



Faculty Tenure-Flow Rates: 2006 Annual Report

Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
and
Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment

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Introduction

2006 marks the ninth consecutive year in which Penn State has analyzed the rates at which its provisionally appointed faculty achieve tenure. Tabulations are shared annually with Penn State’s deans and with the University Faculty Senate.

Distribution of Penn State Faculty

Penn State employs over 5,000 full-time faculty members (headcount including lecturers, librarians and research faculty). Of these, about 2,900 are either tenured or on the tenure track. The following data are University-wide counts for full-time faculty in fall 2005.

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Tenured | 1,991 | (39%) |
| Provisional | 900 | (18%) |
| <u>Other</u> | <u>2,176</u> | <u>(43%)</u> |
| Total | 5,067 | (100%) |

(Source: Penn State, 2006)

Tenure-Track Progression of Assistant Professors

As shown in Table 1, in any given year, about 100 to 180 faculty members enter provisional status at Penn State. For the last nine entering cohorts -- that is, those beginning in 1990 through 1998 -- 55 percent of new entrants had received tenure by the end of their seventh year on the tenure track.

Table 1 also shows tenure rates by gender and minority status. Tenure rates for females have been lower than for males (47 percent and 59 percent). Tenure rates for minority faculty have been lower than for non-minority faculty (51 percent and 56 percent) going back to 1990.

Table 2 summarizes information collected through a special one-off data exchange among ten peer universities that participate in the American Association of Universities Data Exchange (AAUDE). In keeping with the AAUDE agreement, individual institutions are not identified alongside their data in Table 2. However, it is permissible to note which institutions are included. They are Northwestern, Penn State, Rutgers, Michigan, and the universities of Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Pittsburgh, and Wisconsin. In all cases, except for Penn State, the data are for a single (main) campus.

As Table 2 shows, Penn State’s tenure rate of 55 percent is about in the mid-range of this group of universities, for which the average rate is 53 percent. Also, the male-to-female and minority-to-non-minority patterns at Penn State are basically similar to the patterns reported by these peer institutions.

Table 3 shows that the large majority of college-level reviews are consistent with the recommendations coming from departments and campuses. For example, in the 2004-05 academic year, 86 percent to 96 percent of the second- and fourth- and sixth-year cases reviewed at the college level resulted in recommendations for continuation or early tenure. The same pattern has been shown in earlier versions of this report (for example, Penn State 2005a). Historically, the percentages of positive recommendations at the college level have usually been in the low-80s to mid-90s. This has been true whether in reference to decisions about candidates overall, to males or females, or to minorities and non-minorities, and across the years of review (that is, second- or fourth- or sixth-year reviews).

Prior annual versions of this report have also clearly shown that the approval percentage at the university level has almost always been over 90 percent. In other words, outcomes at the university level are very consistent with the recommendations that the university committee and the president receive. This year is no exception to that pattern, with a rate of 99 percent at the university level. Ninety-five dossiers for promotion and tenure (that is, to associate professor or the equivalent library or research ranks) were forwarded to the university committee. The committee recommended 94 of these for promotion and tenure, and the president approved all 94 cases.

Tables 1, Table 2, and Table 3 only indicate whether faculty members received tenure; they do not explain why things happened. Many individuals leave voluntarily, not necessarily because they were denied tenure. Penn State has been exploring some of those matters via an annual faculty exit survey and interview process, conducted since 1997. That study shows that departing female faculty are younger (age 45 versus age 54) than their male counterparts, and that females are more likely than males (50 percent versus 30 percent) to leave because of a more attractive position elsewhere. A complete report on that project is available online (Penn State, 2005b).

Definitions. Each cohort in Table 1 includes new entrants into provisional status. So, for example, ABDs hired initially into a fixed-term position are included in a tenure cohort for the year in which they formally entered the tenure track. The cohorts also include library faculty of equivalent rank. Table 1 tracks cohorts *through* the seventh year – that is, one year past the normal tenure-decision point. This accounts for individuals who temporarily “stopped the clock” for one year (for example, for medical reasons). Typically there are 6 to 12 such individuals, University-wide, in any year’s cohort.

