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With all the hype surrounding the Academic Senate's politically incorrect refusal to "honor" the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King with a three-day weekend – and their subsequent reversal – a post-tenure peer review proposal, agreed upon by a vote one senator shy of unanimity, was passed on to the NU Board of Regents early last month amidst relative obscurity.

The proposal recognizes three distinct purposes:

1. "To assist tenured faculty in ... maximizing their contributions to the University."
2. "To provide assurance to the public that tenured faculty are accountable for their performance."
3. "To provide continued peer involvement in the review of tenured faculty members."

While the first purpose would seem to presuppose that no such "assistance" existed before, the third prospect conjures an image of a smoke-filled teachers' lounge in which several tenured professors sit at a round table patting each other on the back.

Only the second concession is truly progressive in its acknowledgment of a dilemma that has beset the institution of tenure since its inception during the Middle Ages.

In order to understand the inevitable shortcomings of this proposal, however, it is necessary to first understand the basic concept of tenure and to subsequently acknowledge its antiquation.

The medieval purpose for tenure was to provide a safeguard for free

speech. Tenured faculty were thereafter able to lecture the apparent lunacy of a spherical Earth or of man evolving from ape with limited professional repercussions – several intellectual martyrs thus retained their jobs up to the point of combustion (until they were quite literally fired).

And while there is clearly no shortage of unpopular ideas today, freedom of speech has become the foundation on which progressive society stands.

The purpose of professorial tenure in the modern world has thus become increasingly ambiguous, finally evolving into a sort of glorified job security.

Although higher education is unquestionably a growth industry, professorships are few and far between (some would blame tenure for this scarcity), and productivity, a dubious quality in any profession, may very well be impossible to gauge among the professionals in question.

After all, how can I possibly measure the impact of a brilliant English professor's tutelage to my education?

By the same token, how does the incompetence and impersonality of a substandard political science instructor depreciate my university experience?

I can only assume that the profits eventually outweigh the losses, since I'm shelling out \$2,500 a year in tuition.

Education is unquestionably a unique profession that arguably demands a heightened degree of job security, but the most popular misconception concerning tenure is that it is a free ride. Tenure does indeed provide an exceptional degree of security, but as the current post-tenure review proposal should suggest, it is by no means unconditional.

Travails of tenure

Regulations obscure aim of education

Tenure does not fail in the job security it provides – it fails in the double standard it prescribes.

Professorial tenure is generally awarded on the basis of scholarship. Most colleges dictate a "publish or perish" ideology.

A faculty member is employed for a probationary period, which could be anywhere from three to seven years. During that time, the prospective professor is expected to make some substantial contribution to his or her field – this contribution is usually manifested in some sort of published form.

Subsequently, an "up or out" rule is typically enforced.

If the faculty member does not achieve tenure after a certain period of time, he or she either moves on to another university or finds another profession.

Although a professor's ability to profess will inevitably have some relevance to his or her potential tenure, it is this scholarly contribution that bears the most significant influence.

After all, if a potential professor desires to make a good impression on student evaluations, a simple shift in the bell curve will usually bring favorable results. For the great majority of students, an "A" still shows a good teacher and a "D" will always be equated with a bad teacher.

Once tenure is granted, teaching ability becomes even more difficult to assess – there are simply too many variables.

The proposal of post-tenure peer review betrays a similar double standard. This dilemma is made evident by the very name of the proposal – as this is a peer review, it is up to other tenured professors to question the competence of their colleagues.

Such review would seem the equivalent of a classmate grading a

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fellow classmate's course work. And considering that lectures are invariably monologues, it remains unclear how such judgment is to be gleaned.

Once incompetence is beginning to show over coffee and donuts in the professors' lounge, the damage is most likely irreparable and the instructor's impotence irreversible.

Throughout the proposed addendum (available in its entirety on the university's Web site), there is no mention of student consultation.

I don't doubt that student evaluations will play some part in alerting administrators to deficiencies, but the absence of such words as "instruction" and "education" is notable, nonetheless.

I've often wondered whether administrators take student evaluations any more seriously than most students do in filling them out.

An enlightening experience a few years back has admittedly jaded me to the entire process. The relationship I had with the professor in question was unquestionably built on mutual respect, but by semester's end, I believe we both had our doubts – the only possible recourse for my own doubts lay in course evaluations.

As our professor handed out evaluations, he offered a smug smile and a few choice words: "You can write whatever you want about me. After all, I have tenure."

Maybe these words were meant as a harmless joke. From what I've heard from other students, it's a com-

mon jab around evaluation time. If I am to accept this professor's admonition as a joke, then I must presume the very institution of tenure to be a joke as well. Perhaps the free speech which tenure imparts should be used a bit more carefully.

In a capitalistic society, one fundamental flaw pervades the issue: Tenure precludes competition. Young professors at established universities are becoming a rarity, and intellectual stagnation is the inevitable result.

