

## Administration seeks complete overhaul to current tenure system

At the bargaining session on July 1, the administration proposed making drastic changes to the tenure system that has been in place at the College since the first Faculty contract was established 15 years ago.

According to the Faculty bargaining team, the administration's proposal would freeze the number of tenure-track faculty positions at the current number. There are 189 tenure-track positions in Unit 1, not all of which are filled.

Under the administration's proposal, all new full-time faculty positions created in the future would be non-tenure-track positions with year-to-year contracts—meaning that any of these full-time faculty members could be non-renewed at the end of any year, no matter how long they had worked for the College. These non-tenure-track faculty members would never be given the opportunity to apply for tenure.

The administration also proposed that for the faculty positions which would remain on tenure-track, the probationary period required before applying for tenure would

increase to 6 years, rather than the current 4 years of probation. The extended probation would apply even to current tenure-track faculty in the bargaining unit, so current faculty members expecting to apply for tenure in September 2005 would have two additional years of probation, those expecting to apply in 2006 would have to wait another three years, and so on.

According to the Faculty bargaining team, the administration's team gave two reasons for proposing to completely overhaul the tenure system:

- First, the administrative team said the creation of annual-contract faculty positions would provide more administrative flexibility.
- Second, the administration team said they feel the current tenure system does not necessarily reward excellence because almost every applicant for tenure is granted tenure.

Faculty Chief Negotiator John Battistone said, "The administration's proposal seems to create a group of 'second class citizens' within Faculty Bargaining Unit 1, and does not provide any

compelling reasons for doing so."

Faculty Team Member Ron Craig said, "The administration's proposal appears to be a systematic way to get rid of tenure over the years, by replacing tenured faculty positions with year-to-year hires who could either stay safe in their jobs by never doing or saying anything to upset the administration, or risk losing their jobs on April 15 of any year."

Faculty team members said that the administration's proposal would not eliminate all tenure-track positions; however, under their proposal the total number of tenure-track positions could become smaller over time.

Faculty Team Member Ken Stoll said, "Since the administration's proposal specifically says no new tenure-track positions would be created in the future, it's easy to see how, over time, the Faculty could change to almost all non-tenure-track."

"Let's say, for instance, that the administration decided to create and fill a non-tenure-track position in Mechanical Engineering Technology. Then, when I retire, they could easily decide that my tenure-track position no longer needed to be filled, since they

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would have a non-tenure-track MET instructor to take my place.”

“If you keep using that system, eventually the tenure-track group of faculty will be a tiny fragment of the total number of faculty,” Ken added.

According to Faculty team members, the administration team said that the total number of full-time faculty members would be likely to increase under their proposal, since the administration would be more willing to hire new full-time faculty if all the new hires were in non-tenure-track jobs.

Faculty Team Member Geoff Woolf said, “If the administration’s proposal were to be implemented, there would be a large number of faculty members who could be afraid to do their best work, because of the constant fear of being non-renewed.”

“Tenure provides protection for college faculty who, in the course of doing their work, need to express unpopular or controversial views,” Geoff continued. “A tenured faculty member can be honest—and that includes speaking honestly about matters of institutional governance as well as speaking honestly and trying new, creative, and possibly controversial approaches in the classroom.”

“Without tenure, faculty participation in governance is a sham,” Geoff added.

“Just imagine what would happen to a non-tenure-track faculty member if he or she didn’t support the administration’s priorities,” Geoff said. “Imagine what could occur if a non-tenure-track faculty member publicly disagreed with a senior administrator, or if the non-tenure track faculty member did or said something the dean or assistant dean didn’t like.”

“Some tenure-track faculty members, no matter how skilled and dedicated, are afraid to speak up now for fear of being non-renewed during their first four years,” Geoff said. “Non-tenure-track faculty would be intimidated faculty.”

AAUP Chapter President Pam Ecker said, “I’m troubled by the administration team’s assertion that our current tenure system does not reward excellence.”

“The Faculty Senate has worked very hard during the past 15 years to establish, implement, and make improvements to a peer mentoring and review program to help ensure excellence,” Pam said. “This was a totally faculty-driven initiative. For many years, there was absolutely

no administration support of the process, which involved many hundreds of hours of volunteer time on the part of the faculty mentors and the Peer Mentoring Committee.”

“Also, the faculty members elected to serve on the Faculty Tenure Committee over the past 15 years are well aware of the increasing levels of scrutiny given to tenure applicants,” Pam added.

“If our administrators or our Board of Trustees members believe that more needs to be done to better assess the quality of our tenure-track faculty during their four-year probationary period, I wish they would bring some proposals to the bargaining table, rather than proposing to essentially eliminate the tenure system,” Pam said.

## Faculty team makes EPMI proposal

In addition to the discussion of the Tenure article, the Faculty team presented a proposal on July 1 to change the article on Electronically Purveyed Methods of Instruction to appropriately recognize faculty workload associated with offering distance education and technology-enhanced courses.

The next negotiation session is scheduled for July 13, when both teams are expected to present all remaining contract proposals.

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