

AAUP Report

Spring 1995

American Association of University Professors
Bloomington Chapter

Comment on Untenured Clinical Professors by Jeff Stake

[The following statement was written in response to a proposal brought to the University Faculty Council this spring; discussion and action will continue in the coming fall semester.]

The immediate practical problem with the proposal presented to the University Faculty Council is that it combines two ideas: 1) allowing each school to hire some clinical professors and 2) allowing untenured clinical faculty to make up 49% of the faculty. The second is a bad idea. The first deserves consideration.

With a few well-chosen scenarios, a good case can be made that Medicine is not the only School that could benefit greatly from the presence of one or two faculty having great practical experience but no interest in writing for publication. Likewise, hand-picked examples could establish the potential benefit of research faculty who do not speak to students. Despite the examples, many of us reject mission differentiation as the first step toward a two-class faculty.

The fundamental problem is specialization. We do not like it. It does not fit our self-image. Yet it is inevitable. The academy accepted ages ago the necessity of interdisciplinary specialization, separation by subject. The same pressures have led to intradisciplinary specialization, e.g., high school and college math, and will continue to divide us further in the future. The skills and training needed to organize knowledge and to speak differ from those needed to make new discoveries and to write. If a discipline has developed any knowledge, it often helps students to learn what is known before they explore the unknown. Someone has to teach those known things.

It is possible for some talented faculty to do everything, and do it all well. The balanced case has its (continued on page 2)

Tenure at Risk

In her talk to the Bloomington Chapter of the American Association of University Professors on April 10, Mary Burgan outlined the threats to tenure that have been gathering force over the past several months. She noted an editorial in the *Washington Post* and that both she and Bob O'Neil (now chair of AAUP's Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure) published letters in response. She also mentioned the infamous segment on *60 Minutes*, commenting that the failure of research universities to address the balance between teaching and research can lead, as they had in Leslie Stahl's report, to wholesale attacks on research itself.

Finally, she pointed to a new, two-year project sponsored by the American Association of Higher Education entitled "New Pathways: Faculty Careers and Employment in the 21st Century" as a plausible but finally undermining attack on tenure. The New Pathways Project offers a "new dialogue" on tenure, but the terms of the dialogue seem loaded. Changes in tenure are described as dynamic, progressive, and "new," while tenure is characterized as rigid, conventional, resistant to change. In criticizing such discourse, Burgan suggested that we need to continue our efforts to respond to evolving demands in our profession, but to remember that academic freedom is the basis for tenure – and that it is still in jeopardy throughout the country.

She mentioned the situation at Bennington College, noting that the report by the AAUP investigating (continued on page 2)

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place. But other talented people will lack the taste or aptitude for speaking or writing. Pairing two specialists, a speaker and a writer, and allowing them to contribute to learning in their different ways will in some cases accomplish far more for the university than forcing them to contribute to university missions in equal proportions.

If we do our job of discovery at all, eventually we will amass enough knowledge that students will need whole courses of study before they will be ready to contribute at the cutting edge. It will not be essential, indeed it will be wasteful, to force those pushing the frontiers knowledge to teach what others can teach. It will also be wasteful to force those who communicate well with students and love doing so to spend time on discovery. Without extraordinary infusions of money, institutions that refuse to accept specialization will not be able to compete. And the rest of the world, without a great love for the quaint, will refuse to infuse.

Subject matter specialization has resulted in different classes of faculty; some disciplines do get more respect. But it has not brought down the university. It has sustained it, to the benefit of both discovery and transmission.

So universities need flexibility. They also need tenured faculty. Locally and nationally, the AAUP fights for tenure so that faculty can govern, create, write, and speak without fear of losing their livelihood. Such fears are much less an institutional problem for part-timers and retirees with vested pensions. They who have other sources of income will feel more freedom of expression than untenured full-time employees. Tenure is most important for full-time faculty.

It is important to recognize, however, that increasing faculty security and even freedom are not the goals. The ultimate ends are truth and beauty. Tenure is critical not because it makes a speaker more comfortable but because it gives the listener some hope that the speaker is saying what she truly believes. Hence, tenure is not just a benefit, like medical care or parking, that can be traded off by the faculty member for higher wages. Although it protects the speaker, the protection does not belong to the speaker. It is a benefit that belongs to others, faculty, students, and the public. It is the listeners who lose when faculty speak without a guarantee that their words will not cost them their livelihood.

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committee has just been published in the recent edition of *Academe*. Frontal attacks on tenure are demoralizing, she said, but the more significant attacks on tenure have been through its erosion. The replacement of tenure-track positions by part-time and other non-tenure track positions in academia truly undermines the total structure of academic freedom and governance. Such positions are masked by the efforts to find harmless titles for them; they are called "adjunct," "post-doc," or "clinical" appointments. But a non-tenure position by any name smells the same. We should understand that many shortsighted efforts in the name of "economy" or "flexibility" to hire "contract workers" in academia bypass the essential protections we have worked to attain for the teacher/scholars in American higher education.

