

Thoughts on Academic Tenure

by

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The academic tenure system defines the employment of faculty in most higher-level educational institutions in the United States. Tenure commonly refers to academic employment systems in which faculty members in universities and colleges are granted the right not to be fired from their jobs without cause, after they go through an initial probationary period during which they prove themselves worthy. In some districts, primary and secondary school teachers have tenure as well.

The concept of tenure was officially codified under the auspices of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in a statement issued by them in 1940^[i]. This statement has been endorsed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and by dozens of other academic and professional organizations. Most colleges and universities have wording somewhere in their by-laws or regulations saying that they abide by the principles listed in the AAUP statement. University administrations that violate the principles of tenure described in the 1940 statement can be placed on AAUP's censure list. Censure is basically only a shaming process—it doesn't have any legal standing, but the resulting bad publicity can make it difficult for censured administrations to recruit new faculty members.

Tenure systems, under which job security is guaranteed during good behavior, are rather rare in American society, and are generally restricted to the federal career civil service, the federal judiciary, and to more senior academics, although the senior partners in a law firm sometimes do have a level of job protection that is somewhat analogous to academic tenure. Employees in most American corporations or private businesses are said to be “at-will”, which means that either the employer or the employee can terminate the relationship at any time with no legal liability. This means that at-will corporate employees can be fired or laid off at a moment's notice for almost any reason--except for certain federally-mandated categories such as race, gender, age, national origin, or religion--or even for no reason at all^[ii]. Consequently, there is little or no job security in corporate America, and there is absolutely no protection against arbitrary dismissal--an employee can be ordered to clean out their desk and leave at any time with no reason being given.

However, tenured faculty members are given a great deal of protection against arbitrary dismissals and they can only be terminated for valid cause. In order to fire a tenured professor, the college or university must be able to show a valid reason for the termination, one which will stand up in court if a lawsuit is filed. A lot of people think that tenure offers absolute job security, but this is not entirely accurate. A tenured professor can still be terminated, but it has to be for a valid reason, and there must be a recognized disciplinary procedure in place with due process guarantees and an opportunity for the accused to present a defense.

Tenure systems in academe are usually justified by the claim that they are necessary to provide **academic freedom**. Academic freedom is thought by its proponents to be critically important to the mission of a college or university: the discovery of new knowledge, the study and criticism of intellectual or cultural traditions, and the teaching and education of students so that they may become creative and productive citizens in a democracy. Free inquiry and free speech within the academic community are thought to be necessary to achieve these goals. The principle of academic freedom means that no political, intellectual, or religious orthodoxy can be imposed on faculty or students by administrators, by trustees, by legislators, or by outside political or religious authorities. This means that faculty must be free to do research about any

subject they choose and must be free to discuss the results of their research in the classroom as well as in public forums outside the university. This freedom must include the right to do research and publish information about controversial matters, including those that might irritate and upset academic administrators, powerful political and religious authorities, media demagogues, wealthy donors, or trustees.

Perhaps the most effective guarantor of academic freedom is the general principle of faculty tenure, which holds that instructors having tenure are not vulnerable to being dismissed from their jobs without cause, especially not for openly dissenting with educational or political authorities or with popular opinion. Although most academic institutions say in their rules and regulations that academic freedom applies equally to all their faculty members, it is probably fair to say that the only truly effective way to preserve academic freedom for the faculty is to provide them with the job protection that tenure offers. Without tenure, an abusive or reactionary university administration could fire their faculty members for just about any reason, including the holding or expressing of unpopular or unconventional views in their teaching and research. It is a rare person who can express unpopular or controversial political or religious views if doing so means running the risk of losing one's job. During periods of high national tension or during wartime, instructors or researchers who talk about or study certain controversial subjects can be subjected to a groundswell of public outrage calling for their dismissal, and the presence of tenure is a welcome protection against these pressures.

AAUP rules do allow for some exceptions to academic freedom—courses should stick to the relevant material and should not wander off into extraneous and irrelevant matters. Academic freedom doesn't mean that you should be able, for example, to use your mathematics class as a platform to rant about your political or religious views. The students in your class are a captive audience and shouldn't be forced to hear your views on controversial subjects unless they are actually relevant to the course. While teaching their class, the instructor should stick to the published catalog course description. If there are several sections of the same course, it is quite reasonable and appropriate to insist that there be some degree of uniformity between the sections, that the faculty teach from a common syllabus and use the same textbook.

There are some private institutions that do restrict academic freedom on the basis of religious creed. The primary examples are schools and colleges which are set up and run by a particular church or religion. These schools sometimes hire only faculty who are members of the faith and who are willing to declare allegiance to it. Faculty who express dissenting view to the faith, either in the classroom or in public, can be terminated. Sometimes faculty members at such schools are required to sign an agreement that they will abide by the moral and spiritual principles of the faith in their personal lives, and if they violate any of these provisions they can be terminated. However, such schools have the obligation to be explicit in their by-laws and regulations about the scope and nature of these restrictions.

Tenure is also a valuable aid in preserving and protecting the professionalism and independence of the faculty. In most higher education institutions, faculty members are regarded as being something more than just employees--they are also regarded as independent and self-sufficient professionals who have a substantial amount of autonomy in determining how they perform their jobs. Faculty members are trusted by the administration to do their jobs competently and professionally, in an atmosphere of minimal supervision free from bosses and supervisors constantly looking over their shoulders. Faculty members are entitled to teach their courses or perform their research the way they think is most appropriate, not the way the department head, the school administration, or outside individuals think they should. Faculty members should have the freedom to choose their textbooks, to select their course materials, and to organize their course syllabi and order of delivery the way they think is most appropriate. Faculty should be able to choose the research topics that they are most interested in, not those that the administration wants them to follow. Students should have freedom of inquiry and should have access to the full range of available information and should be able to develop and practice critical thinking skills in a classroom environment free from intimidation, harassment, and censorship. Faculty members should be able to assign student grades based

solely on achievement and mastery of the material, free from political influence and free from business or financial constraints or threats of lawsuits. Faculty members should be able to resist the latest educational fads that come down from the administration, and not be forced to incorporate them into their classes where not appropriate. The long-term job security that tenure offers is probably the most effective tool available to preserve the professional integrity of the faculty—if you can be fired at a moment's notice for no reason, you are not really an independent professional, you are just hired help.

The principle of *shared governance* is an important feature in most traditional colleges and universities, with both the faculty and the administration playing collaborative roles in the management of the institution. Employees in typical corporations are generally at the bottom of a rather rigid chain of command reminiscent of the military—policies are set by higher-level management and the employees are expected to do as they are told by their bosses and usually have little or no say in managing or running their organizations. However, the faculty members in colleges and universities have significant power in determining how their institutions are run. The faculty members in academic institutions have the primary responsibility for setting academic standards and in establishing academic rules and regulations, they play the dominant role in defining the academic curriculum, and they are given the primary authority in deciding academic personnel matters, particularly in selecting and hiring new faculty members. A lot of shared governance consists of faculty members serving on committees that deal with these matters. Many academic institutions have a faculty senate that plays an important part in institutional management, and the faculty plays an important role in setting academic policies, in establishing new programs and new degrees, the hiring of new faculty, administrators, and employees, setting grading policies, by making changes in the curriculum, etc.

In the view of many, it is only the existence of tenure that makes it possible for the faculty to participate effectively in shared governance. College and university administrations have quite a bit of power, and the presence of tenure makes it a lot safer for the faculty to resist management intimidation, harassment, retaliation, or interference in their prerogatives and to be able to express dissent from administration policies—it is unlikely that any faculty member would attempt to fight an ill-advised administration policy if it meant running the risk of being fired. In an environment in which there is constant pressure to keep student enrollments high in order to bring in more money, there is a temptation for many administrations to pressure their faculty to lower academic standards, to give more A's and to fail fewer numbers of students—and without tenure there is little chance for the faculty to be able to resist such pressures to “dumb down” the curriculum.

Tenure also prevents faculty members from being fired simply for personality conflicts or disputes with administrators or trustees. The academic ideal is that of tolerance by both the administration and the faculty for differences of opinion, methods, styles, and personalities. There is a strong tradition in academe of toleration if not encouragement of eccentric personality traits, and the existence of tenure prevents the administration from firing an otherwise productive and capable faculty member simply because of some odd personality quirks.

Another reason that tenure exists is that in the realm of academic and intellectual pursuits, it is thought that faculty members are able to produce higher quality intellectual and pedagogical output when they have job security than when they do not. The job security and autonomy of a tenured position gives faculty members the freedom to pursue their own topics of interest, not those which the administration would like them to follow. Since faculty members are presumably more passionate about the topics they are most interested in, they should be able to produce better results. Without some level of job security, faculty will be preoccupied in the classroom and laboratory with survival issues, and they will probably spend inordinate amounts of time in trying to figure out what intellectual pursuits the administration wants them to follow in order to keep their jobs, and in doing so produce a lower quality of output.

In addition, the possibility of achieving lifetime tenure is a powerful means of attracting some very bright

people who would otherwise be able to obtain much higher salaries in the industrial or commercial world—some really smart people might be willing to trade a high-paying but insecure corporate job for one which doesn't pay as well but which offers lifetime job security.

Without the job protection that tenure offers, senior professors in a college or university might be reluctant to hire junior faculty members who are bright and capable, people who might actually be smarter than they are and might turn out to be superior teachers and who might be able to produce a better research output. People often say that they don't object to hiring people smarter than they are, but most of the time they don't really mean it, especially if these brighter people might be a threat to their job security. This is because a budget-conscious administration might recognize this and replace their senior faculty with newer faculty members who would work for a lot less. Such fears might result in only lower-quality faculty members ever being hired, presumably those who would be less threatening to the senior faculty, resulting in steadily-declining educational and research standards. The existence of tenure for the senior faculty is a welcome protection against these pressures, ensuring that they can't be fired and replaced by cheaper junior faculty. Without tenure, incumbents might never be willing to hire people who turn out to be better than themselves.

Finally, the job security that tenure offers gives university researchers the opportunity to follow their curiosity wherever it may lead and however long it might take. Untenured faculty members must adopt a short-term research strategy, one which promises a quick return in terms of publications and grants, since they are faced with a tenure decision coming up in only a couple of years. Many of the great intellectual and scientific advances of the past originated out of basic research that had no guarantee of an eventual payoff. If tenure is replaced by a system having less job security, for example by a system involving a series of renewable contracts, the result would be an inevitable pressure for faculty to follow a short term approach in their research, whereas truly ground-breaking academic research needs to focus on the long term.

If a tenured professor accepts a job at another academic institution, they are usually offered tenure at their new position (as "senior hires"). Otherwise, tenured faculty would rarely leave their schools to join different universities. These days, a tenured faculty member would be a fool to accept another academic job without it.

The Granting and Loss of Tenure

The whole tenure process is one of most stressful aspects of academe. Generally, an entry level faculty member is initially hired into a position that does not have tenure. Such a faculty member is said to be in a *probationary* position, since they are under continual scrutiny, and will be granted tenure only if they perform well.

After the end of the probationary period, which can be as short as 3 years but which according to AAUP rules cannot exceed 7 years, an extensive review is made of the tenure candidate's record, and a decision is made on whether or not to grant them tenure. This limitation on the length of the probationary period was introduced by the AAUP to prevent university administrations from endlessly stringing along their faculty from year to year with vague promises of tenure being granted "sometime in the future".

The tenure decision is perhaps the most critical moment in the career of anyone in academe, and a tenure candidate can often become anxious, fearful, and even a little bit paranoid as the date of decision approaches, since the stakes are so high. I know, because I went through the process at the Illinois Institute of Technology.

If the tenure decision is positive, the faculty member is effectively granted a lifetime job for as long as they want it. This is a major step forward in a faculty member's career, since there is now every prospect that they can make a lifetime career out of their chosen profession. They are now a true colleague of the other tenured

faculty in their department, and the granting of tenure is sort of analogous to being given full citizenship in the academic community.

But if the tenure decision is negative, the unfortunate candidate loses their job and must seek other employment—tenure is an “up-or-out” process. This is one of the disadvantages of the AAUP-imposed limit on the length of the probationary period--it forces an “up-or-out” decision fairly early in a faculty member’s career.

A candidate who is denied tenure is sometimes considered to have been fired or dismissed, but unlike dismissals or layoffs in a corporate environment in which the unfortunate employee is walked out the door that very day, employment is usually guaranteed for up to a year after tenure is denied, so that the rejected candidate has enough time to conduct an extended search for a new job. This is what happened to me when I was denied tenure at the Illinois Institute of Technology back in 1978—it took me almost a year to find another job and it wasn’t in academe—it was an industrial research and development job at the Teletype Corporation in Skokie, Illinois. When Teletype closed its doors, I moved to Bell Laboratories in Naperville, Illinois.

If the rejected faculty member wants to continue in academe, the AAUP rules require that the institution that hires them must be willing to appoint them to a tenured position, or at least be willing to guarantee that tenure will be granted within a reasonable amount of time. The faculty member who accepts such a position needs to take special care to make sure that any promise of tenure being awarded in the future is made in writing, since as the old saw goes, a verbal promise isn’t worth the paper it’s written on, and the people who made the promise may not be there when it comes time to honor it. Also, some prestigious universities and departments in the USA are so elitist that they almost never award tenure to anyone and being denied it is not really considered a blot on your record. Very often, a faculty member who was denied tenure at, for example, Harvard University, is able to quickly pick up another job with tenure at a lower-tier university.

Tenure can only be revoked for valid cause--normally a professor has to do something really wrong or really stupid to lose tenure. Most universities have disciplinary procedures already in place for handling such cases—typically a quasi-judicial proceeding is provided, surrounded by due-process protections and an opportunity for the accused to provide a defense. Such cases are quite rare--in the US, according to the *Wall Street Journal* (Jan 10, 2005), it is estimated that only 50 to 75 tenured professors (out of about 280,000) lose their tenure each year. Revocation of tenure is usually a lengthy, costly, and tedious procedure, very often resulting in a lawsuit. Grounds for dismissal typically include doing something illegal like embezzling research funds, stealing school property, or conviction of a felony or any offense involving “moral turpitude”. The grounds for tenure revocation can also include things such as professional incompetence, gross academic malfeasance such as plagiarism or the faking of research results, falsification of records or credentials, neglect of duty, unprofessional or confrontational conduct toward colleagues, sleeping with a student, sexual harassment of another faculty member, or other conduct which falls below minimum standards of professional integrity. A tenured faculty member can also be dismissed if they develop a physical or mental disability, one so serious that even with reasonable accommodations the faculty member is no longer able to perform the essential duties of their position.

In recent years, there have been cases of tenured faculty members being let go because of "financial exigency", in which a university or college gets itself into a serious financial bind, one that is so bad that its future survival is threatened. Tenured faculty members can also be dismissed if their academic department or program is closed down because of a lack of students or the loss of grant support, even if the survival of the entire school is not at risk. There are AAUP rules that deal with such cases, guidelines that are designed to protect against misuse or abuse of the process by administrations. If the institution declares a financial exigency, it must be an actual financial crisis that threatens the future survival of the university, and not merely a minor or temporary budget problem. The closure of a department or program must be done for

valid academic or financial reasons and not contrived simply to get rid of a targeted faculty member--for example the administration can't close your department, fire all the faculty members, then bring them all back except for you. The AAUP also requires that the faculty members who work at an institution that is undergoing a financial exigency must be made a part of the decision-making process on how the retrenchment is to be done. The dismissal of tenured faculty should be considered only as a drastic last step that is taken only after all other reasonable alternatives have been exhausted. Prior to the actual termination of tenured faculty, other less-drastric things such as early retirements, voluntary leaves of absence, transfers, reduction of nonacademic expenses, or the sale of assets should be tried.

Contrary to popular understanding, tenure is not really a lifetime job guarantee, although in practice this is actually often effectively the case. Formally, all that tenure means is that a college or university cannot fire a tenured professor without cause --it is simply a requirement for due process in any punitive or disciplinary actions that are brought forth against tenured faculty. Faculty members still remain accountable even after achieving tenure. Tenured faculty at most colleges and universities undergo annual reviews of their research, teaching, and service for such things as salary raises and in some cases merit pay increases. This gives quite a bit of power to the administration--if they really want to get rid of an obnoxious or non-performing tenured faculty member, all they have to do is deny them a salary increase, increase their teaching load to astronomical levels, give them a long list of menial committee assignments, and otherwise make life difficult until he/she gives up and quits. Tenured faculty who do not publish, who teach badly, or who ignore their service duties can find that their salaries remain static in an inflationary economy, which means that their real salaries steadily decline year after year, until their standard of living has eroded so badly that there is a great incentive to seek employment elsewhere.

Although things are changing, it is still true that the attainment of tenure is the Holy Grail in academe, and it is easy to understand why tenure is such a hurdle for young faculty members to surmount^[iii]. Imagine for a moment that you are a young faculty member coming up for tenure this year. Look at the issue from the perspective of your college or university administration. How much is it going to cost them to award you tenure? Let's say for simplicity that you will make \$60,000 per year after being promoted and that you will serve the university for 30 years after tenure is granted. Assume in addition that you obtain reasonable salary raises over the years that are at least as good as cost of living increases and perhaps even a little better. Adding in the cost of benefits, retirement plans, and the overhead associated with your job, this means that your institution must agree to pony up almost 4 million dollars over your career. If promoting you turns out to be a mistake, your college or university is out a lot of money. If you instantly turn into deadwood or start driving students away by the boatload with your bad teaching, the administration will have made a bad \$4 million dollar bet on you, since they are stuck with you for the rest of your life.

On the other hand, if the university denies you tenure and a couple of years later you win a Nobel Prize, your university will look really bad and will become the butt of a lot of jokes. Everyone will roll their eyes and joke about stupid your university was and about how much they screwed-up big-time when they kicked you to the curb. However, memories are short and people will soon forget about your university's embarrassing little mistake, and after a couple of years have passed noone will even remember that you had ever worked for a school which had fired you. Although it is certainly true that it will cost something to hire your replacement if you are denied tenure, it is increasingly likely that the replacement will be either a part-timer or a non-tenure track person who will work for quite a bit less. Given the crushing financial penalty that could result if they give tenure to the wrong person, it is small wonder that universities choose to err on the no side, not on the yes side when they make their tenure decisions.

Faculty Rankings

Most colleges and universities have a faculty ranking system that is almost as rigid as that of the military, and

faculty members can be as rank-conscious as military officers.

A new entry-level faculty member is usually hired at a beginning rank of **assistant professor**, which is typically without tenure. Assistant professors are usually hired under annual or multiyear contracts, which are subject to regular renewals based on adequate performance. Faculty members who are assistant professors are said to be on the *tenure track*, which means that they are eligible for tenure if and when it is granted. Assistant professors on the tenure-track are also said to be in *probationary* positions, since they are under constant administration scrutiny and will be awarded tenure only if they perform well. The contracts of assistant professors are subject to periodic renewals (usually after the third year), and during the probationary period, almost all colleges can choose not to renew faculty contracts without any reason or cause.

An assistant professorship usually requires a PhD or other doctorate, although in some fields only a masters degree is required. In the current academic job market, tenure-track faculty positions are increasingly difficult to find, because of a large surplus of qualified applicants recently coming out of the graduate schools and a shortage of available positions. In some areas, especially in the natural sciences, it is rare to grant assistant professor positions to newly-minted PhDs, and nearly all assistant professors will have spent a couple of years serving as postdoctoral fellows at universities or government labs. Many PhD holders don't find tenure-track jobs until they are in their mid-thirties.

At the end of the probationary period, the assistant professor's record is extensively reviewed and a decision is made whether or not to promote the faculty member to a tenure rank. The standards for tenure have tightened considerably in recent years—accomplishments that would have easily brought tenure years ago are today deemed completely inadequate. Except for the most vague and general of statements, the requirements for tenure at a given academic institution are almost never written down anywhere or explicitly spelled out in any detail, so the assistant professor rarely knows what he/she is supposed to be doing in order to achieve success. Even when there are a few definitive tenure requirements that the administration has written down somewhere, there is usually an additional set of unwritten requirements also in existence that the aspiring tenure candidate does not know about but is nevertheless expected to meet if they are to have any chance of success. This means that the candidate often feels trapped in a sort of nightmarish Alice-in-Wonderland scenario reminiscent of the infamous Queen of Hearts croquet match, one where the hoops one is expected to go through keep jumping around, and where the rules are kept hidden and keep changing as the game is played. Since the candidate often really doesn't know what the rules are, they have to play a guessing game and rely on rumors or gossip about what is required. Very often, the candidate will seek out the advice of more senior faculty who have successfully negotiated the tortuous path to tenure and who presumably know what is required. However, the pursuit of tenure can often be an elusive dream, a random shot at a moving target.

There are generally three major areas in which faculty are judged—research, teaching, and service. The relative importance of each of these will vary from institution to institution, and it is often difficult for an aspiring assistant professor to get a straight answer from those in power about the relative importance of each one of these three areas at their particular school.

At large universities and technical institutes that grant PhD and other advanced degrees, research is definitely the most important faculty area. Many of the very largest universities, both public and private, have as one of their primary objectives the creation of new knowledge. Such schools are said to be “research-intensive”. At these schools, the research mission is so intense and so important that it often overshadows the education and teaching mission. Those universities with the highest research budgets and the most intense research activity are sometimes known as “R1” universities, which is a classification that the Carnegie Foundation at one time assigned to what they now call “very high research activity” universities. Examples of such R1 schools are Princeton, MIT, Harvard, Stanford, CalTech, Brown, and the University of Chicago.

At research universities, a faculty member must demonstrate a high degree of research productivity in order to achieve tenure. Research productivity is usually evaluated on the basis of the number and quality of scholarly publications in peer-reviewed journals, and often includes a requirement for one or more full-length books or monographs on scholarly subjects. Academic administrators at research universities often issue pious statements to their faculty saying that research and teaching count equally towards tenure, but such statements are almost always entirely false—at such schools it is the quality of your research, not your teaching, which will determine whether or not you get tenure. It is truly “publish or perish” in these institutions, and the quality of your teaching is usually only of secondary importance if it is considered at all, although you certainly don’t want to be so bad in the classroom that you drive students away en masse or are the source of a blizzard of student complaints.

