

A Comparison of Two Private University Faculties' Perspectives of Using Collegiality in Tenure and Promotion Decisions

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Some faculty members feel that collegiality is a de facto requirement for tenure and promotion. However, collegiality remains a controversial subject in terms of using it as a criterion in tenure and promotion decisions and the ability of faculty members to challenge it in court as an unacceptable criterion appears to be wasted effort. This pilot study of using collegiality in tenure and promotion decisions was launched to discover what features faculty members consider important for collegiality and the proportion who believe it should be considered in the tenure and promotion process. Using the Collegiality Climate Scale as a measure of collegiality, the study compared faculty perspectives at two private Christian universities, one located in the Southwest United States and one in the Southeast. The study revealed a relatively high level of collegiality among faculty at both universities. However, there were some areas of low scores on the scales. The vast majority of faculty at both universities (74.6% Southwest, 77.5% Southeast) favored using collegiality as a criterion for tenure and promotion decisions. Objections to using collegiality as a criterion centered on two elements: (1) that other factors, such as productivity, scholarship, and excellence in teaching, are more appropriate criteria for promotion and tenure, not collegiality, and (2) the difficulty of measuring individual collegiality.

Keywords: collegiality, tenure and promotion criteria, and collegiality research

Introduction

Wilhelm von Humboldt, in creating the University of Berlin in 1810, visualized a community where small groups of scholars and students worked together combining research and teaching (Elton, 2008). This view of the university has collegiality as a necessary component for success. Two hundred years later universities continue to struggle with developing and maintaining a collegial environment. It has been reported that a lack of a collegial atmosphere is one of the main reasons faculty members decide to stay or leave a particular institution (Ambrose, Huston, & Norman, 2005).

The subject of collegiality has spawned an area of research that attempts to determine what collegiality entails (e.g., Johnston, Schimmel, & O'Hara 2012; Laws 1990; Rakes & Rakes 1997), the effects of collegiality on tenure and promotion (e.g., AAUP, 1999; Harrison, & Brodeth, 1999; Johnston, Schimmel & O'Hara, 2012; King, 2003; Laws, 1990; Massey & Wigler, 1994; Scott & Bereman, 1992), and how to measure collegiality (Brady, Miner-Rubino & Seigel, 2008). The purpose of this paper is

to present the results of an exploratory study that measured faculty members' attitudes toward collegiality as a requirement for tenure and promotion.

We will first review the literature concerning collegiality in higher education including arguments that have been offered for and against collegiality as a component of the tenure and promotion process. Next, we will present the results of our study, and finally, we will present the conclusions and directions for future research.

Review of the Literature

The literature on collegiality does not provide a generally agreed upon definition of the term. For example, Laws (1990) sees collegiality as shared goals and intellectual values of a group of academics. This is similar to Wilhelm von Humboldt's view of the university when he created the University of Berlin in 1810. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) is in general agreement with this concept by referring to collegiality as a community of scholars who are obligated to be: "objective in the professional judgment of colleagues;

active in the defense of academic freedom; and duly respectful of the studied opinions of colleagues” (AAUP, p. 251). Hostetler (2004) defines collegiality as “being a good colleague, being decent and civil with other people.” (p. 324).

O’Meara (2004) approaches collegiality from a different view point. She first notes that university faculty members are professionals and as such engage in a similar type of work and share values. Collegiality, then, is one of the values shared by academics. A similar view is held by Siebert, Caprio, and Lyda (1997) who note that collegiality is “shared authority among colleagues” (p. 251).

In contrast to the above definitions that view collegiality as a part of the job of faculty members in an educational setting, Johnston, et al., (2012) see collegiality as an extra-role behavior. As such, they define collegiality “to be any extra-role behavior that represents individuals’ behavior that is discretionary, not recognized by the formal reward system and that, in the aggregate, promote the effective functioning of the educational organization” (p.9).

