

Mississippi IHL Universities' Tenure Policies and Practices

CONCLUSION: The IHL Board is the constitutionally authorized entity responsible for employing and granting tenure to university faculty. IHL universities establish and follow the same general process for tenure-track faculty to apply for tenure after serving a probationary period. IHL universities employ more non-tenure-track faculty than tenured or tenure-track faculty, but tenured and tenure-track faculty earn higher salaries on average. Universities state that tenure provides certain benefits to students, including the teaching and research experience tenured faculty gain over years of teaching, and the research funding and opportunities that tenured faculty bring to university students. Finally, universities maintain evaluative processes to ensure tenured faculty members remain effective in their teaching, research, and service to the universities.

Background:

Tenure traces its roots in American higher education to the 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*. The *Mississippi Constitution of 1890* authorizes the IHL Board and defines its authority to employ university faculty, as well as the reasons that tenured faculty members may be dismissed. The IHL Board also sets minimum tenure standards in their policies, but permits IHL universities to set additional tenure standards and requirements.

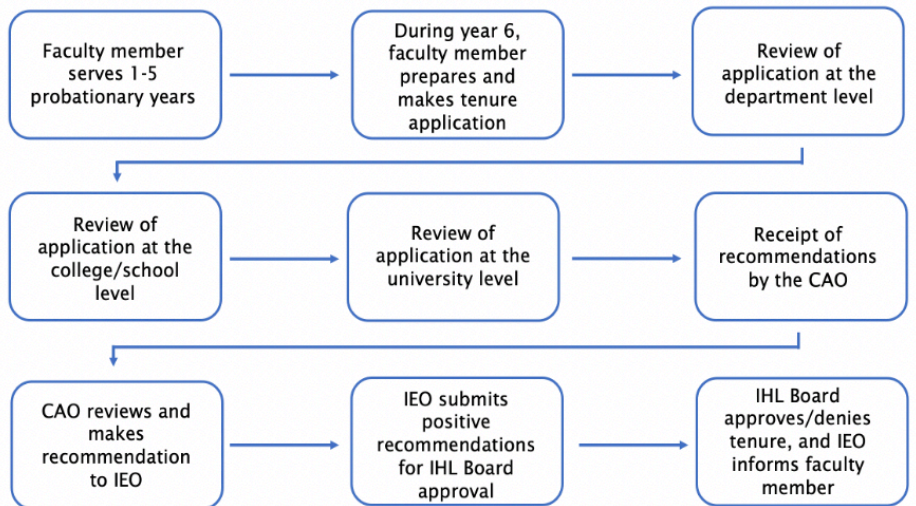
Surrounding States:

Mississippi's IHL universities follow the same general tenure process as surrounding states, but Mississippi's higher education governance structure is unique. In surrounding states, a coordinating board oversees issues across all university systems while a governing board oversees the day-to-day activities for each system. The IHL Board functions as both a coordinating board and a governing board.

In a comparison of 16 states in the southeast, for typical tenured positions—professors and associate professors—average salaries ranked 13th and 11th respectively. For the typical tenure-track faculty ranking—assistant professors—average salaries ranked 12th. For typical non-tenure track positions—lecturers and instructors—average salaries ranked 11th and 16th respectively.

Tenure Process:

When applying for tenure, tenure-track faculty follow the same general process at each university.



After being granted tenure, tenured faculty members receive a four year contract that continually renews, as opposed to the one-year contract that tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty receive.

Faculty Numbers and Average Salaries:

Between FY 2019 and FY 2021, tenured faculty comprised 34% of IHL university faculty members.

Tenured Faculty	Tenure-Track Faculty	Non-Tenure-Track Faculty	Total Faculty
1,613	865	2,204	4,682

During that same period, the average salary of a tenured faculty member was 29% higher on average than that of a tenure-track faculty and 113% higher than that of a non-tenure-track faculty member.

Tenured Faculty	Tenure-Track Faculty	Non-Tenure-Track Faculty
\$118,647	\$91,695	\$55,730

Student Benefits

1

Tenure benefits students by providing faculty members with years of teaching and research experience. For example, at JSU, tenured faculty received higher evaluations than tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty teaching the same course (college algebra).

2

Students also benefit, for example, from increased access to research opportunities and funding that tenured and tenure-track professors provide. At UM, tenured and tenure-track faculty brought roughly \$75 million in research and grant funding to the university between FY 2018 and FY 2020. This type of funding supports graduate assistantships and provides undergraduate and graduate students with introductions to scholarly research.

Ensuring Faculty Effectiveness

1

The post-tenure review process happens after tenured faculty receive multiple negative evaluations (or, for some universities, is triggered after the sixth year of tenured employment). Three faculty members have been separated from employment for unsuccessfully completing the post-tenure review process between FY 2019 and FY 2020.

2

Annual evaluations are used not only to evaluate tenured faculty, but also tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty. Annual evaluations judge faculty based on goals they set with the department chair or dean on a faculty member's teaching, research, and service performance.

Dismissing Tenured Faculty

1

Tenured faculty can be dismissed for four reasons specified in IHL polices: malfeasance (wrongdoing), inefficiency, contumacious conduct (willful disobedience to authority), or financial exigency (imminent financial crisis) as declared by the IHL Board. For all reasons but financial exigency, faculty can appeal the decision at the university level, and if unsuccessful, to the IHL Board.

2

Universities have dismissed two faculty members between FY 2019 and FY 2021: one at MSU for contumacious conduct, and one at DSU for inefficiency resulting from unsuccessfully completing the post-tenure review process. However, four tenured faculty resigned at UM during that period as a result of the university opening investigations into their conduct or effectiveness.

Report Recommendations

1. In order to further ensure that tenured faculty are formally evaluated, the IHL Board should consider adopting a policy that requires an automatic trigger for post-tenure reviews of tenured faculty after the sixth year of tenured employment, as is in place at MSU and MVSU.
2. In order to ensure that IHL universities can adequately demonstrate to the IHL Board, the State Legislature, and the public the benefits that students receive as a result of the tenure system, the IHL Board should require that IHL universities develop a system to track and periodically report to the IHL Board the benefits that tenure provides to each university and its students, including:
 - the amount of research or grant funding that tenure-track and tenured faculty are awarded; and,
 - the benefit of tenure to students demonstrated through academic metrics and outcomes.
3. Although awarding tenure to new hires is rare and only utilized for faculty with exceptional qualifications, IHL universities should nevertheless amend faculty handbooks and tenure policies to include criteria that reflects the types of exceptional qualifications that new hires should possess to be hired with tenure.