At research-intensive universities, the research mission is so primary and so important that faculty members on the tenure-track definitely do not want to spend any significant amount of time or effort on anything that might distract them from a single-minded pursuit of research excellence. If you are a tenure candidate at a research-intensive university, it is probably a good idea for you to express a certain amount of disdain for your service and teaching responsibilities, or to give such duties only grudging or minimal support. Otherwise, the more senior faculty members in your department might not take you seriously as a committed and dedicated scholar. The teaching of students and service to the institution are little more than unneeded distractions from your primary goal of becoming a nationally or internationally-recognized expert in your field. You definitely do not want to be seen by your colleagues as someone who spends too much time on teaching or service—it might even happen that getting an award for excellence in teaching could doom your chances of getting tenure.

Since research productivity is most often measured by publication output, this means that publishing scholarly papers is the primary and most important task for a tenure-track faculty member. The academic publishing game can be an intense and time-consuming process. The process begins when an author writes a scholarly paper and submits it to a particular journal in their field. The journal editor then sends copies of the paper out to anonymous experts (known as *referees*) in the author’s field of expertise, seeking their opinion on whether the methodology is correct, whether any data presented is reliable, and whether the paper is worthy of publication. The referees then review the paper and send back their opinions, and the editor uses these reports to decide whether to accept or reject the paper. Sometimes the paper is accepted as submitted, but more often than not the referees suggest that changes or revisions need to be made before the paper can be printed, and there can be a lengthy back-and-forth between the author, the journal editor, and the referees before the paper is finally accepted for publication. Sometimes the paper is rejected because the referees have concluded that there is something seriously and fundamentally wrong with the paper—perhaps the methodology is fatally flawed, or perhaps the results being presented are not sufficiently novel or sufficiently interesting to be worthy of publication. This process is known as *peer review*, and is considered as being critical to maintaining the integrity and quality of the scholarly journal in particular and the scholarly discipline in general.

Since everyone else in the academic world is doing exactly the same thing, an aspiring tenure candidate needs to publish lots and lots of papers, since, like inflated currency, each paper becomes worth less and less as more and more of them are put out. Recognizing that tenure evaluators might simply play a numbers game and just count the number of papers published, assistant professors are often tempted to try and “game” the system and drive their publication count as high as possible. This can be done under the concept of the “least publishable unit”, a system under which the research is broken up and published in separate little pieces, simply in order to increase the publication count. Sometimes assistant professors are able to churn the system and boost their publication count by publishing the same research over and over again, simply by changing the title, by doing a little rearrangement, or by making other small changes.

But not all scholarly papers are of equal value. The impact of any one of the candidate's papers on the field can often be judged by doing "citation analysis", in which the number of times that other authors reference the paper is counted. These citation indices (some of which, such as Google Scholar, are available online) had as their original purpose to act as aids for researchers and to help in information retrieval, but had the unintended side-effect of being adapted as tools to evaluate the relative effectiveness of scholars, under the assumption that the more effective a scholar is, the more likely it is that their papers will be cited by others in the field. A scholarly paper which is quoted in the literature so often that it is considered to be a "classic" is worth a lot more to a tenure candidate than a paper that is cited only rarely or not at all.

Not all scholarly journals are of equal value either. Articles published in high-impact journals in the field are worth a lot more than an equal number of articles published in lower-ranking journals. Some academic institutions actually assign numerical rankings to scholarly journals, with a higher score being given to an article published in the most prestigious journal than to one published in a lower-status journal.

Scholarly journals can be ranked against each other by using citation analysis, the same tool that can be used to rate individual faculty members. This is done by counting the total number of citations that all the papers published in the journal earn, under the assumption that the higher the total citation count, the more prestigious the journal is judged to be. The relative prestige of a scholarly journal is often based on something known as the "impact factor", which is a number that is obtained by counting the citations earned by all the papers published by the journal in a given year, divided by the number of papers published. Another related rating system is the "h-index", which focuses on the top cited articles over an extended time period. Based on citation counts obtained by Google Scholar, a journal earns a score of h if the journal has published as many as h papers, each of which has been cited at least h times. So if a journal has an h-index of 15, this means that the journal has published 15 papers that have been cited at least 15 times.

These numerical journal rating systems have inspired a competitive rat race between different journals, which end up struggling with each other to maximize their citation counts and thereby drive them up in the rankings. The editors of some journals have been accused of "gaming" the system, in an attempt to raise their rankings. This can be done, for example, by the editors of the journal requiring that their authors add a certain number of citations to other articles published in the journal in question.

The relative rankings of journals can also be based on their rejection rate--journals which are so snooty that they reject most of the papers submitted to them are considered as being far more prestigious than those which accept just about anything that is submitted. Of course, the higher the prestige of a journal is judged to be, the larger will be the number of articles submitted to it, which will drive up the rejection rate and raise the prestige of the journal still further.

This means that faculty members striving to get tenure, a promotion, or a salary increase will often take extreme measures to get their papers published in such high-status journals, sometimes continuing to argue with referees and editors for months and months after their papers could already have been published in a lower-ranking journal.

I have a background in physics. In the field of physics, perhaps the most prestigious journal is *Physical Review Letters* (PRL)^[iv]. *Physical Review Letters* is published by the American Physical Society, which advertises that the journal has the mission of "quick and timely publication of short, high-quality reports of highly significant and notable experimental and theoretical results in the full range of fundamental and interdisciplinary physics research". PRL was rated by the Journal Citation Reports Science Edition with an impact factor of 7.645 for 2015, and was rated by Google Scholar with a five-year h-index of 471. Getting a paper published in PRL can be a significant milestone in a physicist's career, and can be an important aid in getting hired, in getting promoted, in obtaining a salary raise, or in achieving tenure. In addition, if a

physicist has a couple of PRL articles under his/her belt, this can be an important aid in getting their grant applications approved.

But since everyone in the physics community is aware of all this and is playing the same game, there can be a mad scramble among physicists to get their papers published in PRL, and there are far more papers submitted than can possibly be accepted for publication. The acceptance rate for papers submitted to PRL is low, less than 25 percent. The reason most often given for rejection is that the paper is deemed by the editors and referees of PRL to be not very significant, that it is insufficiently novel, that it is not all that interesting to the physics community, or that it is not ground-breaking enough to be worthy of publication. Of course, whether a given paper is highly significant or not is largely a subjective judgement and a lot of authors complain that PRL's editorial policy can be arbitrary and capricious, that it unfairly favors authors from highly prestigious institutions such as Harvard, Princeton, MIT, CalTech, or Stanford, at the expense of authors from lower-level institutions. In addition, the referees chosen by the editors to review a given paper can often turn out to be professional rivals of the author, and the reviews can often be overly biased. Trying to get published in PRL can become a highly-competitive rat race, and a lot of physicists don't even bother to submit their papers to PRL, fearful that their papers will probably be rejected.

An aspiring tenure candidate shouldn't try to range too far afield or get involved in publishing a lot of research that is outside their own relatively narrow specialty. If a candidate has too many papers in widely-divergent fields, this might be evidence of a certain lack of focus or commitment to a given subject area and could count against them during tenure review. A tenure candidate must also be very careful about getting involved in cross-disciplinary or inter-departmental research, since a lot of senior faculty in their department might regard such research as being at cross-purposes to the primary mission of the department, and not treated as a serious and worthy research venue. Tenure reviewers often look for evidence of continuity in research—a series of closely connected papers is worth a lot more than a bunch of disjointed papers on completely unrelated subjects. They want to see solid evidence that the candidate has a promise of becoming an internationally recognized expert in a particular discipline.

In some fields, such as computer science, the research output of a faculty member is judged primarily by their presentation of papers at highly competitive academic conferences rather than by their publication of papers in scholarly journals. An academic conference is an organized forum at which researchers in a given field can share their work with each other. Conferences are typically organized by professional societies, by government agencies, or by corporations. The work is usually presented at the conference in the form of short, concise talks lasting from about 20 minutes to half an hour. After the papers are presented orally and discussed at the conference, their texts are often later printed in the conference proceedings. Often there are keynote speakers invited to give talks at the conference. These keynote speakers are usually scholars of some renown in the field, and getting invited to give a keynote speech at a conference can often be an important feather in one's cap. Sometimes workshops are also offered, and many conferences can be important venues for social and professional networking as well as for job-seeking or interviewing. Attending a conference can be expensive in terms of transportation, hotel, food, and admissions costs, but some of these expenses can be defrayed by money provided by grants or by institutional support.

But just like scholarly journals, not all conferences are of equal value. Some conferences will allow just about anyone to attend and present a paper, but others are by invitation only and are very selective and exclusive about whom they will allow to attend and present a paper. There can be a mad scramble to get invitations to present papers or give talks at some of these more prestigious conferences--the acceptance rates for papers at the very "top" conferences can often be only 15 percent or less. Since getting an invitation to present a paper at one of these more snooty conferences can be an important boost to a tenure candidate's career, the entire conference "scene" can be a highly-competitive rat race for junior faculty members struggling to get tenure.

During tenure review, the opinions of outside experts in the applicant's field of study are also solicited. During the tenure review process, sometimes the tenure candidate will be asked to submit a list of reviewers that the tenure committee should contact, but more often than not the tenure committee will take it upon itself to select the reviewers. Ideally, all of these experts should be tenured faculty or high-status researchers that are located at institutions that are considered equal to or better than the one at which the tenure applicant is currently teaching. It is also important that none of the reviewers be people with whom the tenure candidate has collaborated in the past, supposedly to ensure that the reviewers will be completely candid and objective in their opinions about the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate. These reviewers will be asked to give written opinions about the past quality and future promise of the candidate's research—if a couple of Nobel Prize winners are willing to put in writing that they think you walk on water, this can be an important plus.

More and more research, especially in medicine and the hard sciences, involves a collaborative effort among two or more investigators. In high-energy experimental physics, it is not uncommon to see papers having the names of 50 or more authors on them, often from several different institutions and sometimes from several different countries. Collaboration with others on research projects can be a valuable and rewarding experience, but an aspiring assistant professor has to be very cautious about collaborative projects when it comes to tenure considerations. A lot of people who are knowledgeable about university and academic politics maintain that it almost never a good idea for junior faculty members striving for tenure to get involved in collaborative research projects with more senior faculty members, whether inside or outside the university. This is because when these junior faculty come up for tenure, the tenure evaluators might give most of the credit for the funding and the publication output of the project to the more senior partners, even though the junior faculty members are probably the ones doing most of the work. It may even be risky for a tenure candidate to get involved in collaborative projects with anyone at all, even with other junior faculty members. At tenure time, such joint research projects probably won't count nearly as much as individual research. A scholarly paper with just your name on it is worth a lot more than a paper in which your name is buried within a long list of co-authors. If you do get involved in writing collaborative papers, you want to try and have your name appear either first or last in the list of authors, not somewhere in between, which might imply to tenure reviewers that you are only a relatively minor or insignificant contributor to the research. This is under the assumption that the last author on the paper is probably the overall director of the research project, whereas the first author is probably the one who did most of the work.

Mentorship by a more senior faculty member can be a valuable aid along the path to tenure for an assistant professor. Most departments have some sort of mentoring process in place, since all but the most evil of academic institutions really wish to keep the assistant professors that they hire—after all, they have invested too much money in these new assistant professors to simply throw them away after six years and then have to start all over again with someone else. Ideally, an effective mentor will tell the young assistant professor what *really* has to be done to get tenure at that particular school—they will reveal all the unwritten rules, the names of the committees that any person hoping to get tenure definitely needs to serve on, the names of the people that one definitely does not want to offend, the details about all of the political ins and outs in the department and in the university as a whole, the types of research topics that the department favors, the minimum number of scholarly papers that one needs to write, and the dollar amount of external grant support money that one needs to bring in.

However, the junior faculty member has to be careful that they don't rely too much on their mentor. The tenure candidate definitely needs to be particularly cautious about collaborating with their mentor on research projects, because they need to make sure that they firmly establish their own independent reputation in the field. They need to make sure that they publish an adequate number of papers without their mentor's name on them or the names of other senior faculty members, whether inside or outside the university. Also, the junior professor needs to make sure that they firmly establish their own scholarly research base—they need to obtain their own grant support and must not ride along on their mentor's grant or use their mentor's research facilities. Otherwise, the tenure committee is likely to perceive the candidate to be only a junior or

subordinate partner in the relationship, which is certain to be the kiss of death.

These days, scholarly research (especially in experimental science and in medicine) is extremely expensive and requires lots of money. This money helps to pay for the support of graduate students, the salaries of a couple of postdoctoral research associates, the summer salaries of the faculty members themselves, plus publication, travel, computer, and equipment costs. This money is most often obtained from outside funding sources such as federal agencies, private foundations, or corporate sponsors. This means that faculty members at research institutions must write research grant proposals so that their research projects can be funded--just like a candidate running for political office, a large fraction of a professor's time must be spent in fundraising.

A research proposal is a formal document that consists of an outline of what the research is supposed to accomplish, along with a detailed budget describing how the money granted is to be spent (equipment, salaries, computer time, etc). The grant proposal is then submitted to the funding agency, where it is carefully reviewed, in collaboration with outside experts in the field known as peer reviewers. The lead person on the proposal is known as the *principal investigator*, and is the one who has the responsibility for completing the project, directing the research, and reporting directly to the funding agency. These days, it is extremely difficult for faculty members to obtain grant support because of a shortage of available funds and a vast oversupply of worthy applications---the whole grant application process is extremely competitive and only a few proposals ever get funded, and most are rejected. In 2015, the acceptance rate for National Institutes of Health grant applications was only 18 percent. When an aspiring assistant professor chooses a research specialty at the beginning of their career, they will often be forced to choose an area that has a reasonably good chance of attracting grant support, rather than pursuing their true passion.

Although few university administrators will ever actually admit it, an assistant professor's ability to attract external grant support is often the single most important factor in determining whether or not tenure is granted. In fact, failure to obtain external grant support will almost always be fatal to any tenure candidate at a research-oriented university. The primary reason why this is true is the payment of overhead by the grant funding agencies. The philosophy behind the payment of overhead in a research grant is to reimburse the university for the indirect costs of performing the research. These indirect costs include things like electricity, heating, air conditioning, janitorial services, rent, photocopying, insurance, interest, accounting fees, legal costs, telephones, secretarial services, staff salaries, and the like. Since no one seems to be able to determine exactly what these costs are for any particular research project, the amount of the overhead to be paid by the funding agency is usually calculated as a certain percentage of the salaries, wages, and benefits that are called for in the grant proposal. Since the actual indirect costs incurred by any particular grant-supported research project are almost impossible to determine, the money supplied by the overhead can be used by the administration to defray general costs, not just those directly related to the research being supported by the grant. In many ways, the payment of overhead has become an indirect means of providing universities with a subsidy, and universities have come to depend on overhead from grant money as an important source of income. It is largely because of the payment of overhead that faculty members who can attract grant support are worth a lot more to their institutions than those who cannot--an assistant professor who is able to offset 200 percent of his or her salary in the form of overhead from their research grant is far more likely to receive tenure than one who has secured no grant support. Individuals who cannot "bring in money" can easily be dispensed with.

"Grantsmanship"—namely, the ability to ferret out sources where grant money might be available, along with the talent to be able to write winning proposals that get funded—is an important skill that every aspiring assistant professor needs to acquire. In fact, the pursuit of grant support money is now so important that publication in peer-reviewed journals is effectively only of secondary importance, a long list of publications being seen primarily as a means by which grant support can be obtained, rather than the need to get a grant so that one can do research and continue to publish lots of papers.

Advertisements for faculty openings at research universities will typically include a requirement that prospective candidates must have a demonstrated ability to secure external funding, or at least show that they have a reasonable prospect of obtaining such funding. If you apply for such a position and you have never gotten a grant or if you show little prospect of ever obtaining one, chances are that your CV will go right into the trashbin.

Because of critical importance of obtaining grant money in the current academic environment, the whole system has gotten turned on its head and the distinction between means and ends has become blurred. One might think that the primary reason why faculty members would need to obtain grants is to fund their research, but it all too often seems that nowadays faculty members do their research primarily in order to get grants. It now seems that faculty members pursue certain research projects not because they are significant, interesting or ground-breaking, but simply because they are fundable.

Since grant money is hard to obtain, you probably need to submit lots of grant proposals, since this will increase your chances of success. If your grant application is rejected, you shouldn't simply take no for an answer and should appeal the decision and ask the agency for a report on what the reviewers said about your proposal so that you could revise and improve it accordingly and then submit it again. But you need to be cautious and selective about the grant applications that you do submit. Some senior faculty will tell you that you get significant credit with the school's administration for each grant application that you submit, but this is usually not true--it is really only success that counts. After a while, if you have too many unsuccessful grant applications, this will count against you.

College and university administrators, who often have the final say in tenure decisions, usually know very little about the professional abilities and talents of individual tenure candidates, but they do know which of them has been able to secure grant support and which of them have not. Consequently, the ability of an assistant professor to bring in grant support money is often seen by university administrations as an ipso-facto indication of research and scholarly excellence. Even if an aspiring assistant professor manages to obtain grant support by collaborating with other investigators in the writing of a joint proposal, this often does not help him or her very much in obtaining tenure—you have to be the principal investigator on the grant or it does not count.

In institutions such as two-year community colleges or four-year undergraduate institutions (sometimes known as selective liberal arts colleges, or SLACs^[v]) the primary mission is education and teaching, with the research mission being considerably less important. In such schools, the quality of one's teaching is the primary criterion for the granting of tenure—laudatory peer-review reports, glowing student course evaluations, and a fistful of teaching awards are generally necessary. You want to be seen by your students as well as by other faculty members as a super teacher, one whose classes are so popular that they quickly fill up with eager young minds eager to gain knowledge from a brilliant instructor such as you. The mentoring, tutoring, and advising of students are also an important part of an instructor's job—you want your students to see you as a committed and dedicated instructor who really cares about them and who really makes an extra effort to see that they learn.

You should pay particular attention to student course evaluations because administrators often take them very seriously as an indication of the success of their courses and in particular the skills and abilities of their instructors—you want your course evaluations to be rave reviews that literally gush about how brilliant a teacher you are. Too many lukewarm course evaluations, or even just a couple of bad reviews, could be fatal to your chances for promotion to tenure. You definitely do not want anything bad said about you on RateMyProfessors.com

You need to take special care to make sure that nothing negative ever happens in your classroom—after all, students are paying customers and if you drive too many of them away, the bottom line of the school will be adversely affected. It is especially important that you don't have students complaining about you to the dean or to the department chairman, since any sort of negative report will almost certainly work against you at tenure time. Even just a few student complaints about bad teaching, unfair grading, or excessive demands could be fatal to your chances. If your students get so angry with you that your name starts appearing on the bathroom walls, you could be in big trouble. If you are unlucky enough to encounter a classroom full of lazy and sullen undergraduates, you dare not flunk them all, lest you bring down the wrath of the administration upon your head. Nevertheless, if you are perceived as being too easy a grader, some of the senior faculty members may hold this against you during tenure deliberations. It's a narrow path that you have to walk—choosing between not being too easy a grader on one hand, and not being so strict and so demanding that you generate a long list of student complaints on the other.

In some teaching-intensive institutions such as two-year community colleges, a pursuit of research interests can actually be a negative, since publishing scholarly works can often be seen by the administration as a distraction from more important teaching and educational duties. In these teaching institutions, there is usually no provision for any sort of research program or facility, and the teaching and service loads are probably so high that there will be little or no spare time left over for such work. For example, it would be a major mistake for an applicant for a faculty position at a community college to spend a lot of time talking about their research or scholarly interests during the job interview, since all the community college is really interested in is the candidate's ability to teach elementary, introductory subjects in front of a classroom of students.

However, some of the more prestigious SLACs are now beginning to stress scholarly research in addition to high-quality teaching, so the publish-or-perish mania is beginning to come to these schools as well. These colleges are beginning to feel competitive pressures in attracting capable students—they are scrambling against each other for name recognition and status. In pursuit of name recognition and status, these undergraduate institutions seek to hire faculty members who are graduates from well-known and prestigious research universities and who have solid scholarly reputations, particularly those who have lots of publications and perhaps even a few books or monographs to their credit. Such faculty members can bring name recognition to their school simply by virtue of their scholarly reputations, which will help to attract still more students to the school.

This sort of strategy is possible because the current academic job market is so tight that new PhDs from R1 universities who ordinarily wouldn't even consider working at a school that stresses teaching over research are nevertheless grateful to get any sort of tenure track job at all. Consequently, the research and publication requirements for faculty at major liberal arts colleges have been steadily ratcheted up. Being excellent in the classroom is no longer enough for faculty members in these major liberal arts colleges to achieve advancement and promotion. They must now also publish scholarly papers, write books, and chase after grant support money in order to achieve tenure. The tenure chase at four-year undergraduate liberal-arts schools is becoming almost as stressful as it is at major PhD-granting research universities. It can be argued that research and publishing should enrich and improve teaching rather than compete with it, but it is also true that as research demands steadily increase, they will cause teaching, advising, and service to suffer and lose importance.

Also included in the tenure criteria is the level and quality of service to the academic institution in the form of committee assignments. These committee assignments are an important part of shared governance. Examples are faculty committees that deal with issues such as curriculum development, the approval of new courses, student discipline, the quality of student life, student success, the hiring of new faculty and administrators, even academic freedom and tenure.

