in them. They pose continuing questions for the Federation and academics. The first question is whether universities are tertiary institutions or different from tertiary institutions. There used to be no doubt of the characteristic quality of primary and secondary institutions — in them young people were taught prescribed subjects according to graded syllabi and texts. There may have been some fraying at the edges of these notions but the central fabric remains. Tertiary institutions such as technical colleges are of similar pattern. Most undergraduate university courses repeat the layout and so long as they do it is hard to see how any different conditions of work can be claimed for the staffs concerned. Twice at the A.N.U. there were proposals during financial pressure to dispense with senior staff and use students in one case and in the other juniors **to teach** the undergraduates. The staff associations, if they wish their members' institutions to be administered by a central body dealing with all post-secondary institutions, will need to decide whether there is a difference between a university and any other post secondary teaching institution. If there is one centre, for convenience, the tendency will be to treat them all the same! This might be called Sweeney's Law! It was Mr. Justice Sweeney who found that the financial rewards of similar classes of staff in universities and colleges of advanced education should be broadly the same.

The proposition that the senior staff of a university speak with authority, not under authority, is the very essence of university education. In order to do this they need adequate library and other appropriate facilities. They are considered to need long-term appointment and proper conditions of tenure to enable them to develop a significant body of learning.

These are important questions because universities, as such, will disappear if they are reduced to places where immature scholars instil orthodox dogma to inarticulate pupils. For example, the present day "Economics" applied to human conditions has a level of effectiveness similar to Galenical medicine. And it is well to recall Galen's final statement in his treatise on Medical Experience: "For it (was) conceded to you that the sum of everything used in healing was discovered by logos alone and then (it was) demonstrated that we do not require it at all at this time". In every aspect of our human condition we are as dangerously ignorant as Galen but not all as self-satisfied. Optimal conditions for the questing able mind should be the primary reason for the existence of our universities. But can these freedoms be assured if all Australian universities derive their resources and pressures to conformity directly from one central authority? Will such a condition as the Federation's model tenure statute be acceptable to the central administration? Or will staff enjoy security of tenure only if they are members of the Public Service Officers' Association duly vetted for security risk and loyalty oath and other orthodoxies? At present there is the thin barrier of state treasuries between the universities and the Federal treasury but once this goes the Federal Treasury system of yearly accounting and omniscience may well prevent acceptance of many opportunities for long term plans or quick adaptation. Its habit of deducting from government subventions the equivalent of local benefactions certainly depresses local enterprise. And would they be much better provided under a Central University Authority?

Earlier in this review the independent stance adopted in the early days was mentioned. It is very doubtful whether the Federation could have won a fraction of what it has in fact achieved if it had been obliged to another organisation for space, staff and money. The present policy of asking the universities to provide accommodation and relief from duties for officers of the staff associations savours a little of the grace and favour system.

But the most serious sound heard in the wind is a growing cry for Federation representation on the Universities Commission. If anyone thinks that by this the Federation's views will be more effective than as freely and forcibly presented in any manner available to the Federation, it might be well to consider the history of such minority representation with its duchessing, purchasing and hypertrophy of the amour propre.

In conclusion, remember those who led in establishing a strong, resourceful and successful Federation: Thorpe and Buckley, Somervaille, Brett and George Smith stand out from those early days when the standards were raised and set. But we are passing from the days of our successful sparrow warfare — with the Federation's urging, the power centre has now congealed in Canberra Castle and a whole new set of techniques will be needed to sustain the values essential to the survival of real university work. This will almost certainly need the staffs of teacher training establishments, of institutes, of colleges and of Universities to co-operate loyally on the political front while maintaining their individual ideals and standards on their home fronts — a very tricky situation.


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# FLEXIBILITY IN A STEADY STATE UNIVERSITY

Richard Campbell*

**Introduction**

Since the report of the Murray Committee of 1957 Australian universities have seen nearly two decades of rapid expansion. When the Whitlam government decided that the year 1976 would be outside the triennial progression, many saw that as but a temporary halt occasioned by economic difficulties. It is now becoming clear that a fundamental change has occurred, and that we are entering a prolonged period of what is known in the literature as 'steady state'. In its last report' the Universities Commission addressed itself to the fact that our universities are entering an environment in which there will be no growth.

The Commission pointed out (par. 3.25) that, given that intakes were held constant over the 1977-79 triennium, there would be a significant reduction in the relative opportunities for school leavers to enter universities. That fact might suggest to us that as we come out of the current economic recession the universities can begin expanding once more. I suggest that, apart from the newest crop of universities, we face a steady state for many years to come. With a slowing down of immigration and changes in childbirth patterns, Australia's population will cease growing as rapidly as it has in the post-war period. In particular, the number of 18-year-olds will peak by 1979 (precisely when undergraduate numbers are to be held constant), and then a trough occurs building up to another peak about 1989, after which the number will slowly decline.

