

Tenure vs. Term Contract: Pros and Cons

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Introduction

- Tenure:
 - Preceded by tenure-track appointment, faculty “prove” themselves before going up for tenure
 - Fairly permanent faculty position, only terminated for serious violations
- Term Contract:
 - Positions contracted for a set term
 - Can be renewable

Tenure: Personal Pros

- Job security
- Well respected position
- Better pay and benefits
- More freedom
 - Can pursue research interests freely (still have to obtain funding)
 - Help run universities and make positive change
- Reward for years of hard work

Tenure

Institutional Pros

- Attract many of the best and brightest
- Reduces competition between faculty – promotes a more congenial workforce
- Tenured faculty are more likely to be loyal to the given university
- Support education by having instructors that can develop and improve courses over a long period of time

Tenure

Personal Cons

- Difficult to land a tenure-track position in the job market
- Takes a lot of work and effort to get tenure even once you have a tenure track job
- Less academic freedom while trying to get tenure
- Difficult to juggle personal life and the stresses associated with getting tenure
- Few incentives to work as hard once tenure is attained
- Not complete freedom, still require funding, need approval for sabbatical, etc.

Tenure

Institutional Cons

- More expensive and can be problematic for budgeting in tight financial situations
- Can promote stagnation
 - More difficult to adapt to evolving fields
 - Few positions available to bring in new blood and drive innovation
- More difficult to remove individuals who no longer contribute or are a detriment to their department

Term Contract: Personal Pros

- More opportunities in the field
- Moving around, can get a wider range of experience
- Encourages obtaining grants and improving oneself
- Sometimes a stepping stone to more permanent or tenure track positions
- Can help accommodate two-body problem

Contract

Institutional Pros

- Does not cost as much
- Allows more turnover in faculty, bringing in new ideas
- Can have more faculty positions (creates more jobs for the field)
- Can free up more time for permanent faculty to do research (more faculty to teach classes)

Personal Cons

- Little job security
- Lower pay and benefits
- Less free time for your research
- Must spend more time obtaining funding/renewing contracts/
looking for jobs
- More difficult to settle down and develop a personal life
- Difficult to start a family with the possibility of frequent
moving or obtain extended maternity leave

Contract

Institutional Cons

- Not as attractive as tenure positions
- If there is a lot of turnover, it is difficult to build a collegiate environment and internal collaboration
- With more faculty flux, do not have as much of a chance to develop specialized programs and courses

Conclusions

- From an individuals side:
 - Tenure is difficult to obtain, but once attained has many desirable perks
 - Term contract positions provide experience the field and currently may be a stepping stone to a tenure track position, but also has less benefits and lower job security
- From the institutional side:
 - Tenured faculty are more likely to be loyal to the university and drive development (research and educational), but come at monetary cost and inflexibility
 - Term contract faculty provide an additional source of teaching, freeing up permanent faculty and allow for a more dynamic department, but may be less stable

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