

Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and the  
Department of Planning and Institutional Research

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Faculty Tenure Rates: 2015-16 Annual Report

January 2016

# Introduction[[1]](#footnote-1)

For the past nineteen years, Penn State has analyzed the rates at which its provisionally appointed faculty members achieve tenure. Tabulations are shared annually with Penn State’s deans and with the University Faculty Senate. This report and an archive of prior years’ reports are available on the Department of Planning and Institutional Research web page (<http://www.opa.psu.edu/institutional-research/publications-and-reports/research-and-data-analyses/tenure/>).

# Distribution of Penn State Faculty

In fall 2015, Penn State employed 6,127 full-time faculty members, including lecturers, librarians, and research faculty (Table 1). Of these, 2,911 were either tenured or on the tenure track.

**Table 1. Full-Time Faculty by Tenure Status, Fall 2015** [[2]](#footnote-2)

| **Faculty type** | **Number** | **Percentage** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Tenured | 2,251 | 36.7% |
| Tenure track | 660 | 10.8% |
| Other | 3,216 | 52.5% |
| **Total** | **6,127** | **100%** |

# Tenure-Track Progression of Assistant Professors

Over the past decade, an average of 163 faculty members have entered provisional status annually at Penn State. Table 2 shows the tenure achievement rates for entering cohorts for whom sufficient time has passed to allow outcomes to be observed. Specifically, tenure rates in Table 2 are calculated from the time of appointment through the seventh year (which allows for the handful of individuals who “stop the clock” for one year during the provisional period). It is extremely rare for a faculty member to stop the tenure clock more than once, although it is permitted under University policy. For the last ten entering cohorts – that is, from those beginning in 1999-00 through those beginning in 2008-09 – 59% of new entrants received tenure by the end of their seventh year. This does not mean that 41% were denied tenure because assistant professors leave the tenure track for many reasons.

**Table 2. Tenure Rates over the Past Decade by Gender and Minority Status**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Cohort Year** | **Number of Entrants - All** | **Percent**  **Tenured - All** | **Number of Female Entrants** | **Percent**  **Females Tenured** | **Number of Male Entrants** | **Percent**  **Males Tenured** | **Number of Minority Entrants** | **Percent**  **Minorities Tenured** | **Number of Non-minority Entrants** | **Percent**  **Non-minority Tenured** |
| 1999-00 | 178 | 63% | 63 | 60% | 115 | 65% | 34 | 56% | 144 | 65% |
| 2000-01 | 190 | 60% | 72 | 50% | 118 | 66% | 31 | 52% | 159 | 62% |
| 2001-02 | 183 | 58% | 77 | 60% | 106 | 57% | 41 | 63% | 142 | 56% |
| 2002-03 | 189 | 62% | 76 | 58% | 113 | 65% | 56 | 54% | 133 | 65% |
| 2003-04 | 158 | 60% | 68 | 58% | 90 | 57% | 45 | 51% | 113 | 64% |
| 2004-05 | 130 | 59% | 42 | 50% | 87 | 63% | 30 | 63% | 99 | 58% |
| 2005-06 | 147 | 56% | 64 | 48% | 83 | 63% | 56 | 52% | 91 | 59% |
| 2006-07 | 134 | 54% | 64 | 48% | 70 | 60% | 46 | 59% | 88 | 52% |
| 2007-08 | 160 | 63% | 67 | 52% | 93 | 71% | 61 | 59% | 99 | 66% |
| 2008-09 | 162 | 55% | 58 | 52% | 104 | 56% | 59 | 49% | 103 | 57% |
| 1999-00 through 2008-09 | 1,631 | 59% | 652 | 55% | 979 | 62% | 460 | 55% | 1,171 | 61% |

**Tables 1 & 2 Notes**

* Each cohort includes new entrants into provisional status. So, for example, faculty members who have not completed dissertations and who may have been hired initially into a fixed-term position are included in a tenure cohort for the year in which they formally entered the tenure track. The cohorts also include library faculty of equivalent rank. As explained in the narrative, Tables 1 & 2 track cohorts *through* the seventh year – that is, one year past the normal tenure-decision point. Therefore, in Table 2, tenure rates include individuals who "stopped the clock" for one year. Typically, there are about 20 or so such cases, University-wide, in any year's cohort.
* These cohorts include all Penn State locations except for the Pennsylvania College of Technology. Cohorts prior to 2008-09 do not include the Dickinson School of Law.
* Minority faculty include all faculty members whose race/ethnicity is not White. This category includes all faculty whose race/ethnicity is reported as international.