School-leavers are not, of course, the only source of new undergraduates. Already at A.N.U. in 1976, 52% of new undergraduates were not school-leavers, and 37% had some previous tertiary experience. This university, at least, is emerging as an educational facility of 'second chance'. Nevertheless, the possibility of resumed expansion will be contingent upon increase in social pressure from this group, and political recognition of it, rather than population increase.

The Universities Commission pointed out that "inherent in a situation of no growth are problems which, if not faced, must lead to deterioration in the standards of teaching and research" (par. 1.17). In this paper I want to discuss some aspects of a no-growth situation, and some measures which might be taken to preserve flexibility and vitality, on the basis of a detailed study of the academic staff of the School of General Studies (S.G.S.) at the A.N.U., which in the relevant respects functions as a typical Australian university. (All my future references to A.N.U., except where stated otherwise, will be to this school.)

**The Demography of Departments**

Expansion over the past 15 years has resulted in Australian universities having a very uneven age distribution in their academic staff. Figure 1 presents the retirement pattern (at age 65) of the tenured staff of the S.G.S. by year and grade.

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES

RETIREMENT PATTERN BY YEAR AND GRADE

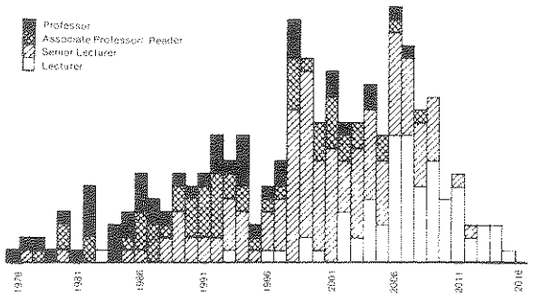


FIGURE 1

This imbalance does not **in itself** give cause for concern; if a fair proportion of staff now in their 30's and early 40's were likely to move on to other positions, to be replaced by younger colleagues, the situation would be healthy indeed. Serious problems arise, however, if this age structure is combined with a very low resignation (as distinct from retirement) rate. The U.C. report points out how the turnover of staff has been dropping in recent years, with a further 20% drop in the rate between the first half of 1975 and the first half of 1976. At A.N.U. resignations have been fewer than the Australian average, being 2.2%, 2.1%, 2.0%, 4.3%, 2.3% and 1.9% of established permanent academic posts in the years 1970-75 respectively. So long as we were expanding, this very low number of resignations did not excite attention. Now that we are in a no-growth situation, there is precious little room for flexibility. No doubt other universities are in a similar position.

When one comes to study individual departments, it is not possible to predict other than in the most general terms who is likely to resign before retirement. In Law, and perhaps in certain areas of Economics, positions outside academia attractive to academics are available and may generate some turnover of our staff. But in many areas in Arts,

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Asian Studies and Science, those staff who resign before retirement are likely to be moving to positions in other universities, which will likewise be restricted by the current economic climate and underlying demography. Putting it bluntly, we are likely to be stuck — for better, for worse — with most of our tenured staff until they retire, unless present contracts are varied.

Further evidence pointing to the same conclusion comes from examining years of first appointment of A.N.U. tenured staff. In half of all departments staff in these categories have been here already on average between 11 and 14 years. That is, staff who were appointed in the early years of the S.G.S. of the A.N.U. have shown little inclination to move on. The prospects of the resignation rate increasing do not appear strong. (Of course, while this produces a static and ageing staff, the effect is not altogether bad; other things being equal, we could expect it to be the 'better' staff who would have been likely to resign in order to accept promotion positions elsewhere.)

Analysing the retirement pattern department by department proved to be a most interesting exercise. Whereas some departments have a roughly even age spread, and thus can expect a slow but regular turnover of staff, others exhibit the disturbing pattern mentioned above in a very extreme form. For example, one department will have no vacancy in a permanent position through retirement until 2003, and another not until 2001. Others will have only one or two such vacancies before next century. It should be stressed that the basis for concern in these cases is not just that these departments are likely to be staffed by elderly academics by the year 2000, but that there is little prospect of any infusion of 'new blood' for 25 years.

This examination reveals a severe problem which could seriously affect the filling of chairs and of achieving renewed energy and change of direction through deliberately choosing for a chair a person with interests different from those which had prevailed in a department. At A.N.U., in as many as 14 departments, a chair will be the first vacancy, but no other tenured position will fall vacant through retirement for many years after the new professor's appointment (assuming the chair is promptly filled).

This problem may well be compounded by departments having posts disestablished through student interest drifting away from them with no increase in overall student numbers to compensate for this. (Another aspect of this possibility is taken up below.) That is, if in any of the above departments such drift occurs **after** the chair is refilled, the time which would elapse until a new tenured appointment can be made would be even longer.

