

EDITORIAL

Tenuous affairs

Tenure, as everyone is aware, is the academic equivalent of a guaranteed income. Originally designed to ensure that academics were free from political pressures to enjoy the pursuit of knowledge, tenure has become a major problem for universities. The current practice of granting tenure for life is no longer appropriate - we must reevaluate both the concept and practice of granting tenure.

One may make an economic argument for the removal of tenure. Today the universities in Canada are reducing their academic staff positions through attrition and hiring freezes. This leaves the universities with highly salaried full professors, and very few assistant or associate professors, at lower wage levels. Clearly, the old system of adding new academic staff at low wages, while laying off pensionable faculty, which allowed for a relatively level operating budget, has been discarded. Additional operating funds must now go to faculty salaries and benefits instead of badly needed equipment and supplies.

This is not a desirable state of affairs for students who must work in poorly equipped labs, and receive instruction from academics whose training can charitably be described as classical.

Nor is it desirable from the point of view of those who pay the University's operating bills - the taxpayers. They expect that the young people trained at the university will enter society and utilize their training in a way that will benefit both the former student and the community-at-large.

The second argument for tenure removal is that it creates sloth. Tenure is not an effective method of ensuring that research is performed at the level of excellence expected at an academic institution.

This argument is more or less true, depending on where one currently resides on campus. Every faculty contains at least two or three persons, who, for reasons known only to their chairperson, have not published in several years. Many of these same individuals also have reduced teaching loads. In a time of cutbacks and hiring freezes, the possession of tenure by these individuals is criminal. Tenure is a guarantee that academics can pursue their research in an independent manner. It is not meant to be a free ride for those who cannot organize themselves and have no love for knowledge itself.

There are simple solutions to these problems. The university could offer term tenure contracts to new academics. After a period of five years, the teaching and academic record of the prospective faculty member would be reviewed. If the standards of the university have been met, a second five year contract could be awarded. Again, the record might be reviewed. Only after a successful 'apprenticeship' in academia should a faculty member be awarded full tenure - then only for a period of fifteen years. In most cases this will allow the best to be promoted to the top - the others whose standards are not sufficient, should be dismissed.

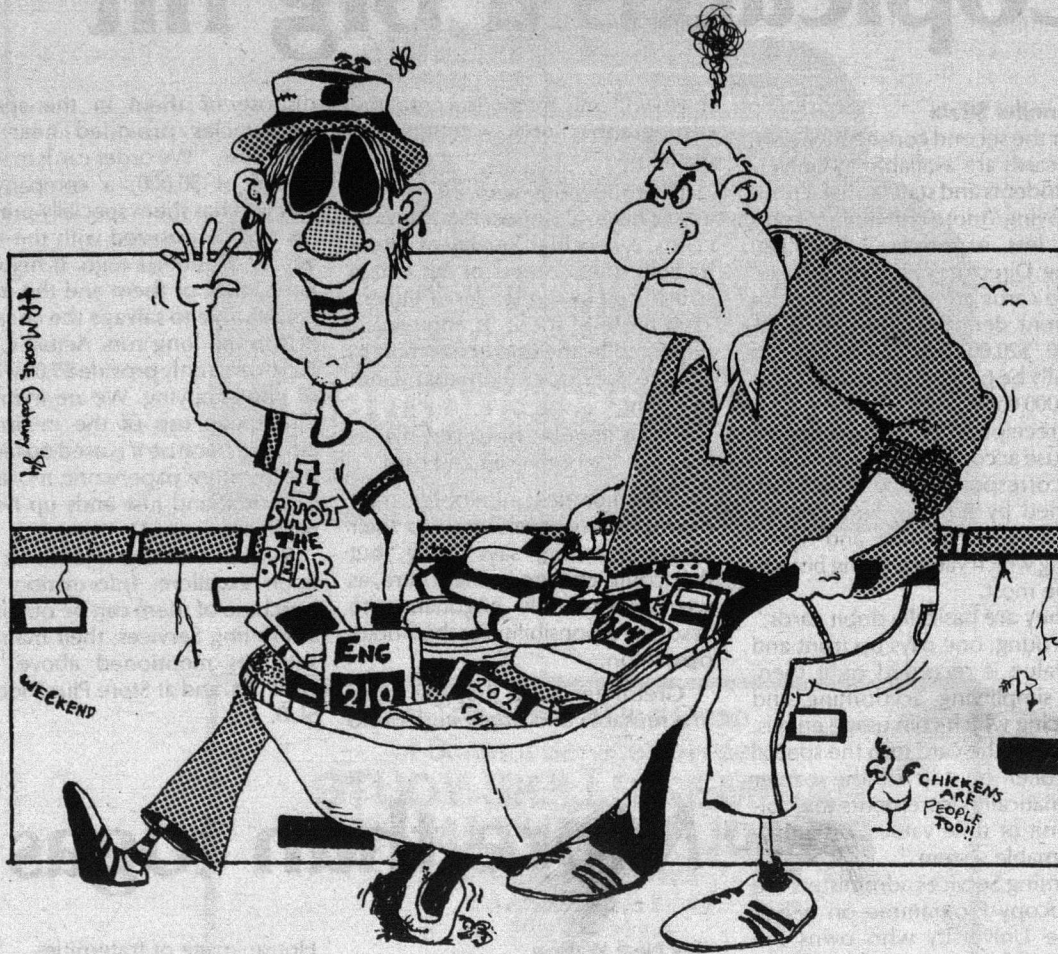
We can not afford to squander a generation of young academics whose inability to obtain jobs is due to a system that harbors incompetents and laggards

