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LEADING FACULTY WITH PURPOSE AND VISION

PROMOTION AND TENURE

Best Practices in Decision-Making for Tenure as It Declines Across Institutions

By Eric Lyerly

Tenure is the professional distinction par excellence for faculty. Historically, it developed as a vehicle to prevent the arbitrary dismissal of faculty due to unpopular speech, publications, or research findings—thereby promoting academic freedom. This continues to be its main function in the modern day.

Only about 1 in 5 faculty are tenured, with the number of tenured professors and researchers declining 21 percent in recent years (AAUP). This article explores the trends influencing this decline and discusses best practices for tenure decision-making. By understanding these trends and practices, department chairs and faculty leaders can position themselves to make tenure decisions for their departments that advance their department's research and teaching goals—and protect the institution from cumbersome litigation.

Understanding trends regarding tenure

The recent decline in the number of tenured faculty is partly a response to various trends regarding the tenure format, including the willingness of colleges and universities to lay off such faculty. Earlier this year, Manhattan College laid off 19 tenured professors after telling faculty that cuts would be based on seniority (Guilfoil). Faculty at the University of West Virginia, the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, and other institutions recently experienced the same fate.

Additionally, state legislatures have passed bills that place restrictions on the tenure process.

- **Indiana—S.B. 202 (2024)**—Requires college and university board of trustees to adopt a policy restricting faculty from obtaining tenure if the faculty is (1) unlikely to expose students to a variety of political or ideological views applicable to their discipline, or (2) likely to subject students to political or ideological views that are unrelated to the faculty's course of instruction.
- **Florida—S.B. 766 (2023)**—Requires the state's Board of Governors to adopt a regulation subjecting tenured faculty at public universities to a post-tenure review every five years.
- **Texas—S.B. 18 (2023)**—Only allows a college or university governing board to grant tenure. A faculty member's property interest in tenure applies to continued employment but not annual salary.

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Planning Priorities for Leaving the Chair Position

By N. Douglas Lees

Although not often in mind at the outset of life as an academic department chair, the time will come for all academic department chairs to exit their administrative roles. What prompts the departure's timing can be as simple as the expiration of the term limit at institutions where there is a tradition or policy of leadership that has time limits on service. In schools where there are no prescribed limits on chair service, the motivations for leaving the post of chair are more complex. Among them are a desire to turn full attention to the things that drew department chairs to higher education—teaching or research; new administrative leadership that may take a path incompatible with the chair's goals; a feeling of having accomplished as much as possible; performance issues, whether real or perceived, that lead to dwindling support; and ambition for higher administrative positions. With regard to the latter, although some faculty members are wary of colleagues who set an administrative career track, it seems it is far better to move talented individuals from within the academy to senior leadership posts than to have those from other professions assume these positions.

Regardless of the circumstances of the departure, all chairs, except those entering permanent retirement, will undergo a professional role change. Most return to the faculty where their administrative work will be exchanged for new assignments in teaching and/or research. For those with further administrative aspirations, the role may change to dean, program or center director, etc., locally or at another institution, or to another chair position elsewhere. Being prepared for these new roles is a personal responsibility that should have been planned well in advance. In addition, in any case, the chairs will be leaving their academic units to new leadership, and there is a responsibility to the institution to take the steps necessary to make certain that the transition is a smooth one. Fulfilling this obligation will also require some forethought.

Chairs returning to faculty roles in teaching and/or research at major research universities have fewer challenges because their institutions have ample department staff and resources that have allowed the chair time to maintain a high scholarship profile. In the sciences and technological disciplines, where external funding is an expectation, the chair is likely to have a funded laboratory that is supervised by a senior scientist. Thus, the change would be additional projects (and funding) with a modest increase in teaching. The scenario is quite different in public comprehensive and urban universities, where teaching loads are higher, department staff are fewer, resources are limited, and student demographics are such that chairs must spend considerable time dealing with student populations that are unevenly prepared for higher education, all while trying to maintain a viable program of scholarship.

Chairs at small colleges that historically were teaching-focused may face an elevated research expectation when they return to faculty life. Research productivity has become a more important parameter in faculty advancement and merit decisions at such institutions, a phenomenon driven in part by the rec-

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ognition of undergraduate research as a powerful pedagogy. In addition, there are a plethora of innovative approaches in teaching that busy chairs may not have had time to experience.