Burgan ended by declaring that the erosion of tenure through the creation of non-tenure ranks of "service" instructors is especially pernicious because it divides faculty against itself. Thus the professoriate has become an ever more deeply stratified profession. Whereas schools like IU have in the past been able to maintain a system which resisted marking "haves" from "have-nots" among faculty, now the segregation of the tenured and tenurable from the untenurable threatens to undo this collegiality among us. And the resulting stratification has worrisome parallels with many of the other fractures that now threaten our entire society. The greatest divide, she suggested, was now the one between the old and the young -- between those who know and those who aspire to know, between those who have used the system to become established and those who find the rules changed so that their beginnings are marked by instability. For many of us, becoming professors has been motivated by the challenge of healing such fractures and bridging such divisions. To maintain this idealism, we need to come together again, to reaffirm our commitment to the promise of tenure for everyone who is engaged in teaching and inquiry at our colleges and universities. And we can best make this reaffirmation through our membership in AAUP -- the only national organization that continues to speak for faculty throughout American higher education.

President Brand at the AAUP Forum

The fifth annual AAUP Forum was held in the Law School moot courtroom on Wednesday, February 1. President Miles Brand spoke about "Bucking the Trend: IU's Resistance to Privatization." A panel discussion followed, moderated by Professor Pat Baude (Law) with panelists Harry Gonso (Member, Board of the IU Foundation); Professor Al Ruesink (Biology), and Myrtle Scott (School of Education).

President Brand outlined three significant transitions in the evolution of U.S. higher education since WWII. The first saw government support for creation of the research university in response to the cold war. This contrasted with European practice, where government support was not necessarily directed towards universities. In Japan, somewhat later, government funding often went to private industry. The second major transition occurred in the late 1960s -- again in response to significant international events and the domestic fallout (in this case, to the Vietnam War). A major effect was replacement of the core curriculum by distribution requirements.

We are now, Brand believes, in the middle of a third transition -- this time in response to international economic rather than violent confrontations. Without a common enemy, the nation has become introspective and that has produced skepticism about existing institutions. Prominent among the targets of this discontent is the university. A combination of fiscal constraint and demand for public accountability (which has survived economic recovery) has lowered higher education in the national priority list.

One response by universities has been to move towards privatization -- less and less reliance on state funding and more reliance on tuition and private funding. This was President Brand's experience at Oregon, forced upon the university by drastic cutbacks in state funds. It is also the route taken by several state universities, such as Michigan and Virginia. Their state funding is now in the 10-15% range. The President concluded that privatization was a bad idea for IU. First, state investment (now a little over 33%) was too large for us to absorb significant reductions. Second, Indiana citizens have retained faith in their university. There is a large reservoir of good will on which we can draw. Third, the effort to replace state funding would fail. There is not enough tuition and private money to make up the resulting shortfall. We would simply get smaller,

and become unable to fulfill our mission to the state and other communities. This reality requires IU to connect better with the state, seeking ways in which we can serve more effectively. To that end, Brand has set up several task forces to think about implementing new ideas. The timetable calls for presentation of these ideas to the schools next fall and for the university community to decide on the directions it wants to take during 1996. The choice we confront, he argues, is not whether we will change but whether we will determine what changes occur.

As for new ideas for funding, Brand floated the idea of differential pricing for various educational programs, presumably based on their different costs. He noted that in a state institution such a pricing policy would have to be supplemented by aid to students who couldn't afford courses or programs they needed.

In response to Brand's comments, Myrtle Scott pointed to the importance of maintaining enduring faculty principles, such as academic freedom, the right of a professor to direct her or his own work, and the free and open exchange of information. She noted that some or all of these can be abridged by some types of contracts for funding, and that it is important to "read the fine print" in order to guard against infringement on these principles. Brand seemed notably sympathetic to (continued on page 4)

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Scott's point that working with industry entails constant vigilance to see to it that academic inquiry is not contaminated by obligations to keep secret -- as trade secrets -- findings that ought to go into the pool of common knowledge for research.

Pat Baude noted the widespread perception that, no matter what happens, I.U. and Purdue get the same increase. He then asked Harry Gonso whether, in light of that fact, Brand's program to program to impress the changing nature of the university upon the legislature and other funding sources really matters. Gonso responded that it is true that in the past the legislature did not examine details of the university's funding. However, he said that funding will receive critical review and so Brand's program will be important.

Baude asked Al Ruesink to address what becoming less private (or at least avoiding becoming more private)

might mean to the teaching mission of I.U. Ruesink noted that maintaining a public stance would encourage good high school students within the state to consider I.U. as an highly appropriate place to obtain additional education. This has, of course, been true of this institution in the past. In addition, he emphasized that many faculty are implementing new teaching strategies -- e.g., increased and improved technology; undergraduate teaching interns -- as means of improving teaching and learning. Better connections with external constituencies around the state, such as the public schools, could help us disseminate to a broader public such strategies for more effective teaching. Finally, Ruesink asked President Brand what he foresees as the impact of decreased privatization on the curriculum of our institution and was assured that none was anticipated.