Jarzabkowski (2001), noting that schools are a workplace for adults, sees collegiality as a form of teacher culture. This culture incorporates the shared values, beliefs, and assumptions others have noted as characteristics of collegiality and expands them to include patterns of relationship and forms of association among faculty members. This view combines the concepts of collegiality and congeniality.

Brady, Miner-Rubino & Seigel (2008) developed the Collegiality Climate Scale (CCS) to measure faculty experiences concerning the interpersonal workplace environment. This positively-focused measure was based on items from Seigel’s (2006) preliminary work exploring collegiality among law professors. The items considered as part of collegiality included: honoring agreements, colleagues “pulling their own weight”; helping each other; commenting on each other’s work; encouraging and empowering each other; creating a supportive environment; informally discussing scholarship and teaching; sharing work product with each other; fostering harmony; willingness to take on special assignments; and participating in all aspects of university life. The scale was validated through an online survey of 1,300 law school faculty from across the United States. The CCS exhibited acceptable convergent, concurrent, and discriminant validity and accounted for significant and unique variance (compared to other commonly used measures of interpersonal workplace climates) in a number of work-related outcomes, such as job satisfaction and job burnout. The CSS was selected as the principle measure of collegiality among university faculty for

the current study. Our purpose was to determine if the key aspects of collegiality were practiced at the selected universities. Then we asked if, considering these characteristics, collegiality should be considered in the tenure and promotion process. It is this subject we address below.

The difficulty of defining collegiality leads to the very controversial subject of the role it should play in the tenure and promotion process. From our review of the literature, no other subject concerning collegiality has received more attention. In the following paragraphs, we will address the arguments for and against using collegiality in the tenure and promotion process and we will examine the results of cases where collegiality has been a factor in the denial of either tenure or promotion.

Collegiality as a specific item in the tenure/promotion process

Allen (2004) notes that collegiality becomes important in the tenure and promotion process when a lack of collegiality interferes with the basic academic jobs of teaching, scholarship, and service. As he notes, “A faculty member who cannot work willingly and effectively with colleagues also cannot contribute adequately to the activities needed to coordinate curricula, mentor new teachers, or sustain a productive community of scholars.” (p. 1). Allen (2004) posits that while collegiality is a trait one must exhibit in order to be an effective member of the faculty, there is no reason to treat collegiality as a distinct category of performance.

Collegiality is also affected by competition for scarce resources in ever smaller higher education budgets. Instead of collegiality, there is a sense of competition (Scott & Bereman 1992). Their study found that music, education, and English professors had annual salaries between 68% and 73% of engineering and business professors. The conclusion is that a lack of internal equity in higher education has hurt collegiality.

Massy and Wilger (1994) agree that salary differentials negatively affect collegiality. They add fragmented communication patterns and prevailing methods of evaluation (such as an over- emphasis on research) also hinder collegiality in higher education.

As previously noted, Allen (2004) stated that collegiality is already a de facto criterion for tenure and promotion in that a lack of collegiality affects the stated functions of teaching, scholarship, and service. In addition, (Siebert et al., 1997) notes that collegiality is important to the “effective functioning of an educational institution” (p. 252) and is even a valid criterion for employment.

Johnston, et al., (2012) see collegiality as part of a psychological contract that exists among colleagues. That is, collegiality may not be specifically mentioned in an employment contract, but is commonly accepted as the norm in most institutions of higher learning. Further, they report that tenured faculty are more interested in collegiality than non-tenured faculty.

Connell and Savage (2008) point out that a university, in extending a job offer to a potential instructor, expects that the new hire will cooperate with other faculty members for the long-term best interests of the university. Additionally, they argue that employment at a university is similar to employment outside of academia where employees are expected to be civil and cooperative.