Penn State’s Information in a National Context

As we continue to build on past annual reports to the Senate on this topic, it is probably most helpful to briefly summarize main themes of reviews in the past and to point out new threads that seem to be emerging in the literature.

Earlier Annual Versions of this Report. Last year’s report included a fairly extensive literature review along with a summary of the findings from institutional research reports from seven other research universities. The conclusion to that report stated the following (Penn State 2005a, pp. 4-5):

Direct institutional comparisons for Penn State’s tenure-flow profile have, for the most part, not been readily identifiable. Definitions and methodologies do vary somewhat among the peer institution studies that have been found, and conclusions can vary considerably based on parameters established for particular analyses.... Comparative tenure rates appear to in the range of about 40 percent to about 70 percent. The picture is mixed on the effects of gender; in some cases, women are tenured at higher rates, and in others at lower rates. With one exception, ... the peer institution studies reviewed here did not relate differences in tenure rates to minority/non-minority status.

Again, the comparisons are imprecise, but Penn State’s overall tenure rates appear to fall about in the mid-range of available benchmarks.

Emerging Threads Nationally. We are struck by two ideas that recently seem to be gaining some energy in national conversations related to tenure flow.

First, questions and discussions on the topic of academic career progression are especially vital and current in relation to personal and family considerations. Recent articles in *Academe* on “Do Babies Matter?” (Mason & Goulden, 2002; Mason & Goulden, 2004) and the “Bias Against Caregiving” (Drago, Colbeck, Stauffer, Pirretti, Burkum, Fazioli, Lazarro & Habasevich, 2005) are among those bringing attention to issues around the intersection of family decisions and academic careers. As already noted, there is an absence of large, multi-institution datasets that researchers could, ideally, use to fully address research questions in these topics. Nonetheless, the emerging literature is raising challenging questions. The cogent and interesting analyses cited above point toward some troubling differences in average age at tenure for various groups, and suggest that having a family may slow the career progress of female faculty members.

Second, while more researchers are beginning to pay attention to these topics, it remains true that most institutions cannot answer this basic, faculty, straightforward question: “What proportion of your new assistant professors achieves tenure?” Also, as far as we know, there are no national-level mechanisms or reporting conventions for sharing information on tenure flow (Dooris & Guidos, forthcoming). As noted above, for the first time a subset of the American Association of Universities has, albeit on an *ad hoc* basis, exchanged data about tenure success rates, and more scholars are addressing these matters. In short, there still is a gap, but greater awareness and better data may be starting to emerge.

References

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Table 1. Tracking Cohorts Entering the Tenure-Track through Seven Years

| Cohort Year | All Entrants | | | Female | | | Male | | | Minority | | | Non-Minority | | |
|---------------|--------------|---------|------|----------|---------|------|----------|---------|------|----------|---------|------|--------------|---------|------|
| | Entrants | Tenured | Rate | Entrants | Tenured | Rate | Entrants | Tenured | Rate | Entrants | Tenured | Rate | Entrants | Tenured | Rate |
| 1990 | 121 | 70 | 58% | 40 | 19 | 48% | 81 | 51 | 63% | 18 | 9 | 50% | 103 | 61 | 59% |
| 1991 | 93 | 55 | 59% | 30 | 15 | 50% | 63 | 40 | 63% | 8 | 5 | 63% | 85 | 50 | 59% |
| 1992 | 151 | 89 | 59% | 55 | 28 | 51% | 96 | 61 | 64% | 29 | 15 | 52% | 122 | 74 | 61% |
| 1993 | 103 | 55 | 53% | 31 | 12 | 39% | 72 | 43 | 60% | 17 | 8 | 47% | 86 | 47 | 55% |
| 1994 | 134 | 63 | 47% | 50 | 17 | 34% | 84 | 46 | 55% | 21 | 6 | 29% | 113 | 57 | 50% |
| 1995 | 127 | 70 | 55% | 53 | 30 | 57% | 74 | 40 | 54% | 23 | 17 | 74% | 104 | 53 | 51% |
| 1996 | 91 | 45 | 49% | 29 | 12 | 41% | 62 | 33 | 53% | 22 | 12 | 55% | 69 | 33 | 48% |
| 1997 | 160 | 87 | 54% | 52 | 25 | 48% | 108 | 62 | 57% | 28 | 15 | 55% | 132 | 72 | 55% |
| 1998 | 183 | 107 | 58% | 75 | 38 | 51% | 108 | 69 | 64% | 44 | 21 | 49% | 139 | 86 | 62% |
| Totals | 1163 | 641 | 55% | 415 | 196 | 47% | 748 | 445 | 59% | 210 | 108 | 51% | 953 | 533 | 56% |

