance documents provide clear and objective criteria for attainment of tenure.” Additionally, 13% strongly disagreed/disagreed with the statement that “my institution adheres to the tenure criteria when making decisions regarding tenure.”¹¹ One may argue that these are small percentages compared with the majority of respondents who were in agreement with those statements. However, when dealing with such a high-stakes issue and decision such as tenure, this is an important percentage to consider.

An institution’s promotion and tenure policies can be unclear and contain vague definitions and standards of what is needed to achieve tenure in the areas of teaching, service, and scholarship.²⁰ As a result of such vague policies, inconsistent decisions can be rendered because of the potential for interpretation. Approximately 50% of faculty members in a tenure-track position did not clearly understand the tenure policies by their fifth year.²¹ Couple this with insufficient faculty mentoring and a host of factors too varied in a high-stakes tenure decision arise. These results mirror those of a 2015 AACP faculty survey, in which approximately 16% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that their school consistently applied promotion and/or tenure policies and procedures.²²

There is also potential for discrimination during tenure decisions. The literature is filled with cases involving discrimination based on gender and race. For example, approximately 31% of surveyed pharmacy faculty members strongly agreed/agreed that female faculty members face steeper barriers to attaining tenure in comparison to their male peers.¹¹ In addition, although more women graduated from professional and graduate programs and received more PhDs than in previous decades, they were still less likely to achieve tenure compared with males at 4-year institutions.²³ Also, African-American and Hispanic faculty members are less likely to achieve tenure compared with other races.²⁴ One must also consider the high number of tenure appeals and court cases regarding denial of tenure based on race and/or gender.

Finally, in schools where there is both tenure and non-tenure track faculty members, a divide can exist between faculty members as a result of different expectations. This may lead to a 2-tiered faculty system. Faculty members in tenure-track positions and/or tenured positions may receive additional mentorship and resources from the institution. In addition, tenure-track and tenured faculty members often are on an academic year schedule, while nontenure-track faculty members are on a calendar year schedule. Add to this that nontenure-track faculty members often may not be eligible to serve on some committees, such as promotion and tenure and, in some instances, cannot participate in institutional governance to the same degree as their tenure track colleagues. In 2015, 51% of pharmacy faculty members noted they were in a tenure-track position, 35% were in a nontenure-track position, and 15% were at an institution without a tenure system.¹¹ This is also found in medical schools, where there is often a 2-tiered system that separates clinicians from basic scientists.²⁵ Whether it is status, job security, or involvement in faculty governance, differences can result in a divide in an environment where collaboration is critical. Moreover, a 2005 survey from the Higher Education Research Institute reported that 34% of faculty members believed tenure was outdated.²⁶

Strict timelines to achieve tenure shift the goal from quality to quantity, potentially hindering creativity and innovation. For example, it is difficult to conduct high level research, receive funding, complete projects, and publish results in a timely fashion. This may limit a faculty members' creativity and may force them to pursue less risky research. In addition, faculty members trying to achieve tenure often are focused more on research, with little time to hone teaching skills and develop innovative strategies in the classroom.

At many institutions, the tenure decision comes down to the faculty member being productive in the area of grantsmanship, with a high priority being placed on federal grants where indirect costs are significant. With the high teaching expectations that practice faculty members face, coupled with precepting and clinical services, this leaves little time to pursue high-level research that would lead to significant federal funding. In addition, for science faculty members in tenure-track positions, the pursuit of federal grant money is becoming more and more difficult. When one pursues federal funding to a high degree, this may lead to deficiencies within the classroom and, ultimately, impact the education of students.

CONCLUSION

Strong arguments exist on both sides of the academic tenure debate. Throughout this Point/Counterpoint, both sides referred to the paper by Pfeifferberger et al that

appeared in AJPE in 2014.¹¹ Sixty percent of respondents felt that tenure in academic pharmacy was doing what it was intended to do, which is to provide academic freedom and allow for innovation. However, 63% agreed that tenure reform was needed. It appears that the real problem may lie with the application of tenure, not tenure itself. By adopting tenure reform, elements of tenure that protect faculty members could remain, yet provisions could be included to ensure fairness in faculty productivity and accountability.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge Arcelia Johnson-Fannin, PharmD, for providing mentorship and guidance to the team throughout the project.

