

Will Tenure Survive as Money Shrinks and Adjunct Faculty Ranks Swell?

The Questions of Tenure

Edited by Richard P. Chait
Harvard U. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2002. \$35.00 (334 pp.). ISBN 0-674-00771-9

Reviewed by David Seligman

Richard Chait, who edited *The Questions of Tenure* and wrote 3 of its 11 chapters, is arguably the best known and most authoritative voice in the US on tenure and faculty governance in higher education. From the outset, Chait makes clear that he does not intend either to advocate or to oppose the institution or practices of academic tenure. In contrast to more partisan views such as Matthew Finkin's *The Case for Tenure* (ILR Press, 1996) and Charles Syke's *ProfScam: Professors and the Demise of Higher Education* (St. Martin's Press, 1988), Chait intends his book to provide a scholarly analysis, and to present "research-based, data-driven answers to important, practical, and frequently posed questions about tenure policy and practice" (p. 2). Little else fills this niche, other than the much earlier *Faculty Tenure* (Jossey-Bass, 1973), by William Keast and John Macy Jr, and Chait's own previous works, including *Beyond Traditional Tenure* (Jossey-Bass, 1982), which he coauthored with Andrew Ford.

The scope of the book is impressively grand, yet appropriately focused. The chapters address separate but connected questions. Chait begins with his own clear and convincing account of why the debate about tenure has gained new life after a period of latency. In chapter 2, Cathy Trower provides a basis for later chapters by analyzing current faculty personnel policies—traditional and nontraditional—at more than 200 US colleges and universities. Chait returns in chapter 3 to examine the relationship

between tenure and governance at eight diverse small colleges. Then, R. Eugene Rice and Mary Deane Sorcinelli compare perceptions and practices in the tenure process by way of exploring whether the process can be improved.

Roger Baldwin and Jay Chronister consider the policy and quality implications of recent shifts away from tenure-track appointments in some higher-education sectors. Next, Philip Altbach contrasts how academic freedom of faculty is protected (or not) in the US and abroad. Trower examines how institutions that do not grant tenure have attracted and retained faculty. Charles Clotfelter continues that theme through the question, Can faculty be induced to relinquish tenure? In a thought-provoking case study, William Mallon discusses six small colleges that have pursued opposite strategies. Three of the colleges replaced tenure with contract systems and three replaced contract systems with tenure, but all six reported that their decisions to promote faculty increased accountability and improved performance. Then, Trower and James Honan use two data-driven initiatives to suggest how faculty tenure policies might be helped by constructive use of data.

In the final chapter, Chait distills insights from the previous chapters. He notes that no single tenure system exists in the US because tenure has evolved on significantly different alternative paths. As Chait puts it, "Context counts." Despite institutional differences, faculty perceive no acceptable substitute for tenure, so little "internal market" exists for tenure reform. Nevertheless, legislators, trustees, and others continue to exert pressure to reexamine faculty employment practices and policies. Such pressure may be abetted by dissatisfaction, not particularly from faculty within traditional tenure tracks, but from faculty within the swelling ranks hired outside the tenure tracks.

The Questions of Tenure deserves a careful reading from academic administrators, trustees, and legislators concerned with sustaining academic quality in the face of financial constraints. It also should be read by faculty members, particularly those who

may find themselves in the position of making "up or out" decisions about their academic colleagues. It is the single most useful resource to appear in the field for many years.

Hydrogen: The Essential Element

John S. Rigden
Harvard U. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2002. \$28.00 (280 pp.). ISBN 0-674-00738-7

John S. Rigden's book, *Hydrogen: The Essential Element*, could be subtitled, "The Hydrogen Atom's Impact on Physics in 23 Nutshells." The book begins in chapter 1 with the creation of protons in the big bang and ends in chapter 23 with such hydrogen exotica as positronium and Rydberg atoms. In between are engaging discussions of topics that include the invention of nuclear magnetic resonance, the discovery of the Lamb shift and the anomalous magnetic moment of the electron, and the hydrogen atom's role in the birth of quantum mechanics.

Rigden, special projects director of the American Institute of Physics, is personally familiar with many of the heroes of these nutshells and with the importance of their work. His mastery of the subject has helped give the narrative vividness and accuracy that are seldom matched in semipopular science books.

The book contains a wonderful collection of anecdotes, many new to me, about famous physicists whose lives were touched by the hydrogen atom. For example, pages 132–133 contain a bittersweet description of how graduate student Norman Ramsey worked himself out of a thesis topic by finding magnetic-resonance lineshape anomalies that led to the discovery of the deuteron's quadrupole moment. "Since Rabi sensed that something significant lurked in the peculiar signal shapes, he invited other members of his research team to participate in this potentially important experiment. As a result, Ramsey had to find another dissertation topic."

Complementing the text are good photographs both of people and of

David Seligman is a professor of philosophical studies and chair of the philosophy department at Ripon College in Ripon, Wisconsin. He has taught philosophy for more than 35 years and has served as vice president and as dean of faculty at the college.