If the decision is made to move back to the faculty ranks, what can chairs do to make sure they are prepared for new work and will be smoothly assimilated into the faculty? One strategy is to identify a collaborator (in teaching or research) from within the department or from another, related department on campus. If in teaching, the collaborator would be regarded as an expert from whom the chair could learn and with whom the chair could co-teach. If it is a research collaboration, the chair would offer intellectual input into research direction and experimental or project design, coauthor proposals for funding, and help with manuscript writing while leaving the day-to-day operations of the research group to the collaborator.

A second strategy would be to negotiate with the dean for a package of support that would allow the chair time and resources to do some personal "reinvention" immediately following chair service. Included might be released time from partial or full faculty obligations (perhaps an in-house sabbatical) for a semester (or year) and some monetary resources that will allow the former chair and "new" faculty member to attend conferences in the research area or focused on teaching, hire an assistant/student helper, and purchase some basic materials or equipment for research or teaching. Because this fund is similar to start-up funds many institutions provide for new faculty, it could be called a "re-start-up" fund. This modest investment is justified by the professional sacrifices that the chair has made by engaging in administrative work and by the fact that the institution will be far better off in the future with this individual contributing at a more productive level.

Chairs seeking to remain in administration after their current chair position is surrendered have a different set of issues to think about before it is time to move up or on. The issues are those defining what credentials they must have to make the next move and how they might go about earning them. Effective unit management is important, but this alone will not make an applicant stand out. Rather, leadership success on critical issues will.

Examples of successes that may make an applicant attractive enough to earn an interview for a dean's position would include interdisciplinary program development; faculty, student, and staff diversity improvement; fundraising and external funding; and outreach programs. The interesting thing about these is that efforts in these areas are also compatible with effective work at the department level. The overarching characteristics of individuals destined for success at high administrative levels are a firm grasp of the big picture; dedication to being visible outside the department, especially when the agenda includes items of importance and opportunity; and being able to work effectively with others from different disciplines, backgrounds, and organizations. Chairs with an ambition for higher administrative positions should select, where possible, projects, initiatives, and activities that will enhance their leadership skills and that have the potential for impact beyond the department.

> *"Knowing early how resources flow will allow the incoming chair to be effective much faster."*

Regardless of the intended destination of the exiting chair, there is one reality that all will face. That is, each will turn over the department to new leadership. It seems for obvious reasons that chairs would want the best possible outcome for their departments and thus would be disposed to help the new chair learn and prosper. This process is best initiated before the leadership transition takes place.

If the chair successor is internal, the preparation required should not be extensive. This person is familiar with faculty, students, and staff; knows the dean and other key administrators; and is aware of local policy. The areas where the chair can have meaningful input with the successor might be class scheduling and teaching assignments, including prior arrangements and negotiations; ongoing work in faculty development and improvement; budgeting; and the administrative process of promotion and tenure.

If the new chair is recruited from another institution, the preparation challenge is significantly greater. Unlike the internal successor who is available for training and, through delegation, may even be able to gain some experience in targeted duties before taking the helm, the external chair is not likely to be local and may visit campus on only limited occasions prior to starting. This means that all sessions, whether by phone, email, Skype, or in person, must be carefully organized and supplemented with documentation. Budgeting provides a good example. The topic of budgeting for the internal successor involves setting the allocated dollars into categories, while for the external candidate it means learning much more, including how dollars flow at the institution. That is, what budget model is used, and how is it unique in its local implementation? Are there incentives that increase allocations? Can a chair make special requests? If so, to whom and for what? Knowing early how resources flow will allow the incoming chair to be effective much faster.

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- **Georgia—University of Georgia System (2021)**—The University of Georgia system approved a policy that allowed administrators at its public colleges to remove tenured faculty with minimal input from faculty peers.

Other states such as South Carolina, Nebraska, North Carolina, and West Virginia have seen proposed bills restricting or eliminating tenure stall in the state legislature. Still others have proposed or passed so-called divisive concepts laws that prohibit the teaching of certain concepts related to race, sex, etc. Critics say these laws limit faculty's academic freedom.

Understanding why tenure is being challenged

There are many reasons tenure has faced threats from state legislatures and university systems—some social, some economic, and some political. This section will briefly touch on a few reasons.

Socially, confidence in higher education is eroding. Research from Gallup found that Americans' confidence in higher education has fallen sharply. A 2023 poll revealed that only 36% of Americans have "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in higher education—down from 57% in 2015 and 48% in 2018 (Brenan). Not surprisingly, fewer students are attending college, meaning institutions are generating less revenue. Additionally, states are cutting funding for higher education, leaving less in the pot for recruitment and retention of tenured faculty.

Financially, long-term tenure appointments are expensive, costing an institution hundreds of thousands of dollars over a faculty member's career. The increasing availability of less expensive forms of instruction—adjuncts, instructors, and online formats—has reduced the urgency to offer tenured appointments.