Examples of collegiality as a requirement for tenure and promotion include Louisiana Tech's College of Applied and Natural Sciences (Louisiana Tech 2009), Appalachian State University's Department of Philosophy and Religion (Appalachian State 2013), and Baylor University (Baylor 2009). Louisiana Tech's College of Applied and Natural Sciences lists collegiality as a minimum requirement for tenure and promotion. The elements of collegiality include maintaining a high degree of professionalism, sharing in departmental duties, acting as an effective advocate for the university, and maintaining high standards of ethics, honesty, and integrity (Louisiana Tech 2009).

Appalachian State's Department of Philosophy and Religion defines "professional collegiality" as a faculty member acting in the interests of the department, contributing to the health of the department, and aiding in the professional development of colleagues. In short, Appalachian State's requirement is that a faculty member works for the betterment of the department, college, and university (Appalachian State 2013).

Finally, Baylor does not use the word collegiality, but reason f) in the tenure requirements is stated as "Interpersonal relationships with students, colleagues, and other members of the university community" (Baylor 2009, p.9). Baylor also requires community and religious service in its tenure criteria. According to a study by Harris and Lumsden (2006) of the surveyed schools that are members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) and that required tenure, 93% reported collegiality as a criterion for tenure and promotion.

This was the least given factor the schools considered, however.

Opponents of collegiality as a consideration in the promotion and tenure process argue that the concept of collegiality is vague (Johnston, et al., 2012), that it stifles faculty debate, and may be used by administration to enforce homogeneity within an academic department (AAUP 1999).

The AAUP position is that collegiality is expressed through successful teaching, scholarship, and service, and, therefore, does not need to be a separate consideration. The AAUP (1999) also notes, as do Connell and Savage (2008) that collegiality could be used as a "mask" for discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation or other areas covered by employment law. Further, they posit that collegiality would negatively affect the tenure and promotion of women and minorities even if no intended discrimination was practiced.

O'Mera (2004) in a study of attitudes toward post-tenure review noted that many faculty members felt that performance feedback for tenured professors was not collegial. In other words, late career professors did not believe that feedback on their performance was a collegial act.

Despite the opposition to collegiality as a factor in tenure and promotion, the courts have generally supported the institution when collegiality was used to deny promotion or tenure whether specifically mentioned or not (Connell & Savage 2008; Johnston, et al. 2012; King 2003).

Court cases concerning collegiality

Most courts have taken the view of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit which stated in the case of *Chitwood v. Feaster* that "a college has a right to expect a teacher to follow instruction and to work cooperatively and harmoniously with the head of the department" (Connell & Savage 2008, p. 1).

Plaintiffs in collegiality cases argue that to deny promotion or tenure based on a lack of collegiality violates the specific university's tenure policy or the employment contract. Courts have rejected these arguments in almost every case (Connell & Savage 2006). Several representative cases are illustrated in Table 1 below. In each of these cases, the courts found for the university.

Table 1: Representative Court Cases Involving Collegiality

Case	Lack of Collegiality Description in Denial of Tenure
<i>Fisher vs. Vassar College</i>	Difficulty in establishing straightforward, open, trusting, collegial relationships with others in the department.
<i>Kelly vs. Kansas State Community College</i>	Refusal to cooperate with other colleagues and “constant snipping” in staff meetings
<i>Bresnick vs. Manhattanville College</i>	Inability to work with others in a collaborative manner
<i>Babbar v. Ebadi</i>	Departmental chair described him as a “two-faced” person with “zero collegiality” that “will say one thing and do another.”
<i>Stein v. Kent State</i>	Stein was not reappointed because she lacked collegiality, which was exhibited by her filing charges and suits that the EEOC and the courts consistently judged as frivolous.
<i>Jawa v. Fayetteville University</i>	Jawa was found to be uncooperative with his colleagues and that he recklessly, and with little regard for the truth, accused his superiors of incompetence and discriminatory practices against him.

While collegiality remains a controversial subject in terms of tenure and promotion, the ability of faculty members to challenge it in court as an unacceptable criterion appears to be wasted effort. Therefore, since collegiality is a de facto requirement for tenure and promotion, we conducted a survey of two Christian universities to discover what features faculty members consider important for collegiality and the proportion who believe it should be considered in the tenure and promotion process. We report the findings of our survey in the next section.