While the improbability of being able to re-shape the department through new appointments could have a dampening effect on the quality of the field applying for a chair, the static and ageing nature of these departments heightens the need for the chair to be filled by a person who is able to bring fresh intellectual vigour and new ideas, even if that means a degree of conflict with the views of existing staff members. With the democratisation of decision-making, even more will we require intellectual leaders rather than administrators to fill chairs, if we retain the present staffing structure. This issue is discussed further in the section headed "promotion".

**Reviews**

With the onset of a period of stringency, academic staff are coming under increasing pressure from four directions. One is to improve the quality of teaching. A majority of universities now have units to assist staff with their teaching, and partly under student demand many are introducing formal means of some sort for evaluating teachers and courses. A second is to improve the quality of research. While Australian universities have not accepted the 'publish or perish' mentality, in order to justify their positions, academics are increasingly being asked about the amount and quality of their research. And in a static situation, it is only through research and scholarship that the intellectual resources of departments will be refreshed. Thirdly, recent moves towards democratisation of decision-making and the ever-increasing variety of assessment methods have meant that much more of an academic's time is now taken up in meetings, discussions on these matters with colleagues and students, and in marking student work. Fourthly, the financial resources to support all this work are being reduced. Cutbacks are tending to fall more on the general than the academic staff. In short, academics are being asked simultaneously to improve their teaching, deepen their research work, and consult more with students and colleagues, all within less financial resources.

There has been little done by way of assessing the impact of these pressures in an integrated fashion at the workface where they are felt. Further, we will need to ensure that the 'steady state' we are now entering does not become a period of stagnation in which standards of teaching, research and scholarship decline.

To meet these needs, and to provide some external stimulus now that infusion of new tenured staff will reduce to a trickle, the A.N.U. has decided to conduct regular reviews of departmental activities. These reviews will be conducted by committees consisting of representatives of staff and students from the department, other senior academics from within and outside the university, and are to be chaired by the Vice-Chancellor or his deputy. They will normally occur:

(i) approximately every ten years,
(ii) in new departments initially earlier,
(iii) when the headship of the department becomes vacant,
(iv) when a chair in the department becomes vacant.

In a static situation some reviews will occur under this policy even though no tenured vacancies are imminent. For a review to be put off for that reason would be to assume that renewed vigour and new direction can only come from a new appointment from outside. That would be to underestimate the resourcefulness of existing staff, who in many cases would welcome a time when all the activities of their department are re-assessed and new initiatives deliberately encouraged.

**New Developments**

In a rapidly changing world, a university which is alive must be responsive to — indeed take a leading intellectual role in — shifts in understanding and changing delineations of areas of concern. This is not (or at any rate, is not always) a matter merely of changing **fashions.** It is a commonplace that in many areas nowadays frontiers of growth in research are located not within traditional disciplines but at the edges where they overlap. The dynamics of research programmes have carried them over into other discipline areas.

With some notable exceptions, the S.G.S. is divided into departments which represent traditional disciplines. Recent developments in university structure here, as elsewhere, have had the effect of entrenching this departmental structure. Yet not only do the research interests of staff tend to be increasingly in interdisciplinary areas; student demand for courses is moving in that direction also. One of the most significant developments in recent years has been the growth of student interest in combined and double honours.

While not neglecting the need properly to ground students in **disciplines** of enquiry, we will increasingly confront the problem of how to bring those disciplines to bear on **fields** to which many disciplines are relevant. With little prospect of meeting this problem by new appointments funded out of growth in the number of posts available, flexibility must be obtained through redeploying present resources.

Two lines along which action to meet this would be required concurrently are as follows:

- Universities will need to take deliberate steps to retain some funds, and some posts, in a School or Faculty pool, so that new appointments can be made of persons specifically to co-ordinate teaching (and research) in inter-disciplinary fields. In order for this to be possible, the expectation of departments that they become 'entitled' to additional staff in accordance with some formula (at A.N.U. a formula based on weighted student units) would need to be deflated. At any case, those expectations cannot be met; in all but the newest universities the question of additional staff will rarely arise.
- A number of existing staff could be re-deployed to form inter-departmental consortia to run approved programmes of an inter-disciplinary nature. These consortia would not consist simply of groupings of departments, but of selected and appointed members with special interest and expertise in the field of study. In order to maintain direct contact with his discipline, a person appointed to such a consortium should still retain a position within his department. Lecturing commitments could, for example, be half and half where there is a need for new course units to be devised, rather than using existing units. Some new staff could deliberately be given dual appointments where appropriate. The members of such consortia would form the nucleus of staff for a programme, but could draw in others on a less formal basis where they could contribute.

