

Faculty Forum, February 20, 2002

Comments by Risa L. Lieberwitz, Associate Professor, School of Industrial and Labor Relations

I have three points to discuss that I hope will help to frame the issues and to provide some ideas for further discussion:

1. What are the goals that we should try to achieve?
2. The proposed general enabling legislation for creation of new professorial titles and the College of Veterinary Medicine's specific proposal for new non-tenure track professorships should be evaluated independently of each other.
3. There may be some amendments that could be made to the enabling legislation that would lead to a more open, more democratic, and more full evaluation of specific proposals, such as the Veterinary School's proposal.

Now, for discussion of these three points:

1. What are the goals that we should try to achieve:
  - a. We should protect a strong tenure system – not to maintain a hierarchy – but to protect the rights that correspond to tenure, which is a strong form of job security. At the heart of those rights is academic freedom, which is essential for all teaching and research and for the right to express views and opinions about the university. Job security is essential to protect the rights of academic freedom.
  - b. The need to protect the tenure system is especially crucial now – we are discussing these issues against a national background of Boards of Trustees and University Administrators seeking to increase the number of non-tenure track faculty. Administrators justify these actions as a way of

making financial savings; in reality, such measures also undermine academic freedom.

- c. We should also pursue the goal of improving the status and respect given to non-tenure track faculty at Cornell (the instructors and lecturers), to recognize the importance of their work and to provide the rights of academic freedom and job security to non-tenure track faculty.

2. This brings me to my second point.

- a. The general enabling legislation should be evaluated separately from any specific proposals from a college or school within Cornell.
- b. The Faculty Senate will be voting on the proposed enabling legislation for creation of new professorial titles available on a college-by-college basis. The Faculty Senate will not be voting on any specific proposal from a college – thus the Senate vote on the enabling legislation is not a vote on the Veterinary College proposal.
- c. As a result – it is possible for the Faculty Senate to approve proposed enabling legislation and for the Veterinary College proposal to be considered and either approved or not approved by the appropriate Faculty Senate committee.

3. Finally, this brings me to my third point:

- a. As I noted earlier, one goal is to improve the status and respect provided to non-tenure track faculty (e.g. lecturers, instructors). I would favor extending the professorial tenure-track to include non-tenured faculty. However, I also believe that the enabling legislation to create new titles, with some important amendments, may be a first step toward addressing

the issue of enhancing the respect and status given to non-tenure track faculty.

- b. Amendments would be needed in the enabling legislation to ensure that the use of a professorial non-tenure track title fulfills the purpose of improving the status of incumbent non-tenure track faculty – for example, criteria could be included in the enabling legislation that requires a school to show that it is re-titling already existing job positions and that it is not adding a new layer of non-tenure track jobs at the expense of tenure-track positions. The amendments to the enabling legislation could also include procedural provisions – for example a period for information and comments to be submitted by any interested person to the Faculty Senate committee considering the specific college’s proposal.
  
- c. With such amendments adding both clearer criteria for new titles and procedural provisions to increase input and information, the process of consideration of specific proposals will be improved – with a case-by-case determination of specific college proposals.