Politically, lawmakers, typically conservative politicians, have expressed concern that some faculty are "indoctrinating" students with unpopular ideologies regarding race and sex. These lawmakers maintain that tenured faculty are too insulated from consequences regarding performance and conduct.

Given recent trends and threats to tenure, it is more important now than ever for faculty leaders and institutions to make legally sound tenure decisions and get the right faculty into tenured appointments. The American Council on Education, The American Association of University Professors, and United Educators have published a handbook on best practices in tenure evaluation (ACE).

"Financially, long-term tenure appointments are expensive, costing an institution hundreds of thousands of dollars over a faculty member's career."

These groups have identified four major themes for the tenure evaluation process: (1) clarity in standards and procedures, (2) consistency in tenure decisions, (3) candor in the evaluation of tenure track faculty, and (4) caring for unsuccessful candidates. The following sections will summarize each theme and add legal insights where appropriate.

Clarity in standards and procedures

Department chairs should ensure that their institution's tenure policy lists all major criteria used for evaluation. Traditionally, "teaching, research, and service" are the primary categories for evaluation. Faculty leaders should always make tenure decisions based on criteria in the institution's written policy. Tenure denials that rely on unstated factors (e.g., student enrollment, success in securing external funding, etc.) could result in legal challenges. Even if the unstated factors seem related to a stated criterion, department chairs should still ensure these factors are articulated in the written policy.

Faculty leaders should also make sure that tenure policies allow consideration of positive/negative events after a tenure application is submitted. Policies should specify whether evaluators can weigh positive achievements (e.g., a publisher's acceptance of a candidate's manuscript after the application submission). These policies should also specify who is responsible for updating the application with the new information—and at what stage, if any, it is too late to add new information. Additionally, faculty leaders should specify the steps the institution will take if a candidate faces negative events (e.g., a decline in teaching evaluations, a harsh review of a recent book, misconduct, etc.) during the tenure process.

Consistency in tenure decisions

Inconsistency in tenure decisions can spell legal trouble, usually in the form of discrimination or retaliation lawsuits. Colleges and universities are required to comply with federal employment laws and cannot treat tenure applicants differently on the basis of age, sex, race, national origin, disability, or other protected characteristics.

If an unsuccessful tenure candidate sues a college or university for discrimination, they will be permitted to compare their situation to institutional faculty who received tenure. Courts will evaluate the institution's tenure decisions over time and across departments to identify possible patterns of discrimination.

Faculty leaders play a key role in ensuring consistency in the tenure approval/denial process. At each level of a tenure

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review, faculty leaders should consider how a candidate compares to other applicants the department has evaluated in recent years—checking for consistency. Moreover, department chairs should be consistent in formal (and informal) evaluations of a candidate's work before the submission of their tenure application. If a negative tenure decision is the first critical evaluation of the candidate, the candidate may be more likely to see the decision as discriminatory or retaliatory.

Moreover, faculty leaders should also scrupulously follow written tenure procedures (see previous section). Many discrimination lawsuits revolve around alleged unfairness in the process of tenure evaluation. Courts are reluctant to adjudge the correctness (or incorrectness) of an institution's decision on a candidate's tenure. However, they can—and will—intervene if faculty leaders abuse or fail to follow the written processes for making those decisions.

Candor in the evaluation of tenure-track faculty

Faculty leaders should ensure that new faculty understand the requirements for reappointment and tenure. Faculty leaders should also promptly inform candidates of any changes to decision-making standards.

Department chairs should review relevant requirements with candidates during subsequent evaluations and inform them of their progress in meeting the requirements. Such evaluations should offer specific feedback about a candidate's strengths and areas of improvement during the review period.

Caring for unsuccessful candidates

Most tenure applicants do not ultimately stay at an institution that denied them tenure. These candidates often have to begin the process all over again (if at all) at a new college or university. After investing years of effort in pursuing tenure, a denied candidate may experience a difficult transition. When faculty leaders offer compassion and assistance during this transition, they may reduce the candidate's desire to take retributory legal action.

After a candidate receives news of the denial decision, faculty leaders should encourage departmental colleagues to interact professionally with the candidate. Department chairs and faculty should consider making time for conversation and social interactions, so the candidate doesn't feel isolated. Faculty leaders should also ensure that unsuccessful candidates are not forced into awkward professional situations, such as recruiting students to an institution that just denied them tenure.

