Throughout the country, the institution of tenure is being questioned and reevaluated. Because tenure is essential to academic freedom the Academic Senate believes that it is essential for the faculty and administration to reaffirm their commitment to tenure and to the provisions in the Faculty Handbook:

Faculty tenure is the right of a regular faculty member to hold his/her position with pay, until the age of retirement. Only for adequate cause and under stipulated procedures may the faculty member be dismissed, demoted, prematurely retired, or placed on indefinite leave without pay from that position.

Tenure and promotion are separate processes. Tenure should be considered on an individual basis and should be fully justified.

Only the President is empowered by the Board of Trustees to take action relating to appointments, promotions, demotions, dismissals, premature retirements, and assignments to indefinite leave, of all personnel holding tenure positions as defined herein. In such actions the President is advised by the Provost and the appropriate University committee.

Tenured faculty may be dismissed, demoted, or prematurely retired for adequate cause (See Section 2.5(b)) only upon proof of one or more of the following: serious neglect of duty; incompetence; major violations of academic freedom; misconduct; dishonesty; or conflict of interest that brings severe injury or discredit to the University: moral turpitude related directly and substantially to the fitness of the faculty member in his/her professional capacity as a teacher or researcher.

Tenured faculty may be urged to apply for disability status in the event of physical or mental incapacity. Tenured faculty may be placed on Special Leave of Absence upon proof of severe physical or mental incapacity. The intention is, whenever reasonable, that tenured faculty be returned from disability to active status. When this is not possible, tenure faculty may be involuntarily retired early upon proof of such
physical or mental incapacity. In such cases financial benefits that have accrued as a result of service to the University shall not be forfeited.

Tenured faculty may be placed on indefinite leave without pay if reductions in faculty become necessary under extraordinary circumstances because of demonstrated bona fide financial exigency. Financial benefits accrued through their University service shall not be forfeited.

We believe that tenure resides with the University and not a specific unit, department or school. We also believe that tenure includes protection of economic security such that significant decreases in salary for a tenured faculty member are a violation of the conditions of tenure in the absence of a declared University-wide financial exigency.

We further believe that tenure carries with it the duty of faculty members to the University to continue to strive for excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service. The faculty and the administration should work to develop incentives and mechanisms to encourage excellence by all faculty members.
Tenure is essential to ensure academic freedom. Nonetheless, many are questioning the value of tenure as it is commonly defined. In response, let it be known that the Academic Senate of the University of Southern California reaffirms its commitment to tenure as embodied by our Faculty Contract, and elaborated upon in our 1987 Faculty Handbook:

Faculty tenure includes the right of a regular faculty member to hold his/her position with pay, until the age of retirement. Only for adequate cause and under stipulated procedures may the faculty member be dismissed, demoted, prematurely retired, or placed on indefinite leave without pay from that position.

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Tenured faculty may be placed on indefinite leave without pay if reductions in faculty become necessary under extraordinary circumstances because of demonstrated bona fide financial exigency. Financial benefits accrued through their University service shall not be forfeited.

Tenure includes the protection of economic security. Tenure rests on the financial resources of the University and not a specific unit within it. Ensuring tenure with the resources of a unit might encourage tenured faculty to work for the benefit of that unit at the expense of the University as a whole. Thus, when the contract with tenured faculty refers to demonstrated bona-fide fiscal exigency, the contract is referring to the fiscal health of the University, and not a single unit.

Tenure carries with it the duty of faculty members to strive for excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service. The faculty and the administration should work together to continue to develop and improve mechanisms that enable all faculty to fulfill that responsibility.

Resolution Number: 96/97-12
Date: April 3, 1997
Presented at meeting held: April 16, 1997

Motion by: Executive Board
(Second not required when moved by Committee.)

Action taken: Passed as amended.