At some universities this kind of model is already functioning with considerable success. One lesson which has been learnt from this experience is that such inter-departmental consortia need to be recognised formally, both for planning and budgetary purposes. There is great difficulty in maintaining such programmes on an informal co-operative basis where participation is *per gratis* of departments and occurs only on the margins of their disciplinary concerns. Even the designation of a member of one department as a 'co-ordinator' does not go far enough. Under such an arrangement the field of studies is still seen to be within that department's sphere of influence, rather than as genuinely inter-departmental. One university which has developed this model in a significant way has found that the Chairman of its inter-disciplinary studies committee needs to act in a way analogous to a departmental chairman for planning and budgetary purposes. Only such a structure is likely to survive in the intense competition for scarce resources we now all face.

**Tenure**

The problems posed by a static and ageing staff inevitably raise the question of tenure. Some senior academics with whom I have discussed these problems have advocated legislation to abolish all tenure.

The merits of a tenure system as against a limited contract system have been canvassed a great deal overseas, especially in the U.S.A. The major discussion of the issue is in *Faculty Tenure:* **The Report of the Commission on Academic Tenure in Higher Education** *(Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1973),* which comes down firmly on the side of retaining tenure. The Report summarises the reasons pro and con as follows:

**A. Arguments made in support of tenure.**

(1) Tenure is an essential condition of academic freedom in that it assures staff that professional findings and statements will not be subject to pressures which might cost him his position.
(2) Tenure creates a faculty with strong long term commitment to the institution.
(3) Tenure is important in attracting staff of ability.
(4) Tenure has some economic value in that it helps offset the additional lower financial rewards of higher education, enabling institutions to compete in fields which have highly developed markets outside universities.
(5) Tenure removes the uncertainty of the future, thus enabling staff to concentrate on their teaching and research obligation — the uncertainty of renewal of short term appointments affects morale and performance.
(6) Non-renewal of short term appointments provide no procedures for appeal and thus academic freedom is not adequately protected.

**B. Arguments made against tenure**

(1) Tenure imposes an inflexible burden upon institutions.
(2) The tenure system, especially in times of financial difficulties, reduces the institution's opportunity to attract and retain younger staff.
(3) The tenure system encourages the perpetuation of established departments and disciplinary specialists. It tends to exclude new approaches in subject matter.
(4) It diminishes accountability and fosters mediocrity.
(5) It leads to diminished emphasis on undergraduate teaching through concentration of postgraduate education and research.

This situation as regards tenured staff in the S.G.S. at A.N.U. would not be atypical. Excluding part-time teachers, temporary lecturers and senior tutors/tutors on temporary appointments under one year, we have 70% of academic staff with tenure, 10% (senior lecturers and lecturers) on probation in tenurable positions, and 20% (lecturing fellows, senior tutors and tutors) on fixed term appointments.

Lecturers on probation are appointed for an initial three-year period, in the third year of which the individual's performance is to be reviewed in order that the person be re-appointed to age 65, offered a further limited contract, or not re-appointed. The grounds for not re-appointing to age 65 are failure to pursue duties responsibly or to attain the reasonably expected level of achievement in performance of duties. Such criteria, and they are standard, are notoriously difficult to apply; I believe that a lecturer on probation has a reasonable expectation of reappointment to age 65. For this reason, we must lump together the Tenured and Probation groups in order to gain a fair picture of the tenured/untenured ratio. Doing so yields that ratio at A.N.U. at present is 80:20. As Faculties react to current financial stringency by cutting salaries expenditure, obviously most cuts will fall on tutorial positions; they are the only posts which regularly become vacant in significant numbers. But cutting tutorial positions will increase both the tenured/untenured ratio and the average salary per staff member in real terms. As continuing posts in time become vacant, some redress in this balance will become possible. However, in the short term the tenured/untenured ratio is likely to move in the opposite direction to that desirable on the grounds of increasing flexibility.

Another aspect of this problem is highlighted in a recent study of the staff-salary structure of University College, London, which found that average salary level would remain constant in real terms with a growth of between two and three percent.[2] For a growth rate less than this, the average salary level would rise. 'Incremental creep' thus appears likely to be a continuing problem for our budget planners.

In its Fifth Report the A.U.C. suggested that rigidities in staff structure would be reduced if the proportion of non-tenured senior posts was increased and if posts which became vacant were not automatically advertised and filled — departments being required to argue the case for retention of these. The Commission reiterated these views in its Sixth Report, and again in its Report for the 1977-79 Triennium, and urged universities to aim at raising the proportions of limited term appointments (par. 5.10).