The Current Study

As stated earlier, the purpose of this paper is to present the results of an exploratory study that measured faculty members' attitudes toward collegiality as a requirement for tenure and promotion. An online survey was used to collect the data from a Southwest private university faculty with a student body of about 3,200 and 280 full and part time faculty members and a private Southeast university with a student body of about 5,000 and 239 full and part time faculty members. The survey was sent via an email which explained the general purpose of the study and clearance from the Human Subjects Research Review Committee at each university and included a link to the survey instrument.

The questionnaire included questions about length of time teaching in higher education, the number of universities they had taught at, length of time at this university, rank, teaching area, rank and tenure. This was followed by scaled statements from the Collegiality Climate Scale (CCS) referred to earlier. Then respondents were asked whether they thought collegiality should be used as a criterion for

tenure and promotion in addition to teaching, scholarship, and service. An open ended follow-up question asked “why or why not” to get qualitative input on the use of collegiality as a criterion. Respondents were also asked whether or not they had ever been denied tenure or promotion.

The Collegiality Climate Scale (CCS) items and instructions are shown below:

For each of the statements listed below, please answer in relation to those colleagues you have the most interaction with in your current teaching position. (Each item was measured on a 5 point scale ranging from “Not at all” to “Extremely”)

My colleagues honor agreements.

My colleagues "pull their own weight".

My colleagues are willing to help each other

My colleagues comment on each other's work.

My colleagues are encouraging and empowering.

My colleagues create a cooperative and supportive environment.

My colleagues initiate and participate in informal conversations about the organization (about scholarship and teaching)

My colleagues share products of their own effort with each other.

My colleagues work to foster harmony.

My colleagues take on special assignments (given to them by the department head or dean).

My colleagues participate in all aspects of organizational life (e. g., attend functions)

Results

Of the 280 emails sent out in the Southwest university, 59 faculty responded, giving a response rate of 21.1%. For the Southeast university, 239

emails were sent out and 80 responded, yielding a 33.5% response rate. Characteristics of a typical Southwest respondent were: had taught in higher education for more than 25 years, had taught at 1 or 2 universities, was untenured, and a full professor. On the question of time at their current institution, Southwest responses were fairly evenly divided, with the majority reporting 11-15 years. Characteristics of a typical Southeast private Christian university respondent were: had taught in higher education less than 5 years, 11-15 years, or over 25 years, had taught at 1-3 universities, had taught at this university less than 5 years, was an assistant or associate professor, and was not tenured. The results of the CCS scale are shown in Table 2.

While the overall results show a relatively high level of collegiality, there were some areas of weakness. Specifically, commenting on each other's work, initiating and participating in informal conversations about the organization, sharing products of their own effort with each other, working to foster harmony and participating in all aspects of organizational life contained more dispersed responses and therefore lower average scores than the other items. T-tests and chi-square tests of differences on the CCS scale items by respondent characteristics revealed no significant differences based on years of teaching, number of universities taught at, rank, tenure, and whether or not collegiality should be used in tenure and promotion decisions.

Table 2: Differences in Collegiality Climate Scale Scores between Two Private Universities

Statement	Private University 1 Means N=59	Private University 2 Means N=80	Level of Significance
My colleagues honor agreements.	4.58	4.41	.183
My colleagues "pull their own weight."	4.14	3.95	.234
My colleagues are willing to help each other.	4.42	4.32	.429
My colleagues comment on each other's work.	3.43	3.54	.526
My colleagues are encouraging and empowering.	4.16	3.88	.072
My colleagues create a cooperative and supportive environment.	4.15	3.94	.182
My colleagues initiate and participate in informal conversations about the organization (about scholarship and teaching).	3.95	3.76	.286
My colleagues share products of their own effort with each other.	3.68	3.86	.318
My colleagues work to foster harmony.	3.98	3.80	.262
My colleagues take on special assignments (given to them by the department head or dean).	4.19	4.19	.985
My colleagues participate in all aspects of organizational life (e.g., attend functions).	3.53	3.41	.468

Of the 59 respondents from the Southwest private university who responded to the question of whether or not collegiality should be included as a criterion for tenure and promotion, 74.6 % replied yes and 25.4% replied no. For the Southeast private university, the proportion responding yes to that

question was 77.5% and 22.5 percent responded no. Evidently, collegiality is a very important criterion in both private universities. Typical open-end responses to the "why or why not" question are shown below in Table 3.