However, an aspiring assistant professor has to be extremely careful here--a lot of school administrators mouth platitudes saying that service counts a great deal toward tenure, but only very rarely is this actually true. Naïve and inexperienced assistant professors often knock themselves out serving on large numbers of committees, only to find that such service does them very little good when they come up for tenure--their research, publication, teaching, and grant record is just about all that will really be looked at by the tenure committees. In addition, not all committee work is of equal value--service on some committees is deemed important and significant, whereas service on others is dismissed as trivial and menial, often by criteria that are hidden or invisible to assistant professors striving to get tenure. It is certainly true that high-visibility committee assignments are worth a lot more than those in which the committee member is unseen or invisible, but it is often difficult to determine ahead of time which ones these will be. So it is often difficult for a tenure candidate to decide what committees that they should strive to be on and which ones that they should try to avoid. Assistant professors striving for tenure often need to develop the ability to say no and resist excessive administrative demands for committee service—they may be flattered by a request from the dean or the department chairman to serve on committees X, Y, and Z, but they need to remember that such service probably won't count for very much at tenure time, especially if it takes away valuable time from more crucial research and teaching duties.

Participation in faculty governance and service on institutional committees are often seen by junior faculty as unwelcome distractions, taking away valuable time and energy from the teaching and research which are perceived as being far more important in achieving tenure. Service on committees can sometimes bring out the worst in people, turning them into petty tyrants or inspiring rivalries and competition over even trivial and inconsequential matters, setting people with axes to grind or secret agendas against each other. There is often no way that junior faculty members striving to achieve tenure can win in such an environment. It is unfortunately true that junior faculty members can all too easily make enemies among the senior faculty that are members of these committees, which could hurt them when they come up for tenure.

A lot of academic committee work can be a frustrating and demoralizing exercise in futility. Sometimes committee work is little more than a kabuki dance—committees trying to pursue goals that are essentially unreachable, committees that meet simply for the sake of meeting, or committees that do good and valuable work only to have it rendered all for naught because of a sudden withdrawal of funding or because of changes in an administrator's whim. Sometimes committees have only the illusion of shared governance without the reality—they have no real power to make any actual decisions and are there only for show, such power effectively remaining in the hands of the administration. Sometimes committees are formed solely to deal with the latest educational fads that come down from the administration—the whole outcomes assessment movement being a current example—and when the fad's energy is spent or when the administration changes its mind and moves on to other things, the committee's work is often for naught.

Another factor is that in many colleges and universities non-tenured faculty are not permitted to participate in any meaningful way in institutional governance. This can be because non-tenured faculty members are considered by the administration as being lower forms of life that are unworthy of the responsibility of shared governance, or perhaps because it is deemed too dangerous for the careers of faculty members without tenure to serve on faculty committees and get involved in controversial academic politics. In such schools, the awarding of tenure is seen as the gateway for a faculty member to be allowed to participate in the shared governance of the institution.

Finally, many colleges and universities have the rather vague category of “collegiality” as an unwritten tenure requirement, which essentially means that you should be a good academic citizen and work and play well with others. Even if you are a potential Nobel Prize winner or are a super teacher with a whole wall full of teaching awards and plaques, you probably don't want to be seen as a pain in the posterior by your colleagues in the department, someone who is so difficult to work with that they go out of their way to avoid having to deal with you at all or to be viewed as someone that easily gets involved in personal arguments and disputes

with others. You also don't want to be seen as someone who shirks their duties or fails to show up at meetings, or as someone who can't be depended upon to get routine tasks done. It is especially important that you don't make any enemies among the senior faculty during your probationary period, because even one vote against you at tenure time can often doom your chances. The university can be a seething mass of petty jealousies and easily hurt feelings, and you have to be very careful about what you say and do at all steps during the probationary period. Senior faculty members can hold grudges for a very long time—even the most innocent remark or act from many years ago could be mentioned as a reason to deny you tenure.

Many SLACs place a strong emphasis on “community”, and want to make sure that a tenure candidate will be able to fit smoothly into the broader campus culture, including extracurricular activities and athletic experiences. Administrators expect that their faculty members will be seen to be active participants in the social and academic activities around the campus—you definitely don't want to be perceived as a “loner” who is seen only infrequently around the campus, one who attends few faculty meetings or workshops, one who does not attend faculty socials, or one who does not participate in campus extracurricular activities, lest you be perceived as being disconnected, uninterested, or just unwilling to be an active participant in important campus activities.

Nowadays, the tenure criteria are so demanding that even the least bit of negative information in an applicant's portfolio can doom the candidate's chances. You have to be practically perfect in all three major areas—research, teaching, and service—if you are going to have any chance of success.

In most colleges and universities, when a candidate for tenure appears, the tenured members of the applicant's department make the tenure decision. This is because the other department members are presumably experts in the particular discipline and know the candidate's strengths and weaknesses the best. However, in most cases, the departmental recommendation on tenure is subject to approval or disapproval by the Administration. College and university administrations are so powerful that nowadays the departmental input on the tenure decision is effectively meaningless and is only for show. The real decision power on tenure is in the hands of the administration (usually the office of the Dean or the Provost) and is often made on the basis of financial considerations, i.e., how many students there are in the department, how many tenured faculty members there are already, and on how much research grant support money the faculty member is bringing in, rather than on the quality of teaching or research.

If the decision is positive, the faculty member is given tenure and is promoted to the rank of **associate professor**. One can usually tell whether a faculty member has tenure by simply looking at their rank, although some institutions have a process under which a faculty member can be promoted to associate professor rank without tenure being awarded. In such institutions, the promotion process and the tenure process are completely separate.

The granting of tenure effectively guarantees you a lifetime job at your school for as long as you want it. The achievement of tenure is a major step forward in your professional career, and you have succeeded in accomplishing something that is quite difficult to do. You rightfully feel a sense of pride and accomplishment, and there is now every chance that you will be able to make a lifetime career out of your chosen profession. A great weight has lifted from your psyche--your long and expensive investment of time and energy in the education and training that you went through for your profession has finally paid off. Since you no longer have to worry about job security, you can now afford to take a longer and broader view in your research and your teaching. You can start working on those daring and far-reaching research projects that you have always wanted to pursue but dared not attempt for fear that they might not pay off quickly enough so that you could get tenure. In the classroom, you no longer have to worry nearly as much about student evaluations and can now insist on high academic standards without fear of losing your job. Suddenly you find that you have become a lot less paranoid and you no longer fear that the entire universe is in conspiracy against you—you are no longer at the mercy of hidden and impersonal malevolent forces, and what people

think about you or say about you behind your back no longer matters nearly as much. You are no longer vulnerable to capricious administrators, budget-cutting deans, tyrannical department heads, spiteful colleagues, or vengeful students. You feel a sudden increase in your personal self-esteem and confidence—your colleagues and your institution have made a commitment to you, and you now have a voice in how your institution is managed and run. You have achieved full citizenship in the academic world.

The chances for obtaining tenure vary greatly, depending on the institution or the discipline—it can be as high as 90 percent in non-PhD granting schools or as small as 10 percent in the natural science departments of top research universities such as Princeton or MIT. Some institutions and departments report that they select their junior faculty members so cautiously and mentor them so carefully that almost all of them get promoted to tenure rank. However, other institutions are completely ruthless and deny tenure to most of their assistant professors. The chances for promotion to tenure at some of the more elitist academic institutions are essentially zero—they almost never promote from within and when the administration wants to hire someone to a tenured position, they bring in some superstar from the outside. In some rare cases, an associate professor will be hired without tenure, but the position is almost always in the tenure-track with an explicit understanding that the person will very soon qualify for tenure.

The denial of tenure can be a crushing and demoralizing personal defeat—you must seek another job in a depressed market. The reaction to tenure denial can be similar to the grief at the death of a loved one or to the stress and anger of a messy divorce. From your perspective, the whole tenure process was sort of like some nightmarish and grotesque TV reality show. You have been voted off the island—you have failed to hit the ever-moving and changing target that is tenure. You are now a lame duck, and must spend much of your spare time looking for your next job. Tenure denial can lead to complete displacement—you are forced not only to seek new employment but perhaps also to move to a new location and uproot your family as well. After many months of searching, you may very well find that the academic job market is so tight that another teaching job is impossible to obtain and that you will have to consider a career change, in spite of the many years that you spent in training and preparation.

During the months following tenure denial you will have a lot of opportunity to reflect on your faults and why you didn't make the cut. Obviously there must be something seriously wrong with you, but you don't really know what it is. Because of strict rules of confidentiality, you are unable to read or hear the comments of those who voted for or against you, and you really have no clue as to who or what did you in. Was the number of your publications not high enough? Was your research in the "wrong" area, one that was currently out of favor with your department? Did you publish only in low-ranking journals? Was too much of your research a collaborative rather than an individual effort? Were you perceived as someone who was in a subordinate or dependent relationship with some of the more senior members of the department, rather than as an independent and self-reliant scholar? Did you not achieve a high enough rating in the citation indexes? Did you spend too much time on teaching and not enough time on research? Did you fail to bring in enough grant support money? Was your record of university service deemed inadequate--did you serve only on those committees that were unimportant or insignificant, and failed to serve on those committees deemed "important" by some unseen and unknown criterion? Were you done in by a couple of student complaints or by something bad said about you on a student evaluation form? Did the student comments about you on RateMyProfessors.com work against you? Did you inadvertently offend a powerful senior faculty member? Was the dean or the provost angry with you? Did you not socialize enough with the right people, or socialize too much with the wrong people? Suddenly your colleagues in the department start treating you like the walking dead, as someone who is dying from a mysterious and disgusting fatal disease. When they encounter you in the hallway, they will try to avoid your gaze, look down at their feet, and scurry by in the hope that they won't have to talk to you. The untenured will shun you altogether, lest they catch the same disease that afflicts you. The tenured faculty will often regard your failure with an air of callous indifference and will sometimes make crude and sadistic jokes about your plight, having many years ago become jaded and cynical about the whole process.

But let's say that you made it to tenure. What comes next? Once a tenured associate professor has achieved a sufficient level of eminence in their field, they can be promoted to full professor, sometimes listed as just **professor**. Promotion to a full professorship is not automatic, and many associate professors are never promoted to this rank. However, the promotion to full professor is not an up-or-out process, and an associate professor can remain at that rank indefinitely without being fired or forced out.

Generally, in order to attain the rank of full professor at a major research university, you need to have achieved a position of eminence in your field of expertise, perhaps having acquired a national or even international reputation. You have written dozens of publications in top-ranking peer-reviewed scholarly journals and perhaps have written a couple of books or monographs which have achieved national recognition. You undoubtedly have a coterie of graduate students working under your supervision, who worship the ground that you walk on, and who are constantly generating new publications for which you are the senior author. You are probably the principal investigator on several research grants provided by outside funding agencies that are providing your institution with tons of money in terms of overhead support. You are constantly sought after by the editors of prestigious journals in your field to act as a referee of papers submitted for publication. You are perhaps even the editor of several key scholarly journals in your field. Also, you probably have assumed a leadership role in professional organizations within your field. Whenever something newsworthy in your field occurs, the TV news anchors beat a path to your door to get your take on the matter. You are constantly hopping from one scholarly conference to the next, always being sought after to give invited papers. The dean and college president are constantly seeking your advice and consent for virtually every important decision. Maybe even the Nobel Prize committees are beginning to take notice of you.

The position of full professor is well paid, with the average annual salary at PhD-granting universities being well over \$100,000. If you are a tenured full professor in a R1 university, you have achieved a status that is about as close to absolute freedom and independence as you can legally get in American society. As a full professor, you are the independent and absolute master of your fate--each and every day when you come to school, you are the one that decides what you will be working on, not someone else. You have no boss, no one can tell you what to do, and you do not report to anyone. Yes, you must still show up and teach your classes, you must still attend all of those dull and boring committee meetings, and you really don't want to get the administration so angry with you that you get no salary raises. But you can usually choose which classes you do teach—if you like, you can avoid all those stressful and tedious introductory classes and can restrict yourself to teaching only those fun advanced subjects that are within your field of research expertise. Since you have now reached the pinnacle of your career and no longer have to worry about promotion or job security, you have complete freedom to choose which research topics you want to tackle and can start working on those far-reaching and risky long-term projects that you always have wanted to pursue. You are limited only by your imagination.

A particularly eminent full professor can be nominated by their university as a *distinguished professor*, or can be appointed to an *endowed chair*. These are honorary positions which are generally reserved for professors who have distinguished themselves nationally or even internationally by making significant and important contributions to their fields. An endowed chair is typically funded by investment income from money donated by a private corporation, by the university itself, or even by a wealthy individual. The interest earned by the principal of the endowment grant is used to fund the chair holder's salary, their benefits, or to provide increased research funds. The name of the endowment is typically added to the professor's title. An appointment to an endowed chair can be the capstone to any professor's career.

Retired professors of particularly high rank and status may be offered the right to retain some sort of formal or informal links with their university or college after retirement. Although the retired professor no longer has any active professional duties to fulfill, they may be able to retain the right to continue to use their title,

they may be able to retain library and parking privileges, they may be able to serve on certain committees, they may be granted the right to have access to an office, and they may be entitled to attend all appropriate faculty social functions. Typically such retired professors are referred to as *emeritus*. In some cases, the title emeritus is conferred automatically upon all professors who retire at a particular rank, but in others it is awarded only to a few particularly eminent professors.

So you can usually tell whether a faculty member has tenure by their rank, although the term Professor may be used as a polite term of address for any college or university teacher, regardless of actual rank.

Off the Tenure Track

In recent years, there has been a major change in how most American colleges and universities operate. An increasing percentage of the full-time faculty members in many academic institutions are in employment arrangements under which they are said to be working “off the tenure track”. Non-tenure-track (abbreviated henceforth as NTT) faculty are given that name because no matter how long they serve or how well they perform, they will never be awarded tenure. Although they are generally full-timers with access to a set of benefits, they are typically hired on annual contracts, which can be renewed or not at the whim of the administration. Since their contracts are subject to regular renewals, they are sometimes called *contingent* faculty. If times get tough or if money gets tight, a contingent faculty member can be let go simply by not renewing their contract. More and more administrations are coming to rely on NTT contingent faculty as a way to staff classes without having to make any long-term commitments.

Since the 1970s, the proportion of full-time faculty working off the tenure track has steadily grown. In some departments, NTT faculty members actually outnumber the traditional tenured and tenure track faculty. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that in the year 2005, 38.6 percent of the full-time faculty members at degree-granting colleges and universities in the United States were working off the tenure track. This was up about 4 percent from 2003. The proportion of professors eligible for tenure has actually shrunk faster than the proportion of those who already enjoy tenure. It seems that on those rare occasions when a new faculty member is actually hired, it more often than not turns out that the new hire is in a contingent position that is ineligible for tenure. When a tenured professor retires, quits or dies—or when an assistant professor on the tenure track is denied tenure—all too often the position is not replaced or if it is, the new position is ineligible for tenure.

There is one big reason why NTT faculty are becoming more numerous on campus—money. More and more colleges and universities are facing a severe financial crunch, with reduced growth in government funding and support, shrinking endowments, rising costs of performing scholarly research, uncontrolled increases in the costs of medical benefits and pensions, as well as the need to spend increasing amounts of money on computers and other related technologies, all causing a rapid inflation in the price of student tuition. Administrative costs have also skyrocketed in recent years because of requirements for careful record keeping, the need to handle the details of student financial aid, the need to demonstrate accountability to accrediting agencies, as well as the need to show compliance with myriads of government-imposed rules and regulations. These financial problems only promise to get worse in the future, especially if student enrollments start to decline. Consequently, college and university administrators have been forced to think and act like typical corporate business executives, focusing narrowly on short-term bottom-line fiscal issues and on the next quarter’s financial balance sheet.

This short-term focus means in particular that college and university administrators are reluctant to offer any of their faculty the long-term financial commitment that the granting of tenure would require. The tenure system interferes with the administration’s ability to respond quickly to changing priorities. Administrators often find that the tenure system forces them to hang on to professors long after they are no longer needed—those who have long ago become obsolete, those whose research disciplines are no longer viable, those

who can no longer get grant support, or those for which there are no longer any students majoring in their specialties. The presence of large numbers of expensive tenured professors on the faculty makes it difficult for cash-strapped administrations to come up with the money to hire new staff that can handle the demand for newer and more modern disciplines. Finally, the up-or-out aspects of the tenure system and the seeming capriciousness and arbitrariness of the whole process provide an ever-present legal liability risk for administrations. This is because there is an increasing danger that a tenure-track faculty member who is denied tenure at the end of their probationary period and who is now being thrown out on the street will get angry and sue the school or university over some perceived irregularity or unfairness in the process, costing them tons of money in legal fees.

Most college and university administrators bitterly resent the rigidity, expense, and inflexibility of the tenure system—since tenured faculty have almost absolute job security, the administration can't eliminate their jobs if the needs of the institution change, if times get tough, or if money gets scarce. When you mention the word "tenure" to a college or university administrator, they will often cringe and curse under their breath, almost as if you had said a dirty word. A recurrent administrator's dream is to wake up one glorious morning to find that the tenure system has been miraculously abolished overnight. Administrators would strongly prefer never to offer tenure to anyone—if they could, they would probably even like to get rid of the tenured faculty that they already have, or at least not replace them when they retire, quit, or die. Furthermore, administrators would like to avoid ever hiring anyone into a position where tenure is even a possibility in the future. Instead, they prefer to hire contingent faculty who are ineligible for tenure and who work under short-term contracts, since such faculty can easily be let go simply by not renewing their contracts if times get tough, if students begin to disappear, or if funding starts to dry up. College administrations say that the increased rate of hiring of contingent faculty gives them greater flexibility to meet needs as student enrollment fluctuates, as demand for particular specialties waxes or wanes, or as grant support is gained or lost. But the real reason is to save money.

NTT full-time faculty are typically given titles such as visiting professor, research professor, acting instructor, acting professor, teaching professor, extension professor, consulting professor, clinical professor, lecturer, senior lecturer, instructor, or reader. They are generally hired with annual contracts that can be renewed or not as economic conditions dictate. Although dismissal of a full-time NTT faculty member during their contract period requires an adequate cause, once the contract has expired, the administration can decide not to renew it for any reason whatsoever, or even for no reason at all. So there is little if any long-term job security for full-time NTT faculty.

Another justification for the increased rate of hiring of full-time NTT faculty is the desire for specialization. The ideal for a tenure track faculty member in a research university has long been that of the teacher-scholar, one who is expected to conduct ground-breaking research while at the same time carrying out a full teaching load. In contrast, full-time NTT faculty members in a research university are usually not expected to excel at both of these roles and are typically hired either to teach or to do research, but usually not to do both. Consequently, there are two major categories of NTT full-time faculty—research faculty and teaching faculty.

Full-time NTT faculty that are hired primarily to do research usually work in collaboration with other faculty members in the department, and they have major responsibilities for externally-funded and sponsored programs of research. They are not expected to do much teaching or university service. Sometimes these research faculties are fully independent and autonomous investigators working on their own research projects and are thus indistinguishable from the regular tenure track faculty, with the exception that they aren't expected to do any teaching. Other research faculty are little more than contract employees who are working on someone else's research project and are in a subordinate position to the principal investigator on the grant, who is usually a senior faculty member with tenure. It is very rare that research faculty members actually do any teaching, but they often do supervise undergraduate and graduate students who participate in their research programs. Their salaries derive largely or exclusively from grants and contracts—they are said to be

on “soft money”. This means that if the grant dries up or is not renewed, their job usually disappears as well. Such appointments can usually be renewed indefinitely, subject only to the continued availability of funds. In many ways, research faculty are quite similar to postdoctoral research fellows right out of graduate school who work for a couple of years on a senior faculty member’s research program before they get enough experience and rack up enough publications so that they can try to land a tenure-track job somewhere.

Full-time NTT teaching faculty members are exactly the opposite—their primary job is to teach classes, not to do research or publish papers. The vast majority of full-time NTT faculty members in research universities fall into this category. They are usually hired to teach introductory or intermediate courses to undergraduates—courses that most tenured or tenure-track faculty, caught up in the publish-or-perish world, don’t really want to handle since such courses typically have lots of students and involve a lot of grading and preparation time. Since these teaching faculty are not expected to carry out a research program or to participate in university service, their course loads are often significantly higher than those of their tenure-track colleagues—sometimes loads can be as high as four or five undergraduate courses per semester or quarter. Many institutions use NTT faculty members to fill in for senior faculty on sabbatical leave or to substitute for those who have been awarded release time from teaching to pursue research interests. NTT faculty members dominate the undergraduate curriculum in many institutions—in such schools many undergraduates never see a tenure track faculty member at all, at least in most of their introductory courses.

Colleges and universities with medical schools often have full-time NTT clinical faculty on staff, who are hired primarily to perform patient care and to provide instruction to medical students in a clinical setting. They are generally not expected to do any research or service, although some actually do.

Since NTT full-time teaching faculty members usually do little or no research, their lists of scholarly publications are generally far less impressive than those of their tenure-track colleagues. For this reason, they are often looked down upon by the regular tenured and tenure-track faculty as being inferior scholars, definitely lower down on the academic food chain. Since they are hired primarily to teach, NTT full-time faculty often have little institutional support for professional development, no access to money for attending conferences or presenting papers, no support for professional association memberships, no possibility of sabbatical leave, and no possibility of any partial relief from teaching duties to pursue research interests.

The treatment of full-time NTT faculty varies widely from institution to institution—all the way from really lousy at some to fairly good at others. Even though they often have the same qualifications, degrees, and level of experience as the conventional tenure-track faculty, full-time contingent faculty are sometimes treated by their institutions as little more than hired help--there is usually little or no academic freedom for contingent faculty and no security against dismissal on the basis of controversial teaching or research. Full-time NTT faculty are usually paid as much as 20 percent less than their tenure-track colleagues, but at a few research universities full-time NTT faculty are actually paid higher salaries than those on the tenure track. Full-time NTT faculty members often do not have access to the regular salary increases, merit raises, and bonuses that are available to the tenured and tenure-track faculty, but some universities do have a promotion and salary advancement system in place that covers their full-time NTT faculty. Full-time NTT faculty often receive lower medical insurance and pension benefits than their tenure-track/tenured colleagues, but at some institutions they have access to the same set of medical insurance and pension benefits as are available to tenure-track and tenured faculty. Many academic institutions state in their by-laws that they offer their full-time NTT faculty members the same level of protections regarding academic freedom as they do for their tenured and tenure-track faculty.

