

Breakthrough Solution #4:

Require Evidence of Teaching Skill for Tenure

The Goal

If universities are to serve students, parents, employers and taxpayers, a large number of the tenured faculty need to be good teachers as well as productive researchers.

This reform ensures that teaching will be considered as an important qualification for tenure by requiring evidence that a majority of those nominated for tenure have demonstrated the ability to teach well.

[Notes](#)

Carrying Out the Reform

This reform requires that a majority of those nominated for tenure must have proven that they are good teachers.

1. *Require evidence of teaching skill for tenure.*

The majority of new tenure appointments (say 75%) will be granted to professors who have proven that they can teach well by having taught on average three classes per semester and thirty students per class for the seven or more years that a teacher is on the tenure track.

2. *Customer (student) satisfaction ratings would be used to determine teaching effectiveness.*

Average teaching ratings must be a minimum of 4.5 on a 5.0 scale. Limits may be placed on the number of A's and B's awarded if the efficacy of customer (student) satisfaction ratings are questioned.

Possible Objections

1. *Is this an attack on tenure or academic freedom?*

This reform does not change the rights and responsibilities of tenure or the protections of academic freedom. Faculty and administration repeatedly state that being a good

teacher is already part of the tenure decision-making process; thus, this reform does not even add new criteria for tenure awards, but merely makes one of those criteria be explicitly evaluated by students.

2. *Are student ratings merely a “popularity contest”?*

Teachers and students are the only people in the classroom who can judge teaching and course effectiveness. There are not enough outside observers to sit in every class to independently evaluate the teaching and course. Thus students are the only reliable and consistent source to judge the effectiveness of teaching and courses for every teacher.

If there is a concern that teachers will give students good grades in an attempt to receive high ratings and thus the bonus, several options are available. Any teacher wishing to be considered for tenure could limit the maximum number of A's and B's awarded in each class. Additionally, student ratings could be collected prior to students being informed of their final grades.

3. *Will this ruin research?*

Actually, this would enhance research because a large number (25%) of all tenured positions would be set aside for faculty who do nothing but research and thus wouldn't be distracted by teaching. This will allow universities to recruit the best and most productive researchers who will not be burdened by teaching duties.