

Lincoln Park

Protesters rally against DePaul tenure woes



Protesters gather outside DePaul's Student Center at the corner of Belden and Sheffield avenues to protest recent denials of tenure to minority candidates. (Jeremy Mikula photo for RedEye)

BY [Jeremy Mikula](#), DePaul reporter · Friday, May 27, 2011 9:00 a.m.

A group of about 65 students, faculty members and graduate students gathered outside DePaul's Student Center Thursday afternoon to protest what they think is a glaring denial of tenure to minority and female candidates.

"This rally is to increase awareness because of the fact that those people affected are people of color and/or women," said Brian Bean, 30, a member of the International Socialist Organization who helped organize the rally. "It stinks of racism and sexism, as well of academic freedom."

DePaul's tenure-bestowing process has been met with criticism in recent years.

Norman Finkelstein, a professor in the political science department, found himself at the center of controversy when he was denied tenure in 2007, likely because of his radical views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Holocaust. Last year, five professors were denied tenure – four of them were

women, and one was a minority man. This academic year, of the more than 40 professors who applied for tenure, six were denied, all of them minorities.

DePaul has denied any kind of wrongdoing in its tenure denial. DePaul president Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, was quoted in a *New York Times* article as saying, “This has never happened before at DePaul. People didn’t notice it in the early stages of the tenure process. ... Then we realized, ‘Oh, my gosh, all the candidates getting the no votes are people of color.’ ”

Protesters, however, disagree with Holtschneider’s assessment, saying this is more than just an accident.

For example, Melissa Bradshaw, a professor of women’s and gender studies who spoke at the rally, was denied tenure last year. She had founded a minor in LGBTQ studies, unique for a Catholic university.

Quinetta Shelby, the only African-American in the chemistry department, was denied tenure this year. The department unanimously voted against recommending tenure for Shelby because they did not respect three of the journals in which she published – journals in which others granted tenure had work published.

Protestor’s signs said things like “Holtschneider did WHAT?!?!” and “SHAM(E),” and there were shouts of “Our education is under attack. What do we do? Fight to get it back.”

One of the speakers at the rally, Namita Goswami, was denied tenure this academic year. Goswami was a professor in the philosophy department who taught post-colonialism and feminist philosophy.

“I was hired specifically to challenge the views of traditional philosophy,” Goswami said. “Our students and their families make enormous sacrifices for a DePaul education. To honor such sacrifices, I believe it is incumbent on all parts of the university to consider appeals of morality and diversity with seriousness. I believe, in the injustice of my denial, that it constitutes an academic freedom violation.”

A report done by the American Association of University Professors highlighted hostility among the department toward Goswami. Noted in the AAUP report were by opinions that her strongest published work was an essay “co-authored with her husband” and that she suffers not from a “writing problem,” but from “a thinking problem” – things protesters say are evidence of sexism and racism.

Goswami, originally from India, was hired in 2003 and received the highest teaching award given out by the university: the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Excellence in Teaching Award.

An internal review board examining her appeal found that her academic freedom had been violated — the first time it had been officially found in the university’s history. An independent review also reached the conclusion that Goswami was wrongfully denied tenure.

Despite these findings, the final say on tenure rests with Holtschneider as university president. By rule, the tenure process begins with department vote, then academic-college vote, and finally with the University Board on Promotion and Tenure. Once denied tenure, professors are no longer allowed to work at the university full-time.