The access of NTT full-time faculty members to shared governance also varies from institution to institution. Unfortunately, at some academic institutions, NTT full-time faculty members are treated as second-class academic citizens and are excluded from the main currents of departmental academic life and from departmental or university governance, and they often feel a sense of isolation and lack of interaction with

their senior departmental colleagues. But at other institutions, full-time NTT faculty members often do have some level of participation in institutional governance, the level of which varies from one institution to another. However, some of the tenured faculty members might be hesitant to include full-time NTT faculty in shared governance, because they fear that their contingent status makes them more vulnerable in their dealings with the administration, and would make them more reluctant to participate freely and openly. But one might argue that assistant professors on the tenure track probably feel much the same way.

The real disadvantage of being a full-time NTT faculty member is of course the lack of any long-term job security. Each and every year, a full-time NTT faculty member must feel an increased sense of anxiety, fear, and dread as their contract renewal date approaches. They worry that some administrator could use the flimsiest of pretexts to not renew their contracts and have them thrown out on the street to face an utterly miserable job market. To address some of these concerns, some academic institutions do offer their contingent full-time faculty a guarantee of continued future employment after a certain number of years of satisfactory service at the institution, usually six years. At the end of the sixth year, if the faculty member is offered another contract renewal, this means that the faculty member has a reasonable expectation of a long-term job at the institution if they continue to perform satisfactorily. This is known as the “six year rule”, and the renewal of a teacher’s contract after six years on the job is effectively a de facto granting of tenure. The notion of de facto tenure was originally designed to protect full-time contingent faculty from abuse and exploitation—the idea was to force university administrations to give long-term job security to contingent faculty who had given a certain number of years of good service. This de facto tenure process is quite different from the system under which the regular tenure-track faculty members are granted tenure, since there is no formal tenure review process and tenure is conferred solely by virtue of the faculty member’s reappointment for another term.

However, college and university administrations strongly prefer a system under which they are free to hire their full-time NTT faculty on sequential one-year contracts, one where they can easily let faculty go when they are no longer needed. Since in the current job market there are literally hundreds of applicants for each full-time teaching position, it is very easy to find a replacement for a contingent faculty member whose contract is not renewed. Consequently, at schools where the “six-year rule” applies, it is often very difficult for the full-time contingent faculty to get a reappointment to that critical seventh-year term, thus denying them de facto tenure and forcing them back out on the street to face an utterly miserable job market. College and university administrations are sometimes not up front about this aspect of the six-year rule, and a lot of full-time NTT faculty members are not really aware that there is a high probability that their job will disappear after six years of service, no matter how well they perform.

Some full-time NTT faculty view themselves as simply being in a temporary holding pattern, waiting patiently for the day when a tenure-track job opens up at their institution or at some other school. However, others have abandoned any hope of ever getting a tenure-track position and have been at the game so long that their job has become a permanent lifetime career. Some full-timers report that they have been working on a contract basis at their institutions for more than 20 years. Although some full-time contract employees are happy at being able to avoid the tenure track, others express feelings of bitterness and exploitation.

Adjunct Hell

Another separate and completely different category of NTT faculty is that of part-time temporary faculty, sometimes known as **adjuncts**. Full-time and part-time NTT faculty members are sometimes lumped together, but this is usually a mistake, since each subgroup has a quite separate and distinct set of issues, concerns, and problems.

Part-time adjunct faculty members are hired on short-term single-quarter or single-semester contracts, and are generally paid on a per-course basis. The increased presence of part time adjuncts on campus is a growing

scandal in academe—part-timers have little or no job security, they generally lack any academic freedom, they usually have no access to benefits, and they are often subject to demeaning and exploitative working conditions. A report from the National Center for Educational Statistics showed that of all the faculty members working at colleges that award federal financial aid in the fall of 2005, 46.3 percent of them were in part-time positions. The percentage is probably even higher now.

Historically, adjunct faculty have been professional people with full-time day jobs hired by local colleges and universities to teach specialized courses in their area of expertise, courses which the regular faculty were not competent to handle. For example, a mechanical engineer would be hired to teach a course in engineering draftsmanship at a local college, a lawyer would teach a course on copyright law at an art school, or a business executive would teach a course on management at the nearby community college. Sometimes, recently-retired professionals who wanted to keep their minds active and remain current would agree to teach courses related to their profession in their spare time, just for the fun of it. The number of adjuncts was always fairly small, with most departments having only one or two of these part-timers.

However, things are quite different now. The numbers of part-time adjunct faculty members have rapidly expanded in recent years, and many departments now have more adjuncts than they have full-time faculty members. Part-time adjuncts rather than full-time faculty members now dominate the undergraduate curriculum in many academic institutions. No longer are adjuncts primarily limited to teaching only a couple of specialized courses in their areas of expertise, they are now teaching almost the entire range of undergraduate courses in many colleges and universities, at least most of the introductory gateway courses. Again, the primary reason for this trend is money--adjuncts are a lot cheaper than full-time faculty, and they provide extra flexibility to university administrations, since they act as additional teaching resources that can be quickly called up or dispensed with as necessary. Part-timers are a ready pool of expendable workers who can easily be eliminated when no longer needed simply by not renewing their contracts or by not offering them any courses to teach.

In the current academic job market there is a vast oversupply of freshly-minted PhDs vainly trying to secure a tenure-track position, and there are so few such positions available that the chances of landing one are often not much better than the odds of winning the PowerBall lottery. Many new PhDs who want to pursue an academic career are forced to accept adjunct or part-time positions simply in order to pay their bills while they chase after that elusive full-time gig. It is not unusual for part-timers to teach courses at two or even three different institutions at the same time, since just one adjunct position probably isn't enough to pay all the bills, especially without benefits. These multiple-position adjuncts are often called "freeway flyers", since they sometimes spend more time in commuting back and forth than they actually spend in the classroom.

Many adjuncts are subject to economic exploitation and demeaning working conditions. They are definitely second-class citizens within the university community--an educational underclass, an academic proletariat. Most adjuncts earn only about half of what full-time or tenure-track faculty make to teach the same number of courses, and it is usually the case that the pay rate for adjuncts is the same no matter what their level of experience. Since they are part-time employees, adjuncts usually do not have access to employer-provided benefits such as health care insurance, paid sick leave, life insurance, or retirement plans--yet another powerful reason why budget-conscious administrations prefer to hire them rather than full-time faculty. Part-timers generally do not have access to the protections of the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Adjuncts are often faced with some rather severe working conditions. Adjuncts often do not even have an office, or else they may have to share office space with many other adjuncts or with graduate students. Because of this lack of office space, when a student wants to meet with their adjunct instructor, they have to meet in a local coffee shop or even in the adjunct's car. Adjuncts often have no space to store their materials on campus, and must schlepp their stuff every day between their homes and their classrooms. Adjunct

faculty members usually don't have a telephone, or even a mailbox, and they often don't have access to university services such as computers, e-mail, office supplies, or photocopying machines. Adjuncts are often treated as being invisible on campus—they are often not listed in university directories, on department websites, or in course catalogs, and they are often not invited to participate in staff meetings.

Adjuncts are typically ineligible for research or travel funds, and there is usually no administration support for the professional development of adjuncts. Adjuncts rarely, if ever, receive salary raises to reward them for their experience and professional development. Even though their primary job is to teach, adjuncts are often ineligible for university teaching awards. Adjuncts often have little or no academic freedom—things that tenured or tenure-track faculty can usually do with impunity, such as teaching controversial subjects, fighting grade changes, attempting to organize unions, speaking out against objectionable administration policies, or even writing controversial opinion articles in newspapers, can cause an adjunct's job to disappear fairly quickly. An adjunct can lose their course assignments or not have their contracts renewed for any reason whatsoever, or even for no reason at all. Adjuncts are an expendable commodity—they can be replaced as easily as one replaces a burnt-out light bulb.

When adjuncts are hired, there are no formal searches or search committees, and institutions don't interview at the major conferences for adjunct positions. The adjunct market is strictly at the local or even departmental level, and the need for adjuncts is usually decided on a term-by-term basis. Adjuncts are typically hired at the last minute, often only days or even hours before the classes they are supposed to teach actually begin, leaving them essentially no time for preparation. At the time of their hiring, adjuncts are usually given only the most cursory of interviews, and they usually have no chance to meet the faculty with which they will be working. Sometimes, during the interviewing process the human resources people at the hiring institution will “tease” potential adjuncts with vague hints about possible future salary increases, perhaps benefits someday becoming available, or even the possibility of their position eventually being made permanent or full-time. But these promises are never made in writing, and it invariably happens that they are bogus and the money and the position never appear.

The number of courses taught by a part-time adjunct faculty member can vary from just one to a full-time load or even an overload. Because of fluctuating student enrollments and uncertain funding, there is no guarantee that classes will be available for part-timers from one academic term to another. Since full-timers generally have priority in course assignments, an adjunct can lose their course assignment if a full-timer's class doesn't fill and the full-timer had to be given the part-timer's class. When money is tight or when enrollment is declining, classes can be easily yanked away from adjuncts and transferred to full-time professors, and courses with low enrollment can easily be cancelled. Sometimes, full-timers can be allowed to teach an overload for extra money, and this can cause a part-timer to lose their class. Consequently, a part-time faculty member's schedule can be quite unpredictable from one term to another, and this uncertainty in employment can lead to a sense of anxiety and frustration.

Since the availability of courses is often uncertain from one academic term to another, there can be an intense and sometimes nasty competition between adjuncts for these courses. Adjuncts sometimes resort to dirty tricks or unethical behavior to get a “leg up” on their competitors for course assignments for the next term. Since there is usually an oversupply of adjuncts and a shortage of available courses, the adjunct game can encourage this sort of hyper-competitive behavior, and can pit part-timers against one another, creating an environment in which ever-vulnerable adjuncts have to be suspicious and distrustful of each other as well as of the administrations that exploit them.

Sometimes there are workload “caps” imposed on part-timers that restrict course assignments and therefore pay, creating economic hardships that force them to seek multiple positions, becoming “freeway flyers”. These caps are usually imposed by college administrations to get around rules that require higher base pay and the provision of benefits such as health insurance or access to pension plans to those faculty members

who teach more than a certain number of credit hours, usually 12 hours. Sometimes, as a condition of being allowed to exceed the threshold, adjuncts are sometimes required to sign an agreement pretending that they are only teaching 11 credits, thus denying them medical insurance benefits.

The workload caps imposed on part-timers were generally established on a local basis by each college or university, and not on the basis of any state or federal law. But the Affordable Care Act changed all that. The ACA takes the step of officially defining what is meant by a full-time employee, namely as one who works 30 hours or more a week. This definition has caused some unintended consequences. In order to comply with the new government regulations and provide health benefits to their 30-plus hour a week part timers, this would mean a significant increase in their benefits costs. The clear solution is to put a cap on all part-time employees' weekly hours at 29. In universities and colleges, the effect of all this is to further lower the number of courses that a part-timer can teach, sometimes reducing it to only two every semester or quarter. This can make it more difficult for an adjunct to make a decent living, even if they are teaching at two or three different institutions.

Currently, academic management has become increasingly corporatized, with more and more attention being paid by administrators to the bottom line. In such an academic environment, students are increasingly regarded as paying customers--it is important not to displease the customers so that enrollments remain high and tuition money keeps coming in. Consequently, student course evaluations have become more and more important to university administrators in determining the success or failure of their courses and in particular in judging the quality and competence of their instructors. Adjuncts know that they are particularly vulnerable when it comes to student evaluations--just a few poor evaluations or even a couple of student complaints to the dean can result in their contracts not being renewed. So in order to avoid bad evaluations, many adjuncts are tempted to take the easy way out by inflating grades, by giving easy assignments and simple exams, by teaching to the lowest common denominator, and by not challenging their students too much. It is a frequent adjunct dilemma--be an easy grader and get good reviews or stick to high standards and risk losing their future course assignments.

Unlike full-time faculty members, adjuncts usually do not participate at any level in the administrative governance of their college or university, they don't sit on committees or boards and they have no voice in curriculum planning. This can be either because adjuncts are regarded as lower-status part-time employees that are deliberately excluded from institutional governance or else because they are so busy manipulating multiple gigs that they just don't have the time or energy to get involved in committee work. As a result, adjuncts often have little or no emotional or intellectual investment in the university or college at which they teach, which can lead to a sense of isolation and alienation. Since adjuncts can be fired (or, rather, "not renewed") for making only the slightest waves, it is usually a mistake for them to try and get involved in controversial academic politics or contentious issues such as creating new degree programs, making curriculum changes, or introducing new courses. These issues will just eat up your time, you will invariably offend at least some of the full-time faculty, you will probably antagonize the dean or the department head, and people will wonder about your motives and will think that you are acting above your station. As an ever-vulnerable adjunct, the last thing you need is for faculty members or administrators to be suspicious of you.

There is often little if any sense of collegiality between adjuncts and the full-time faculty. It often seems that very few full-timers are interested in getting to know any of the adjuncts, and it is sometimes the case that adjuncts are looked down upon by the full-time faculty as inferiors. The prevailing attitude among full-timers at research institutions often seems to be that adjuncts are little more than failed academics, second-rate scholars who have been found wanting in the publish-or-perish game--after all, if an adjunct were any good they would have obviously gotten a full-time position somewhere. Full-timers at teaching-intensive institutions often feel that adjuncts must be inferior teachers, since they have not yet been able to obtain full-time employment. Consequently, many full-time faculty members regard their adjunct colleagues with an air of condescension and thinly-disguised contempt. Although many adjuncts bring important real-world

experience to their institution, they seldom have the opportunity to share this experience with the full-time faculty, and it all too often happens that full-time faculty members are not really interested in what the adjuncts have to say. The nature of their employment (many of them are teaching at several different institutions, many have a full-time job off-campus, or are, like me, retired) means that adjuncts are on campus so rarely that they are unable to form social or professional relationships with the full-time faculty—adjuncts tend to be invisible on campus, just like the janitors who clean the washrooms, the maintenance people who repair the photocopiers, or the groundskeepers who mow the lawns.

Although many adjuncts report a high degree of satisfaction in their relationships with their students, because of their lack of regular presence on campus, and also because they lack offices and telephones, adjuncts are often unable to meet with their students out of class to answer questions or to advise them adequately. There is often such a rapid turnover of adjuncts that students don't get to know any of their instructors long enough to have them write letters of recommendation. This can lead to their students feeling shortchanged in comparison to those of full-time faculty members. A recent national survey indicated that one half of part-time faculty do not hold office hours or meet with students outside the classroom. But it is difficult to hold office hours when you don't have an office.

A recent survey indicated that an academic institution's relegation of a large fraction of the teaching duties to part time or adjunct faculty can have a negative effect on student outcomes ^[vi]. This doesn't necessarily mean that adjuncts are inherently poorer teachers than full-timers, but that the system itself is at fault—often there is inadequate support for adjuncts, there is a lack of office space and computer access, and there is limited access to professional development programs that might enhance their teaching skills. Adjuncts are often so busy maintaining multiple gigs that they are actually on campus only long enough to teach their classes and then must immediately dash off elsewhere. This means that adjuncts generally have little or no contact with their students outside the classroom. Since they usually don't have offices, adjuncts find it difficult to meet with their students even when they are on campus. Many students find this sort of interaction very important to their overall education, and a student's perception of a faculty member's availability and concern for their welfare can play an important role in their academic success. Adjuncts often have only a minimal emotional or intellectual connection to the culture of the school at which they teach, and they are less likely to be able to help or assist students who get into academic or personal trouble, and adjuncts are often unaware of the student services that are available.

The study also showed that students who have a large fraction of their classes taught by part-timers tend to have lower persistence—they are more likely to get into academic trouble, they are more likely to switch majors multiple times, and they are more likely to drop out of school altogether. There is a special disadvantage in having introductory “gateway” courses taught by part-timers—students would generally be better served if these critical courses are taught by full-time tenure-track or tenured faculty. Students in classes at 2-year community colleges that are taught by adjuncts are less likely to transfer to four-year colleges. In addition, at many academic institutions adjuncts are generally looked down upon by their full-time colleagues and are definitely at the bottom of the academic pecking order, and this feeling on the part of adjuncts of being disrespected by their full-time colleagues can carry over into the classroom--adjuncts usually bring less scholarly authority into the classroom than do the full-time faculty, and if students know that their class is being taught by someone perceived to be a low-status individual, this perception could have a negative effect on student progress and success.

A lot of adjuncts labor under the expectation that if they do a good job, obtain glowing student course evaluations, and perform extra work above and beyond their regular duties, they might be able to attract enough favorable attention from the administration so that their jobs are eventually converted to a full-time or tenure track position. However, such hopes are usually in vain. It is very rare that part-time positions are converted to full-time, and even if they are, the adjunct faculty already on staff seldom receives any priority

consideration. Typically, when a non-tenure-track position is converted to the tenure track, or if a new full-time position is created, the department advertises nationally, usually resulting in a flood of hundreds of CVs from super-qualified applicants. At research institutions, adjuncts have little opportunity to publish in peer-reviewed journals--so their lists of publications will generally be much less impressive than those of recent PhDs. The teaching experience of adjunct faculty members may actually work against them—it is often true that the longer an adjunct works as a temporary instructor the farther behind they will fall in the publish-or-perish game. If an applicant for a full-time job has been an adjunct for too long, the search committees will look askance at their CV and will start wondering what is wrong with them. Tragically, in academe, once you are branded as a part-timer, you are likely to stay one, and all too often you will find that you are in a dead-end rather than an entry-level job.

A distinction should probably be made between two different types of part-time faculty.

The first category of part-time faculty are outside professionals with regular “day” jobs who are hired to teach a course or two in subjects that are related to their specialties, courses which the regular faculty are not competent to handle. Other adjuncts have spouses who carry much of the family’s financial load, including the provision of health insurance, and they are teaching a couple of courses just to earn a little supplemental income. Alternatively, part-timers can be recent retirees who choose to teach a couple of courses, just to maintain their currency or just for the fun of it. These folks are probably not interested at all in seeking any sort of a full-time tenure-track faculty appointment at the school where they teach, they have sufficient money and benefits from their regular jobs, from their spouse’s job, or from their retirement plans, and they are perfectly happy about being part-timers. They are financially fairly secure, they are not greatly concerned with their earnings from teaching, and they are probably not all that interested in obtaining a full-time position.

The second category of part-time faculty are not nearly as satisfied—they are recent PhDs who are seeking an academic career and who are trying to secure a full-time tenure-track faculty position, but are faced with an utterly miserable job market and are reduced to teaching part-time at two or three different institutions for low wages and no benefits, just to keep their financial heads above water while they chase after that elusive full-time tenure-track job. They are trying to make a living as part-time adjunct instructors in an awful job market and are having great difficulty in doing so. Some are even so economically bad off that they are living in their cars or are on some sort of welfare. These folks fully realize that they are low-status employees at the very bottom of the academic pecking order, they feel disrespected, overworked and exploited, and they are definitely not happy about being part-timers. They are often frustrated and disillusioned about the career choice that they have made, and are wondering if they should try something else.

Proprietary Schools--Where Tenure Doesn’t Exist

A few colleges and universities have never had a tenure system at all, and some others—most notably at financially-squeezed schools--have been able to eliminate tenure at their institutions, albeit after a protracted legal battle. In these schools, tenure is replaced by a sequence of employment contracts, renewable indefinitely at the administration’s discretion.

The growing ranks of proprietary/for-profit schools (such as the Education Management Corporation, the DeVry Institute, ITT Education Services, or the University of Phoenix) usually do not have a tenure system at all, and all of their faculty members (both full-time and part-time) are in contingent positions, hired on short-term yearly or even quarterly contracts.

Unlike traditional non-profit educational institutions, proprietary schools are run like typical profit-making corporations—they have boards of directors, they have company officers, they issue stock offerings and they have listings on the Wall Street stock exchange. There is constant pressure on management to keep the stock

price high and to keep the financial analysts happy. This requires that profits be maximized and that shareholder value be increased through aggressive cost cutting and vigorous marketing strategies. Some of these schools, which were once owned locally, are being absorbed into large nationwide chains with central headquarters.

Proprietary schools are providing significant competition to traditional two-year community colleges. Proprietary schools typically offer undergraduate degrees and programs that are more career-oriented and more vocational and job-specific than those offered by traditional non-profit schools. Most provide two-year associate degree programs, but some of them are beginning to offer programs and degrees that are indistinguishable from those offered by non-profit schools, and some are now even offering Masters and PhD degrees. Many of them are accredited by the same agencies that handle traditional public and non-profit schools. It generally takes less time for a student to complete a degree at a proprietary school than at a four-year non-profit school, and it can cost less, since proprietary schools usually don't have expensive features such as sports teams, large campuses, research facilities, or an extensive program of student activities. Students graduating from proprietary for-profit schools are supposedly more assured that they have the practical skills that employers want. Although such schools are advertised as being strictly trade, vocational, or technical, in order to satisfy the rules of the accrediting agencies most of them require that their students take "general education" courses, including courses in economics, mathematics, physics, chemistry, political science, sociology, history, English, and communications. However, it is a constant struggle to persuade career-oriented students that such classes are worthwhile.