This analysis covers tenure decisions through the seventh year. Therefore, tenure rates include individuals who "stopped the clock" for one year. Typically, there are 6 to 12 such individuals, University-wide, in any year's cohort. This table summarizes data for Penn State including Hershey, but excluding PCT and DSL.

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**Table 2. Tenure Achievement Rates From Selected Association of American Universities Institutions
1997-98 Tenure Track Entrants Achievement of Tenure by 2004-05 (main campuses only, except PSU data)**

| University | All Entrants | | | Female Entrants | | | Male Entrants | | | Minority | | | Non-Minority | | |
|----------------|--------------|------------|------------|-----------------|------------|------------|---------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| | Entrants | Tenured | Rate | Entrants | Tenured | Rate | Entrants | Tenured | Rate | Entrants | Tenured | Rate | Entrants | Tenured | Rate |
| A | 87 | 29 | 33% | 34 | 9 | 26% | 53 | 20 | 38% | 7 | 4 | 57% | 80 | 25 | 31% |
| B | 62 | 29 | 47% | 26 | 10 | 38% | 34 | 19 | 56% | 9 | 3 | 33% | 53 | 26 | 49% |
| C | 129 | 62 | 48% | 41 | 18 | 44% | 88 | 44 | 50% | 26 | 14 | 54% | 103 | 48 | 47% |
| D | 89 | 43 | 48% | 36 | 16 | 44% | 53 | 27 | 51% | 28 | 11 | 39% | 61 | 32 | 52% |
| E | 61 | 32 | 52% | 29 | 13 | 45% | 32 | 19 | 59% | 17 | 8 | 47% | 44 | 24 | 55% |
| F (Penn State) | 160 | 87 | 54% | 52 | 25 | 48% | 108 | 62 | 57% | 28 | 15 | 54% | 132 | 72 | 55% |
| G | 40 | 22 | 55% | 18 | 10 | 56% | 22 | 12 | 55% | 7 | 5 | 71% | 33 | 17 | 52% |
| H | 630 | 352 | 56% | 236 | 123 | 52% | 394 | 229 | 58% | | | | | | |
| I | 41 | 25 | 61% | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| J | 83 | 56 | 67% | 38 | 23 | 61% | 45 | 33 | 73% | 16 | 7 | 44% | 67 | 49 | 73% |
| All | 1382 | 737 | 53% | 510 | 247 | 48% | 829 | 465 | 56% | 138 | 67 | 49% | 573 | 293 | 51% |

*Excludes Medical School faculty

**Includes tenure-track entrants between 1986-1991 and tenure achievement through 8 years.

***Gender figures do not add to total because two are "Unknown".

**Table 3. Second, Fourth, and Sixth-Year Tenure Decisions, 2004-05
College Level Reviews & Recommendations**

| | Total | | | Men | | | Women | | | Minority | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | 2nd Year | 4th Year | 6th Year | 2nd Year | 4th Year | 6th Year | 2nd Year | 4th Year | 6th Year | 2nd Year | 4th Year | 6th Year |
| a. # of cases reviewed | 113 | 140 | 107 | 63 | 86 | 60 | 50 | 54 | 47 | 24 | 33 | 20 |
| b. # with continuation recommended | 109 | 121 | 95 | 61 | 75 | 54 | 48 | 46 | 41 | 24 | 27 | 15 |
| c. # forwarded for early tenure (subset of line a) | 5 | 13 | n/a | 3 | 9 | n/a | 2 | 4 | n/a | 1 | 4 | n/a |
| % with "positive" recommendations | 96% | 86% | 89% | 97% | 87% | 90% | 96% | 85% | 87% | 100% | 82% | 75% |

This table summarizes data for Penn State including Hershey, but excluding PCT and DSL.

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