The bottom line

Given the decline in the number of tenured faculty and the recent challenges to the tenure format, faculty leaders have an increasing responsibility to make the right tenure decisions for their departments, in terms of both substance and process. By understanding these trends and best practices for tenure evaluations, faculty leaders can get the right faculty in the right seats and insulate their departments/institutions from burdensome legal actions.

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An introduction to people would be an appropriate title of a session between the exiting and entering chairs. What does the dean most value? How does one approach the dean with requests? What are the dean's top priorities? These are examples of questions where the answers may save the chair time and effort once on the job.

And then there are the all-important faculty members. The new chair has met them during the interview, at which times they were hopefully on their very best collective behavior. The insight gained by discussing each faculty member will allow the new chair to deal effectively with the "line at the door" phenomenon that takes place when new administrators arrive. It will also reveal who routinely acts in the best interests of the department, who are the top scholars, and who does the best job in the classroom as well as internal political issues such as factions supporting one position or another and individuals who just do not get along. With this information at hand, the chair can avoid assignment errors and can discern the motives behind some faculty behaviors.

In summary, chairs who will be leaving their administrative positions should plan ahead for their new roles and for providing their successors with information relevant to department performance, policies, practices, and culture.

This article first appeared in *Academic Leader* on June, 2015.

Providing Leadership and Support to Professionally Develop Adjunct Faculty

By Amy B. Harkins

Adjunct faculty may be the most overused and under-resourced groups of individuals in higher education. Many departments and courses would not function, or at least not function well, without adjunct faculty. Yet despite being in many cases essential members of a department, adjuncts receive modest pay, typically by the course and term. They often function on the periphery of a department or program with little if any attention paid them or their development as a faculty member. As the chair of a department that includes a variety of clinical health disciplines, my philosophy and approach are to involve adjunct faculty in the department and as members of the academic programs in which they teach. Investing in mentoring them as if they were full-time faculty members and supporting their development as educators can, I believe, provide valuable returns. In my department's case, the possibility that a current adjunct can become our next best full-time clinical faculty applicant should not be ignored. While not all department units may be structured in a way that would permit full-time hires, adjunct instruction may be foundational to the unit. Regardless of the department or the organizational structure, ultimately, one goal is that there should be no discernible differences in the quality of instruction between full-time and adjunct faculty.

I recognize that my departmental need of specialized clinical health professionals for adjunct instruction tends to fall on the side of the expert lecturer for upper-level and discipline-specific courses. However, I believe the same principles apply to the entry-level core and prerequisite courses that adjunct faculty teach at most institutions. To assist in hiring the appropriate individual as an adjunct faculty member, we rely on the networks established among our full-time faculty in the program, the department, and the college. The optimal adjunct faculty candidate is an appropriately credentialed expert on the course topic who has college teaching experience. If the individual has no college teaching experience, then providing professional development and teaching resources is essential. A content expert isn't necessarily good or natural at imparting the information students require. Those with formal teaching experience may have gained it by serving as a graduate TA, guest lecturing, or having previously been an adjunct faculty. Moreover, the best adjunct faculty candidates have a passion to teach and want to learn how to improve this craft. In my experience, the most highly engaged adjuncts are interested in giving back to their discipline and to students. Below, I discuss four ways that our program supports adjuncts.

Faculty peer-mentoring

When our department hires an adjunct faculty member to teach a course, the individual is paired with a program director or a faculty mentor (or both) who can assist with the daily needs for course delivery. The faculty mentor works closely with the new adjunct faculty to develop the course. The faculty mentor assists the adjunct in navigating the institutional systems of electronic publishing of the course and other didactic details for in-seat or online delivery, including the university's syllabi requirements and formats, and all policies and procedures relevant to the adjunct's needs. The department purchases books and printed or electronic resources for the adjunct. Established administrative staff support for student needs is quite beneficial; didactic support for classroom assistance, electronic exam preparation, and any other course material needs are also provided. All adjunct faculty should have access to an office, even if shared space, for teaching preparation and holding office hours as well as access to common spaces within the department or college for small group work. In some instances, access to office and common space may require a dean's approval.

Professional development and resources

Importantly, when I hire an adjunct faculty, I am sure to provide any needed professional development, including resources and chair support and mentoring. As opportunities arise in the campus teaching and learning center, it is important to nominate and support adjuncts who have an interest in additional training and pedagogical programming. I also recommend that each adjunct faculty new to teaching participate in available free training sessions on the curricular management systems and video systems for the classrooms. In addition, I help to identify opportunities to support adjunct faculty and their professional development. There is a high return in providing even small amounts of funding to offset expenses for an adjunct to attend a discipline-specific academic meeting. For example, I helped to defray the cost of an adjunct faculty member to attend a national pedagogical conference. This ad-

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junct faculty has subsequently redesigned the delivery of a human anatomy and physiology laboratory with augmented virtual reality, the first of its kind on our campus. While many of these resources can be provided by departmental funds, it is always necessary for a dean to have knowledge and to be supportive of the resources allocated to adjunct faculty members for their professional development.