The management structure in such schools is modeled on the corporate, top-down style similar to that found in large corporations such as Microsoft, General Motors, Apple, Google, IBM, or AT&T. The management model in for-profit schools is definitely corporate rather than academic—there is little pretense of shared faculty governance, there is very little academic freedom, and none of the faculty members have tenure. Instead, all the faculty members are hired on a contract contingent basis and a large fraction of the faculty—sometimes a majority—are adjunct part-timers. At proprietary institutions, faculty members are often treated by management as being little more than hired help, as "at-will" employees who can be let go (e.g. contracts not renewed) at a moments notice with no cause being given. Although the faculty members at proprietary schools often do have some say in specific course management, and can often create new courses or revise older ones, the level of faculty access to institutional decision-making is much less than it is at non-profit schools that have an entrenched system of faculty governance and a tenure system. The faculty generally has little or no influence on important things like academic policy, admission standards, hiring decisions, grading policies, student qualifications, curriculum design and development, and the management of academic programs. Decisions about these critical matters are made by corporate upper management—by the central corporate office—not by faculty deliberations, and the expectation is that the faculty will stand up, salute, and obey, like it or not.

Since many of these proprietary schools have numerous branches in different parts of the country, there can be strong pressure for curricular uniformity from one branch to another, and the faculty is often required to teach a largely "canned" curriculum as dictated out of corporate headquarters, one which has little room for alterations or innovations. It is often the case that the course syllabi and lesson plans are created at the corporate level and are highly structured, and faculty members are not allowed to deviate significantly from the formula. In such an environment, there is little if any academic freedom for the faculty.

In for-profit proprietary schools, there is little or no emphasis on faculty scholarship or research, with most of the effort being on achieving more effective teaching. To many faculty members, this can actually be an advantage, since they do not have to spend any time on such stressful matters as writing dull scholarly papers for a limited readership or chasing after grant support dollars. The faculty members at these schools undergo regular performance reviews and faculty members who do not perform well in the classroom are subject to dismissal at the end of their contracts. Student complaints about bad teaching generally get a lot more

administration attention than they do in traditional non-profit schools, and if a teacher is really bad, he can be quickly fired and replaced by a new teacher.

Although financial and monetary considerations certainly do play a role in traditional non-profit schools, there is much more tension between the business and academic sides in a proprietary institution. Even in the most reputable proprietary schools there is a constant interplay between the desire to maintain high academic standards on one hand, and the need to keep enrollments high and to keep tuition money continually flowing in on the other. There is constant tension between the requirement to offer general education courses in order to keep the accrediting agencies happy, and the desire to offer larger numbers of practical job-related courses which attract more students and more tuition money. General education faculty members will get upset when the administration tries to reduce the number of courses in liberal arts subjects in favor of increasing the number of courses in more readily-practical and useful job-related subjects. Faculty members of all departments will get angry when the administration starts admitting a lot of unqualified or poorly-prepared students to their classes, making their jobs more difficult. Also, many faculty members will get upset when they see a compromise in academic standards in order to raise recruitment levels. Faculty will become irritated when they see pressure to inflate grades in order to keep the student retention rates higher.

The deans, department heads, and managers at for-profit schools tend to get very uptight about student attrition, because it adversely affects the school's bottom-line. Faculty members whose courses have particular high drop rates often receive unwelcome attention from the deans, and if the student withdrawal rate from a particular professor's class remains consistently high, this can be a cause for termination. Consequently, there are pressures for faculty to ease up on grading standards in order to keep the attrition rates low so that they can keep themselves out of potential trouble. In order to prevent students from dropping out, the administration sometimes pressures faculty to take extreme measures to increase student retention rates, such as asking them to contact poorly-performing students at home or off-campus.

Proprietary educational institutions have recently become quite controversial. In 2010, the Obama administration proposed something known as a "gainful employment" rule. The main purpose of this rule is to ensure that career colleges and training programs are successfully preparing their students for well-paying jobs once they graduate, supposedly to ensure that student loans will be repaid. Under the rule, the US Department of Education will attempt to measure the relationship between the debt that students incur and the income that they earn after completing the program. If a program graduates too high a number of students with excessively high debt-to-income ratios, the program may become ineligible to participate in federal student funding under Title IV. In addition, if too many of a school's graduating students default on their student loans, their programs could also lose access to Title IV federal funding.

The proposed gainful employment regulations have become quite politically controversial, and a lot of for-profit colleges claim that it unfairly targets them, with non-profit colleges and universities being virtually immune from such scrutiny. For-profit colleges serve a lot of lower-income and minority students, and their lobbyists argued that almost half of the students at for-profit colleges could lose access to federal financial aid under the proposed guidelines. If so many of their students lost access to federal financial aid, many proprietary schools might be forced to close their doors.

The original proposed gainful employment rule was thrown out by a federal district court in June 2012 after lobbyists for the for-profit education industry sued. One of the criteria for determining whether a program would lose eligibility for federal student aid had been based on how well a program's students repaid their loans, and the court concluded that these loan repayment criteria had been set too "arbitrarily and capriciously".

A new proposed rule was released in August 2013, and it dropped the loan repayment metric and focused instead only on whether a program graduates a lot of students with high levels of debt compared to their

earnings. The for-profit industry and its lobbyists, tried to block these rules by yet more legal challenges, but the Obama administration was able to beat back these challenges, and on July 1, 2015, the gainful employment rules actually went into place. In response to these rules, some for-profit institutions have tried to clean up their acts by increasing their spending on scholarships and by dropping expensive programs that have poor outcomes. But it is unclear if any for-profit institutions will lose eligibility for federal aid, since the sanctions were not scheduled to kick in until President Obama's term ends. It will be up to the Trump administration to decide whether to enforce the regulations or to scrap them. Initially, it appears that the Trump administration will be much more favorable to for-profit educational institutions, and will ease up on the regulations or perhaps eliminate them altogether.

Historically, proprietary educational institutions have had a bad reputation. The core complaint leveled against such schools is that they are operated as businesses that emphasize profits at the expense of learning. There have been some high-visibility scandals in which unaccredited proprietary schools have operated as little more than diploma mills, selling fake degrees and phony certificates like fast-order food, requiring no studies, no assignments, no class work and no exams. Some of the more unstable proprietary schools have run into financial difficulty and gone belly-up, leaving their students high and dry. In the late 1960s and 70s lawmakers spent a lot of time investigating charges of fiscal improprieties in for-profit schools, usually involving shenanigans with student financial aid. Several schools were found to have inflated their enrollments with "ghost" students, or failed to report students who dropped out or withdrew from classes, in order to take financial aid dollars. Some proprietary schools improperly pressure their admissions and recruitment personnel to satisfy unrealistic enrollment targets, sometimes resorting to discipline or even termination if the numbers are not met. Still other proprietary schools were found to have drawn students into programs that were later cancelled, or created programs which offered degrees and diplomas for very little required coursework. Others were found to have admitted unqualified or poorly qualified students in order to meet growth goals. Some even rounded up homeless people, collected their student aid, and then offered them worthless courses. Some proprietary schools were found to have made inflated or exaggerated claims about their ability to place graduates in jobs. Some proprietary institutions were found to have hired incompetent or unqualified faculty members. Many of these proprietary schools have a high rate of student loan defaults, quite a bit higher than those from non-profit institutions.

But things are slowly getting better. Stiffer regulations and greater attention to student satisfaction by federal and state agencies are correcting some of the more egregious proprietary school abuses and are reducing the number of complaints about these institutions. The U.S. Department of Education is particularly concerned about institutions that have high student loan default rates and is now insisting on academic accreditation of the for-profit institutions before student aid is granted. Some of the more shady practices of proprietary institutions are policed and regulated by state agencies responsible for consumer protection, as well as by state higher education commissions. Accreditation agencies are vigilant about ensuring that academic standards remain high, that the faculty members on staff are qualified, and that the students are not shortchanged. Many of these institutions also take great care to protect their integrity and are careful to avoid some of the more unscrupulous practices that have given proprietary education a bad name in the past.

Online and Distance Education

The need for traditional faculty members is also threatened by the rise of online or distance education (such as that provided by the University of Phoenix) in which the traditional old-fashioned face-to-face faculty teaching in classrooms is replaced by websites, e-mail, and a battery of off-site faculty and tutors. Online students are taught by remotely located faculty members, lectures are distributed to the students in the form of electronic documents, and discussion questions based on the lectures are posted on a website. Class discussions take place using e-mail and group-collaboration software, and assignments are turned in via the web.

Distance learning first appeared in the 19th century, in the form of correspondence courses, in which the student interacted with the instructor via the US Mail. Later, courses began to be offered over broadcast radio and over television. With the advent of the computer and the Internet, the opportunities for distance education have expanded greatly.

There are several different flavors of online distance education. Some of them are strictly online, whereas others use a blended approach which combines online participation with a conventional classroom.

One recent version is that of the Massive Open Online Course (abbreviated as MOOC). MOOCs are aimed at student unlimited participation and open access via the Internet. Student access is free, and the courses offer video-recorded lectures by faculty superstars. These lectures are supplemented by readings and homework assignments. In addition, MOOCs sometimes provide online user forums that offer an interactive environment for students, professors, and teaching assistants. In principle, several thousand students could simultaneously participate in a single MOOC. Several American providers of MOOCs have emerged, including Udacity, Coursera, and edX. Some top-tier schools such as Stanford University, the University of California at Berkeley, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have begun to offer MOOC courses.

Another recent version is the so-called “flipped” classroom. In a typical college class, students attend a classroom lecture by a faculty member, and then do their homework assignments outside the classroom or at home. In a “flipped” classroom, the situation is exactly the opposite—students watch video-recorded lectures online at home, and then do their homework assignments in the classroom, under the watchful eye of a faculty member or a teaching assistant who can answer their questions. This blended approach supposedly helps students who are having difficulty in understanding the material.

Online education is designed to serve more mature students, those who have full-time day jobs and family responsibilities. It can appeal to people who are physically challenged (visual, hearing, mobility, etc), those who would have difficulty in a conventional classroom. It would also appeal to people living in rural areas where there are no nearby schools. Online education can also appeal to men and women serving in the armed forces who are deployed but who have access to Internet services. Online distance education enables a student to learn at their own pace, in an environment where they are not limited by time or space, since they can read and study anytime, anywhere. E-classes are asynchronous, which allows learners to participate and complete coursework in accordance with their daily schedules.

Online education also appeals to cost-conscious college and university administrations because it overcomes the limits of physical infrastructure—online students don’t need expensive classrooms, dormitory rooms, or parking spaces. This makes it possible for schools to increase enrollment without building lots of expensive new structures. Online education also appeals to administrations because of the promise of sharply lower labor costs—many online educational programs rely heavily on part-time adjunct instructors to staff and manage their classes. Since adjuncts have low salaries and no benefits, they cost a lot less than full-time faculty.

But online education isn’t for everyone—some students require a more structured experience and need an in-person instructor to lead them by the hand. For a student to be successful in online courses, they have to have a higher tolerance for ambiguity, a need to be autonomous, and an ability to be flexible. They need to be more focused, better managers of their time, and must be more able to work independently. Sometimes it is difficult for an online student to get into contact with or talk with their teacher, which can be very frustrating if they are having difficulty in understanding the material. Online courses usually require a lot more student self-discipline and self-motivation than do conventional face-to-face courses. Many online students imagine that just because they don’t have to attend regular classes this means that they have complete freedom to do as they please and goof off, only to quickly find that the class really does have a specific, set schedule in which work still needs to be done by the deadlines. Such students rapidly discover that they cannot keep up

with the assignments and the work—the dropout rate in many online classes can be quite high as poorly-motivated or procrastinating students rapidly get themselves into academic trouble and they quickly crash and burn.

One of the joys of learning can be in the collaboration and connection between peers and between students and professors—the social components of education such as classroom discussion and personalized interaction can be difficult to achieve in a purely online curriculum. Some people need the interaction with other students, which is often lacking in an online environment. Being involved in a collaborative learning process can be an important part of education, and when this is lacking, participation becomes low and dialog is absent. In an online environment, peer collaboration and involvement is much more difficult to achieve, and there is more danger that students could isolate themselves or become alienated from others.

Although more and more employers are beginning to recognize the validity of online courses, some of them are suspicious of someone who has earned their diploma exclusively through the Internet, not recognizing that there is an important difference between online courses offered by legitimate academic institutions and those offered by fly-by-night unaccredited outfits that are little more than “diploma mills”.

Online education is not for all faculty members either. The teaching of an online class is a special challenge--not all faculty members can easily adapt to the special needs and requirements of online education. If a faculty member imagines that teaching an online course is somehow going to be simple and easy, they will be making a big mistake. They will probably end up making a bad job of all of this--the course will become a joke, with incredibly simplified material and trivial quizzes, and the students will learn very little, certainly much less than they would if the course were taught in a conventional classroom. Even worse, the material in a badly managed and designed online course could become totally incomprehensible to the students, driving them away in droves. The development of an effective online course syllabus and lesson plan can be quite a challenge—it requires expertise in the creation of Internet-based lessons, the ability to adapt factual material for web presentation, as well as skill in the creation of adequate and effective tests and examinations. Special attention needs to be given to how online courses are displayed—it is important that the online material be “user friendly”, that it can be easily searched and easily navigated. In order to set up and maintain an online course, a faculty member needs to be able to master web tools such as Microsoft FrontPage or Adobe Dreamweaver, and perhaps even has to know how to program in HTML, or at least be able to get someone else to do all of this work for them.

One of the advantages of online education is that faculty members can work at home on their own schedules, they do not have to meet conventional classes, and they do not need to keep regular office hours. However, faculty members report that one of the joys of their work is the face-to-face interaction with students, the holding of office hours, and in advising—all this is lost when the interaction with students is strictly via e-mail. In an online setting, it can often be harder to detect when plagiarism and cheating are taking place, situations in which others write a student’s formal papers and do their weekly homework. During online discussions and interactions, student rudeness can be a problem, especially when students think that their online interaction is anonymous.

Online education is not necessarily an easy ride for college and university administrations either. All too often, cost-conscious administrations assume that online distance education will be some sort of silver bullet, a “cash cow”, or a “labor saving solution” that will somehow magically increase student enrollments while at the same time will sharply reduce costs. They don’t recognize that there are hidden costs that can actually make online education more expensive than conventional face-to-face classroom teaching. It is certainly true that conventional bricks-and-mortar classrooms are no longer required, but in order to make online education a success, proper support is required and proper support can be expensive. Online courses can be expensive to establish and even more expensive to maintain, especially when you factor in the cost of computer equipment and tech support. The cost of training instructors and tutors in the intricacies of online course

instruction and management must also be considered. Distance education can put colleges and universities at the mercy of monopolistic software companies, who charge astronomical fees for use of their course management packages, and regularly completely overhaul or revise their programs at a moment's notice and force migration to them by dropping support of "legacy" versions. This means that the maintenance of an online course can be quite expensive, especially when it is necessary to keep redeveloping and modifying lessons to stay abreast of a changing software environment. When such things are taken into account, the promised cost-savings of online education can rapidly disappear.

Although many college and university administrators literally salivate at the prospect of the cost-savings that online programs promise to deliver, other administrators are less enthusiastic. They sometimes view distance programs as only a second-rate add-on to their conventional programs and give only limited or grudging support to online education. Sometimes administrators fail to support their online education programs with adequate personnel, adequate technology, and a reasonable operating budget, and this attitude of neglect can rapidly trickle down to the instructors and the students, creating an environment of frustration and disillusionment. Also, many academic departments give only cursory or begrudging cooperation to the adaptation of their curriculum and instruction to fit the needs and requirements of online education. Consequently, faculty members involved in online education often feel that they are second-class citizens in the academic pecking order.

The instructional quality of online distance learning programs can become an issue--if online programs are not created and maintained with great care, they can quickly become second-rate. Online education programs need a steady increase in student enrollment in order to maximize profits, and there have been some complaints about hard-sell tactics, deceptive marketing practices, widespread misrepresentation, false guarantees, and the recruiting of unqualified students. There have been student complaints about incompetent or inattentive instructors, and graduation rates from online programs tend to be rather low. Unfortunately, there are lots of unscrupulous, fraudulent and unaccredited online academic institutions out there, and a student must be careful and must investigate thoroughly before they sign up for an online course.

MOOCs have a special set of problems. Since student access to a MOOC is free, how can a college or university collect tuition or offer college credit for MOOCs? How can a college or university compete with free? How does outcomes assessment work? Special attention must be paid to proctoring and the prevention of cheating. Completion rates in a MOOC can be rather low, with a lot of students starting out but very few of them actually finishing. MOOCs have been criticized that they are not a reliable means of supplying credentials, that they are not a viable substitute for a college-level degree program. Since MOOCs are individually provided by outside profit-making corporations, there is a danger that financial incentives might overwhelm strictly academic concerns. There are concerns that individual MOOC offerings might not be of sufficiently high quality and that they might not fit together into a strong and sequenced academic program. MOOCs might not fit very well into a college which offers their students seminar-type classes and personalized feedback. Another problem is that MOOCs might tend to promote a "star-system" among faculty, with just a few faculty superstars at high-tier academic institution such as Harvard and Princeton being able to supersede and eventually replace a lot of faculty members of lesser ability who teach at lower-tier institutions. In fact, there might be no reason that the MOOC faculty superstar even be alive—I can imagine a MOOC physics course being put together based on the recorded lectures of the late Richard Feynman.

Some of the problems with online education are technical in nature. Because the courses are computer-based, there can be problems with slow servers, software glitches, lost files, or e-mail congestions and backups. In a conventional class, if an overhead projector burns out during a lecture, an alternative can usually be quickly found, but for an online class if there is a hardware malfunction or if a software problem occurs, the entire class is often shut down until the problem is solved. Sometimes, the online course management software package that the university uses has been designed to work with PCs and often slows down or even locks up

when a Macintosh or Linux user tries to go online. The online course management software is often optimized for broadband access, a service that many students do not have at home, making it a frustrating experience for a dial-up Internet user when they try to download tests, view videos, listen to audio material, or participate in online discussions.

Many distance educational programs rely heavily on part time adjunct faculty to teach and maintain the online classes. These part-timers are poorly paid and do not receive any benefits. Consequently, many online educational systems have the potential to create a rather exploitative working environment for their instructors, sometimes creating something that is little more than an “electronic sweatshop” where instructors are constantly being observed, timed, and monitored by administrators and are scolded or even terminated if they fail to meet artificially-imposed deadlines on things like timely response to student e-mails, the grading of exams, or in the returning of papers. Online instructors can tend to become isolated and demoralized, quickly perceiving that they are exploited, underpaid, and overworked, an attitude hardly conducive to good teaching or to an effective learning environment. All too often, faculty members are thrown into online courses with little or no training or preparation in the techniques and peculiarities of online education, resulting in a bad experience for students and faculty alike. The hassles, worries, and frustrations experienced by the overworked, underpaid online faculty often result in a high amount of turnover of instructors, and the quality of instruction can be quite mixed.

Many online instructors report that even though there are no formal classes or lectures, they spend much more time in grading, e-mailing, and in correcting work than they do in conventional face-to-face classes. In addition, an online instructor has to be able to master the complexities of an ever-changing online course management software system, and they often must spend hours and hours of time on the phone talking to tech support to straighten out problems and snags. Because the interaction with the students is web- and e-mail based, this means that the online instructor is potentially available to students at all hours—24 hours a day 7 days a week, which can rapidly consume the instructor’s time and energy, much more so than a conventional face-to-face course would. An online instructor needs to learn fairly early on how to set reasonable limits to their accessibility, lest they be driven to exhaustion.

Many online instructors report that they have very little control over the content of the classes that they teach. Online classes often rely heavily on standardized course materials provided by an outside vendor, which means that online faculty members have very little academic freedom and are usually required to teach a largely “canned” course syllabus that is designed and created by others. Critics charge that this division of labor has resulted in an erosion of academic freedom, as well as a de-professionalization and a de-skilling of the academics that participate in online education, reducing them to the status of performers who simply read the works of others to their students.

Even when faculty members are able to create and maintain their own online course materials, there can be another problem. Course materials created by online instructors are often treated as being “works-for-hire”, which means that online instructors lose their intellectual property rights when they use their course materials online--they are required to cede the rights on their materials to the vendor or to the university, thereby enabling their employer to sell the online materials to others or to hire a part-timer to deliver the material for considerably less money. A prospective online instructor needs to read their contract very carefully before signing—if the phrase “works-for-hire” appears anywhere in there, this is an automatic red flag.

Even though online education relies heavily on part-time adjuncts, regular full-time tenure track faculty members often do teach online courses. However, the whole tenure and promotion process often does not adequately recognize the value of excellent off-campus teaching, especially if it takes away valuable time from faculty research, and faculty members participating in online education and working primarily at home often become invisible to their administrations, making it especially hard for them to get tenure or to get promoted. As a former boss of mine once said, the last thing you want is to be invisible at performance-

review time.

Many traditional faculty members regard online distance education as a serious threat, sometimes accusing online education as being nothing less than a conspiracy on the part of college administrations to eliminate faculty jobs and to abolish tenure. They fear that bean-counting college and university administrators have evil intentions, that these administrators really would like to fire all their faculty members, close down all their physical facilities, and replace all their classes by an entirely online curriculum taught by poorly-paid and overworked part-time labor. To a certain extent, this fear is not entirely unjustified, since most online courses are indeed taught by poorly paid part timers, who are often demoralized, frustrated, and poorly motivated. Faculty members involved in online instruction tend to become invisible and easily replaceable cogs in an educational machine. But this exploitation of adjuncts is not peculiar to online education; it is endemic to higher education in general.

Concerns have been expressed that the widespread adoption of online education might tend to produce a dual-class higher-educational system, one in which only well-funded elite colleges and top-tier R1 universities will be able to offer their privileged students a real live professor in a real bricks-and-mortar classroom. Students of lesser means at poorer and lower-tier private and public institutions will be condemned to sitting in front of terminals and watching a bunch of video-recorded lectures. If they have difficulty in understanding the material, they will be able to interact only with a part-time low-ranking instructor who has been reduced to the status of a glorified teaching assistant.

Because online education is Internet-based and requires fewer “bricks-and-mortar” facilities, it is readily “fungible”; that is, it can be easily transferred to locations where labor costs are lower and where there are fewer protections against employment discrimination or exploitation. Online faculty members live in constant fear that their jobs can be easily outsourced overseas to places like India or China, where there are plenty of well-educated people and where wages and salaries are only a fraction of what they are here in the USA.