Such stagnation will invariably discourage the "cream of the crop" from educational pursuits. Capitalism is simply not conducive to such an outmoded tradition.

Professorial tenure nevertheless remains indispensable; productivity in the field of higher education is far too subjective to do without the security that tenure provides. However, if this institution is to guard against the stagnation of its ranks, it must re-emphasize education over scholarship.

Perhaps scholarly research is the only objective measure of intellect, and if this is the case, maybe a premature "emeritus" status should be granted to disinterested professors.

The fact remains that it is the business of a university to stimulate thought, not only within its student body, but among its faculty as well.

Grades provide the impetus for student enlightenment – competition must assume a similar capacity for the faculty.



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America is starting to get into a war frenzy again.

The enemy is the all-too-familiar Saddam Hussein.

The recent conflict sparked when Iraq refused arms inspections because of U.S. participation in early November. As a result, Americans are turning to the mentality of "Let's blow him away like we should have done in 1991."

The image of Hussein, complete with the obligatory military garb and a mustache thick enough for Uncle Sam to get lost in, sends any true patriot into a near riot.

The thought of him in possession of enough nerve gas to kill off the world's population is enough to make a staunch pacifist gung-ho about sending troops to the Persian Gulf.

The man and his country are royally pissing Americans off and they aren't going to take it anymore.

Or at least that is what the polls say.

A Newsweek poll taken Nov. 13-14 found that 53 percent of Americans favored using force if Iraq refused arms inspections with U.S. participation.

The number jumped to 82 percent who favored force if Iraq

were to shoot down a U.S. U-2 spy plane flying over its country.

This show of support for force is not limited to Joe Public; Congress is also in on the action.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott proclaimed, "I'd like to see him taken out." And both parties have promised to support Clinton if he decides to use military force.

Only Saddam Hussein could bring Democrats and Republicans in Congress together to act in unison.

Even President Clinton's liberal and former senior adviser, George Stephanopoulos, suggested in Newsweek that we ought to assassinate the Iraqi leader.

Americans are more prepared to strike at Iraq than they have been since Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. Even President George Bush had difficulties in persuading the American people that Operation Desert Shield should turn to Operation Desert Storm.

What ever happened to diplomacy? Or even keeping our nose out of foreign politics?

The isolationists that prevailed before World War II must all be dead.

Diplomacy is a loaded word these days. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, diplomacy means 1. the conducting of relations between nations; and 2. tact.

The United States is using neither definition in regards to its policy with Iraq.

Diplomacy requires a little give and take. The Russians tried to

Give 'em a break

Iraq has been sufficiently destroyed

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bring out a compromise between Iraq and the United States, but we would have none of it.

Do it or else, Saddam!

How would we feel if China, a country that we don't often see eye-to-eye with and that has a larger military than our own, attacked us when we invaded Panama?

Sure we claimed we had our reasons for illegally invading Panama. We had to arrest their leader, Manuel Noriega.

Iraq had its own reasons, too. But even better, how would we feel if China invaded, took us over, and were still here in the U.S. several years after their invasion was over? And then the overbearing government of China forbade us to fly any planes.

And to make matters worse, the battles that took place when China attacked us destroyed our economy.

We could not produce nor import any humanitarian goods. We would be forbidden to export the few items that we're still able to produce in order to buy food and other necessities.

In this theoretical situation, Chinese spy planes and Chinese fighters and bombers fly over our country daily. Any effort to curb the military missions, even years after the initial attack, by threatening to bring down enemy jets would be met with a zealous, all-out attack on any targets they considered to be military.

And the whole world was in on the act against us for invading Panama, only it was the Chinese that were leading the game. The rest of the world just acted as pawns.

The Chinese military would call our presidents mad men because we illegally invaded Panama and swiped their leader. They would cite that, while doing so, we owned a nuclear arsenal with the potential to kill every man, woman and child on earth.

After nearly seven years of this, the American spirit would start to take over.

We would start to hold protests in the streets. We would threaten to shoot down Chinese planes over our soil. We would teach our children that China was the enemy,

that China, not our own president, was our oppressor. We would be all for one and one for all against what we thought was the greatest evil that ever existed.

God would be on our side and we would eventually break free from Chinese oppression.

The patriotism would be beautiful.

But we would know there would be no way that we could beat the Chinese with force. After all, they destroyed our military seven years ago when they attacked us.

We would want them to give a little.

More importantly, we would want them to have a little diplomacy.

This is exactly what is happening, but we are the oppressors.

Any time the Iraqis make a move in order to help themselves gain back any grain of what they once had, we threaten to blow them back into the Dark Ages.

I, like other Americans, think that Hussein is a madman.

But there is a whole country out there on the other side of the world that considers us the enemy. We are the ones who are killing their children by not allowing for the economy to be strong enough to buy basic necessities.

I, too, see Iraq as a potential enemy and don't think we should ignore it.

But sometimes a country has to give a little in order to get what it wants.