Feedback for measurable improvement

While these resources are helpful, I believe that a primary way to develop adjunct faculty members is simply to make time for them. I make myself available through email and phone and in person. At the end of term, I meet individually with each adjunct to review how their course went and what they believe they should change and improve upon for the next term. Approximately once every three terms, I meet casually with the students to get feedback about the course and what they would like to see changed for the next set of students. While course evaluations have a place and provide some information, open conversation and direct interaction with students can provide even richer feedback. From students' verbal feedback and course evaluations, I review the course's strengths and weaknesses with the adjunct face-to-face, and together we review how to improve the course, what is working, and what additional instructional needs can be provided.

Inclusion

Lastly, as they're integral members of the department, I make certain that adjuncts feel valued. This is easily accomplished by invitations to departmental and group meetings when the topics are relevant, especially when an adjunct can provide needed input and perspective for topical meetings. We include adjunct faculty members in the department and programmatic work toward strategic goals, academic program reviews, and accreditation site visits. Inclusion in these activities is essential as adjuncts rarely have a prior understanding of the larger contextual aspects of higher education, which include curricular mapping, competencies, and accreditation requirements. All adjuncts are invited to department social events as social opportunities permit assimilation and integration regardless of a person's role. Inclusion builds a sense of community for and underscores the valuable contributions of adjunct faculty.

Adjunct faculty can substantially strengthen an academic program and pedagogical instruction. Investing even a small amount of time, resources, support, and mentoring toward adjuncts' professional development can guarantee an excellent learning experience for students. Professional development for adjuncts can allow them to become invested academic collaborators and, just possibly, the next best applicants in a faculty search.

This article first appeared in *Academic Leader* on March 2, 2020.

What Are You Doing to Survive the Enrollment Cliff?

By Laura McGee

Years after the publication of Nathan Grawe's 2017 book *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education*, there is still extensive discussion about how to best approach the impending enrollment cliff. Writing in *The CPA Journal*, Copley and Douthett (2020) cite research indicating that the college-age population will decrease by 15 percent between 2025 and 2029 as a result of the recession-related dip in the birthrate some 17 years earlier. Some types of institutions and some regions of the US will be hit harder hit than others. Institutions that have built a fiscal strategy on the assumption of steadily increasing enrollments will have a serious wake-up call.

As a department chair, what are you doing about it? Are you trembling in your shoes daily? Are you waiting for higher levels of administration to provide direction? Are you planning a premature exit—either from administration or from academia—so you don't have to deal with it?

Your institution may remain unscathed by the cliff, but you can by no means be sure. So take the reins and begin by imagining what will happen if enrollments do drop by 15 percent. What will likely happen to the staffing in your unit—and can you live with that?

If your institution is like many, you have faculty and staff at different ranks and levels of seniority, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. Who among them will likely remain if positions are cut? To what extent will your unit still be able to fulfill its mission? What will it be like to work there if certain positions—and people—leave (or are cut)? Will it still be a place you want to work?

These are of course extremely difficult questions. And yet preparing for the threat of reduction is far better than simply falling victim to it. There are perhaps ways that you can indeed shape the future of your unit. And even if things don't turn out as you would have liked, you will know that you applied forethought and were creative. There are many ways you can provide leadership in the face of the enrollment cliff. Let's consider three possible approaches.

Prepare some folks for retirement

This is a hot-button issue. At my institution, the word was "don't bring it up." And yet there may be folks who are near, at, or beyond retirement age and who persist at the university for various reasons. They may have adapted to the newest institutional priorities and may be productive members of your unit—or not. For those who may not be part of a more modest future at your institution, how can you help them see the bright side of retirement?

Genuinely see and believe in the bright side of retirement yourself

Get your own ducks in a row regarding finance and post-career fulfillment so that when you are ready to generate the topic in casual conversation, it is authentic. Academics have lots of opportunities to tuck away additional savings into 403bs and 457s. You can be ready before you ever thought possible. Read up on living retirement fully. Books like *What Color Is Your Parachute? for Retirement* by Nelson and Bolles (2010) provide helpful models for designing your life after retirement.

