

# On Institutional Problems Resulting from Financial Exigency: Some Operating Guidelines

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*The guidelines that follow reflect Association policy as set forth in the Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure, The Role of the Faculty in Budgetary and Salary Matters, and other policy documents. They were formulated by the Association's staff, in consultation with the Joint Committee on Financial Exigency, Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure, and the Committee on College and University Governance. They were first issued in 1971 and reissued in slightly revised form in 1972. The current text includes revisions approved by Committee A in 1978.*

1. There should be early, careful, and meaningful faculty involvement in decisions relating to the reduction of instructional and research programs. The financial conditions that bear on such decisions should not be allowed to obscure the fact that instruction and research constitute the essential reasons for the existence of the university.
2. Given a decision to reduce the overall academic program, it should then become the primary responsibility of the faculty to determine where within the program reductions should be made. Before any such determination becomes final, those whose life's work stands to be adversely affected should have the right to be heard.
3. Among the various considerations, difficult and often competing, that have to be taken into account in deciding upon particular reductions, the retention of a viable academic program should necessarily come first. Particular reductions should follow considered advice from the concerned departments, or other units of academic concentration, on the short-term and long-term viability of reduced programs.
4. As particular reductions are considered, rights under academic tenure should be protected. The services of a tenured professor should not be terminated in favor of retaining someone without tenure who may at a particular moment seem to be more productive. Tenured faculty members should be given every opportunity, in accordance with Regulation 4c of the Association's *Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure*,<sup>1</sup> to readapt within a department or elsewhere within the institution; institutional resources should be made available for assistance in readaptation.
5. In some cases, an arrangement for the early retirement of a tenured faculty member, by investing appropriate additional institutional funds into the individual's retirement income (ordinarily feasible only when social-security benefits begin), may prove to be desirable if the faculty member is agreeable to it.
6. In those cases where there is no realistic choice other than to terminate the services of a tenured faculty member, the granting of at least a year of notice should be given high financial priority.
7. The granting of adequate notice to nontenured faculty should also be given high financial priority. The nonreappointment of nontenured faculty, when dictated by financial exigency, should be a consideration independent of the procedural standards outlined in Regulation 4c, with one exception: when the need to make reductions has demonstrably emerged after the appropriate date by which notice should be given, financial compensation to the degree of lateness of notice should be awarded when reappointment is not feasible.
8. A change from full-time to part-time service, on grounds of financial exigency, may occasionally be a feature of an acceptable settlement, but in and of itself such a change should not be regarded as an alternative to the protections set forth in Regulation 4c or as a substitute for adequate notice.

9. When, in the context of financial exigency, one institution merges with another, or purchases its assets, the negotiations leading to merger or purchase should include every effort to recognize the terms of appointment of all faculty members involved. When a faculty member who has held tenure can be offered only a term appointment following a merger or purchase, the faculty member should have the alternative of resigning and receiving at least a year of severance salary.
10. When financial exigency is so dire as to warrant cessation of operation, the institution should make every effort in settling its affairs to assist those engaged in the academic process so that, with minimal injury, they can continue their work elsewhere.

## Notes

1. The text of Regulation 4c is as follows:

- c. (1) Termination of an appointment with continuous tenure, or of a probationary or special appointment before the end of the specified term, may occur under extraordinary circumstances because of a demonstrably bona fide financial exigency, i.e., an imminent financial crisis which threatens the survival of the institution as a whole and which cannot be alleviated by less drastic means.

[Note: Each institution, in adopting regulations on financial exigency, will need to decide how to share and allocate the hard judgments and decisions that are necessary in such a crisis.

As a first step, there should be a faculty body which participates in the decision that a condition of financial exigency exists or is imminent, and that all feasible alternatives to termination of appointments have been pursued.

Judgments determining where within the overall academic program termination of appointments may occur involve considerations of educational policy, including affirmative action, as well as of faculty status, and should therefore be the primary responsibility of the faculty or of an appropriate faculty body. The faculty or an appropriate faculty body should also exercise primary responsibility in determining the criteria for identifying the individuals whose appointments are to be terminated. These criteria may appropriately include considerations of length of service.

The responsibility for identifying individuals whose appointments are to be terminated should be committed to a person or group designated or approved by the faculty. The allocation of this responsibility may vary according to the size and character of the institution, the extent of the terminations to be made, or other considerations of fairness in judgment. The case of a faculty member given notice of proposed termination of appointment will be governed by the following procedure.]

- (2) If the administration issues notice to a particular faculty member of an intention to terminate the appointment because of financial exigency, the faculty member will have the right to a full hearing before a faculty committee. The hearing need not conform in all respects with a proceeding conducted pursuant to Regulation 5, but the essentials of an on-the-record adjudicative hearing will be observed. The issues in this hearing may include:
  - (i) The existence and extent of the condition of financial exigency. The burden will rest on the administration to prove the existence and extent of the condition. The findings of a faculty committee in a previous proceeding involving the same issue may be introduced.
  - (ii) The validity of the educational judgments and the criteria for identification for termination; but the recommendations of a faculty body on these matters will be considered presumptively valid.
  - (iii) Whether the criteria are being properly applied in the individual case.
- (3) If the institution, because of financial exigency, terminates appointments, it will not at the same time make new appointments except in extraordinary circumstances where a serious distortion in the academic program would otherwise result. The appointment of a faculty member with tenure will not be terminated in favor of retaining a faculty member without tenure, except in extraordinary circumstances where a serious distortion of the academic program would otherwise result.
- (4) Before terminating an appointment because of financial exigency, the institution, with faculty participation, will make every effort to place the faculty member concerned in another suitable position within the institution.
- (5) In all cases of termination of appointment because of financial exigency, the faculty member concerned will be given notice or severance salary not less than as prescribed in Regulation 8.
- (6) In all cases of termination of appointment because of financial exigency, the place of the faculty member concerned will not be filled by a replacement within a period of three years, unless the released faculty member has been offered reinstatement and a reasonable time in which to accept or decline it (AAUP, *Policy Documents and Reports*, 10th ed. [Washington, D.C., 2006], 24–25).