Post-Tenure Review

Some public universities (and some private ones as well) have introduced the controversial practice of **post-tenure review**, in which tenured professors are subject to extensive reviews of their research, teaching, and service at regular intervals—usually once every three to seven years—in addition to undergoing annual merit reviews. . The post-tenure evaluation may be conducted by administrators, by faculty peers, or by a combination of both. Some universities subject their entire tenured faculty to these periodic post-tenure reviews, but others use a “triggered” system, in which only those professors receiving a certain number of substandard annual reviews are subject to post-tenure review.

The object of the post-tenure review is to identify poorly-performing tenured faculty members—a professor who is found wanting at post-tenure review is usually required to complete a remedial development or improvement plan. Those who fail to show improvement after a certain amount of time can be forced to leave or to accept early retirement.

Supporters of the post-tenure review process maintain that it provides a structured system of accountability-- it is an effective way to deal with tenured faculty who have turned into deadwood and it is the only thing that makes it possible to maintain a tenure system at all in the face of the powerful lawmakers, administrators, and trustees who oppose the entire concept of tenure. To many administrators, post-tenure review is an effective sword that can be held over the heads of the tenured faculty, who would presumably otherwise be tempted to retire on the job. When done properly, post-tenure review can be helpful in guiding faculty in planning their careers, improving their teaching, and raising the level of their research.

Critics of the post-tenure review process charge that it is essentially a punitive system that is bad for faculty morale. Many tenured professors regard these periodic reviews as very threatening—they feel that they do little more than subject them to targeting by the administration, which can use the flimsiest of excuses to label them as poor performers and place their jobs at risk. Many tenured professors fear that there is a high potential for administrative abuse of the post-tenure review process, with a negative post-tenure review illegitimately being used simply as a tool to cut tenured faculty in an effort to lower costs. A lot of tenured professors resent the extra time, effort, and paperwork imposed by a system designed primarily to weed out poor performers. The post-tenure review process can undermine collegiality and can promote rivalry and competition within the ranks of the tenured faculty. Some say that the threat of an upcoming post-tenure review might have a chilling effect on a tenured faculty member's decision about what research projects to pursue—it encourages a short-term research strategy, with professors rushing out a whole bunch of “quickie” publications just to keep them out of danger.

Others regard the post-tenure review process as illegitimately replacing the traditional way of disciplining faculty members, since it reduces the obligation of management to prove “just cause” in taking an adverse action against a faculty member. To many, the post-tenure review process is actually nothing less than a de facto re-tenuring or de-tenuring process. Under such a system, the concepts of tenure and academic freedom become meaningless if the faculty is subjected to what is in-effect a re-tenuring process every few years, under steadily-rising standards and with the prospect of discipline and removal hanging over their heads. The entire concept of tenure becomes difficult to sustain if you have to keep re-applying for it every few years.

Faculty Unions

One possible alternative or supplement to the tenure system is a faculty union, which can offer some degree of job protection against a repressive and arbitrary college administration. Unions can be especially attractive to part-time or non-tenure track faculty, who otherwise have little or no job security. Generally, faculty unions bargain collectively with college and university administrations over questions of salary, benefits, promotions, tenure, faculty governance, seniority, academic freedom, and working conditions. However, some colleges and universities have both a faculty union *and* a tenure system—it sometimes can be awkward for faculty and administrations to work with both systems at the same time.

Once a union contract has been signed, it is a legally binding agreement, and any contractual violation usually results in a formal grievance being filed that is settled through a binding arbitration process. Given such an imposing enforcement mechanism, it is often unnecessary to file a formal grievance when a contractual violation has occurred. The chapter merely has to point out a failure to adhere to the collective bargaining agreement in order to secure compliance. However, if talks break down, a strike can result.

In many educational institutions, faculty salaries and benefits are at the discretion of the department chairman or the dean, and the faculty members generally have little recourse to dispute them. In addition, faculty salaries are kept highly secret by the management in most places, and each faculty member generally would have no way to tell if they are being stiffed in comparison with their colleagues. In addition, in many institutions there have been no faculty salary increases for several years and medical and retirement benefits have steadily been cut, causing faculty members to fall further and further behind as inflation takes its toll in the economy.

The presence of a faculty union can be a helpful aid in addressing some of these problems. Under most union contracts, regular salary increases are generally a part of the contract, and everybody gets the same percentage raise, irrespective of job performance. A lot of administrators bitterly resent this aspect of unions, since they strongly prefer to reward their highest performers with generous salary increases and bonuses and to punish their lazy slackers with low raises and perhaps no raises at all. However, faculty members can be as jealous about salaries and perks as corporate executives, and the faculty members who get low raises

become indignant, threats of lawsuits are made, and accusations of favoritism fly fast and thick—the whole yearly salary increase process can be extremely stressful for both faculty and management alike. In such an environment, the presence of a union contract can actually be an advantage, since the entire salary process is dictated by the terms of the contract and is open and across the board, leaving both the faculty and the administration free to not have to fight about salaries and bonuses and to concentrate on other things.

A faculty union contract can also be useful in securing and retaining adequate medical insurance benefits for faculty members. In recent years, there have been increased administrative efforts to cut costs by ratcheting up the premiums that faculty members must pay for their medical insurance coverage and by increasing the deductibles and the copays. The administration probably would like to entirely eliminate medical insurance benefits if they could. A union contract can be a valuable aid in countering such administrative cost-cutting moves. But the rising cost of medicine means that medical insurance can often be an important bone of contention between the union and the management during contract negotiations, and disagreements over medical insurance benefits have actually led to several strikes.

A union contract can be a valuable aid in handling faculty grievances. Without the presence of a union contract, each faculty member is usually on his/her own in handling any problems that they may be having in dealing with the administration—they have to handle their cases on their own and would have to pay for hiring a lawyer if that becomes necessary. The presence of a union contract formalizes the grievance process, and a formal mechanism is put in place to handle faculty grievances—if the grievance involves a violation of the terms of the union contract, the aggrieved faculty member now has the union at their back, and they no longer have to pay out of their own pocket for a lawyer.

A union contract often provides some degree of predictability and transparency in hiring, promotion, performance evaluation, and tenure processes. These matters are often handled by the administration in an atmosphere of high secrecy, and can often be seen by people outside the loop as being biased, capricious, arbitrary and often laden with cronyism and favoritism. Even though there are often formal administrative policies actually in place that deal with these issues, it often happens that such policies are ignored or circumvented by the administration when it becomes convenient for them to do so. Hiring, promotion, performance evaluation, and tenure processes that are codified in a union contract can provide valuable protection for all candidates against abuse and favoritism, and if there are irregularities, a union grievance can be filed.

A faculty union contract can also be valuable if retrenchment or downsizing is taking place. Under most union contracts, the details of how terminations, forced early retirements, program closures, or layoffs are handled are dictated by what the contract says, which minimizes the likelihood that the matter will end up in the courtroom, costing tons of money in legal fees.

But there is strong opposition to faculty unionization from several different quarters. . Most members of college or university boards of trustees come from corporate backgrounds and usually bitterly oppose unions simply as a matter of principle. Most college and university administrations are resistant to any attempts to organize their employees into unions. They oppose unions because they do not want to give up any control over their instructors' working conditions. The presence of a union contract can add extra cost and hassle and can interfere with management's prerogatives in hiring, work assignments, salary administration, promotion, and tenure. Critics claim that unions establish inflexible rules and regulations that make it impossible for the administration to manage the academic enterprise effectively.

Opponents of faculty unions frequently charge that the confrontational character of collective bargaining inevitably weakens and erodes the sense of collegiality between the faculty and the administration that is necessary for meaningful faculty involvement in shared academic governance and collective decision making, although faculty unions generally do not get involved with questions of admission standards, course

creation, or curriculum development

The presence of strong faculty unions can also make it difficult for the administration to do innovative things such as team teaching or to create interdisciplinary programs. Union contracts tend to entrench a set of Byzantine work rules, making it harder for administrations to respond quickly when student demand shifts.

Faculty unions are also criticized because they are often seen as protecting lazy or incompetent faculty members, who would have otherwise have been fired a long time ago. A lot of the general population is vehemently against teachers unions, especially in primary and secondary education, since they feel that they protect incompetent teachers and interfere with management prerogatives in hiring, firing, and promotion.

Not only does management dislike unions, there are also some faculty members who are suspicious of unions. Many faculty members are resistant to the whole concept of unions because they picture American higher-education as being a meritocracy, and they regard themselves as independent and self-sufficient professionals who rely on their individual intelligence and skill to keep their jobs and not on a set of work rules. One often hears that, with collective bargaining, the faculty's professionalism will be lost, that faculty members will be treated in much the same way as teamsters, longshoremen, or autoworkers and that seniority will become the only factor in determining salary and compensation.

Some critics claim that unions create a leveling among the workforce that downgrades everyone to the lowest common denominator. Union contracts often make it difficult if not impossible for outstanding faculty members to be awarded merit pay, which may make it difficult to attract or retain high-performing professors. Union contracts can make it difficult for administrations to accommodate individual faculty requests for things like extra research money, reduced course loads, or for things like a rearranged course schedule to accommodate a faculty member's personal crisis. Tenured faculty can often be resistant to any union contract provisions that erode any of their power in selecting new faculty appointments.

Some faculty superstars--for example those with a ton of teaching awards, a long list of peer-reviewed publications, a fistful of grants, or a boatload of graduate students--might fear that they could actually be hurt by unionization. They worry that their special status and their salaries and bonuses might be limited by the terms of the union contract, that they might get less special treatment on such things as requests for sabbatical leaves, extra research funding, or reduced teaching loads so that they can do more research, and that they could be saddled with more committee work. Sometimes, these stars can be insufferably arrogant and full of a sense of entitlement—they worry that under a union contract their special status and treatment will disappear, that they will be treated in much the same way as the rest of the faculty, whom they perceive to be inferior beings with lesser ability. Such considerations may induce these stars to seek employment elsewhere, at a school without a union where they could be accorded these extra perks.

One of the problems with organizing faculty unions is a 1980 Supreme Court decision (the famous *Yeshiva* case) which concluded that full-time tenure-track faculty members at private sector colleges and universities have no legally-protected right under the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to organize and bargain collectively because they are "managers" who participate in academic and personnel decisions, not "employees". The *Yeshiva* decision does not actually prohibit unionization or collective bargaining in private educational institutions, but faculty members would have no recourse if the administration takes reprisals for union activity or refuses to bargain with a union that has majority support. This ruling does not affect public educational institutions, since they are governed by state laws, which vary from state to state—some states allow union organization at public colleges and universities, whereas other states forbid any sort of public-sector unionization.

The *Yeshiva* restriction does not apply to part-time adjuncts at private institutions, since they generally have only limited participation in decision-making, although they do face the legal argument that casual or

temporary employees have no protected rights under collective-bargaining laws. Nevertheless, many of these part-time faculty members might find unions to be an attractive alternative to the job protection of tenure, which most of them will probably never achieve.

However, when part-time adjuncts and full-time faculty are members of the same union, there can be problems. Many faculty union contracts are written with the interests of full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty primarily in mind and do little or nothing to protect the rights of part-time adjunct faculty, who are handling an increasing percentage of the teaching load in many institutions. In such situations, part-timers often feel marginalized or ignored by the full-time tenured/tenure track faculty members, and they are often not protected by the union contract against administrative abuses and exploitation. For example, the faculty union contract often offers little protection against an adjunct's course assignment being cancelled at the very last minute, does not protect them against being bumped by a full-timer in their course assignments, and does not protect against such abuses as full-time faculty being allowed to teach overloads for extra money, often resulting in an adjunct losing their course assignments.

Unionized full-time faculty can often be resistant to part-time faculty being in the same union with them. The full-time faculty can often be resistant to union contract provisions that require that part-timers be allowed to assume a larger role in shared governance. The full-time faculty members can also be unhappy with union contract provisions that require them to give priority to their part-time faculty members when a new full-time tenure-track position opens up, preferring instead to look at outside candidates of their own choosing.

Consequently, a union environment can actually enhance the tension and friction between the adjunct faculty and the full-time faculty. Sometimes, the sense of alienation can be so great that even if the full-time faculty walk out or go on strike, the adjunct faculty members often offer little or no sympathy or support. This can mean that there is a ready source of potential strikebreakers available to the administration among the ranks of the adjunct faculty, many of which have little or no loyalty to the union, even if they are members.

Since the economic interests of full-timers and adjuncts are often in conflict with each other, part-time adjunct faculty members sometimes attempt to form separate bargaining units. Adjunct-oriented unions can be helpful in adjuncts being allowed to obtain some sort of assurance of continued employment provided that they perform well, and can help them gain some measure of job stability via extended contracts. In addition, the union can help adjuncts obtain some sort of group medical insurance coverage, or can help them in being allowed to buy into a retirement plan.

But the organization of adjuncts into unions can be rather difficult. Adjuncts have to remember that they have very little bargaining power, since there are so many of them out there and so few positions available. Part-timers are often reluctant to agitate for union representation, lest they be perceived by management as not being team-players and placing their jobs at risk. Possible employer retaliation is always a concern. If an adjunct who advocates for a union becomes too much of an irritant to the administration, they can be quickly eliminated simply by not renewing their contract or by not assigning them any courses for the next semester or quarter. Adjuncts that get on the nerves of the administration can easily be replaced. This can make organization of part-timers into unions especially difficult, although more and more part-timers are now being organized into unions, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) being prominent examples.

In December of 2014, the NLRB ruled ^[vii] that full-time non-tenure track faculty (as well as part-time adjunct faculty) are not really managerial employees, and are entitled to collective bargaining should they manage to obtain it. It would indeed be a real stretch to imagine that an adjunct instructor or a non-tenure-track professor, both of who lack job security and full academic freedom, are somehow "managers". The

Board acknowledged that the increased “corporatization” of higher education, under which faculty access to shared governance has been steadily eroded over the last few years, has come to mean that even tenured faculty members really have very little access to shared governance at their institutions. This may mean that fewer and fewer faculty members are truly “managers” in the sense of the Yeshiva ruling. The NLRB ruled that in order for university administrations to argue successfully that their faculty members are “managerial” and hence ineligible for union organization, these universities must be able to prove that their faculty members actually do have real managerial power at their institutions, not just on paper.

There is an ambiguous situation involving religious colleges where attempts have been made by unions to organize their full-time non tenure-track faculty. Several of these colleges are currently trying to block faculty unions, claiming that collective bargaining could intrude on their First Amendment rights to freedom of religion. They argue that a religious denomination should be free to organize and select the ministers of their faith in any manner they choose, free from any sort of governmental regulations. But just who is actually a “minister” of the faith can be sort of ambiguous--it would be hard to picture an instructor who teaches mathematics at a religious college as being some sort of “minister” of that particular religion. The NLRB ruled that just because a college is religious this does not necessarily mean that its faculty members cannot unionize—the college would have to prove that its faculty members are actually performing some sort of religious function in order to gain exemption from the NLRB’s rules. .

We shall see if the NLRB decision is upheld in the legal challenges which are surely to follow.

The Financial Imperative

I must admit that as a lowly assistant professor at the Illinois Institute of Technology, I had a rather Marxist view of the administration. At that time, I regarded administrators as class enemies, whose economic interests invariably clashed with mine. To me, they all seemed to be arrogant overpaid suits who only thought about money, about how to cut costs, and in how to increase their fiefdoms. But over the years I came to realize that administrators are not really evil people, and that the reason why administrators think so much about money is that just about everything the university does costs money, and that this money has to come from somewhere.

The cost of just about everything in academe has grown rapidly in recent years, so much so that college and university student tuition has grown much more rapidly than inflation in the economy in general, even outstripping the rise in medical costs. The reasons for these rising costs are legion. Examples include the rising costs of performing scholarly research, uncontrolled increases in the costs of pensions and medical insurance benefits, as well as the need to spend increasing amounts of money on computers and other related technologies.

Another cost factor is that college education has recently become not unlike summer camp for students, who demand all sorts of expensive amenities such as luxury dorm rooms, lots of recreational facilities, and increased computer and WiFi access. If students don’t get these things on your campus, they will go to another campus which does offer them.

College classrooms are also becoming more expensive. It used to be that all that a college classroom needed was chalk, a blackboard, plus a bunch of desks. Now, classrooms often require computers for every student, they have to provide student WiFi access, and they need a super-expensive DLP projector to show PowerPoint slides. None of this stuff is free, and all of these things add to the cost of a college education.

Because of the rising cost of tuition, a lot of colleges and universities are forced to offer generous financial aid packages in order to attract students. Unless a student has extremely wealthy parents, they cannot afford

to go to college unless they are able to get an offer of a generous financial aid package from the school. Otherwise they are forced to get student loans, and incur a lifetime of debt.

Administrative costs have also skyrocketed in recent years because of requirements for careful record keeping, the need to handle the details of student financial aid, as well as the need to show compliance with a long list of government-imposed rules and regulations, most of which are unfunded mandates. All of these things require a lot of staff, and cost a lot of time and money.

Accreditors often demand all sorts of costly initiatives, the outcomes assessment fad being the latest example. All of these things require extra staff as well as the time and attention of faculty members, lest the accrediting agency ding the college or university for noncompliance, placing the institution's accreditation at risk. If you lose your accreditation, you might as well close your doors.

The legal environment is another driver of increased costs. Colleges and universities need to keep a gaggle of lawyers on staff or on retainer, so that they can defend themselves in case someone who is injured on campus, someone who is sexually harassed, a student who fails a course, a copyright owner who feels that their material is being used improperly, or a faculty member who is denied tenure and who is now being thrown out on the street to face an utterly miserable job market gets angry and decides to sue the school. The current litigious environment is an ever-present danger to the financial well-being of the school. Before an administrator does anything that might have even the remotest possibility of being controversial, they had better wave it past the school's lawyers and get their opinion. You have to make sure that nothing you plan to do can somehow leave you vulnerable to a lawsuit, which encourages an ultra-cautious strategy. If your lawyers tell you that there is even the slightest danger that something you plan to do could get you sued, you may be well-advised not to run the risk and just don't do it.

Another cost factor is the star-system salary bloat. It is not uncommon on many campuses for the president, high level administrators, the football coach, or even superstar faculty members who are working in currently-hot fields and who are bringing in a ton of grant support money, all to be knocking down salaries in excess of a million dollars a year. If they are not paid this much, they will simply pack their bags and move elsewhere.

Because of these rising costs, in order to balance their books, college and university administration have been forced to think more and more like the executives of typical profit-making corporations. They have come to rely very heavily on federal grants, awards from private foundations, alumni donations, endowments, money obtained from athletics, as well as tuition and student fees. But many colleges and universities are faced with declining revenues from many of these sources. Examples are reduced growth in government funding and support, shrinking endowments, plus declining student enrollments.

Declining government funding is especially a problem in state colleges and universities, as well as in community colleges. It seems that state legislatures and local governments are continually cutting the amount of money that they spend on higher education. As a result, some public universities have been forced to implement significant tuition increases or have been forced to accept higher proportions of out-of-state students who pay higher tuition. Budget cuts in some cases have led to the discontinuance of academic programs, layoffs of faculty and staff, larger class sizes, and reduced spending per student.

Another important source of income for colleges and universities, especially for the more prestigious ones, is an endowment. An endowment represents money donated to a college or university by a foundation, by a corporation, or even by a wealthy individual. This money is generally invested in various vehicles in the hope that the total asset value will grow. The institution receiving the endowment usually invests the money only in fairly conservative and safe vehicles, and they avoid risky investments in things such as derivatives and real estate. Some schools, such as Harvard University, have endowments worth billions of dollars.

An endowment fund is often restricted by the donor to only the support of a certain specific program. For example, donors can require that a portion of an endowment's scheduled income be used on a scholarship. Another example of a restrictive use of an endowment's income is to provide funding for endowed professorships. Except in a few circumstances, the terms of an endowment cannot be violated, and the money in the endowment cannot be spent on anything that is not specifically called for by the donor. This means that the college or university cannot use these funds to defray general costs, at least not without the permission of the donors.

Most endowments are designed so that the principal amount remains intact, using only the investment income for covering the specific program called for in the endowment. Most endowments have guidelines that limit how much of the endowment money can be spent each year. For many universities, this amount is about 5% of the endowment's total asset value. In some cases, the amount of money pulled out of the endowment could be a combination of interest income and principal, but most endowments restrict the college or university from dipping too deeply into the principal in order to meet rising costs. But even those schools with generous endowments are husbanding their wealth and cutting expenditures rather than spending their endowment money, just in case they encounter severe financial problems in the future in which donations, tuition revenue, or government grants begin to decline.

However, if an institution encounters a rainy day and is near bankruptcy or has already declared it, but it still has assets in endowments, a court can issue an order that will allow the institution to use those assets to move them to better financial health, while still using the endowment in such a way that reflects the wishes of the donor as closely as possible

Since the economic value of endowments depends on the financial health of the vehicles in which the money has been invested, this value can decline if the stock market or the bond market goes down. Endowments took a bit hit during the financial crisis of 2008. If the economic value of a school's endowments declines too steeply, this can have a negative impact on the school's rankings.

Another source of lost revenue for many colleges and universities is a loss of tuition money because of declining student enrollments. These declines result from relatively flat high school graduation rates, the high cost of a college education, plus an increasing perception that a college diploma from any institution less than Princeton or Williams is really not worth all that much in the current job market, certainly not worth acquiring a lifetime of debt. Even with a college degree in hand, good full-time jobs that pay decent salaries and benefits are often difficult for graduates to find, and a lot of graduating students end up living at home with their parents and working in a series of low-paying temporary gigs while they chase after that elusive full-time position that they presumably trained for at college. Why go to college and train for a career in a certain field if the prospects for finding a full-time job in that field are so small?

