

AAUP Report

American Association of University Professors
Bloomington Chapter

Spring 2009

What's New?

In our fall newsletter we wrote of the proposed changes in the Dean of Faculties Office. After a good discussion in the Bloomington Faculty Council and among concerned groups with Provost Hanson, we now have a Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs and a Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, as well as successful appointments for both positions. Tom Gieryn (Sociology) and Sonya Stephens (French and Italian) took their respective offices last month. We wish them both great success.

The fall AAUP forum concerning first amendment rights of faculty when engaged in faculty governance was well attended and we want to thank Ken Gros Louis and Steve Sanders once more for their presentations. Our spring forum will be on Thursday, March 5, 2009 on the future of tenure at research institutions.

Tenure's demise has been forecast prematurely in the past; but, are there new factors in the academic environment that act to undermine the fundamental premises of tenure? What are the effects of increasing reliance on non-tenure-track teachers in the classroom? Can tenure be achieved within the current seven-year time period or should the tenure clock be extended? A proposal from the IU School of Medicine to extend the tenure clock from seven to ten years is currently being considered by the IUPUI faculty council. What might be the effects of such a change?

The September-October issue of AAUP's *Academe* was devoted to a series of essays on the question of tenure's future in American institutions of higher education. One of the

commentators was Professor Emerita Mary Burgan, formerly of Bloomington's English Department and more recently General Secretary of the National AAUP (1994-2004). In a recent book on this and other issues in higher education, Mary wrote,

"Thus the most significant enemy of tenure is the increasing use of untenured faculty who work as single and disposable cogs in the educational machine and therefore lack the professional standing or the organizational sanction to teach without fear."

"It is clear since the faculty have gone missing in recent years, it is up to the profession, helped by enlightened administrators, to stage a comeback. The faculty's behavior as academic citizens under this new awareness must be informed, inclusive, coordinated and continuous. In short, the presence of professors in campus decision making should become their automatic exercise of a tradition rather than their transitory response to a crisis."¹

Conversation with Mary Burgan

Julie Bobay (Library), a long time member of the Bloomington AAUP Executive Committee, spoke with Mary about her thoughts on the future of tenure which she describes in her *Academe* essay as being near annihilation as a

¹ Burgan, Mary; *What Ever Happened to the Faculty? Drift and Decision in Higher Education*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. (coming in paperback this spring!)

result of “cultural and economic trends in American higher education” in the past decade.

Q: In your recent article, “Save Tenure Now” you suggest that “powerful, tenured members of the professoriate must lead the effort to set tenure right again...acknowledging that the numbers of classes taught by adjuncts is a problem.” Can you tell us why this is such a fundamental problem?

Burgan: One of the last things I did at Indiana was to lead a task force on tenure, focusing on the relationship of teaching and research. Our aim was to reassert the teaching part of the tenure commitment and to make adjustments to assure that teaching and research remained attached. We proposed variable teaching loads and the balanced case—both controversial—and we struggled to keep the door closed on non-tenure track positions, knowing that once started there would be no way to close it in the face of financial pressures. Fast forward 15 years, and what we find is a two-tier caste system, with much teaching done by non-tenure-track faculty under regularized employment contracts. We have effectively outsourced and de-professionalized teaching, cut it off from research, (or to use MLA’s term, “inquiry,”) and stratified the academy. In a nutshell, while I’m not sure tenure has been permanently lost, it has certainly been diminished, and if it’s not to be further diminished, people who have it must become active and alert to the dangers. Some say it is too late already, and it admittedly is a hard wave to turn back; actually it’s a tsunami.

What we see is that after fighting a very intense battle to achieve tenure, newly-tenured faculty settle back into their departments and subspecialties, unaware of what’s happening to the profession. They are not exerting their strength and privilege to oversee the university; instead they need to get grants, write books, etc. They try not to get too involved, leaving the

academic bureaucracy to run the university. Thus we have this situation:

“Tenure is the ultimate employment perk for very successful members of the professoriate....Of course, without tenure, the American academy’s promise of academic freedom for teaching would be compromised, but that hardly seems to matter when so much undergraduate teaching is being performed by unprotected contingent faculty.” (Save Tenure Now)

Q: What can we do to turn back the tsunami?

Burgan: The essence of this challenge is how we think about teaching. If tenure is not balanced between achievements in both teaching and research, the game is lost. I had the great privilege to work at IU under Jack Shiner, a distinguished chemist, who thought that if he didn’t teach introductory organic chemistry, running up against brand new students who constantly refreshed his perspective, he forgot what the questions were, what this was all about.

What can we do? We must keep fighting on the double task of reasserting the balance of research and teaching for tenure, and protecting and fighting for non-tenure-track faculty by turning as many of those lines into tenure-track lines as possible. BFC needs to inventory and publish figures. Mostly, though, this movement has to begin with faculty and chairs at the departmental level, committing themselves to converting NTT lines back to tenure-track. This will not be simple or easy on either side. Tenure-track faculty can gain insight into the situation by asking themselves difficult questions, such as:

Do you know how many NTTs teach in your dept? Do you know their names? Where their offices are? How much

they're paid? Their course load?
Teaching quality or writing? Have you
ever invited them to lunch, or helped
them look for a tenure-track position?
How many tenure lines were there in
your department 10-20 years ago?

On the other side, NTT faculty need to organize
so they have the numbers to assert themselves.
Whether they are willing or able to do that is a
big question, as evidenced by the question that a
non-tenure-track appointee asked me, "Why
should you disturb me? I'm a great teacher,
students love me. I don't want to do research."

Shedding the bulk of the teaching responsibility
to non-tenure-track appointees is at the heart of
the breakdown of the professionalization of
faculty. Teaching and research must go together,

they must together define faculty-ness and form
the basis for tenure.

One last big thing—junior faculty with tenure
jolly well ought to join the AAUP. Or hang their
heads in shame.

Membership

To hold your head high, here is how you can
join AAUP:

***Academic Freedom Isn't Free – Join the
AAUP!***

For membership forms and information, please
contact our Treasurer, Julie Bobay
Library E002, 855-5968, <bobay@indiana.edu>

**AAUP Spring Forum: Thursday, March 5, 2009, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Moot Court Room, School of Law**

“Tenure in Your Lifetime: The Future of Tenure”

Speakers: Tom Gieryn, Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs

Gerhard Glomm, Chair, Economics Department, Bloomington

Anya Royce, Professor, Anthropology Department

and former Dean of Faculties, Bloomington

Reception afterward in Law School Faculty Lounge

Executive Committee Members, 2008-2009

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