Table 3: Favorable and Unfavorable Comments about Collegiality Being Used in Tenure and Promotion Decisions

Using Collegiality in Tenure and Promotion Decisions	
Favorable	Unfavorable
In order for an educational organization to thrive, there must be at least a minimum level of ability for faculty members to work together effectively.	Too difficult to measure and would become artificial. Faculty do it because it's the right thing to do as a human (especially a Christian person). If they were forced to, it would not be genuine.
It impacts the overall experience and quality of education students receive.	While it is important, tenure/promotion should be based on productivity.
It is important for the harmony and growth of the university.	It is too hard to measure.
It is part of one's overall performance as a professor.	Sounds like what a community organizer would say
Collegiality fosters a good working environment and exchange of ideas. It should be expected of professionals.	Promotion should be based on technical professionalism, tenure on commitment to university. Analysis of personality traits as they affect students and student learning should be REQUIRED but collegiality with other faculty members is not necessarily critical.
Teamwork creates synergy. If a department does not demonstrate teamwork it is hard to ask students to be active team members. Actions speak louder than words.	Someone who is doing their part and more should not be critiqued for their interaction with others as others can be difficult to work with, misrepresent them, etc.
Tenured faculty should represent the best of the best, which includes how well individual faculty interact with peers. Congeniality is a plus in education and certainly should be a part of any tenure readiness assessment. If one is not culturally competent and able to work with all people, one is not yet ready to enhance faculty relations as part of the tenured faculty.	Measuring collegiality would be subjective. Like this survey, it would really measure perceptions of collegiality. While you could collect the perceptions of many, it would still be simply measuring perceived collegiality and the perceptions may or may not be accurate.
It models a sense of community for our students.	The tenure process is a joke.
Mutual support among colleagues is the only real defense against administrators' efforts to make life difficult in the academy.	Decisions should be made on scholarship, excellence in teaching, and the willingness to mentor students.
Because people who are not willing to do their job and help and participate in departmental activities until it is just demanded of them make more work for the rest of us.	Very difficult to measure. If an attempt is made to do so, administration will likely use the results to formulate a meaningless quantitative score that will be used to compare faculty.
Not being to some degree collegial is not being Christian, and that is supposed to be an essence of a faith-based university.	It is subjective and can't be quantified, which means it is already a criterion, but not an explicit one. It shouldn't be made explicit unless there is a rubric for measurement.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research

While the overall results show a relatively high level of collegiality at the subject universities, there were some areas of weakness. Specifically, commenting on each other's work, initiating and participating in informal conversations about the organization, sharing products of their own effort with each other, working to foster harmony and participating in all aspects of organizational life contained more dispersed responses and therefore lower average scores than the other items. One interesting comment by a faculty member was that "Tenured faculty should represent the best of the best, which includes how well individual faculty interact with peers.

Congeniality is a plus in education and certainly should be a part of any tenure readiness assessment. If one is not culturally competent and able to work with all people, one is not yet ready to enhance faculty relations as part of the tenured faculty." In other words, it is an a priori criterion that should be used as a precondition to someone being considered for tenure or promotion.

This study focused on two private Christian universities in the United States, one located in the Southeast and one in the Southwest. Would measures of collegiality vary greatly by the following: public/private university, size of the university, geographical location, union/nonunion? Additional research needs to focus on these areas and also the use of different measures of collegiality in research.

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