

XIII. REGULAR FACULTY TENURE

Tenure is the assurance of continuous employment at a particular faculty rank. The assurance of compensation applies to that base academic salary which is agreed upon by the faculty member and the department chair, as defined in the annual contract. Tenure ensures academic freedom, with the expectation that the faculty member will continue to perform according to accepted standards subject to termination for cause (Faculty Handbook 7.1.1), upon retirement, on account of financial exigency or the change or abolition of institutional programs. Tenure rests in the college or department of primary appointment only. The initial letter of appointment and/or contract and annual renewals shall specify status with regard to tenure.

Tenure may be recommended for faculty members appointed to the rank of Professor or Associate Professor. A high level of performance is required; however, tenure is not based upon specific academic skills or attainments. These qualifications are considered in the process of promotion in rank.

The University separates issues associated with tenure from those related to promotion, recognizing that tenure involves criteria different from those defined for appointment and promotion. In considering tenure, there must be evidence of achievement in research or in clinical expertise; success as a teacher is an essential element for tenure regardless of other attainment. All of these factors: teaching, achievement in research and clinical care, represent threshold characteristics that must be met prior to consideration for tenure.

In considering tenure, the individual's long-term value to the University is the central issue.

1. Implicit in the determination of value is academic maturity, a qualitative, not quantitative, characteristic. Many factors contribute to academic maturity. Some of these are professional judgment, wisdom, collegiality, citizenship in the academic community and the capacity to promote development of colleagues and students.
2. Tenure is recommended when, in the opinion of the college, a level of mutual trust and responsibility has developed such that the ability of the college to meet its academic and societal mission and the effectiveness of the faculty member in maximizing scholarly exchange and intellectual exploration, both are enhanced by the relationship.

Once achieved, these characteristics are rarely lost, and it is this durable and continuous state which permits the long-term commitments and obligations inherent in tenure. It is recognized that tenure is of value to the college in the retention of superior faculty members, and to the faculty member in economic security; however, these factors are secondary to its primary purpose.

Appointment to a status of tenure carries obligations both for the College of Medicine and for the faculty member. The college has established a mechanism for regular review of all faculty with the intent of maximizing career development opportunities including faculty holding tenured positions.

The tenure decision requires review and appraisal by several committees of peers in the department in the college and at the university level. Each committee makes recommendations to a department chair, the Dean of the College of Medicine, the Provost, the President and ultimately to the Board of Trustees. The procedure is appropriately complex and lengthy.

Revised May 1994

Excerpt from the Appointment, Promotion and Tenure Clarification Document

When a faculty member is being recommended for tenure, it is also important that those individuals providing external letters of recommendation speak to whether the faculty member would be granted tenure at their institution.

Tenure considerations for current MUSC faculty: Justification of a request for awarding of tenure is distinct from a request for appointment/promotion and should be thoughtfully and thoroughly addressed. The MUSC Faculty Handbook states in section 6.04a, criteria for tenure, that “the faculty member must demonstrate competence and promise of long-term usefulness to the missions and programs of the University to be considered for tenure.” Long-term value to the institution is a critical component and should be highlighted by the department chair in the tenure request; this could include specifics related to contributions to the educational, research, and/or clinical missions; contribution to strategic initiatives; international reputation; leadership roles and/or committee involvement; and the like. It is critically important for the department chair to clearly articulate in the packet and letter the reasons tenure should be awarded, emphasize the importance of the individual to the department and institution, and highlight their strong enthusiasm for the tenure request.

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