

**Guidelines for stopping the tenure clock**  
**College of Medicine**  
**Upstate Medical University**  
*Approved by College of Medicine Executive Committee 1/22/08*

**Tenure:**

According to the Policies of the Board of Trustees (POBT), eligible faculty at the ranks of Instructor and Assistant Professor are eligible for continuing appointment (or “tenure”) at the completion of 7 years of full-time service, the last three years of which must be in an academic rank at the current college. Early consideration is possible with promotion to Associate Professor. Eligible faculty at the ranks of Associate Professor and Professor must receive tenure after the third consecutive year of full-time service.

There are occasionally unique professional and personal circumstances that significantly interfere with a faculty member’s anticipated progress towards tenure and, in these cases, the Dean may choose to stop the tenure clock. These guidelines concern the factors to be considered in a decision to stop the clock. They were developed to provide guidance to the Dean and a framework for faculty members and department chairs who may request this option. This will ensure that the process is transparent and outcomes reasonably consistent. However, the recommendation to stop the tenure clock is solely within the purview of the Dean of the College of Medicine who will assess each faculty member’s unique situation.

At SUNY Upstate Medical University tenure requires promotion to Associate Professor plus evidence of “scholarship”, defined as “the creation of new knowledge and the dissemination and acceptance of it by peers”, and broadly defined to include “creative works in research, teaching or clinical service”. There must be evidence of a “focused, self-sustaining program of scholarship” during the seven year timeframe for tenure to be granted.

The POBT allows two mechanisms by which the tenure clock can be stopped: by moving the individual to a qualified academic rank, or by decreasing the individual’s effort to part-time (e.g., 99%). This is considered a temporary change based on an agreement between the faculty member, chair, and COM Dean that the individual will be considered for contract renewal or tenure on the appropriate schedule (by restoring him/her to unqualified rank or to full-time status) when the extension time is reached.

**When to consider stopping the tenure clock:**

Factors that can be considered when deciding whether to grant the request to stop the tenure clock include, but are not limited to:

FAMILY FACTORS: Childbirth, adoption or foster care placement of a child

HEALTH FACTORS: Serious physical or mental health problems of the faculty member defined according to FMLA criteria as: “illness, injury, impairment or physical or mental condition that involves (a) inpatient care in a hospital, hospice or residential medical care facility, or, (b) continuing treatment by a medical provider.”

Serious physical or mental health problems of a member of the individual’s immediate family (i.e., spouse/partner, child, parent)

EXTRAORDINARY FACTORS: Significant, unavoidable impediments to the faculty member’s ability to develop his/her research and scholarly program (e.g. planned lab space not available)

ACADEMIC FACTORS: There are promising faculty members who have made significant advances in developing their scholarly activities, but who may not meet criteria for granting of tenure during the prescribed timeframe. This is especially a concern for researchers during these times of very tight funding and long publication and grant review periods, and for clinical scientists who have an unanticipated time-limited increase in clinical responsibilities. These must be individuals with “demonstrated potential”, meaning that there is documented evidence that strongly suggests that they have a high likelihood for success if given an extension that lasts for a specified period of time. For a faculty member demonstrating excellence and scholarship in research, (s)he can “demonstrate potential” if (s)he has published manuscripts as an independent investigator, secured nonrenewable grant awards and/or successfully completed an NIH award, and received a score close to the fundable level to renew or fund a new project for a major NIH award or other equivalent federal grants. For a faculty member demonstrating clinical or educational excellence and scholarship (not pursuing NIH awards), (s)he can “demonstrate potential” by publishing manuscripts and/or securing funding that promote his/her clinical and/or educational missions and regional/national reputation, but may be awaiting publication or funding decisions. These individuals may need additional time to revise and resubmit their applications and/or submit additional manuscripts to peer-reviewed journals.

### **For how long should the clock be stopped?**

Different circumstances warrant different time periods, but a maximum of 2 years extension is recommended. The faculty member is able to restart the tenure clock at any time during the extension when (s)he feels ready to do so. The following timeframes for stopping the tenure clock are recommended:

FAMILY FACTORS: One year

**HEALTH FACTORS:** The amount of time equal to the time of productivity that was lost, between 6 months and 2 years. Thus, if the health problem resolves, or no longer significantly interferes with the faculty member's progress, the clock will be re-started.

**EXTRAORDINARY FACTORS:** The amount of time equal to the time of productivity that was lost due to these extraordinary factors, between 6 months and 2 years.

**ACADEMIC FACTORS:** A one year extension can be considered, with a review at the end of one year and the possibility of another one year extension.

**How may a faculty member initiate the process to request that his/her tenure clock be stopped?**

The department chair should feel free to discuss the issue of the tenure clock in his/her mentoring meetings with the faculty member. The formal request to stop the clock should be initiated by the faculty member in a written request to the department chair. In this letter the faculty member should describe the factors that are negatively affecting his/her progress towards tenure and make the request that the clock be stopped for a defined period of time. The chair will review the request. If the chair supports the request (s)he will forward the request, with his/her own letter of support, to the Dean of the COM for consideration. If the chair denies the request, (s)he must inform the Dean that the faculty member has made a request to stop the clock and his/her reasons for not supporting this request. The final decision as to whether or not to grant the request to stop the tenure clock rests with the Dean of the College of Medicine. The Office of Faculty Affairs is available to assist the faculty member or the chair at any point in this process.

If the Dean supports the request, the faculty member should meet with his/her UUP representative to ensure that (s)he is aware of options and consequences. The faculty member, the department chair, the Dean and the UUP representative will come to an agreement about the mechanism and timeframe, and a memorandum of understanding will be signed by the faculty member, the chair, the Dean and a UUP representative. This MOU should describe the agreement, the planned timeframe and the anticipated end date. The Dean will then institute appropriate procedures to stop the clock using the mechanism agreed to by the faculty member.

At any time, if the Dean wants additional input the Dean may convene a small advisory committee to review the case. The members of this advisory committee should include former members of the COM Faculty Appointments and Promotions committee.