Universities which adopt such a policy (and in Australia The University of Melbourne has led the way) will need to have thorough discussions with their staff associations. The Federation of Australian University Staff Associations (F.A.U.S.A.) has declared itself opposed to the use of limited/fixed term academic staff appointments as a means of introducing flexibility in the allocation of staff resources within a university, and as a means of promoting mobility of staff between universities. In such discussions I believe that the possible confusion of the prime purpose of tenure — the protection of academic freedom — with the industrial concern for economic security will have to be firmly resisted.

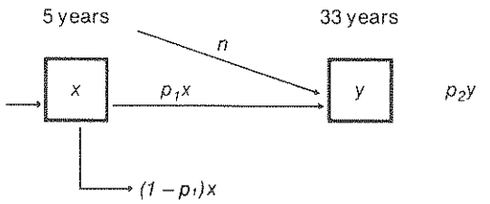
Before deciding on any policy on the tenure ratio, we should look into the long term and examine what an equilibrium situation would be like. Unless steps are taken to move towards such a situation, we will be locked into a see-saw in which the influx of new staff of the 60's and early 70's will be followed by a period of stagnation which will give way to another flood of new staff early next century, and so on.

As a contribution towards the discussion of this complex issue, I present an equilibrium model of the A.N.U. in a no-growth situation. By that I mean a model in which the number of tenured academics with a given number of years of service does not change from year to year. (This model is, of course, ideal in a number of senses of that word, and has been adapted from **John G. Kemeny:** *'What every College President should know about Mathematics'*, American Mathematical Monthly, 1973, pp. 889-901.)

In the S.G.S. of A.N.U., limited term positions (tutorships, senior tutorships, and the relatively new lecturing fellowships) carry a normal maximum period of five years. For our model let there be $x$ persons in this group, and $y$ in the group of persons appointed to tenurable posts. If one takes the year of first appointment of each person in this second group and subtracts that from the year in which each retires at age 65 that provides another interesting statistic. The average number of years of service (excluding resignation) is 33.

Now following the standard Australian pattern, persons enter tenured posts either from outside the S.G.S. or from an untenured position (already three lecturing fellows have been so re-appointed). Let us say that $n$ persons come in the former way. The number of untenured people given tenure will be a fraction of $x$. Let us call this fraction $p_1$. That is, $n + p_1x$ are appointed to tenurable positions. Let us call the fraction of tenured people who leave by retirement or resignation $p_2$.

This yields the following picture:




The Tenure ratio $t = \dfrac{y}{x + y}$ (1)

**In an equilibrium situation,** $p_2y = n + p_1x$ (2)

and $\dfrac{n}{y} \leqslant p_2$

Substituting (2) in (1) and simplifying yields:

$$t = \frac{p_1}{p_1 + p_2 - \frac{n}{y}} \quad (3)$$

Now, if staff retire after 33 years, in equilibrium 3% retire per annum. In addition, some — probably between 1% and 2% p.a. — will resign. I present solutions to equation (3) for both the pessimistic figure of 1% and the optimistic figure of 2%. In that equation, $t$, $n$ and $p_1$ *are the only variables over which the university has any real control, and then within limits.*

Over the 5 year period in which all untenured posts are turned over, the pessimistic resignation rate of 1% p.a. will give the value of $p_2$ as .2, so $\frac{n}{y} \leqslant$ .2. The optimistic value for $p_2$ will be .25. Substituting these values in (3) yields the following results.

| Assuming | | Assuming resignation rate 1% p.a. | 2% p.a. |
|---|---|---|---|
| $t = .8\,{}^{n}/_{y} = .1$ | (i.e. half new tenured vacancies) | $p_1 = .4$ | $p_1 = .6$ |
| $t = .8\,{}^{n}/_{y} = .15$ | (i.e. ¾ new tenured vacancies) | $p_1 = .2$ | $p_1 = .4$ |
| $t = .8\,{}^{n}/_{y} = .2$ | | $p_1 = 0$ | $p_1 = .2$ |
| $t = .6\,{}^{n}/_{y} = .1$ | | $p_1 = .15$ | $p_1 = .225$ |

$p_1$, of course, is the measure of the probability of a person in an untenured position being appointed to a tenured position. The table reveals that in an equilibrium situation, changing the tenure ratio from 80 : 20 to 60 : 40 lowers this probability by .25. Maintaining this probability at something better than .4 could well prove to be a necessary condition for attracting high quality staff to untenured positions.

The most desirable states, I suggest, are those indicated on the top line, and the second **if** the resignation rate is 2% p.a. In these states, there is a turnover of ⅕ to ¼ of all tenured staff in a five year period (approx. 60 to 75 persons), the tenure ratio remains at 80 : 20, yet untenured staff have about a half chance of gaining tenure at the same time as a substantial number (27 to 40 over a 5 year period) of new staff are imported from outside S.G.S., all of which appears to optimise flexibility.