Table 2 also provides tenure rates by gender and minority status. As in prior years, there remains a noticeable gender gap. The lowest gap in the five year rolling average was 5% for the 2003-04 cohort; the gap for the 2008-09 cohort is 13%. In aggregate over the past decade, the tenure rate for minority faculty (defined as Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Black/African American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, multiracial, and international) were lower than that of non-minority (White) faculty (55% compared to 61%). Overall, the aggregate tenure rate for females over the past decade is lower than for males (55% compared to 59%). On average the minority tenure gap does seem to be slowly narrowing. The difference between five-year rolling averages for tenure achievement for minority versus non-minority faculty over the past decade peaked for the 2002-03 and 2003-04 cohorts at 7% and has declined to 3% for the current cohort (data not shown).

Comparative data on this topic are very limited, but apparent disparities in tenure rates by gender and race/ethnicity may be related to differences across academic fields. Demographic groups are distributed disproportionately across academic units and aggregate tenure rates differ substantially by discipline. For example, a 2007 report of the Modern Language Association[[3]](#footnote-3) found tenure rates in the fields it represents–which include relatively large numbers of female faculty members—to be around 35%. This is in stark contrast to Penn State’s overall tenure rate of 59% over the last decade.

In order to explore this issue, faculty in the 2008-09 cohort were divided into four broad discipline areas for comparison: arts and humanities, biological sciences, physical sciences, and social sciences.[[4]](#footnote-4) Almost half of the cohort (48%) are in disciplines categorized as social sciences, 20% are in the physical sciences, 16% are in the biological sciences, and 16% are in the arts and humanities (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Cohort Distribution by Discipline Category**

Within these categories, women make up 50% of the faculty in the biological sciences faculty, 44% in the social sciences, 35% in the arts and humanities, and 6% in the physical sciences (Table 3). Minorities make up 44% of the faculty in the social sciences, 39% in the biological sciences, 34% in the physical sciences, and 15% in the arts and humanities. For this cohort, aggregate tenure rates were higher for males in the arts and humanities and biological sciences, but higher for females in the social sciences (Table 4). Minority tenure rates were lower than non-minority rates in the biological sciences and social sciences, but were higher in the physical sciences. Comparisons by gender were impossible in the physical sciences and by minority status in the arts and humanities due to the small numbers of women and minorities, respectively, in these areas for this cohort. The small number of women and minorities in some of these disciplinary areas, as well as the lack of key tenure predictors such as research productivity, make drawing conclusions from such data inadvisable, however these findings do suggest that this is an area worth further exploration. National data at the discipline-level are not available for comparison.

**Table 3. Disciplinary Category by Gender and Minority Status, 2008-09 Cohort (N=162)**

| Discipline Category | Percentage Female | Percentage Male | Percentage  Minority | Percentage Non-Minority |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Arts and Humanities | 34.6% | 65.4% | 15.4% | 84.6% |
| Biological Sciences | 50.0% | 50.0% | 38.5% | 61.5% |
| Physical Sciences | 6.3% | 93.8% | 34.4% | 65.6% |
| Social Sciences | 43.6% | 56.4% | 43.6% | 56.4% |

**Table 4. Tenure Rates by Group and by Disciplinary Category, 2008-09 Cohort**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Review History** | **Arts and Humanities** | **Biological Sciences** | **Physical Sciences** | **Social Sciences** |
| Number of tenure cases reviewed | 26 | 26 | 32 | 78 |
| Number of female cases reviewed | 9 | 13 | - | 34 |
| Number of male cases reviewed | 17 | 13 | - | 44 |
| Number of minority cases reviewed | - | 10 | 11 | 34 |
| Number of non-minority cases reviewed | - | 16 | 21 | 44 |
| Percentage of cases granted tenure | 62% | 50% | 75% | 45% |
| Percentage of female cases granted tenure | 44% | 46% | - | 53% |
| Percentage of male cases granted tenure | 71% | 54% | - | 39% |
| Percentage of minority cases granted tenure | - | 40% | 82% | 41% |
| Percentage of non-minority cases granted tenure | - | 56% | 71% | 48% |

Note: Blank cells indicate small numbers of faculty in these categories (N<=5), whose confidentiality would be compromised by inclusion in this table.

As noted, Table 2 only indicates the percentage of those who began on the tenure track and received tenure. Table 5 provides information about subsequent Penn State employment status at the end of that seven-year period. As shown in Table 5, small numbers (10% of the 2008-09 cohort) of individuals not receiving tenure remain employed at the University in some full-time capacity at the end of the seven-year window. Of these, five remain in provisional status due to tenure stays, five were subsequently terminated or have upcoming termination dates, and the remaining six are in non-tenure-track, primarily fixed-term, academic positions. Historically, the University has not, as a matter of general practice, retained individuals who have been denied tenure in a subsequent academic appointment.