Provide information that makes retirement more attractive

If your human resources department is not proactively preparing employees for retirement, encourage them to do so. This can involve offering financial planning and retirement planning information. In a 2019 article in *Higher Ed Magazine*, Missy Kline makes the case for HR departments being integrally involved in high-level discussions about responses to the cliff. Another approach is to see whether you can collaborate with other department heads in your college to invite speakers in your fields who have transitioned to an active retirement, using their expertise to give back by serving on boards, mentoring, and consulting. Some may even be alumni. These role models will be inspiring—and the renewed connection to graduates can be a win-win.

Make your most vulnerable and valued faculty indispensable

Here's where you want to get really creative, because sometimes faculty members with the shortest tenure or an annually renewable position are highly productive. They are on top of their game, work well with others, show themselves to be flexible and innovative—and yet are lowest on the totem pole. You might lose them unless you find new ways for them to stimulate enrollments and generate revenue.

Two ways you can respond to the enrollment cliff are by finding new ways to reach the student population your institution is already trying to recruit, and by finding and generating new student

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populations you haven't reached in the past. Can you engage your most vulnerable faculty in these endeavors and demonstrate tangible outcomes of their reassignment? Here are two examples to stimulate your thinking.

Reach prospective students earlier and in a more personalized way through dual credit

In a blog post on CampusLogic, Lyquaia Purcell (n.d.) cites research showing that students who experience earlier and more personalized engagement are twice as likely apply to college. Dual credit offers you the opportunity to achieve this. You can reassign part of the load for a faculty member who is strong in teaching to expand dual-credit offerings. Many states pay the tuition for high school students who enroll in dual-credit courses at their schools. When your reassigned faculty member serves as a liaison to recruit, recommend for credentialing, and mentor high school teachers who offer dual credit in their schools through your department, you create a direct line of contact with teachers and their students. The high school teachers themselves are connected to your institution because you have recognized their expertise, and you provide them a service in the form of discipline-specific development. They subsequently feel good about recommending your institution. Your dual-credit liaison can communicate early and in a more personalized way with learners in the dual-credit courses than, for instance, a college recruiter who does not have the same knowledge about students and their interests.

Develop distinctive programs

Writing in *Academic Leader* in 2020, N. Douglas Lees argues for distinctive programs as an approach to surviving the recruitment challenge. Ron Wagner (2018), also in *Academic Leader*, touts a smaller version he calls "niche programs." What you can do: Work with a faculty member who would like to grow their skills as they develop a new, small-scale program. This could, for instance, take the form of a certificate for working professionals or an add-on certificate for undergraduates. Study projections for the future of careers in your discipline and industry needs in the region and use this information as a basis for your proposal. Not all parts of the program need be new. You might use some existing courses or collaborate with another unit to develop an interdisciplinary program. Alternatively, see whether you can develop noncredit programming that helps reach new student populations. For example, if your discipline leads also to teacher certification, you might assign the faculty member to create a chapter of Educators Rising to inspire high school students to go into teaching.

Ask for support in creating and rewarding a culture of adaptiveness

Speak the same language

Request from the levels above you a practice of consistent messaging and transparency. If everyone has the same information about budgetary and enrollment projections, there will be less of a burden on you to create a sense of urgency. You are more likely to see colleagues pulling together to respond effectively.

Shift reward systems

Changed circumstances require us to adapt. And yet if the reward systems around us stay the same, then there is little incentive to correct course. Ask the administrators above you for support in creating the change that your unit and the institution need to survive—and thrive. Work with your dean and the levels above them to generate ideas for recognizing and rewarding those who help steer past the cliff. This will change how you do things. The time to begin is now.

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The Equity Stakes in Student Evaluations of Teaching for Contingent Faculty

By Edna B. Chun and Alvin Evans

What are the equity stakes in student evaluations of teaching (SETs)? And how are these stakes intensified for minoritized contingent faculty in a two-tiered faculty system? This question is particularly salient given that today half of the instructional workforce is part time, with another 20 percent serving in full-time contingent roles. Because of the tenuous status of these contingent faculty appointments, student teaching evaluations can assume disproportionate impact. Due to a lack of employment security and often semester-to-semester appointments, SETs can weigh heavily in reemployment decisions and career progression.

Consider in this regard how Sara, an Asian American full-time contingent faculty member at an elite Western university describes how minoritized faculty must compensate for bias in student evaluations of teaching:

> *As anyone knows, teaching evaluations are skewed and . . . full of racial and gender bias. But the university continues to use them. . . . And so in that sense, I think that's unfair, because we know that hurts women in general. . . . we know that evaluations work against us, so we have to make an extra effort to make sure that students enjoy our class. . . . So I would put myself in the category of women and minorities who, in a sense, have to try to compensate for race and gender bias in student evaluations.*

The American Sociological Association's landmark statement on SETs (2019), which 17 scholarly associations have endorsed, cites an increasing body of evidence that the use of SETs in personnel decisions is problematic. Studies indicate only a weak correlation with student learning and teaching effectiveness. Moreover, as the statement indicates, a number of observational and experimental studies have found SETs to reflect bias against women and faculty of color. For example, Black and Asian faculty members tend to be evaluated less positively than white faculty, particularly by students who are white men.

