

University of Arkansas at Little Rock  
The Department of World Languages  
27 October 2017

Input regarding proposed changes to UA System regarding tenure, employment periods, and university and distinguished professorships.

---

The policies proposed by the UA System trample on principles of faculty governance and academic freedom. Of particular concern are the revised guidelines for termination which offer vague language to justify the termination of faculty. For example, 405.1 Section I indicates that dismissal is permitted as a result of a “pattern of disruptive conduct or unwillingness to work productively with colleagues”. This policy can potentially deter discussion and critical inquiry within our units or institutions by discouraging dissent or disagreement among colleagues regarding program policy or processes. Would requesting additional information or offering criticism to proposed program or policy changes be interpreted as a hindrance to productivity, for example? Furthermore, by these guidelines a faculty member would be forced to accept additional tasks and duties without regard to their completion of their already assigned duties. Could one also be dismissed for declining to serve on departmental, college or university committees or taskforces, for declining to teach course overloads, or summer classes?

Firing non-tenured faculty for “convenience” and without recourse is at best counter-intuitive to a professional relationship between faculty and the institution and could well be a threat not only to academic freedom but also to a unit’s ability to assure instruction in courses for which students have paid and on which they are relying to satisfy graduation requirements. There is a financial exigency policy independent of this policy that covers an institution’s major financial shortfalls and needs for quick action.

The proposed changes to the UA System regarding tenure and employment periods will impact both the retention and hiring of quality faculty. Quality faculty who have not yet been tenured or promoted will likely seek greener pastures, and potential faculty will be wary of accepting a tenure-track position, knowing that academic freedom at the UA System is limited at best and that the rules for cause for termination are arbitrary.

A tenured faculty member receiving an annual evaluation of “unsatisfactory” currently has a clearly delineated opportunity for remediation. In the real world needed improvements in performance may well take more than one year. For example, a lack of scholarship / research / publication cannot, typically, be substantially remediated in one year since publication dates, grants, etc. have a significant “lead” time... (added) Published work may not appear for over a year or two from submission....

Can “unsatisfactory” be determined “at will” by any administrator in the line of evaluation with or without relying on the standards of the academic unit in which the faculty member is employed?

In general, this major revision in policy will make it markedly more challenging to **recruit** and *moreover* **retain** high quality faculty when they see that the possibility of one unsuccessful year might jeopardize their future at the institution. Given two or more job opportunities, the one with a more robust tenure policy protecting faculty would win out.

\* Agreed. The proposed policy will negatively impact our university’s ability to recruit and

retain high caliber professor and sets us up to recruit faculty who will build their name and move to an institution with better tenure protections.

Dismissal based on the subjectivity of not being “collegial” **does not foster good morale** or the possibility of **freedom of expression**, not to mention academic freedom in the classroom and beyond. Does this mean that an individual who expresses an idea different from the administrative initiative of the day or who questions policy may be seen to be expressing a “pattern of disruptive conduct or unwillingness to work productively with colleagues”? And, if this is so, would this mean that a tenured faculty member could have tenure revoked based on this arbitrary and subjective measurement?