Having identified what seem to be the most desirable forms of a 'steady state' situation, the hard question is: how best to move from our present freeze-following-expansion state? One obvious move is to try to encourage present staff to retire earlier, especially in the trough years 1976-1991. This is discussed in the next section. Another — dare one mention such a 'non-academic' consideration! — would be to avoid appointing to tenured positions persons aged now between 32 and 43.

Perhaps counter-intuitively, consideration of the model in the light of the actual retirement pattern at A.N.U. also suggests that we should **keep** the present tenure ratio of 80 : 20, filling as many tenured vacancies as finance allows, **provided** that the new appointees are now either over 43 or under 32 in age. Our problem **now** is not one of static staff; quite the contrary, in the past 5 year period 1972-76 we have appointed about 90 people to continuing

positions. Our future flexibility problems are a function of the indigestibility of such a large intake. Whatever the financial attractiveness of replacing senior lecturers and readers by tutors might be, in general to attain an equilibrium state they should be replaced by young lecturers.

The upshot of this investigation is that, **if** it continues to be held that tenure is itself academically (as distinct from industrially) desirable for as many academics as possible, then the present 80 : 20 tenure ratio should be maintained **in the interests of future flexibility** during the forthcoming tight period. The continued intellectual vitality of Australian universities in the long term could well depend on each taking deliberate steps to move towards such an equilibrium staffing pattern.

**Early Retirement**

One way of increasing the frequency of vacancies in tenured posts is to make early retirement easier and more attractive. What is possible in this regard is severely restricted by the provisions of the current superannuation schemes operating. As these are so varied, and none offer scope for the magnitude of early retirement likely to be of interest to universities, it will not be useful to detail them here. It is apparent that new and more flexible superannuation schemes would be required.

The new Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme proposed by the Whitlam Government contained provisions for retirement at 60, and early retirement at 55. The scheme finally enacted by the Fraser Government is not as generous in this respect. Normal retirement remains at 65, with provision for early retirement at 60 with reduced benefits. However, the new Act contains the possibility of early retirement at 55 for specially designated classes of employees, which possibility can be activated providing appropriate regulations are gazetted prescribing the classes of employees to whom it applies.

As from 1st July 1976, all new academic staff at A.N.U. have been required to become contributors under this new Commonwealth Act, instead of under the old F.S.S.U. scheme. Negotiations have begun on conditions of transfer of members from that old scheme at A.N.U. to the new. Universities around Australia have a strong interest in how these negotiations proceed, and the A.V.C.C. have appointed a special committee to keep a watching brief on their progress, for all the F.S.S.U.-type schemes have become hard-pressed through sustained high inflation. If the new Commonwealth scheme is to make any contribution to the matter of early retirement, the A.N.U. negotiators will need to obtain agreement to the gazettal of regulations designating academics as amongst those to whom the age 55 provision applies.

So far I have been discussing the **possibility** of drawing superannuation benefits on early retirement. A quite different question is raised when one asks how such early retirement could be made attractive. Under present and proposed schemes, a person taking up this option is severely penalised. If he retires at age 55 his retirement fund will have ten years less growth and he will have a life expectancy ten years longer, both of which significantly reduce the annual amount his retirement fund yields **for the rest of his life.**

At this point, many who consider this topic refer to the retirement benefits scheme for the Armed Forces. Two points are relevant:

- Officers enter the Forces in the knowledge that they will be retired somewhere between ages 42 and 55, depending on their final rank. Tenured academics are appointed to age 65. Expectations are substantially different.
- As foreshadowed in the previous paragraph and as the controversy prior to the introduction of the present D.F.R.B. scheme testified, any early retirement scheme which is sufficiently attractive to have the desired effect is **actuarily unsound.** In the case of the Armed Forces, the tradition of early retirement was so well entrenched and the need to maintain the numerical size of the Forces so politically sensitive, that an attractive scheme was introduced against Treasury opposition. In our case these factors are missing.

Nevertheless, it could be that the saving to the university in replacing a Reader or a Senior Lecturer on the top rung with a tutor over a ten year period is great enough to allow a sufficiently generous lump sum payment to be attractive. As the question has been put: How golden does the handshake need to be?

The calculations here are quite complex. Account must be taken of differences in annual superannuation benefit, of tax, of investment yields, of inflation, of 'savings' to the university depending on the level of replacement, and no doubt more. Only a person with considerable actuarial experience familiar with university staffing would be able to research this question adequately. The A.N.U. is about to undertake such a detailed examination.

A related question which could be referred to the same person for investigation concerns the economics of permitting a senior academic to go onto reduced pay for reduced duties. Such a proposition could be attractive to a senior academic who wished more time, say, to write that book he has had gestating all his life. The drop in real (take-home) salary would not be so great, owing to the current tax structure. However, what might defeat this variant could be the cost of maintaining superannuation contributions, by both parties, and eventual benefits, at the old levels.

