



Faculty Tenure-Flow Rates: 2009-10 Annual Report

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

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Introduction

For the past thirteen years, Penn State has analyzed the rates at which its provisionally appointed faculty members 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, 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 2009.

Tenured	2,181	(38.7%)
Provisional	782	(13.9%)
<u>Other</u>	<u>2,672</u>	<u>(47.4%)</u>
Total	5,635	(100.0%)

(Source: Penn State, 2010)

Tenure-Track Progression of Assistant Professors

In any given year, about 150 faculty members enter provisional status at Penn State. Table 1 shows the tenure achievement rates for entering cohorts for whom sufficient time has passed to allow outcomes to be observed. Specifically, tenure rates in Table 1 are calculated from the time of appointment through the seventh year (which allows for the handful of individuals who “stop the clock” during the provisional period). For the last thirteen entering cohorts -- that is, those beginning in 1990 through 2002 -- 57 percent of new entrants had received tenure by the end of their seventh year. Of course, this does not mean that 43 percent were denied tenure, since assistant professors leave the tenure track for many reasons.

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Table 1 also shows tenure rates by gender and minority status. For the thirteen cohorts combined, tenure rates for minority faculty have been lower than for non-minority faculty (53 percent and 58 percent). Tenure rates for females have been lower than for males (51 percent and 61 percent). The total number of entrants for each group is 372 minority faculty members, 1,531 non-minority faculty members, 703 females, and 1,200 males.

National higher education databases do not normally include tenure achievement rates. Table 2 summarizes information collected several years ago through a special one-time data exchange among ten peer universities that participate in the American Association of Universities Data Exchange (AAUDE). The institutions 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 54 percent (N=160) for the AAUDE cohort study is typical for this group of universities, for which the average rate was 53 percent (N=1,382). The male-to-female and minority-to-non-minority patterns at Penn State were also similar to the patterns reported by peer institutions.

Comparative data on tenure success rates are limited, but apparent disparities in tenure rates probably reflect substantive differences across academic units as much as or more than differences by demographic groups, for two reasons: first, demographic groups are distributed differently across academic units, and second, tenure rates are substantially different by discipline. The 2008 version of this annual report to the University Faculty Senate (Penn State, 2008a) placed Penn State's data in context with the results of a 2007 survey of over 1,300 modern language departments in 734 colleges and universities conducted by the Modern Language Association. In brief, tenure rates were quite low, around 35 percent, in fields represented by the MLA – fields which include relatively large numbers of female faculty members. Penn State's data showed that tenure rates are considerably higher in science and engineering, which employ proportionately fewer female faculty members, and that tenure rates are virtually identical for the men and women in those disciplines.

Prior annual versions of this report (Penn State 2005; Penn State 2006a; Penn State 2007; Penn State 2008a; Penn State 2009) have shown that the approval percentage at the University level has almost always been over 90 percent. Table 3 enables more detailed comparison on outcomes at multiple review levels than did earlier versions.

The large majority of upper-level reviews at Penn State are consistent with the recommendations coming from departments and campuses. Final outcomes have historically been consistent with the recommendations that the University committee and the president receive. In fact, in 2006-07, in 2007-2008, and in 2008-09, the President approved 100 percent of the cases that came to him with positive recommendations from the University committee.

Table 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 47 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. Those gender differences have been evident every year over the past decade in which the exit interview process has been in place. A complete report on that project is available online (Penn State, 2008b).

Perspectives

It is not surprising that, given the challenges facing colleges and universities in recent years, ever more attention is being paid to how the academic workforce is structured and organized, and to current and future tenure practices. Ideas being discussed, and to some extent being adopted, include greater movement toward different tracks and/or appointment types (such as clinical/teaching professors); changing assumptions about tenure homes to include units such as interdisciplinary centers; increased flexibility on stop-outs and the tenure clock (for example, to allow tenure-track assistant professors to temporarily switch to part-time status to cope with family circumstances); broader definitions of the types of evidence accepted in tenure decisions; granting tenure for a specific time period; variable-length probationary periods; and offering faculty members an option to choose between a salary premium or tenure; and more (Mason, 2009; Trower, 2009).

