

2.3 TENURE

University Criteria

In 1983, the Faculty Council of Representatives (the forerunner of the current Faculty Senate) adopted a resolution expressing its concern for affirmative action in tenure appointments. Subsequently, the resolution was incorporated into the University Criteria for Tenure Appointments as follows:

It is not possible to establish, at the university level, detailed criteria for tenure appointments for the many academic units in the university. The basic criteria are clear: excellence in carrying out the responsibilities of the position, and unusual promise for continued achievement. Since the requirements and criteria of a department may change, each decision is a separate action and independent of any other current or previous decisions within or outside the department.

The responsibilities of a faculty member include teaching, research and other scholarly achievement, public service, advising students, and contributing to the department, the college, and the university. Not all faculty members are assigned all these responsibilities. The emphasis given to each responsibility, as determined by existing circumstances, varies among the colleges and departments of the university and may change within a department.

The department, the chairperson, and the dean have the responsibility of weighing the different roles of each faculty member and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates for tenure, taking into account the mission and needs of the department and the college. These include the interests of the unit and the university to promote racial, ethnic and gender diversity among the faculty. But regardless of how the department weighs the relevant factors in any particular case, no candidate may be granted tenure who does not meet the requirements for overall excellence. Failure to meet any of the diversity factors may not be used as a negative element in the evaluation of any candidate.

Given the rigorous standards for tenure at Cornell, individuals whose performance has been acceptable, or even of high quality, may not receive promotion. Many candidates for tenure, in evaluating their own progress, often develop unrealistically positive attitudes relative to their chances for promotion. On the other hand, across the university, only about one-half of the candidates for tenure are promoted.

Since a tenure appointment is not a right, and since it could result in a collegial relationship within the department for a period of decades, the department faculty has considerable latitude in reasons for making a negative recommendation. However, such factors as race, color, creed, religion, national or ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability must not be a basis for such decisions.