This last proposal in turn raises the question of 'half retirement'. 'Phasing in' retirement over a number of years, whatever its institutional and humanitarian



benefits, is not possible under either the old or the new superannuation schemes. In addition, any lump sum payment, either from superannuation or in lieu of long service leave, is likely to be ruled taxable if the person proceeds to some part-time employment immediately after officially 'retiring'. Any changes to the Act to allow gradual retirement would appear to be well down the line.

A general question which needs to be considered in connection with voluntary early retirement is: Who is likely to take up such an option? The hard-working, productive person who wants more time to write, or the once-bright in whom the spark of intellectual enquiry has become dimmed? Might not an attractive scheme induce to leave precisely those who still have much to contribute? Or, in an ageing institution, is that offset by the benefit of new young staff?

In the short-term the benefit such a provision would offer would only be marginal. Academic staff can now retire early at age 60. In the S.G.S. at A.N.U. only 10 persons are eligible to retire now under current provisions. If the early retirement age were dropped a further five years, 15 additional persons would be eligible. That is only 5%, or 1% per year. Given that many academics seek to prolong their working life, in the short term voluntary early retirement provisions could have only a marginal effect. In a decade's time, however, the numbers of people who could be affected become rather larger. I conclude that the scheme is worth pursuing, but cannot by itself offer much by way of added flexibility.

**Promotion**

One aspect of 'steady state' touched on at various points earlier deserves separate treatment. In a static institution, promotional opportunities must either await occasional vacancies caused by retirements or resignations, or else be dependent upon the institution adopting a policy of permitting its staff structure to become top-heavy. A.N.U. would appear to have adopted the latter alternative; already in S.G.S. almost half the departments are top-heavy, and 7 (20%) have no-one at lecturer level at all.

In its Fifth Report the A.U.C. stated that it believed it to be important for universities to avoid such topheaviness, which is relatively costly. It expressed the view that universities should limit numbers in the grades of professor or associate professor/reader to about one-fifth of their full-time academic staff. Already at 30th April, 1976, S.G.S. had 26.5% in these grades, and another 33% at senior lecturer (i.e. almost 60% at senior lecturer or above).

Further, 71 senior lecturers (i.e. 62% of that grade and 19% of all full-time staff) are now at the top of the senior lecturer range. 33 lecturers (i.e. 42% of that grade and 9% of all full-time staff) are now at top of the lecturer range. The pressure for promotion for at least some of these will be well-nigh irresistible. The situation, which could be paralleled at most established universities, is graphically illustrated in Figure 2.

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES

DISTRIBUTION OF ACADEMIC STAFF
BY SALARY RANGE

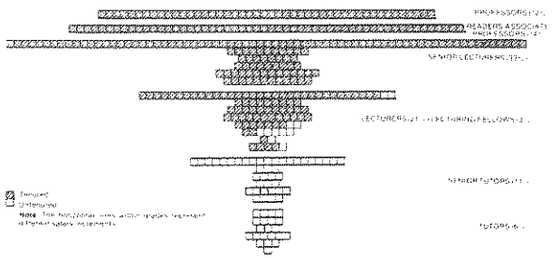


FIGURE 2

Financial prudence and justice in providing promotional opportunities are thus diametrically opposed in a freeze-following-expansion situation such as we are in. Yet with promotional opportunities elsewhere similarly restricted, the possibilities of staff moving 'out and up' will be very limited. Such a situation can only lead to frustration and pressure for institutional change.

This developing situation has been a factor in the democratisation of decision-making referred to elsewhere. At many Australian universities now non-professorial staff have seats on academic boards, in many the head of department need not be a professor (often but not always departmental chairmen are elected by and from all the full-time staff). Such moves, however, serve further to undermine the leadership role of professors and will, I have predicted, lead to agitation for a levelling down of professorial status (and salary?).

Already, this pressure is becoming manifest. The Academic Salaries Tribunal in its 1976 review received a submission from the Melbourne University Staff Association which argued, in part, in favour of a North American system of titles (i.e. professor and reader = professor; senior lecturer = associate professor; lecturer = assistant professor), with excellence being rewarded by salary differentials. Without foreclosing the question, Mr. Justice Campbell considered that fundamental changes in the salary structure would not be the appropriate response to the problems of flexibility. In that he is probably right; the North American experience is that having a wider 'top' to the academic ladder has not averted blockage on the top rung. More apposite are his remarks (par. 5.89):

*I believe there is something to be said for the suggestion of title change. There is no doubt that in academic communities status, as well as money, is an important motivation. But...it needs to be remembered that in North America periodic (commonly annual) reviews of staff salaries are undertaken individually by the university. If staff are not 'performing', their salaries can be left to lag even in real terms... The (Australian) Tribunal looks at a job whilst in North America a university tends to look at an individual.*

Wage incentives of this kind might indeed provide strong extrinsic motivation for academics to keep 'performing' within a steady-state situation, but it would mean a quite radical change, as pointed out, in the system of salary determinations.

