

The Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE)
2021 Faculty Satisfaction Survey

Tenure and Promotion

COACHE definition:

Tenure (tenure-eligible faculty only): Administrators and faculty alike acknowledge that, at most institutions, the bar to achieve tenure has risen over time. Academic leaders can improve the clarity of tenure policies, requirements, and expectations and provide credible assurances of fairness and equity.

Promotion (tenured faculty only): While the academy has recently improved many policies for assistant professors, it has done far less for associate professors. New practices have emerged from related to modified duties such as reduced teaching load; sabbatical planning and other workshops; workload shifts (i.e., more teaching or more research); improved communication about timing for promotion and a nudge to prepare materials for promotion to Professor; small grants to support mid-career faculty (e.g., matching funds, travel support); and broader, more inclusive criteria.

Dissatisfaction can occur from:

- Anxiety about tenure and promotion.
- Lack of clarity and communication about tenure and promotion.
- Inconsistent messages and practices relative to tenure and promotion.

Questionnaire items with the highest percentages:

88% were satisfied with clarity of promotion process.

87% were satisfied with clarity of body of evidence for promotion.

Subpopulation differences varying by 25 percentage points or more in satisfaction or agreement:

- Tenure-eligible faculty were more satisfied with clarity of whether they would be promoted to professor than tenured faculty (100% vs. 70%).
- Relative to clarity of expectations, tenured faculty were more satisfied than tenure-eligible faculty about being an advisor (100% vs. 70%), a colleague (100% vs. 70%), a campus citizen (100% vs. 64%), and engaged in the broader community (100% vs. 60%).
- Asian faculty were more satisfied with clarity of expectations than underrepresented faculty about being a scholar (100% vs. 74%), an advisor (94% vs. 68%), a colleague (91% vs. 53%), a campus citizen (90% vs. 47%), and engaged in the broader community (86% vs. 58%).
- Tenured faculty were more satisfied than tenure-eligible faculty about clarity of tenure criteria (100% vs. 75%) and tenure standards (100% vs. 63%).

- Tenured faculty were more satisfied with consistency of messages about tenure than tenure-eligible faculty (100% vs. 65%).
- Asian faculty were more satisfied than underrepresented faculty about clarity of tenure process (94% vs. 63%), clarity of body of evidence for deciding tenure (88% vs. 63%), clarity of tenure criteria (91% vs. 63%), consistency of messages about tenure (77% vs. 42%), and clarity of tenure standards (79% vs. 33%).

Questionnaire items with the lowest agreement or satisfaction:

75% were satisfied with clarity of tenure criteria.

65% agreed that there was consistency in messages about tenure.

64% were satisfied with clarity of tenure standards.



Promising action items:

- Improve clarity, consistency, and equity.
- Provide rank-and diversity-responsive workshops for promotion, tenure, and advancement.