Tenure, as we know it today, must go

John Algard



Chris Buffett  
Market 84



Hiya Franky! Long time no see! Hey howsa 'bout that university night life, eh, Dude? Gotta run, I have a cold beer waiting for me in Ratt

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Write on, eh?

All students entering an undergraduate program are required to pass the infamous writing competency exam. This fifteen dollar exam, to be completed within twenty four months of the student's acceptance into a given program, is designed to test the writing skills of the student in accordance to present university level standards. Results reveal that two thirds of the exam writers pass the test, while the other third must pay an additional sixty dollars for a remedial course in an attempt to satisfactorily rewrite the exam.

An after degree student has recently raised an issue regarding writing competency exams in the Tuesday September 11th issue of the Gateway. The Faculty of Education interpreted the defining phrase "all students entering an undergraduate program" to include students in the after degree category. This injustice was rightly contested to both the faculty and to the President of this university. President Horowitz immediately consulted with the student regarding this issue with the success of change. After degree students are now not required to complete the writing competency exam, but are given strong recommendations to do so as personal interviews conducted after the test benefit students through analysis of their writing skills.

Another issue of contention regarding these writing competency exams is the incidental, or extra billing of fees resulting from these exams. The Director

of Testing Remediation, Dr Lorna McCallum, explained that these fees must be billed separately from tuition in order to avoid administrative difficulties in billing each individual student either the cost of the test or the cost of the test and the remedial course.

Writing Competency exams are destined to become a university entrance requirement by 1987. Two questions come to mind upon hearing of this proposal. First, why are prospective university students required to be competent in writing yet are allowed to remain in ignorance, so to speak, of other subjects of examination? Second, why do we write these exams at all? Does the responsibility of teaching and evaluating necessary skills and knowledge lie before the gates of the university or within the classrooms of the public school board?

Donna Kassian  
VP Academic  
Education IV

Gateway: Thumbs down...

Last Tuesday's Gateway (Sept. 11) was gawdawful, even by the paper's usually low standards. Consider just some of the contents:

A story on post-secondary education funding which must have been arranged on the page by a mentally handicapped person, since it contains three (three!) misplaced chunks of copy. These breaks are so cunningly arranged that the story can only be read if one spends 15-20 minutes piecing it back together.

The Gateway

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Zowie! In a blaze of sludge, rocking' Tom Hayward, right on Rick Warren, bombastic Bernie Poitras, cool Ken Shipka, dangerous Dan Watson, lovely Linda Derksen, jolly Janine McDade, manganimous Martin Schug, and the wiley Warren Graves head east to the land of the Unknown Chemist. Jocular Gerry Magill, stalwart Stewart Young, terrific Tim Heidt, and darling Don Teplysk watch from the closet in which they are seeking the Emperor's new clothes. K. Arthur, John Charles, Brenda Waddle and Brenda Brochu drink a toast to Algard, the bearded wonder and the infamous Bruno Betelnutt, dancing in the moonlight.