With these findings in mind, consider also a meta-analysis of 100 articles that identifies two significant areas of concern with SETs: *measurement bias* based on the weak correlation with student learning and teaching effectiveness and equity bias based on variables outside of an instructor's control that include demographic differences such as race and ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation (Kreitzer & Sweet-Cushman, 2022). A significant difficulty with SETs relates to the seemingly empirical nature of the data that can mask underlying biases and prejudices. Yet due to its reliance on numerical scores, the SET frequently serves as a quick evaluative instrument. In this regard, Sara describes the use of SETs by department chairs as a quick comparative mechanism:

> *You know they'd rather just have a number. This is your student evaluation number and that's how we compare you against everyone else, and decide whether you're worth promoting or not. And so I think this system is fundamentally unfair and problematic.*

From a conceptual standpoint, the visibility of dimensions of difference in the classroom can give rise to considerations of *role (in)congruity* for minoritized faculty who may not be seen as fulfilling the prototype of the model instructor. Equally problematic is the fact that the standards of evaluation are not fixed but essentially shifting as judgments are made to a reference point such as white males (Chavez & Mitchel, 2019). From this perspective, researchers point out that minoritized individuals can be placed in a "double bind" or face pressures due to the need to fulfill rather than disrupt prescriptive stereotypical expectations as well as the conflicting demands of their professional role. Women, for example, are expected to be more helpful, sensitive, and kind while men are usually seen as more agentic, assertive, and independent (Chávez & Mitch-

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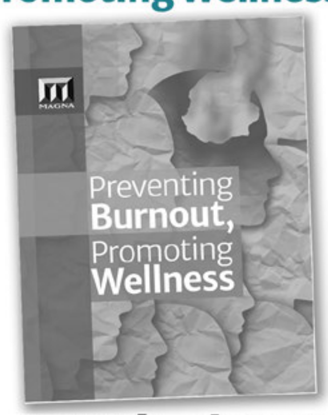
Preventing Burnout, Promoting Wellness



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ell; MacNell et al, 2015). Equity bias also brings into play the complexity arising from the intersectionality of minoritized identities. With an equity framework in mind, institutions can begin to address the ways they can modify and reconfigure organizational processes to address inequality and create more inclusive learning environments.

In our forthcoming book, *The Challenges of Minoritized Contingent Faculty in Higher Education* (Purdue University Press), we document through first-person narratives the intensification of pressure for minoritized contingent faculty to prove themselves due to the double jeopardy of being a minoritized faculty member in a contingent status. Of great concern is the trend in higher education toward treating students as customers, whereby the learning process can be commodified and redirected toward delivering customer service. From this vantage point, faculty can appear more as entertainers than facilitators, and contingent faculty may be more reluctant to introduce difficult topics or give lower grades due to their tenuous employment status. As Nora, a disabled white transgender full-time contingent faculty member at an Eastern public research university, explains,

> *This student wields a certain amount of power, and you want to maintain your integrity, of course, but you are worried that they could go up the chain and complain about this to your chair, to your dean, God forbid to your provost. And so I've had students start at the level of the president, you know, with different concerns. . . . and here's the thing where you have to be concerned about grading, when you belong to these marginalized groups and when you're a contingent faculty member.*

Clearly, with the goal of student learning at the forefront, the potential for measurement and equity bias in SETs is an important consideration for academic leaders. Recognition that SETs describe student perceptions and experiences rather than necessarily provide valid, empirical measures of teaching effectiveness or learning is an important step. As academic leaders consider more holistic and inclusive measures of teaching effectiveness, one intervention can involve informing students of the potential for bias and department heads of the need to consider this possibility. According to a recent study, informing students of the potential for biases affected ratings of female professors upward by a half-point in a five-point scale (Peterson et al, 2019). From an overall institutional perspective, addressing both the measurement and equity aspects of the student evaluation process through evidence-based, holistic assessment will not only strengthen student learning outcomes but also contribute to a more inclusive academic climate.

