

University Affairs Committee
11 September 2014

Statement Regarding the Defeats of Legislative Referral G, Motion to Invite Speakers to Support Class Discussion, and Legislative Referral C, Motion to Increase Number of Tenured Professors on Campus

Before I begin, I would like to thank both senators involved with these referrals for their active interest in the quality of education students receive at California State University, Northridge, particularly in regards to classroom activity and supplemental lectures.

While we the committee respect and value these issues, we feel it is in the best interest of the committee to table these action items indefinitely.

Visiting lecturers are an exciting privilege in the classroom, and while it would certainly do well to encourage their presence perhaps at greater frequency, we must remember that such visitations should occur at the behest of our instructors. It is the right of the professor to determine how class time is spent, how course materials are distributed and discussed, and in what way he or she provides supplemental materials—whether these materials take the form of lectures, readings, or visitations from respected guests is entirely up to the professor.

Students who are members of various clubs and organizations on campus are highly encouraged to invite guest speakers and lecturers to events on campus. This allows for a personal conversation to flourish between the speaker and students, and necessary funds for these visits can be determined and allocated by working with Associated Students. Students involved in Graduate Studies may take advantage of the Distinguished Visiting Speakers Program, established in order to bring well-known speakers to California State University, Northridge. An application is required, and allocated funds are determined according to the circumstances of these visits and their subsequent categorization.

Because there are opportunities for students to invite guest speakers for educational and discursive purposed, and because we respect the privilege of the professors on our campus to design their courses and materials, supplemental or otherwise, according to their own professional tastes, we feel that this legislative referral is unnecessary.

In response to our second legislative referral, the motion to call for an increase in tenure track professors and a decrease in the number of part-time faculty and lecturers, we the committee feel that it is necessary to shed a bit of light onto the tenure process. The issue of tenure is of great importance to both the student body and the faculty of California State University, Northridge. There are many issues on both sides of the coin where tenure is concerned; too many issues, in fact, to cover in what little time we have this morning. It should be said, though, that the tenure track exists in order to ensure a permanence in faculty. Evaluations of tenure-track faculty are performed every five years in an effort to support the educational output of said faculty—there will be no resting on of laurels.

Tenure is not a given—tenure is often an elusive creature, and the process of attaining tenure is lengthy. Professors are required to actively publish research and other materials, their contributions to the university and community at large are rigorously examined—in short, professors who seek tenure do not do so lightly.

It is important to note that a good number of part-time faculty and lecturers are young educators, new to their posts and as yet unprepared for their possible tenure; many continue to work toward doctoral degrees as they cut their teeth teaching lower division coursework. While it has been suggested that these part-time faculty, whose rate of pay is significantly lower than that of tenured professors, maintain a significant percentage of the faculty because their employment provides the university with a bit of a so-called “financial break,” it is important to acknowledge the fact that many of these young instructors are future tenure-track applicants. To do away with a significant number of part-time faculty positions in order to ensure a greater number of tenured professorships would be detrimental to the development of a thriving educational atmosphere—along with innovative ideas, excited and engaging instructors are integral to the positive outward growth of our university, and are a key factor in the successful development of our students at CSUN.

We thank our senators for their efforts, and encourage them to continue actively engaging in similar inquiry by way of future legislative referrals.

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