**Table 5. Tenure Outcome and Subsequent Penn State Employment Status at the end of Year Seven for the Past Five Cohorts**

| Cohort Year | Number of Entrants | Percentage Tenured and Still Employed | Percentage Not Tenured but Still Employed | Percentage Not Tenured and Not Employed | Percentage Tenured and Not Employed |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2004-05 Total | 130 | 50% | 5% | 31% | 1% |
| 2005-06 Total | 147 | 54% | 5% | 42% | 3% |
| 2006-07 Total | 134 | 53% | 6% | 33% | 1% |
| 2007-08 Total | 160 | 61% | 5% | 32% | 2% |
| 2008-09 Total | 161 | 50% | 10% | 37% | 4% |
| 2004-05 Female | 43 | 49% | 12% | 40% | 0% |
| 2005-06 Female | 64 | 47% | 9% | 42% | 2% |
| 2006-07 Female | 64 | 45% | 8% | 44% | 3% |
| 2007-08 Female | 67 | 51% | 9% | 39% | 1% |
| 2008-09 Female | 58 | 45% | 14% | 34% | 7% |
| 2004-05 Male | 87 | 61% | 3% | 33% | 2% |
| 2005-06 Male | 83 | 59% | 2% | 35% | 4% |
| 2006-07 Male | 70 | 60% | 4% | 36% | 0% |
| 2007-08 Male | 93 | 69% | 2% | 27% | 2% |
| 2008-09 Male | 104 | 53% | 8% | 38% | 2% |
| 2004-05 Minority | 31 | 58% | 0% | 39% | 3% |
| 2005-06 Minority | 56 | 46% | 4% | 45% | 5% |
| 2006-07 Minority | 46 | 59% | 4% | 37% | 0% |
| 2007-08 Minority | 61 | 59% | 3% | 38% | 0% |
| 2008-09 Minority | 59 | 44% | 10% | 41% | 5% |
| 2004-05 Non-minority | 99 | 57% | 8% | 34% | 1% |
| 2005-06 Non-minority | 91 | 58% | 7% | 34% | 1% |
| 2006-07 Non-minority | 88 | 50% | 7% | 41% | 2% |
| 2007-08 Non-minority | 99 | 63% | 6% | 28% | 3% |
| 2008-09 Non-minority | 103 | 53% | 10% | 34% | 3% |

National higher education databases do not normally include tenure achievement rates comparable to the Penn State data in this report. Table 6 summarizes information collected in 2015 for the 2007-08 cohort, through a special one-time data exchange among twelve peer universities that participate in the American Association of Universities Data Exchange (AAUDE). Data was provided by Boston, Cornell, Michigan State, Purdue, and Rutgers Universities, and the Universities of Arizona, California – Davis, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota – Twin Cities, Nebraska – Lincoln, and Wisconsin – Madison. In all cases except for Penn State, the data are for a single (main) campus. As Table 6 shows, Penn State’s tenure rate of 63% (N=160) for the AAUDE cohort study was typical for this group of universities, for which the average rate was 65% (N=1,326). The different male-to-female and minority-to-non-minority patterns at Penn State were also similar, but slightly more extreme than those reported by peer institutions in the AAUDE study (Table 6).

**Table 6. 2007-08 Cohort Seven-Year Tenure Achievement Rates from Participating AAUDE Institutions**

| Cohort | Number of Entrants –  Penn State | Percent Tenured –  Penn State | Number of Entrants –  13 AAUDE | Percent Tenured –  13 AAUDE |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| All | 160 | 63% | 1,326 | 65% |
| Female | 67 | 52% | 506 | 59% |
| Male | 93 | 71% | 820 | 67% |
| Minority | 61 | 59% | 433 | 61% |
| Non-minority | 99 | 66% | 893 | 66% |

Except for Penn State, these are main campuses only and exclusive of medical schools.   
Counts and averages for 13 AAUDE universities are inclusive of Penn State.

# Approval Percentages of Upper-Level Reviews

Tables 7 through 9 summarize data for Penn State including Hershey, but excluding the Pennsylvania College of Technology, for each typical tenure review year. The tables present data for the normally sequenced (second-, fourth-, and sixth-year) reviews. Not all units report the information for year 2 and year 4 reviews in a timely manner, so Tables 8 and 9 are incomplete. Usually only 6-10 cases per year are dealt with out of the normal sequence (for example, as third- or fifth-year reviews). There are many possible paths through the review process (with campus committees, department, division, and school committees, college committees, and the University committee). These tables present the most common decision points in the tenure review process. In brief, for Abington, Altoona, Berks, Erie, and Harrisburg, the respective chancellors sign off at the dean/VP level – that is, they are *not* tallied in the campus chancellor column. For the other 14 campuses comprising the University College, *both* the campus chancellor and the vice president for commonwealth campuses (who serves as dean of the University College) sign off. Great Valley faculty fall under the purview of the vice president for commonwealth campuses. Faculty in the Applied Research Lab are eligible for promotion only, not tenure, and are not reflected in these data.