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Creating an Academic Culture of Working to Live

By Tania B. Basta

I'm often asked how I succeed at managing work-life balance—or as I call it, "life-work balance"—and it stems from my childhood. My parents both worked as educators, and both were highly successful in their respective careers. But one was able to balance work with hobbies and self-care, while the other was not able to "turn it off." I didn't realize until just recently what a major effect this had on me. I always knew that I didn't want my career to consume me, but then I joined the academic world, which as we all know often perpetuates the sense of needing to work all the time (and feeling guilty when we aren't doing so).

I majored in exercise science, and after graduation, I worked in and eventually managed a wellness center for a large corporation in the late 1990s. During this time, I learned that the corporate world offered wellness benefits, not because they were more altruistic than other sectors but because they knew that for every dollar they invested in health prevention activities, they would save up to three in healthcare claims. I ended up working for a few years in corporate wellness before returning to college to earn a master of public health (MPH) and PhD in health promotion and behavior. After starting an assistant professor position in 2006, my research interests deviated to HIV and AIDS prevention, but I never lost interest in workplace health.

Fast forward 15 years to the summer of 2021. I had just finished my first two years as dean of the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) at a midsize public institution. I was driving home from my first work trip since the pandemic began and thinking about how to help our students transition to college after their unusual high school experiences. I had witnessed my own children and the habits they'd created as result of the pandemic and figured students of all ages were likely struggling mentally, physically, emotionally, socially, and more. I also thought back to my own experience as an undergrad almost 30 years ago, when I struggled to get connected to activities on campus. It occurred to me that even though students today were connected via technology, they may still struggle to find activities and resources on campus (especially after so much isolation during the pandemic). Then I reflected on our college mission: we prepare students "to increase the quality of life in their communities and beyond," yet we weren't teaching them to increase their own quality of life. How could they take care of others without first learning how to take care of themselves? When all these thoughts converged, the CHHS Student Wellness Experience was born.

> *"[Navigators] don't duplicate services on campus, but they help students find the resources they need and fill in the gaps."*

The purpose of this program is twofold: (1) to increase the quality of life of our students by teaching them about self-care before they enter high-stress careers and (2) to connect students with campus activities and resources so they feel engaged on campus. To operationalize this, we hired two-full time professional staff in 2022, our student wellness navigators, to work with the first-years to help them transition in a healthy manner from high school to college. The navigators teach a one-credit-hour class, Enhancing the Quality of Life in the Health and Human Services, where they teach first-years about the 10 dimensions of wellness and how to engage in activities that correlate with those dimensions. The navigators also meet with students and refer them to appropriate resources on campus. In fact, faculty and staff can refer a student to a navigator, then the navigator will reach out to the student to assess challenges and barriers and make appropriate referrals. They don't duplicate services on campus, but they help students find the resources they need and fill in the gaps.

We pilot tested this program during the 2022–23 academic year and have collected one year of qualitative process data. For example, last spring, one student wasn't turning in assignments and was being bullied by her roommate. Her professor referred her anonymously to one of our navigators. After the meeting with the navigator, the student was able to move to a different dorm room and learn better time-management skills. She made all As last semester, was on the president's list, and returned to campus this fall.

Other examples include walking a student to the math department to borrow a calculator for an exam. Some of the interventions are quite simple but

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make a big difference for a struggling student. And, new for 2023–24, students are using Suitable, a smartphone app that allows them to track their wellness activities to earn badges based on the 10 dimensions of wellness as well as allow us to collect additional data.

Now, recall that I started my public health career in worksite wellness in the late ’90s, so it hit me in summer 2022 that faculty and staff were struggling as much as, if not more than, our students. We needed to do something to help them take care of themselves as well. So, we created the CHHS Faculty and Staff Wellness Hour.

With the support of our HR director and provost, we pilot tested the CHHS Wellness Hour, which allows faculty and staff to take one paid hour per day (in addition to lunch hour) to perform an activity that correlates with one of the 10 dimensions of wellness. We collected data this past year; faculty and staff who participated in the Wellness Hour were statistically more likely to report an intention to continue working for our college as well as report a better working environment.

In a landscape where jobs are competitive and we can’t compete with pay in other industries, we must provide life-work balance to increase our recruitment and retention and create an overall culture of wellness for our faculty, staff, and students. And if we commit to making small changes, we might just change the academic culture of “living to work” to “working to live.”

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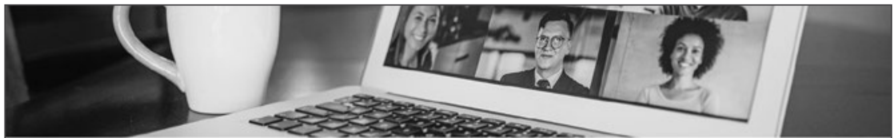

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