

# Road to tenure for professors is six years long

University faculty endure an intense process to become a tenured associate professor

By Chelsea Duncan  
News Reporter

While students are spending four to five years of their lives working toward a degree, some of their teachers are spending a rigorous six years striving for status as a tenured member of the faculty.

To become a tenured associate professor at the University, assistant professors must undergo an intensive process of evaluations and critiques from their peers and supervisors.

"It improves the school because tenure is the backbone of the nation's best universities," said Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Jack Rice. "A strong tenure system, I think, goes hand-in-hand with that expectation of excellence."

Over a nearly six-year period, various committees throughout the University and the faculty member's department analyze the teacher's

progress. Toward the end, experts outside the University are called on to objectively evaluate a faculty member's contributions to his or her field. In the end, a comprehensive report is submitted to the Senior Vice President and Provost John Moseley, who makes the final decision.

Rice said a candidate's strengths and weaknesses are judged and examined.

"It is a subjective decision," he said.

Assistant professors are evaluated in three areas, including scholarship, teaching and service.

"I think the most challenging aspect is just finding the appropriate balance for each individual," Rice said, adding that spending too much time in one area can weaken the value of a tenure proposal.

Scholarship includes research in the assistant professor's career field, which must usually be published in some form. The teaching section focuses on areas such as the contributions faculty make to courses and student evaluations. Service involves faculty involvement with department

endeavors such as committees and conferences.

Psychology Department Head Marjorie Taylor said tenure provides professors with job security, which ensures they can explore research ventures over longer periods of time.

"You can do more risky research," she said.

This year about 20 assistant professors will come up for tenure, which is an average number, Rice said. He said the majority of those faculty members will achieve tenure.

"Over the last 15 years, the average success for granting of tenure is about 90 percent," he said.

Rice said assistant professors are given one year to explore other options if by chance they are denied.

"They're not given a second chance," he said, but they can appeal the decision.

Taylor said those on the tenure track receive feedback throughout the process in time to compensate for weaknesses.

"A negative tenure decision is

devastating for everybody involved," she said.

Taylor said assistant professors must excel in all three areas of evaluation.

"It has to be exceptional across the board," she said.

Chemistry Department Head Tom Dyke agreed.

"Those three areas are given substantially equal weight," he said. "You can't flunk one area and get tenure and promotion."

Dyke added that many people don't realize how rigorous the process is for professors.

Rice said faculty are hired at the University with the expectation that they will eventually achieve tenure.

"When we hire new faculty, they are very good," he said.

Chemistry Assistant Professor Darren Johnson was hired in June, and he said he is ready to begin the tenure process.

"The things that you have to do to get tenure are more or less a continuation of what you've been doing,"

he said.

Johnson, whose research focuses on supramolecular chemistry and nanoscience, said it is important to get his work published.

"You want to make a name for yourself in your field," he said.

English Professor Suzanne Clark — who has been a professor for 23 years, including six years as a full professor — said tenure is also important for retaining professors at the University over time.

"A university has to have stability," she said.

Clark said the most difficult part about getting her tenure was writing a book, which took her five years. She added that students need to recognize what their professors go through.

"A lot of people don't realize that University professors have to go through a tenure process," Clark said. "It's really quite an enterprise."

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## COUNCIL

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Council meetings on television, he came to the conclusion that the Council doesn't listen to the people of the city.

"If something was going to happen, I needed to do it," he said.

After coming to that conclusion, Walsh said he quickly decided to file. He canvassed his neighborhood for signatures, finding that most people he talked to didn't even know who their city councilor was. The whole filing process gave him no problems, he said.

"Everybody that I talked to signed my petition," he said. "It was really easy."

Walsh's campaign is still in its early stages. He said he just started writing fund-raising letters and spreading the word about his candidacy. He plans to invest in yard signs, bumper stickers and other campaign paraphernalia closer to the May 18 primary date.

Though the native Eugenean's only political experience prior to this was holding office as high school class president, he feels good about his political future.

"I think I have just as good of chance as anybody else," he said.

Blues musician Willie Nicholas also filed for office.

"The process of how many candidates running is a bit crazy," he said.

The campaign itself, though, is easy.

"It doesn't really take up a lot of time, actually," he said.

Nicholas, who ran for mayor of Springfield in 2000, said the stage is his pulpit. He plays in the band Forest T. Black and gathered most of his signatures during gigs around town.

"The working poor need someone to represent them in city government," he said.

Nicholas said he doesn't plan to run a big campaign, though he said he is thinking about creating television commercials as he did in his previous run for mayor of Springfield. Even with the television ads, however, the process is not expensive.

"I think during my entire 2000 campaign I spent \$700, and I took 30 percent of the vote," he said.

Information about filing for candidacy is available at the City Recorder's Office in Room 105 of Eugene City Hall at 777 Pearl St. or online at <http://www.ci.eugene.or.us/cityrec/elections/index.htm>.

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## COURT

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people have responded since September, Foster said one was not qualified and another was appointed to the EMU Board. Foster estimates the other two applicants — one who applied Wednesday and one who applied Thursday — will be interviewed during the next week to establish whether they are qualified.

"I think (the court) has a valid argument ... and though the argument is valid, we have been actively trying to fill these positions, but it just seems there hasn't been any interest," Foster said. "If there isn't interest we're kind of at a loss to fill the position."

"We hope these two applicants will pan out."

Foster said ASUO waited until fall to advertise specifically for court positions because ASUO officials

believed student interest would be too low during the summer, and the influx of students in the fall would garner more interest.

Harris declined to comment on why he thinks the vacancy has not been filled, but he did reiterate that the sole purpose of the hearing will be for Melton to show cause regarding the vacancy and her failure to fill it.

In addition to the appearance order, the court also urged Melton in the writ to "diligently fill the present vacancy in question," adding that the recommendation "is not tantamount to a license to act with haste, dereliction, or inattentiveness with respect to filling the aforesaid vacancy."

"A thorough screening process and a well-qualified candidate shall not be sacrificed in the name of expediency," the writ said.

A second position became vacant just one day earlier, on Wednesday, when the court issued a different writ

of mandamus ordering Melton to replace within the next 30 days Meghan Madden. The former justice is studying in Spain for the term and is ineligible to continue her work on the court.

The constitution dictates that court justices are appointed until they graduate, leave the University or are removed for non-fulfillment of duties, with exceptions for absence during the summer. The court ruled that Madden's study abroad didn't fit into the exception, and therefore her term expired.

The constitution grants the court "supreme and final authority" on the constitution itself and allows justices to address questions about non-fulfillment of duties by student leaders.

Contact the managing editor at [janmontry@dailymerald.com](mailto:janmontry@dailymerald.com). News reporter Chuck Slothower contributed to this report.

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