College enrollment seems to track inversely with the overall state of the economy. When there is an economic downturn, the job market gets tighter and young people find it harder to get decent jobs, all of which mean that larger numbers of students choose to go to college in the hopes of improving their lot. But when the economy improves, more young people are able to get jobs and fewer numbers of them choose to attend college.

Top-tier research universities such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, the University of Chicago, Stanford, MIT and Caltech, and super-selective liberal arts schools such as Williams, Amherst, Wellesley, and Swarthmore generally receive far more student applications than they can possibly accept. But some lower-tier and less-prestigious academic institutions are faced with declining student enrollments. The decline in enrollments has become so severe that some of these institutions have been faced with having to close their doors. On the average, about five nonprofit schools close down every year.

A lot of for-profit schools have been especially hit hard by declining student enrollments as well as by a whole bunch of legal and regulatory challenges. Corinthian Colleges closed down and filed for bankruptcy in 2015. In 2016, ITT Technical Institutes reported that it has suffered an almost 60 percent decline in the enrollment of new students, and that its accreditation was in serious danger of being revoked because of numerous pending lawsuits as well as money and credit problems. The US Education Department banned ITT Tech from enrolling new students who used federal financial aid, and on September 6, 2016 it was announced that ITT Tech would be closing all of its 130 campuses. In 2016, it was announced that the Apollo Education Group, the publicly-traded owner of the for-profit University of Phoenix, will be taken private by a group of investors. Phoenix has been severely battered by declining enrollments, a series of government investigations, and heightened federal regulations, and has reported declines in revenues and has imposed several rounds of layoffs.

After being forced to accept early retirement from Bell Laboratories in 2001, I became a part-time instructor in the General Education department at the Illinois Institute of Art (ILIA) in Chicago, which is a for-profit educational institution owned by the Education Management Corporation (EDMC). EDMC is based in Pittsburgh and has four higher education divisions: Argosy University, The Art Institutes, Brown Mackie College, and South University. Initially, times were good at ILIA—student enrollments were steadily increasing, and the school was hiring lots of part-timers and even added some full-timers. However, along with lots of other for-profit schools, EDMC has been badly financially hammered in recent years. EDMC has suffered a nearly 50 percent drop in student enrollment over the last few years. EDMC has been the subject of several lawsuits and investigations, alleging that the company made misleading claims in its effort to recruit students, and has been accused of illegally paying incentives to recruiters based on the number of students that they have enrolled. As a result of declining enrollments and the series of investigations at state and federal levels, EDMC has seen a sharp decline in the value of its stock, and its bond rating was reduced to junk status. There have been numerous layoffs of faculty and staff, most of my friends on the faculty at ILIA are gone, and I have not been offered any courses to teach in the last couple of years.

On May 6, 2015 EDMC announced it would begin closing 15 of its Art Institute locations, citing declining enrollments and the high costs of restructuring. In 2016, South University was placed on probation by its accreditor, due to concerns about the financial stability of its parent company. In June of 2016, EDMC announced that it would be closing 22 of its 26 Brown Mackie campuses across the country in the next few years, citing enrollment declines. These campuses specialize in training for medical assisting careers. It turns out that medical assisting doesn't pay much better than minimum wage, and students are reluctant to take out loans for training in a career that pays so poorly. Brown Mackie will continue operating as it teaches out its current students

In 2017, it was announced that the Dream Center Foundation, a charitable missionary organization affiliated with a Pentecostal church, will acquire EDMC and will convert its remaining campuses from for-profit to nonprofit. Despite the religious nature of the Dream Center Foundation, EDMC institutions will remain strictly secular and nonsectarian after the acquisition.

In July of 2018, the Dream Center Foundation announced that several of its institutions would no longer be accepting students, including the Illinois Institute of Art at Chicago and Schaumburg. The Dream Center had been evaluating academic offerings since buying the schools in 2017 and decided to discontinue campus-based programs at 18 of its 31 Art Institute locations, since enrollment had declined to unsustainable levels. Full time student enrollment at the Chicago location dropped from 2250 in 2009 to only 970 in 2016. The Art Institute schools had lost their accreditation at the time that the Dream Center assumed ownership. It is expected that the affected Art Institute locations would close their doors at the end of December 2018.

EDMC, which had previously owned the schools, had filed for bankruptcy protection in June of 2018.

Even some well-known and prestigious non-profit educational institutions are faced with severe financial pressures. Burlington College in Vermont was placed on probation by its accreditor in July of 2014 due to its failure to meet financial resource standards, and the school closed its doors in May of 2016. Another example is Sweet Briar College, a women's liberal arts college located in rural Virginia. In March of 2015, it was announced that they would be closing their doors at the end of the summer session, citing insurmountable financial difficulties, a declining enrollment, and insufficient endowment resources. However, the decision to close was reversed in June of 2015, the Virginia attorney general announcing a mediation agreement, a change of management, and a release of restrictions on the use of endowment money.

The struggle for tuition-paying students has led to a competitive rat-race between colleges, forcing them to spend a lot of money on advertising and marketing in trying to attract more students. Traditional colleges are also suffering increased competition from lower-cost online providers.

These financial problems only promise to get worse in the future, and some financial experts predict that the rate of college closings will increase greatly over the next few years. Under these sorts of pressures, it is small wonder that college and university administrators seem to be so obsessed with financial considerations.

The Corporatization of Academe

In the current environment of rising costs and declining revenues, colleges and universities have been forced to become so narrowly focused on bottom-line issues that they are becoming virtually indistinguishable from for-profit corporations. In the new corporatized university, academic programs become franchises, students become consumers, donors become investors, the fruits of research become proprietary and secret, faculty members become employees, courses become business products, and other peer institutions become competitors. College and university presidents, provosts, and deans are now beginning to look a lot more like corporate executives and are chasing after quarterly profits, cutting costs, and trying to bring in more money. Education and research often now become secondary to strictly bottom-line financial concerns.

Administrative decisions about academic matters are increasingly made on the basis of a corporate-like "return on investment" mentality, where the outcomes of academic programs are measured primarily by looking at quarterly financial balance sheets. Academic programs are judged primarily by the amount of money that they bring in and by the number of students that they attract, rather than on the quality of the teaching, the eminence of the scholarly achievements attained, or the prominence of the research performed. In any given academic or research program, things like teaching excellence, scholarly achievement, or research prominence are highly subjective matters and are hard to measure, but the amount of money that the program brought in is easy to count. As someone once put it, the deans may not know how to read and evaluate scholarly publications or how to judge teaching quality, but they certainly know how to count money.

The emphasis on bottom-line financial issues leads to the concentration of university resources into those areas that promise to bring in the most money, along with a marginalization or de-emphasis of those areas and disciplines that do not instantly show a profit. If a department or discipline has too few students majoring in it, or if grant support starts to disappear, it runs the risk of being closed down and its faculty members being laid off.

New university academic and research initiatives are created with sexy "brand names" designed primarily to attract wealthy donors rather than to meet any perceived educational or research needs. Just like corporate executives, academic administrators spend a lot of their time on marketing and branding, hopefully to attract more students, more grants, and more donors. Under such a corporate-style system, there is an increasing

tendency for university and college administrators to confuse means and ends— rather than needing to raise money to support academic activity, academic activity now becomes a means to raise money.

In the pursuit of lower costs, college and university administrators have outsourced many university functions and jobs, ranging from groundskeeping and janitorial services, all the way to bookstores and food services. Some university administrators are toying with outsourcing even the education function itself, investing heavily in online educational systems and packages in the hope that costs will be reduced even further. The constant pressure to cut costs has led to stagnant wages for faculty, a steady erosion of benefits, and poverty-level wages for most university workers.

Pressures on university administrations to cut labor costs has led to an increasing “adjunctification” of the faculty—with each passing year, more and more of the classroom teaching is performed by part-time, poorly-paid faculty who get no benefits, who have no job security and who have little prospect of ever getting full-time employment. In many ways, colleges and universities have become not unlike a chain of Walmart stores.

There is an increasing corporate control over research and development, including the diversion of the fruits of publically-sponsored research projects into private hands, creating a system under which the fruits of faculty research become the intellectual property of the institution or of some corporate sponsor. Even the courses taught by the faculty or the publications issued by individual faculty members can be treated as being “works for hire”, under which they become the intellectual property of the college or university, so that they can be sold or leased to third parties for a profit. Under such a proprietary environment, a faculty member doesn’t even own their own course or their own publications. The traditional openness and transparency of university educational and research initiatives is replaced by an environment of secrecy and exclusivity.

Many college and university presidents come from a corporate background and have little or no academic experience. They are hired primarily under the expectation that they will be able to keep the institution’s fiscal house in order, and they bring this corporate mindset with them to their new jobs. In the corporate world, they were used to being able to bark out orders and have them instantly obeyed without question, and were used to being able to fire anyone who got in their way. Under a corporate model, an increasingly authoritarian management style is adopted by university and college administrations, in which faculty tenure is regarded as an unnecessary nuisance, where faculty participation in governance is resisted or ignored, and where faculty members are treated as little more than subordinate employees who are expected to keep their mouths shut and do as they are told.

The entire academic marketplace has become a lot more competitive in recent years, with colleges and universities vying against other for recognition, for access to well-qualified students, for government grants, for donors, and for the ability to attract superstar faculty members. A lot of this competitive pressure is driven by the US News and World Report annual rankings of colleges and universities. These rankings, first introduced in 1983, include categories such as student retention rates, faculty resources, student admissions selectivity, student SAT scores, the number of scholarships, financial resources, the size of their endowments, graduation rates, alumni giving, how much money is spent on certain things deemed worthy, as well as assessments by other peer institutions and by high school counselors. Any college president whose institution slides downward in the U.S. News rankings is in serious danger of losing their job. The pressure to get high ratings is so great that some institutions try to “game” the system in an attempt to raise their rankings. This could be done, for example, by the school spending lots of money on things that the U.S. News formula deems important. Unfortunately, this strategy helps to push college costs higher, because the formula that the U.S. News rankings use in calculating their rankings tends to reward schools that spend more money, so colleges and universities do precisely that, and then inevitably have to raise their tuition to cover the growing costs. Another strategy that could be followed is for a school to increase the size of their student applicant pool by aggressive advertising, so they could turn away a higher percentage of their applicants,

which would show the US News survey that the school is now “more selective” and thereby raise their rank. Some schools have even been accused of sending in faked statistics to US News, in hopes of jacking up their ratings in the next published ranking.

Management By The Numbers

Corporate executives have to spend a lot of their time focusing very closely on short-term business results, worrying about the next quarter’s balance sheet, carefully watching the rising and falling of the stock price, or musing about the ratings given by the financial analysts. The whole enterprise is driven by a need to manage these things, which often devolves into managing a whole bunch of numbers. If these numbers start to look bad, stockholders start to bail, the stock price tanks, the financial analysts start to frown, the board of directors starts to get nervous, and rumors of bankruptcy, downsizing, and layoffs start to spread.

Just like corporate executives, colleges and university administrators are rushing headlong into an environment under which the enterprise is managed strictly on the basis of a set of numbers. This focusing on numbers is justified as a means of providing a more reliable and meaningful measurement of “impact” and “quality” of the institution’s programs, organization, and employees, supposedly under the assumption that unless you can measure these things by some sort of quantitative evaluation, you really have no idea of how well or how poorly they are performing. Under such a management philosophy, everything gets reduced to a set of numbers. Examples include student graduation rates, the numbers of papers written by faculty members, the dollar amount of the grants won by faculty members, the number of citations earned by the papers written by faculty members, the scores achieved on student course evaluation questionnaires, the amount of money in the endowments, the number of students majoring in a particular discipline, quarterly profit-and-loss numbers, even the overall ratings on the US News and World Report annual rankings of colleges and universities.

The management of an organization strictly by the numbers can lead to a whole bunch of perverse incentives, under which academic programs, departments, or even individual faculty members are evaluated primarily by their ability to meet a set of numbers. Academic programs are continually revised primarily to improve their numbers, not necessarily to meet any academic need. Recognizing that a faculty member, an academic department, a research program, or even the entire college or university could get into trouble if their numbers start to look bad, in order to keep out of trouble, there is every temptation for them to make up the numbers or even report false numbers. The system ends up looking not unlike the Five Year plans in the old Soviet Union, in which everyone lied to everyone else all the way up the chain.

In the new corporate university, a rewards and punishment system for the faculty is set up based on these numbers—a faculty rating system comes into existence based on their ability to meet a whole bunch of numbers. Under such a performance evaluation system, faculty members are no longer independent professionals—they effectively become subordinate employees, just like those in a corporation. Woe be unto any faculty member whose actions or lack of actions result in the failure to “meet their numbers”.

In a research university, the faculty rewards system is primarily based on publications and grants. If a faculty member’s research record looks good, promotions, salary increases, the achievement of tenure, access to travel money, a reduced teaching load, even an appointment to an administrative position may be in the cards. But if a faculty member does not have enough publications in high-ranking journals, has not achieved a high enough count in the citation indices, or has not won enough research grants, punishment can be swift—low or nonexistent salary raises, no promotion, no travel money, increased teaching loads, a loss of perks such as good office space, or even the threat of job loss.

The pressure on faculty at research universities to meet a set of numbers has been greatly enhanced by the

appearance of data-mining companies such as Academic Analytics. Many research universities have contracted with these companies to gather statistics on faculty scholarly productivity, supposedly in order to be able to rank research universities and to see how they compare with each other. These companies keep track of things such as the number of books written by faculty members, the number of articles that they published in peer-reviewed journals, the dollar amount of the grants that they brought in, the citation counts that their articles gained, and any awards received.

These data mining services have recently become quite controversial, with charges being made that the databases are proprietary and secret, and that most faculty members are not allowed to look at their own personal data profiles. There is a danger that there are things that could be under-counted or even over-counted, but since the whole system is proprietary, one just doesn't really know. There is usually little or no consideration in these databases of teaching or service, or of anything that cannot be easily reduced to a set of numbers. Some faculty who have actually been able to see their profiles complain that the data in them are inaccurate, that there are errors in how publications, grants, and citations are counted. Critics claim that the data do not account for research quality and that they don't adequately measure interdisciplinary research and do not credit co-investigators on grants. The system could encourage junior faculty struggling for tenure to try and "game" the system and boost their stats.

There is a fear that the data mining system could be used by college and university administrations as a tool in faculty promotion and tenure systems, and might well replace more traditional forms of faculty evaluation. This would be yet another example of an important university function being outsourced to a private corporation. The use of a secret database that individual faculty members cannot see is a grave threat to academic freedom, and if the administration is using the database to evaluate their faculty, there must be a procedure under which individual faculty members can view their profiles and correct any errors.

In a teaching-centered institution, the faculty evaluation system is often quite different, and is usually based on the quality of the teaching, or at least on the administration's perception of the teaching quality. This too can be based on a set of numbers. A faculty member must make sure that get high scores on their student course evaluation questionnaires, lest they get called on the carpet by the administration and be accused of being bad teachers. They dare not fail too many students, lest they adversely affect the school's graduation rate and drive the school down in the ratings. They need to make sure that they do not have students complaining about them to the dean or to the department chairman. This encourages teachers to be "easy graders" and to not challenge their students too much.

In the new academic corporate environment, there is a rising wall of suspicion and mistrust between the faculty and the administration. Administrators can appear to the faculty to be nothing less than a bunch of bullies, who are seen as enemies who are constantly threatening them or beating them up over a set of numbers. Each faculty member is forced to focus a lot of their attention on their numbers, and wonder how each move they make will affect their numbers. If a faculty member's numbers start to look bad, administrators quickly jump in to threaten them with low salary raises, a loss of perks, or even the loss of their jobs. This can lead to an erosion of shared governance, under which much of the management of the university is transferred away from the faculty and into the hands of a bunch of deans, assistant deans, provosts, and directors and assistant directors of this and that. Faculty members are forced to fight against each other for high ratings in this numbers game, and are increasingly driven into a competitive environment for access to pieces of an ever-decreasing pie, under which they have to regard their colleagues with suspicion and mistrust. They find that they have to fight with their fellow faculty members over even the most trivial and inconsequential matters.

Under such a high-pressure toxic environment, going to work each day becomes less and less pleasant with each passing month, and a lot of faculty members start wondering if they have made a bad career choice. Their salaries are remaining fairly stationary, the costs of their benefits are continually going up, their

chances for promotion are quite small, their teaching and service loads steadily increase, there are more demands for research, publication and grants, and they have to spend so much time working that their families forget what they look like. Furthermore, if they find that they hate their jobs and want to find a teaching job somewhere else, unless they are a superstar, the academic job market is so tight that there is very little chance of getting a job offer from another academic institution. A lot of junior faculty members find that the whole academic tenure rat-race isn't worth the hassle, and they decide to give up the tenure race, to quit academe altogether, and to do something else with their lives.

The Disadvantages of Tenure

These days, tenure in academe is an extremely controversial subject, with intense opinions being offered on both sides of the issue, both inside and outside the academy. Most of the general public is against teacher tenure, primarily because of frustration with public school teachers who are constantly being bashed in the media as being lazy, incompetent, or out of touch. Tenure became politically unpopular beginning in the 1970s, when opponents charged that it unfairly relieves university professors of the economic uncertainty felt by workers in the corporate world, who are largely "at-will" and can be fired or laid off on a moment's notice with no reason being given. Others criticize tenure because it supposedly allows professors, once tenured, to be able to effectively retire on the job, reasoning that their positions are relatively secure no matter what they do. Another criticism of tenure is that on those occasions when it actually quite reasonable and just to remove a tenured professor who has abused their position, a protracted and expensive legal battle usually follows. The cost of such a legal hassle is so great that university administrations often choose simply to wait out an obnoxious tenured professor and hope that they will soon retire or quit.

Tenure is also criticized by people who imagine that tenured faculty members are all lazy slouches who spend most of their time gossiping about academic politics while sipping sherry at the faculty club, who teach for only a few hours a week and usually have the summer off, and are thus grossly overpaid for what they do. This criticism is based on a common misunderstanding of what academics do—the time spent in face-to-face classroom teaching is actually only a small part of their jobs. Faculty duties also include lecture preparation, meeting with students, advising, grading, plus significant research responsibilities and administrative duties and service to their institution.

Some of the objections to tenure are basically political in nature. Certain right-wing individuals (most prominently the activist David Horowitz) feel that university faculties, especially in the humanities and social sciences, are very heavily-stacked with left-leaning professors who are unaccountable to anyone because they are protected by tenure. Sometimes derisively called "tenured radicals", these leftist professors use their absolute job security as a base to attack fundamental American political, economic, religious, and moral values, or so the argument goes. Accusations are made by conservatives that these tenured radicals, in collaboration with compliant administrators and naïve students, enforce a Stalinist regime of "political correctness" at their institutions, one in which a totalitarian conformity to a set of Marxist or leftist political philosophies is required of both students and faculty, or an attitude is enforced that favors individuals on the basis of their race, ethnic origin, sex, or sexual orientation. Conservatives charge that these tenured faculty members have created a whole bunch of new and trendy departments and study programs--e.g. women's studies, black studies, postmodernist literature, or gay/lesbian/transgender studies--which are little more than leftist propaganda and indoctrination mills rather than serious intellectual disciplines with a recognized core of knowledge, an extensive peer review process, and an approach of academic freedom. Conservative political or religious thought is effectively silenced at such institutions and it is virtually impossible for a conservative to receive tenure or even to be appointed to a tenure-track position, or so the detractors claim.

Now, I certainly don't think that every tenured faculty member is a flaming radical leftist, since I have known

quite a few who have been rather conservative, and there are academic departments that are dominated by conservative ideologues (such as the Hoover Institute at Stanford or the economics faculty at the University of Chicago), but it cannot be denied that university faculty members do tend to be more liberal than the general populace at large. However, I don't think that the presence of large numbers of leftists in colleges and universities is the result of some sort of conspiracy, since it can be argued that colleges and universities are by their very nature humanist institutions that attract people with a liberal bent, just as corporations, businesses, the military, and the police tend to attract people with a more conservative frame of mind.

Another disadvantage of tenure is that it is difficult to dismiss tenured professors if their discipline is no longer viable, if research funding grants dry up, or if students majoring in their subject began to disappear. Tenure can lock faculty in place long after they are no longer needed. Although it is true that tenured faculty positions can indeed be eliminated due to "financial exigency" or program cancellation, such removals are usually quite difficult to perform in actual practice because they invariably result in lengthy and expensive legal proceedings.

Tenure is increasingly under attack in state universities because of the higher cost of tenured faculty members to the taxpayers. According to this argument, one of the causes of the rapidly-increasing cost of higher education in state universities is the presence of so many expensive professors who can't be replaced by less-expensive faculty because of tenure. Over the years, the tenure system has produced an emphasis on research and publishing over teaching as the key to the internal faculty reward system in state universities, and the steep price tag of sustaining a research facility adds greatly to the overall cost of education. All too often, those highly-expensive faculty superstars who have excelled at the research game never actually teach undergraduate courses or even see undergraduates at all. Undergraduate students who are attracted to a given university by the presence of one or more superstars on the faculty are often disappointed to find that they will never see these stars in the classroom, and that most of their undergraduate courses will be taught by harried and demoralized part-timers or by lower-ranking faculty who work off the tenure track. Another cause of the rising cost of education is the policy of giving professors relief from teaching duties to do research or to perform other institutional tasks. Also adding to the cost is the practice of granting senior faculty sabbatical leaves, in which they are paid to take a year off from their teaching duties to pursue research interests.

The publish-or-perish mania that results from the struggle for tenure in a research university often detracts from the quality of instruction that undergraduates receive. In an ideal world, teaching and research should certainly complement each other and should be of equal value to the university, but even the most junior faculty members at research institutions quickly receive the message that teaching is definitely less important than research in the internal reward system. Because the institutional rewards for research and publishing far exceed those for good teaching, faculty are tempted to favor their research over their teaching whenever the two come into conflict. Many faculty members in research universities cynically assert that it really doesn't matter how bad they are in the classroom, so long as they publish enough papers and bring in enough grant support money.

