

October 8, 2013

Report from CAFR, based on discussions at a September 27, 2013 meeting convened to respond to a charge of the senate executive committee to consider medical school issues, with the following CAFR members in attendance: John Dinan (chair), Gloria Muday, Carol Milligan, Doug Beets, Susan Smith, Thomas Dowling

In considering recent Wake Forest University Health Science (WFUHS) policies and practices regarding reductions in annual compensation for tenured faculty, members of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Responsibility (CAFR) have found helpful a 1999 report approved by the AAUP Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure entitled "Tenure in the Medical School." As part of a series of wide-ranging conclusions, the AAUP report contains the following recommendation:

The sources of funding for positions in academic medical schools vary perhaps more greatly than in other units of the university, with the faculty member being expected in many cases to make up a designated portion of his or her salary from patient care or research. The 1940 Statement of Principles stipulates that tenure is a means not only to academic freedom, but also to "a sufficient degree of economic security to make the profession attractive to men and women of ability." Except, as is sometimes the case, where the reward of rank and tenure is purely honorific, all tenured and tenure-track faculty should be guaranteed an assured minimum salary adequate to the maintenance of support at a level appropriate to faculty members in the basic sciences, and not merely a token stipend, on a formula to be determined by the administration and board of trustees after consultation with a representative body of the faculty. The unilateral administrative abrogation of a portion of that salary, absent a prior understanding as to the extent of its guarantee, may reasonably be interpreted not as an exercise of fiduciary responsibility but as an attack on the principle of tenure. While the same minimum may not apply in the case of non-tenure-track faculty, those faculty should have a clearly understood and contractually enforceable expectation of a stipulated salary that cannot be unilaterally or arbitrarily abridged during the appointment period. Although the extent of economic security may be subject to interpretation, due process must be assured for all faculty regardless of the nature of the appointment. (AAUP Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure, "Tenure in the Medical School," 1999, <http://www.aaup.org/report/tenure-medical-school>)

CAFR members are particularly concerned that the WFUBMC Policy on Faculty Compensation approved in June 2012 does not comport with the AAUP recommendation that "all tenured and tenure-track faculty should be guaranteed an assured minimum salary adequate to the maintenance of support at a level appropriate to faculty members in the basic sciences, and not merely a token stipend, on a formula to be determined by the administration and board of trustees after consultation with a representative body of the faculty." The WFUBMC Policy on Faculty Compensation states in the relevant part:

Tenured faculty annual compensation and incentive payment methodologies shall be identical to those for similar non-tenured faculty; however, tenured faculty will have additional protection that recognizes a degree of financial stability recognized to be important for the preservation of tenure and associated academic freedom in the School of Medicine.

Tenured faculty compensation reductions recommended by the department chair shall be limited to 10% per year on the Medical School component of compensation (as defined by research and teaching time and effort). The Dean may authorize up to a 15% reduction per year.

CAFR members are concerned that the WFUBMC policy allows reductions in compensation up to 15% to be applied year after year so that total reduction in compensation over several years could far exceed the “20% cumulative total” that the Wake Forest Faculty Senate in an October 19, 2011 meeting (http://facultysenate.wfu.edu/files/2012/10/Minutes_10_19_2011.pdf) identified as the outer limit beyond which point it would be more appropriate for alternative procedures to be followed in line with “established criteria and policies for appointment, renewal or dismissal” of faculty. Additionally, and in the absence of “an assured minimum salary,” reductions in annual compensation of this scale could be seen as failing to provide a sufficient degree of economic security that is “indispensable to the success of an institution in fulfilling its obligations to its students and to society.” In this regard, CAFR members find useful the conclusions advanced by the AAUP in a “1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure” to the effect that: “Tenure is a means to certain ends; specifically: (1) freedom of teaching and research and of extramural activities, and (2) a sufficient degree of economic security to make the profession attractive to men and women of ability. Freedom and economic security, hence, tenure, are indispensable to the success of an institution in fulfilling its obligations to its students and to society.” (<http://www.aaup.org/report/1940-statement-principles-academic-freedom-and-tenure>).

CAFR members are particularly concerned about the consequences of recent medical school compensation policies and practices for faculty recruitment and retention. It is clear that well-funded senior faculty who are not directly affected by this policy are leaving along with early-career faculty who are concerned about the impact of this policy on their job security. We stress that these consequences, particularly problems with faculty retention, have important implications and risks not only for the medical school but also for the university as a whole, threatening ongoing research collaborations, centers, and most importantly graduate education.