

At our Fall 2021 UT AAUP meeting, faculty from across the university spoke about ways that faculty can unilaterally improve academic freedom and shared governance at UT. Three recommendations rose to the fore:

I. **Familiarize yourself with tenure's purpose and advocate for it every chance you get!**

Tenure's purpose is to protect faculty from losing their jobs because they speak freely in the classroom, assert themselves in shared governance, or publish research on controversial topics. AAUP's position on tenure is that ALL full-time faculty should be considered eligible for tenure.¹ This applies to both teaching and research faculty. AAUP also supports tenure for part-time faculty members.² After an agreed upon probationary period, if a faculty member is good enough to remain at UT, they deserve tenure.

II. **Create pathways for collective action!**

One of the early motives for forming AAUP was to support collective action.³ Do not silo yourself. This means creating informal shared governance structures at the department and college levels. It means sharing information across units of the university. Chairs across a college should meet to discuss common problems and solutions outside of regular meetings called by the Dean. Tenure and promotion committees from the four colleges should talk to each other about whether or not their determinations are being accepted or overturned. Faculty should tell each other their salaries. These and so many more efforts to bring transparency to opaque processes give faculty more leverage in shared governance across the institution.

III. **Recognize the incentive structures and resources faculty are working under!**

When evaluating yourself and your peers, recognize the incentive structures of the university and the resources available. We are regularly asked to teach heavy loads with high student engagement, do independent research with students, publish in high profile peer-reviewed journals, fight for shared governance where we can get it, and advise students.⁴ You know the staff support, material resources, and time we have to work with. We should stop judging our colleagues against an ideal that relies on more staff, resources, and time.

1 <https://www.aaup.org/report/recommended-institutional-regulations-academic-freedom-and-tenure>

2 <https://www.aaup.org/report/tenure-and-teaching-intensive-appointments>

3 https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/Tiede_0.pdf

4 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716204268185>