Critics point out that tenured professors tend to act like a sort of restrictive medieval guild, a secret society, an exclusive and elite fraternity, one that deliberately limits its membership and promotes its own selfish economic interests at the expense of others. Tenured professors all too often abuse their absolute job security and act as petty tyrants, who gang up and conspire to dictate campus policies that turn their institutions into bastions of waste and inefficiency. Just like a couple stuck in a bad marriage, angry faculty members often exhaust each other in petty battles over trivial matters, imagining that they are fighting for high principles. As Henry Kissinger is quoted as having said, the reason why academic politics are so petty is that the stakes are so small^[viii]. The tenure system encourages greed and enhances interpersonal fights over status—tenured faculty members can be as anxious about money, promotions, salary, perks, and office space as

corporate executives and they can be as rank-conscious as military officers. Tenured faculty members steadily drive the requirements for achieving tenure higher and higher, making it nearly impossible for new members to join their exalted ranks. Tenured professors can be insufferably arrogant, with an exaggerated sense of entitlement and superiority, imagining that they are the winners in some sort of Darwinist struggle for survival. These senior faculty members can sometimes be downright evil and abusive to those below them in the academic pecking order, treating these underlings as inferior and unworthy beings, destroying careers and even lives with reckless and unfeeling abandon. The well-paid tenured faculty members, absolutely secure in their jobs, are generally indifferent to the travails of the part-time faculty and graduate students who increasingly do most of the teaching at major universities, and often refuse to support better pay and benefits for them, fearful that the extra money will cut into their salaries.

Yet another disadvantage of the tenure system is that when times are tight it is very difficult if not impossible for an assistant professor to attain tenure--many departments are "tenured-in", in the sense that there are a lot of tenured faculty members already in the department and not much room for any more. Administrations are reluctant to hire more tenured faculty in such an environment because they are fearful of the long-term financial burden that they will incur if they offer someone what is effectively a lifetime commitment, especially when money is tight or when student enrollments are declining. Since tenure is an "up-or-out" system, the university is forced to fire even the best and brightest assistant professors because it cannot run the financial risk of making a long-term commitment to them. So the result is a static, aging faculty that is demographically similar to an old-folks home.

In addition, the rigidity and inflexibility of the tenure system has had an unpleasant side-effect: the emergence of a large scholarly underclass of adjunct part-time professors who teach classes on a semester or quarterly contract basis for relatively low wages and no benefits. Because a university cannot lay off its tenured faculty members during periods of low or declining enrollments, they need a pool of expendable workers so that they can add or cancel classes as enrollment fluctuates. These part-timers cost a lot less than more experienced full-time faculty members, so that when budgets are tight, department chairs feel pressure to hire several part-timers rather than one tenure-track full-time faculty member.

Some large research universities deliberately hire more tenure-track professors than they can possibly keep. This can lead to a Darwinian struggle for survival of the fittest, with only a few assistant professors making the cut and most falling by the wayside. This can produce an enhanced sense of competition and rivalry between colleagues, leading to a feeling of extreme paranoia, distrust, and suspicion. Students suffer when faculty members are constantly fighting with their colleagues, and working in such environments can't be pleasant. It's difficult to concentrate on doing a good job in the classroom or laboratory when you are constantly preoccupied with survival issues, always looking over your shoulder, fearful that a colleague will undercut you or stab you in the back.

Another negative aspect of the tenure system is that the abolition of a mandatory retirement age has made it possible for many tenured faculty members to stay on the job indefinitely. This can make it nearly impossible for departments to add a new tenure track position or to promote anyone to a tenured position. With a limited number of spots available and with highly paid senior faculty staying on the job virtually forever, it is difficult to make room for new junior faculty. It is so bad in some departments that you literally have to wait until someone dies before there is any chance for you to be hired or promoted.

It is certainly true that tenure is an extremely valuable prize, one that encourages junior faculty to work very hard to attain. This is presumably a good thing that helps to increase the quality of teaching and research in general. However, many junior faculty members are encouraged to be very cautious and risk-averse in their teaching and research during the probationary period so that they don't offend anyone. Many junior professors are often reluctant to teach controversial topics in the classroom, lest they ruffle the feathers of someone in power who could vote against them at tenure time. They are also likely to opt for "safe" research

topics—those that are trendy and currently in vogue, those that please the senior members of the department, those that promise to pay off in a relatively short time in terms of publications and grants--rather than risk their careers on more speculative or far-reaching research topics which could potentially be ground-breaking but might not pay off quickly enough to earn them tenure. This can lead to assistant professors blindly following the current trend or chasing after the latest intellectual fad, simply to please the senior members of their department so that they can earn tenure. The physicist Lee Smolin has pointed out that it is virtually impossible for any theorist who does not do string theory to earn tenure in the physics department of any major research university.

A lot of junior faculty members at research universities cynically claim that they are working on research that is currently trendy simply in order to get tenure, and that once they have it, they will buck the trend, break the bonds of convention, and range freely on unconventional research topics of their own choosing. But this very rarely ever happens. After so many years of overly cautious behavior, professors are often so emotionally and intellectually locked in that they never adopt more risk-taking strategies even after they have obtained the safety of tenure. It makes no sense to have an employment system that protects a tenured professor's intellectual independence, when the same system makes it virtually impossible for people who exhibit this independence to ever attain tenure.

A lot of people argue that tenure is an obsolete holdover from an earlier era and is no longer needed to protect academic freedom in the current environment—the First Amendment to the US Constitution is entirely sufficient. This might be valid for state colleges and universities, but not for private institutions. The Constitution only applies to the government, and doesn't protect an employee of a private organization from being fired for their political or religious opinions. It is quite true that academic freedom concerns affect only a very tiny minority of faculty members, but there have been a few recent highly publicized cases in which universities have been pressured to fire tenured faculty members because of their opinions.

Although the ultimate goal for most aspiring faculty members has always been to land a tenure track job, some full-time faculty members actually feel that being off the tenure track can be a good thing. Sometimes a person will opt for a NTT full-time post if it means being on a campus in a prime geographic location, perhaps one in which their spouse or partner can obtain a good job as well or where the children will have access to good schools. Perhaps the faculty member seeks a more favorable balance between research and teaching duties than a tenure-track position at a research university would provide. The absence of the pressure to attain tenure removes some of the nastier aspects of the politics involved in the pursuit of tenure and eliminates much of the “publish-or-perish” pressure that is present at more traditional research universities, leaving the faculty member freer to concentrate on good teaching. In medicine and in the natural sciences at research universities, tenure-track faculty have to spend a lot of time in fundraising—off the tenure-track it is often a relief to be free of the constant pressure to seek and obtain grant support from outside funding agencies. In addition, being off the tenure track means that there is no up-or-out decision held over the faculty member's head at the end of the probationary period, as would be the case for an assistant professor on the tenure track.

A lot of aspiring academics look at the lives of the tenure track faculty members that they know and they are definitely not interested in living like them--they don't want to have to work so hard--perhaps even sacrificing evenings and weekends--that their spouses and families forget what they look like. The heightened sense of anxiety over tenure can sometimes lead to personal crises—to episodes of acute depression, to sleepless nights, to alcohol and drug abuse, to marital breakups, and even to suicides. Assistant professors on the tenure track report a high level of stress--the whole tenure and promotion process is always first and foremost in every assistant professor's mind, and every tenure candidate gets more and more anxious, suspicious and paranoid as their date of tenure review approaches. The whole tenure process is shrouded in secrecy—you don't know what is going on at the higher levels, rumors fly around at the speed of light, and you get different stories from different people about what the criteria for success are. This can

lead to a feeling of extreme persecution mania and a general suspicion that dark, malevolent forces are at work against you. Do you really want to live like that?

In most cases, a full-time person off the tenure track can usually count on regular contract renewals if they continue to perform adequately and don't offend the wrong people. Many institutions offer the possibility of promotions and regular salary increases to their full-time NTT faculty who perform well. Many full-time contingent faculty members have access to a full range of benefits, similar to those offered to tenure-track faculty. Non-tenure track full-time faculty members often do have some say in university governance, hiring, and curriculum. Some full-time contingent faculty members feel that their academic freedom is already adequately secured under due-process laws and campus policies that apply to all faculty members. But other full-time non-tenure track faculty report that they feel exposed and vulnerable and are reluctant to provoke controversy or voice opinions radically different from their colleagues. Many observers, however, would argue that junior scholars on the tenure track probably feel much the same way. .

In many academic fields, the job market is so tight that there is no shame at all in taking a full-time NTT position. Even once in the tenure track, there is no guarantee that the candidate will succeed in attaining tenure, and a growing chance that they will fail to do so—why struggle so hard when the chances for success are so small? The tenure track can be a frustrating and demeaning rat race, forcing people to lead lives of quiet desperation. You can't run the risk of actually saying what you think for the entire seven years of the probationary process, while you do what everyone else tells you to do, or what you think everyone else wants you to do. You feel that you are constantly walking on eggshells as you negotiate the torturous path to tenure, fearful that you will say the wrong thing or offend the wrong people. You get mixed messages about what's important in the tenure process—it is difficult to get a straight answer about what is expected of you, about what is critically important and about what is of little if any significance.

Even if a faculty member manages to achieve tenure, their agony is often not really over. One might think that the attainment of the job security that tenure offers would make a faculty member satisfied and happy, but a lot of tenured faculty members are expressing anxiety and frustration about their lot in life and are wondering if they have made a bad career choice. Academic politics have become so petty and vicious that faculty members have to fight with each other even over relatively small and unimportant matters. Things are often so bad that tenured faculty members in a department can start to hate each other. I remember running into a tenured professor of chemistry at the Illinois Institute of Technology in the local grocery store—he said that he was afraid that some of the other faculty members in his department were trying to kill him.

Tenured faculty members are subjected to relatively static salaries in an inflationary economy, the costs of their benefits keep rising, the demands for research and grant writing steadily increase, their teaching loads go up and up, their service loads can often be crushing, and they have to fight with the administration for access to an ever-shrinking pie. The administration is continually increasing the loads of tenured faculty and cutting their resources. Each and every month, they find that they have to do more and more with less and less. If tenured faculty members are unhappy in their current positions, unless they are superstars, the academic job market is so tight that they have very little chance of ever being to move to a different college or university. They are essentially stuck in their jobs for the rest of their lives.

In the new corporate academic environment, tenure is becoming less and less valuable a commodity for most faculty members. Tenure often now does not really offer the absolute job security that one might imagine that it should provide. Tenure can often be effectively revoked if a faculty member with tenure manages to get the administration angry with them or if the school needs to cut costs. If a tenured professor in a research university stops publishing or stops bringing in grant support money, they can be threatened with low salary raises, increased teaching loads, more menial committee assignments, or even the loss of office space and lack of access to travel funds, or they can even be forced out or to accept early retirement. In a teaching-

intensive institution, the administration can come down hard on a tenured faculty member if they start to get poor teaching evaluations, if they fail too many students, or if their students start complaining too much.

Not only can tenured faculty members be punished by the administration for perceived deficiencies in their research, service, and teaching duties, they can also be punished for various vague and subjective matters. Sometimes a tenured faculty member can be dinged for being critical of the administration, especially in public. Such activity would ordinarily be protected under the aegis of academic freedom, but under the new academic corporate environment, tenured faculty members can often be punished by the administration if they speak out too forcefully on controversial issues, if they send offensive tweets, or if their behavior somehow manages to embarrass their institution. If a tenured faculty member objects too strongly to certain administrative measures, they can be accused of being disloyal or they can be labeled as a troublemaker, and they can be ignored, sidelined, harassed, or encouraged to leave.

A tenured faculty member can even be fired by the administration based on trumped-up charges of the most trivial of offenses, such as being perceived as “difficult to work with”, for being thought to be “disloyal”, or for not being a “team-player”. They are often not allowed to offer any sort of defense. Very often, the due process guarantees that are supposedly available to tenured faculty under threat of removal are circumvented or ignored by the administration. The AAUP can actually do very little to protect them, since the administration probably cares very little if the AAUP gets angry and their school ends up on the censured list. The targeted tenured faculty member may have no other option than to file a lawsuit. There have been several recent examples of tenured faculty members being forced out on the flimsiest of pretexts, often without any sort of due process under which they are allowed to present any sort of defense.

The administration can almost always come up with something that they can use against a tenured faculty member that they really want to get rid of. Tenured faculty members may be under risk of being fired without any valid reason or being forced to accept early retirement if some dean or provost decides that they want get rid of them for whatever reason. The administration can make life so difficult for them that they end up retiring early or quitting in disgust. A friend of mine who was a tenured professor of mathematics at the Illinois Institute of Technology and who had received numerous awards for excellence in teaching, felt that the administration was simply waiting for him to die so that they could get him off the rolls and save a whole bunch of money. He decided to give up teaching and went into administration.

The Future of Tenure

After all is said and done, is tenure a good system or a bad system? Even though I was denied tenure at the Illinois Institute of Technology back in 1978, I am of two minds on the subject of tenure.

I certainly recognize the downsides of a tenure system, many of which I have talked about here. It is indeed true that tenure is infinitely abuseable. It permits older faculty members who are way past their prime and who are no longer productive to hang on to their jobs, often at the expense of younger, more productive faculty. Tenure does sometimes permit faculty members to effectively retire on the job, reasoning that their jobs are reasonably secure no matter what they do. Tenured faculty members often gang up to ratchet the tenure requirements steadily higher and higher, making it more and more difficult for junior faculty to join their ranks. This results in the creation of an extremely stressful workplace environment for junior faculty, one that leads sometimes to mental problems, marital breakups, and even suicides. Sometimes the senior faculty can place so much pressure and stress on tenure candidates that whole tenure process can appear to them to be not unlike the hazing that college fraternities and sororities sometimes force their new inductees to pass through. The up-or-out aspects of tenure forces a lot of junior faculty members out on the street to face an utterly miserable job market. It is certainly true that the presence of tenured faculty whose jobs cannot easily be terminated is a major irritant to college and university administrators, making it more difficult for

them to manage the academic enterprise efficiently and effectively. The rigidities of the tenure system have resulted in the creation of an expanding underclass of part-time adjunct faculty members who have low salaries, no benefits, no job security, and little prospect of ever getting full-time employment. Tenured faculty sometimes conspire to create processes and systems that force their institutions to waste tons and tons of money, steadily driving the cost of college tuition upward and upward. Tenured faculty members can be insufferably snooty, arrogant, and abusive, with an exaggerated sense of superiority and entitlement, imagining that they are somehow smarter and cleverer than the rest of us.

However, I think that the job protection that tenure offers is a very good thing, and I wish that I had gotten it. As someone once put it, having tenure is the difference between being a subject and being a citizen. Without tenure, you are little more than hired help, an expendable employee who can be dismissed at the slightest administrator's whim. Once tenured, you are treated as a complete professional, someone with every prospect of a long-lasting career, a valued full citizen of the place where you work. You feel a sense of pride and accomplishment now that your colleagues and your institution have thought highly enough of you to have made you a lifetime commitment. Once you have tenure, the administration can't fire you simply to save a little bit of money and cannot replace you with some junior person who will work for a lot less. You can no longer be fired simply because someone doesn't like your teaching style, the research topics you chose, your personal lifestyle, or even the way you part your hair. Tenure gives you full ability to participate effectively in the governance of your college or institute, to decide who gets hired into new faculty or administrative slots, to design new courses, or to revise the curriculum. Tenure gives you the freedom to say what you really think in faculty meetings, to tell the dean or even the president that you think what he or she is doing is not a good idea. Your political and religious views can safely be aired in public or in the classroom without any danger of losing your job.

However, reliance on tenure to protect academic freedom or shared governance will not work when fewer and fewer faculty members have tenure and most never will have tenure in the future. As the numbers of tenure-track faculty decline and the numbers of administrators increase, the balance of power shifts steadily away from researchers and educators and towards the management and administrative side of the institution. There is a steady movement in many colleges and universities towards a more corporate-style management structure, one where bottom-line issues become paramount, where cutting costs and increasing the income stream become more important than the educational and research goals that the institution is presumably there to serve. Under such a corporate model, there is a subtle but definite shift in the goals of the university—instead of the traditional mission of increasing knowledge and educating the next generation of citizens, the university goal is now to maximize profits and to minimize costs.

In the current environment, the trend is increasingly away from faculty tenure to a model in which faculty members are in contingent positions where they are vulnerable to instant termination with no cause being given. Tenure seems to be a slowly dying institution—in another generation or so it will be almost completely gone and those few professors who actually still have tenure will be an anachronism of a bygone era. Instead, faculty members in most institutions will in the future be little more than “at-will” employees much like those in large corporations—just hired help with no job security, no say in their employment conditions, and subject to instant dismissal at the slightest administrator's whim. Even those faculty members with tenure may not be all that secure in their jobs, and can be vulnerable if some administrator needs to cut costs or decides that they have become too much of a nuisance.

Perhaps the real blame for the current employment crisis lies in the fact that the academic job market is currently glutted with so many PhDs, far more than can ever hope to get tenure-track faculty positions at major colleges and universities. One of the reasons why universities and colleges have replaced so many tenure-track faculty slots with poorly-paid part-time labor is because they *can* do it—there are so many PhDs out there that only a few of them can ever hope to get full-time academic jobs and most must settle for these part-time adjunct positions simply in order to pay their bills. The current graduate education system is

largely to blame for this mess, with programs at many research universities depending heavily on the presence of large numbers of graduate students working long hours for low pay on research projects directed by full-time faculty members. The faculty members are often so busy in seeking out new grants and in reporting to the agencies responsible for the grants that they already have that they have very little time left over to do any actual research, and must depend on graduate students and post-docs to do their research for them. The major output of most graduate programs is not really publications, grants, or papers—it is new PhDs.

Graduate school has become not unlike a Ponzi scheme, one in which the survival of the program depends on the recruitment of more and more graduate students. These students are used as little more than cheap labor to perform the research for the senior tenured faculty, who are often so busy in seeking external grant support or in reporting to the funding agencies of the grants they already have that they have little time left over to actually perform any research. Very often, these senior faculty members add little more than their names to the papers written by their students. These senior faculty members have absolutely secure employment, they sit in fancy offices, they knock down six-figure salaries, and they travel on the government dime to exotic places attending conferences to report on the results obtained by their graduate students, who slave away at odd hours in the morning, who make virtually starvation wages, and who live in constant fear of not being able to obtain a decent job upon graduation.. A friend of mine once said that it is the principal investigator on the grant who gets all the credit for the research performed, whereas the graduate students are the ones who do all of the work, It often happens that the overall director of a ground-breaking project is the one who gets the Nobel Prize for it, whereas it was the graduate students, postdocs, and lower-ranking assistant professors who did most of the work.

Each new grant that is awarded, each new research project, and each newly hired faculty member calls for even more graduate students, until there are so many of them being produced that there is little chance for any but a few of them to ever attain full-time academic positions. It often happens that many of these new PhDs are unable to land a full-time academic position, and are reduced to flipping burgers at Wendy's, bagging groceries in the local supermarket, or are freeway-flying adjuncts trying to cobble together a meager living while they try to land that elusive full-time academic position. Law schools and the legal profession take steps to prevent the flooding of the job market with new lawyers, but graduate schools keep on cranking out more PhDs than can possibly get academic jobs. The academic job market will not improve until graduate schools begin to address this surplus issue.

If tenure is going to die, some sort of new system needs to be devised in its place in order to preserve academic freedom. Contingent or part-time faculty need to be provided with some sort of job protection under which they will be given a reasonable expectation of continual employment if they continue to perform satisfactorily. Their academic freedom needs to be protected by some sort of enforceable guarantee under which they are granted the right to teach and study free from political or religious interference and are allowed to espouse unpopular views in the classroom and outside the university. They also need to be granted full participation in the selection of instructional materials and textbooks, in defining course content, and in determining grading standards. They must be granted full intellectual property rights on the instructional materials that they develop. They must not be excluded from full participation in shared governance, and they must be allowed to serve on various university committees. There has to be some sort of new social contract among educators, administrators and society as a whole.

But I don't see this happening any time soon. Frankly, I can't see any good reason why anyone would want to consider a career in academe. The only thing you have to look forward to is a hardscrabble existence, working for low wages and no benefits in an increasingly precarious environment, fearful that making even the slightest waves could get you thrown out on the street. Why invest so many years in preparation and training when the chances of obtaining full-time employment are so small? Even if you do manage to land a tenure-track job, there is no guarantee that you will actually obtain tenure at the end of the probationary

period and a growing chance that you will fail to do so. You will probably end up drifting gypsy-like from one temporary job to another, until you finally become so old and tired that you can't work any more and are forced into retirement, with no pension, no healthcare coverage, and a feeling that you have wasted your life.

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Endnotes

[i] 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, American Association of University Professors, <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/1940statement.htm>

[ii] There are a few protections in corporate America against arbitrary dismissals, but only if there is a union contract in existence or if there is some sort of employment contract in effect. If the employees of a corporation are in a union, the union contract generally does not protect them against wholesale layoffs or firings, but it usually does stipulate the details of exactly how these layoffs and downsizings have to be done, typically giving favored treatment to those workers having the greatest seniority. However, most professional and managerial corporate employees are said to be “salaried exempt”, which means that they are not members of any union and are not eligible for such protections. In other cases, some protection against arbitrary terminations is provided if there is an employment contract in existence, one in which both the employer and the employee have signed an agreement that employment will be guaranteed for a certain amount of time so long as the employee continues to perform satisfactorily. However, such employment contracts are rare in the corporate environment, and most employers are careful to point out that nothing that an employee signs can be construed as any sort of employment contract.

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[viii] The line may actually originally be due to a Columbia University professor named Wallace Sayre, who probably first used it back in the 1950s. Kissinger later listed his “rule” as follows: “I formulated the rule that the intensity of academic politics and the bitterness of it is in inverse proportion to the importance of the subject they’re discussing”