Tables 7 through 9 demonstrate that the large majority of upper-level reviews at Penn State are consistent with recommendations coming from departments and campuses. Final outcomes have, likewise, historically been consistent with the recommendations that the University committee and the President receive.

As noted in Table 9, in 2014-15, 88 cases made it to the dean/vice president of research level of six-year review.  Seven of those cases were denied at that level and 81 cases (including seven early-tenure cases) continued to the University-level of review.  Of the 81 cases presented to the University-level of review, 79 carried a positive recommendation from the respective dean. At the University-level of review, 79 cases were reviewed positively and all were approved by the President. This pattern is typical. Prior annual versions of this report have shown that the University-level approval percentage has almost always been over 90%.

This report indicates whether faculty members received tenure; it does not explain why some faculty members do not receive tenure. Many individuals leave voluntarily, not necessarily because they were denied tenure. Penn State has been exploring some of those matters via an annual faculty exit survey and interview process, conducted since 1997. The most recent Faculty Study, as well as an archive of prior exit studies is available online at the Department of Planning and Institutional Research web page (<http://www.opa.psu.edu/institutional-research/publications-and-reports/research-and-data-analyses/faculty-exit/>).

**Table 7. Year Two Tenure Reviews, 2008-09 Cohort**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Review History** | **Campus Chancellor** | **Dept/Div/ School Head** | **College Dean/Sr VP Research** |
| Number of cases reviewed | 18 | 107 | 127 |
| Female cases reviewed | 6 | 47 | 54 |
| Male cases reviewed | 12 | 60 | 73 |
| Minority cases reviewed | 10 | 44 | 54 |
| Non-minority cases reviewed | 8 | 63 | 73 |
| Positive recommendations | 18 (100%) | 107 (100%) | 127 (100%) |
| Female positive recommendations | 6 (100%) | 47 (100%) | 54 (100%) |
| Male positive recommendations | 12 (100%) | 60 (100%) | 73 (100%) |
| Minority positive recommendations | 10 (100%) | 44 (100%) | 54 (100%) |
| Non-minority positive recommendations | 8 (100%) | 63 (100%) | 73 (100%) |

**Table 8. Year Four Tenure Reviews, 2008-09 Cohort**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Review History** | **Campus Chancellor** | **Dept/Div/ School Head** | **College Dean/Sr VP Research** |
| Number of cases reviewed | 5 | 59 | 66 |
| Female cases reviewed | 0 | 27 | 29 |
| Male cases reviewed | 5 | 32 | 37 |
| Minority cases reviewed | 0 | 24 | 25 |
| Non-minority cases reviewed | 5 | 35 | 41 |
| Positive recommendations | 5 (100%) | 59 (100%) | 65 (98%) |
| Female positive recommendations | 0 | 27 (100%) | 29 (100%) |
| Male positive recommendations | 5 (100%) | 32 (100%) | 36 (97%) |
| Minority positive recommendations | 0 | 24 (100%) | 25 (100%) |
| Non-minority positive recommendations | 5 (100%) | 35 (100%) | 40 (98%) |

**Table 9. Year Six and Early Tenure Reviews, 2008-09 Cohort**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Review History** | **Campus Chancellor** | **Dept/Div/ School Head** | **College Dean/Sr VP Research** | **University Final Decision** |
| Number of cases reviewed | 18 | 73 | 88 | 81 |
| Female cases reviewed | 7 | 33 | 40 | 37 |
| Male cases reviewed | 11 | 40 | 48 | 44 |
| Minority cases reviewed | 7 | 28 | 35 | 33 |
| Non-minority cases reviewed | 11 | 44 | 53 | 48 |
| Positive recommendations | 15 (83%) | 72 (99%) | 79 (90%) | 79 (98%) |
| Female positive recommendations | 6 (86%) | 32 (97%) | 36 (90%) | 36 (97%) |
| Male positive recommendations | 9 (82%) | 40 (100%) | 43 (90%) | 43 (98%) |
| Minority positive recommendations | 7 (100%) | 28 (100%) | 32 (91%) | 32 (97%) |
| Non-minority positive recommendations | 8 (73%) | 43 (98%) | 47 (89%) | 47 (98%) |

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Retrieved from [*The Penn State Fact Book, Faculty Distribution by Tenure* (https://budget.psu.edu/factbook/  
   HrDynamic/FacultyDistributionBytenurePSULaw.aspx?ReportCode=Tenure&YearCode=2015humors&FBPlusIndc=)](https://budget.psu.edu/factbook/HrDynamic/FacultyDistributionBytenurePSULaw.aspx?ReportCode=Tenure&YearCode=2015humors&FBPlusIndc=N) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Modern Language Association of America. (2007). Report of the MLA Task Force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion. MLA Task Force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion. New York. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A list of University department assignments to the discipline areas is available from Penn State’s Department of Planning and Institutional Research. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)