



## The Questions of Tenure

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Tenure is the abortion issue of the academy, igniting arguments and inflaming near-religious passions. To some, tenure is essential to academic freedom and a magnet to recruit and retain top-flight faculty. To others, it is an impediment to professorial accountability and a constraint on institutional flexibility and finances. But beyond anecdote and opinion, what do we really know about how tenure works?

In this unique book, Richard Chait and his colleagues offer the results of their research on key empirical questions. Are there circumstances under which faculty might voluntarily relinquish tenure? When might new faculty actually prefer non-tenure track positions? Does the absence of tenure mean the absence of shared governance? Why have some colleges abandoned tenure while others have adopted it? Answers to these and other questions come from careful studies of institutions that mirror the American academy: research universities and liberal arts colleges, including both highly selective and less prestigious schools.

Lucid and straightforward, *The Questions of Tenure* offers vivid pictures of academic subcultures. Chait and his colleagues conclude that context counts so much that no single tenure system exists. Still, since no academic reward carries the cachet of tenure, few institutions will initiate significant changes without either powerful external pressures or persistent demands from new or disgruntled faculty.

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