REFERENCES

1. Loope DR. Academic Tenure: Its Origins, Administration, and Importance. South Carolina Commission on Higher Education Staff Position Paper. 1995. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED382149.pdf>. Accessed July 31, 2015.
2. Jane Stanford: The woman behind Stanford University. Stanford University. <http://janestanford.stanford.edu/biography.html>. Accessed July 31, 2015.
3. AAUP archives. American Association of University Professors. <http://www.aaup.org/about/history/aaup-archives>. Accessed July 31, 2015.
4. History of the AAUP. American Association of University Professors. <http://www.aaup.org/about/history-aaup>. Accessed July 31, 2015.
5. Seligman ERA, Bennett CE, Dealey JQ, et al. General report of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure: presented at the annual meeting of the association. December 31, 1915. *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*. 1915;1(1):15-43. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40216731>. Accessed August 19, 2015.
6. American Association of University Professors. 1940 statement of principles on academic freedom and tenure with 1970 interpretive comments. <http://www.aaup.org/file/1940%20Statement.pdf>. Accessed July 31, 2015.
7. American Association of University Professors. Academic due process: recommended institutional regulations on academic freedom and tenure. <http://www.aaup.org/file/RIR%202014.pdf>. Accessed July 31, 2015.
8. Allen, HL. Tenure: why faculty, and the nation, need it. *The NEA Higher Education Journal*. 2000;16(2):95-110.
9. Medina MS, Bouldin AS, Gonyeau M, et al. Report of the 2011-2012 Academic Affairs Standing Committee: the evolving role of scholarly teaching in teaching excellence for current and future faculty. *Am J Pharm Educ*. 2012;76(6):Article S5.
10. Ceci SJ, Williams WM, Mueller-Johnson K. Is tenure justified? An experimental study of faculty beliefs about tenure, promotion, and academic freedom. *Behav Brain Sci*. 2006;29:553-94.
11. Pfeifferberger JA, Rhoney DH, Cutler SJ, et al. Perceptions of tenure and tenure reform in academic pharmacy. *Am J Pharm Educ*. 2014;78(4):Article 75.
12. Metzger AH, Hardy YM, Jarvis C, et al. Essential elements for a pharmacy practice mentoring program. *Am J Pharm Educ*. 2013;77(2):Article 23.

13. Heinrich KT, Oberleitner MG. How a faculty group's peer mentoring of each other's scholarship can enhance retention and recruitment. *J Prof Nurs*. 2012;28:5-12.
14. Antony JS, Raveling JS. A comparative analysis of tenure and faculty productivity: moving beyond traditional approaches. ASHE Annual Meeting Paper. American Educational Research Association; 1998.
15. Waller KV, Karni KR. Scholarly activities of the most productive CLS faculty and schools in the USA. *Clin Lab Sci*. 2010;23(3):175-179.
16. Schweitzer L, Eells TD. Post-tenure review at the University of Louisville School of Medicine: a faculty development and revitalization tool. *Acad Med*. 2007;82(7):713-717.
17. Hawkins Jr AG, Graham RD, Hall RF. Tenure as a fact of academic life: a methodology for managing the performance of tenured professors. *Educ Law*. 2007;19(1):41-57.
18. Schoenfeld AC, Magnan R. *Mentor in a Manual: Climbing the Academic Ladder to Tenure*. Madison, WI: Atwood Publishing; 1994.
19. Edwards R. Can post-tenure review help us save the tenure system? *Academe*. 1997;83(3):26-31.
20. Epple Calvert ML, Vaughn CA, Sullivan CA, Garn G. Knowledge and perceptions of tenure guidelines and criteria among allied health faculty: case study. *J Allied Health*. 2007;36(2):e142-e159.
21. Olsen D, Sorcinelli MD. The pretenure years: a longitudinal perspective. In: MD Sorcinelli and AE Austin, eds. *Developing New and Junior Faculty*. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 48. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass; 1992:15-25.
22. American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness. American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy Faculty Survey: 2015 National Summary Report. http://www.aacp.org/resources/research/institutionalresearch/Documents/2015_Faculty%20Survey_Final%20Summary%20Report_for%20web.pdf. Accessed August 31, 2015.
23. Toutkoushian RK. The status of academic women in the 1990s. No longer outsiders, but not yet equals. *Quar Rev Econ Fin*. 1999;39(5):679-698.
24. Cataldi EF, Bradburn EM, Fahimi M, Zimbler L. 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF:04). Background characteristics, work activities, and compensation of instructional faculty and staff: fall 2003. *National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)* 2006-176.
25. Jones RF and Gold JS. Faculty appointment and tenure policies in medical schools: a 1997 status report. *Acad Med*. 1998;73(2):212-219.
26. Lindholm JA, Szelenyi K, Hurtado S, Korn WS. Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). The American College Teacher: National Norms for the 2004-2005 HERI Faculty Survey. <http://www.heri.ucla.edu/PDFs/pubs/FAC/Norms/Monographs/TheAmericanCollegeTeacher2004To2005.pdf>. Accessed August 31, 2015.