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Students march around campus chanting in support of Women's and Gender Studies professor Dr. Melissa Bradshaw.

The fight for tenure continues

By: Kevin Fields

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"This was student-generated which is so moving to me," said Dr. Melissa Bradshaw of the protest rally and march held outside of the Student Center Tuesday evening. Bradshaw, an assistant professor in the Women's and Gender Studies Program, was denied tenure at DePaul this past May.

Approximately 50 students, faculty and staff members protested the decision. A few students took the opportunity to use the megaphone and speak their minds. Each student emphasized DePaul's great loss should this decision not be overturned.

"[Bradshaw] is so personable," said Melissa Baer, a Women's and Gender Studies major. Baer, a senior at DePaul, explained that students are so passionate about this professor because of her approach in the classroom.

"In her classes, it's more than just theory or methodology. She is all about practical application and makes the material so relatable. It's all about enhancing our lives," said Baer.

Other students also share a sense of gratitude to Bradshaw. "DePaul would be losing a valuable asset," said Ashli Watts, a DePaul senior. Watts, who is double majoring in Women's and Gender Studies and Sociology, credits Dr. Bradshaw with introducing her to this field of study. "I first met Dr. Bradshaw when I was a freshman and it had a big impact on me. I was introduced to women I could relate to."

Bradshaw said she is grateful that DePaul has an appeal process. "I filled out all the paperwork and now I'm just waiting to hear back." According to Bradshaw, she anticipates the final decision being made by mid-November.

The appeal process is conducted by a Review Board of three tenured faculty members from departments other than the professor applying for promotion/tenure. They have to decide if the process was deficient and whether a faculty member's academic freedom was compromised. The report and decision will then be sent to President Fr. Dennis Holtschneider, who makes the final decision.

Chris Jessup, a student organizer of the protest, asked the protesters where Fr. Holtschneider's alleged support is.

"I have had the privilege of attending the LGBTQA Minor luncheon each year as an undergrad. Fr. Holtschneider has been at every luncheon I have been to and has spoke on behalf of the university in support of the minor."

Bradshaw is a founder of this minor and Jessup says this contradicts the president's support. "I don't think denying tenure to a founding member of a program equates to supporting that program."

Bradshaw was present at the protest, appearing emotional. She said all she wants for her students is to engage in life passionately. "Seeing these students out here goes to show what an amazing place DePaul is and how lucky I am to be here."

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