There are indications of efforts to move toward new types of contracts while improving the status of contingent faculty. In the British university system, the government ended academic tenure for new employees beginning in 1988, with passage of the Higher Education Reform Act. In the United Kingdom (and in Ireland and Australia, which operate roughly similar systems), there is now much greater reliance on multiyear or open-ended contracts for PhD instructors and researchers (Monk, Dooris & Erickson, 2009).

References

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Definitions. Each cohort in Table 1 includes new entrants into provisional status. So, for example, ABDs who may have been 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. As already briefly noted, 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

Table 1. Tracking Cohorts Entering the Tenure-Track Thorough Seven Years at Penn State.

Cohort Entry 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	54%	132	72	55%
1998	183	107	58%	75	38	51%	108	69	64%	44	21	49%	139	86	62%
1999	178	113	63%	63	38	60%	115	75	65%	34	19	56%	144	94	65%
2000	190	114	60%	72	36	50%	118	78	66%	31	16	52%	159	98	62%
2001	183	106	58%	77	46	60%	106	60	57%	41	26	63%	142	80	56%
2002	189	117	62%	76	44	58%	113	73	65%	56	30	54%	133	87	65%
1990-2002 Cohorts	1903	1091	57%	703	360	51%	1200	731	61%	372	199	53%	1531	892	58%

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.

Prior to 1997, the cohorts included University Park, Behrend, Capital, and Hershey and excluded other locations. Beginning with the 1997 cohort, the table summarizes data for all of Penn State except for Penn College of Technology and Dickinson School of Law.

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**Table 2. Tenure Achievement Rates from Participating Association of American Universities Data Exchange Institutions
1997-98 Tenure Track Entrants Achievement of Tenure by 2004-05 (except for Penn State, these are main campuses only and exclusive of medical schools)**

	All Entrants			Female Entrants			Male Entrants			Minority			Non-Minority		
	Entrants	Tenured	Rate	Entrants	Tenured	Rate	Entrants	Tenured	Rate	Entrants	Tenured	Rate	Entrants	Tenured	Rate
Penn State	160	87	54%	52	25	48%	108	62	57%	28	15	54%	132	72	55%
10 AAUDE¹	1382	737	53%	510	247	48%	829	465	56%	138	67	49%	573	293	51%

1. Counts and averages for 10 AAUDE universities are inclusive of Penn State data.

**Table 3. Second, Fourth and Sixth-Year Tenure Cases, 2008-09
Reviews and Recommendations at Selected Levels**

	Campus Chancellor (14 University College Campuses)	Department/Division/ School Head	College Dean/Sr VP Research/VP Comm Campuses (14 Univ College Campuses)/Chancellor (5 Campus Colleges)	University Final Decision
Year 2				
# of cases reviewed	20	110	131	0
# of positive recommendations	20	109	130	0
% positive recommendations	100%	99%	99%	--
Year 4				
# of cases reviewed	8	84	92	0
# of positive recommendations	5	80	84	0
% positive recommendations	63%	95%	91%	--
Year 6 and Early Tenure				
# of cases reviewed	24	73	93	79
# of positive recommendations	17	67	79	77
% positive recommendations	71%	92%	85%	97%

1. This table summarizes data for Penn State including Hershey, but excluding PCT.
2. This table presents data only for the normally sequenced (second, fourth, and sixth-year) reviews. Usually, only an additional five or so cases per year are dealt with out of the normal sequence (that is, as third or fifth-year reviews).
3. Given the many possible paths through the review process (e.g., with campus committees, department, division, and school committees, college committees, the University committee), not every combination can be represented. Table 3 presents the most common decision points in the tenure review process.

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