The equilibrium model discussed earlier does not help with the problem of promotion blockage. There are eight rungs to the lecturer grade and six to the senior lecturer. This leaves eighteen years in which the **average** academic will be held at the top of a range if he cannot progress beyond senior lecturer, not through lack of ability but through lack of opportunity, unless the ranks of associate professor/reader and professor are widened. For many first appointed as young lecturers, it will be even longer.

It is significant that the model for Dartmouth College, from which the equilibrium model was adapted, has a 30 year average number of years of service in tenured positions, *24* of which are at full professor level. By contrast full professorships constitute approximately 12% of all full-time staff in S.G.S., and on average will not become vacant for another fifteen years. As mentioned the possibility of early retirement is not likely to have a major impact on any of this.

Australia inherited a staffing structure based on the professor who professed his subject, with a few assistants. This grew into a pyramidical hierarchy, which was satisfactory in providing adequate promotional opportunities so long as the whole system was expanding. As we enter a prolonged period of steady state, we must ask whether that structure can prove still to be appropriate.

**Visitors and Exchanges**

With little short-term flexibility in tenured staff, one way of encouraging new ideas is through a substantial programme of visitors and exchanges. I suggest that Australian universities could well look to this as a way of providing refreshment and stimulation to their staff.

If a significant pool of School or Faculty posts can be established, some of that could well be used in bringing short-term visitors to assist in identified areas, both in existing departments and to build up new developments. To some extent this is already being done. With a tightening of university financing all around the world, we might well find that it will not be too difficult to attract visitors of some eminence and drive if funding is available here. Travel costs would, of course, be an extra, but that may not be a problem if our funding is supplementing some small allowance from the visitor's home university.

Contrariwise, 'space' can be created in a static department by granting an academic extended leave-without-pay in order to take up a two or three year appointment elsewhere. Until recently, Australian Vice-Chancellors have been somewhat reluctant to approve such leave; they have tended to prefer a resignation, which relieves their own flexibility problems. However, as we all come up against the same problems, such proposals could well come to be assessed in a different light.

In this respect the Institute for Advanced Studies at the A.N.U. has a crucial role to play. **One** of the functions originally envisaged for what became the I.A.S. was to be a research unit for the whole Australian university community. With the significant growth of research and graduate study at other Australian universities in recent years the ways in which it fulfills this function need to be re-assessed. I suggest that it would be mutually beneficial were both the I.A.S. at A.N.U. and the Australian teaching universities (including the S.G.S. at A.N.U.) to view the Institute as providing an intellectual 'retreat' for teaching staff.

The Institute is currently moving towards having at most half its staff in tenured positions. Thus there will continually be many opportunities for short-term appointments at research fellow/senior research fellow level for which academics with specific projects can apply. In this way, in an extended period of little change, the I.A.S. could come to function as a 'diaphragm' enabling the Australian academic community to 'breathe'.

In addition, the possibility of simple exchanges between universities is worth exploring. When we all are afflicted with institutional rigidity, musical academic chairs could keep the blood circulating in our heads.

**Concluding Remarks**

The problems posed by our abrupt transition to a steady state following rapid expansion are many and interlocked. No single solution is to hand. As we react to this transition we need to re-assess both the **quality** of our teaching, scholarship and research and the **directions** in which it is proceeding. Any university which is serious about encouraging flexibility in favour of change can only do so by throttling back or closing down some existing operations. That will be painful. The danger is that decisions with long-term consequences will be made on an **ad hoc** basis.

It is also true that many of the possibilities I have discussed are difficult for one university to introduce alone. In this paper I have drawn on details from one typical situation — the S.G.S. at A.N.U. — in order to render the discussion concrete. The problems, however, are general. We will need to tackle them in a concerted fashion. I hope this paper will contribute to that end.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# INEQUITIES AND ABSURDITIES IN THE HIERARCHY OF RANK IN AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES


N. Etherington*


Financial stringencies imposed by a 'no growth' situation show up the anomalies in our promotional ladder. Most of what I say below is illustrated by examples drawn from The University of Adelaide but applies equally to other universities.

**Historical Background**

Most Australian universities began as communities of equals. My own university, for example, began as a community of professors and as late as 1883 the Calendar listed the staff as "the Professors and Lecturer." (There was only one lecturer!). A great deal can be said in favour of the egalitarian establishment. Professors were free from the temptation and the necessity to curry favour. Their researches were disinterested in the best sense. What they did was done to advance knowledge, to edify students, to win applause or fame, but not to win promotion. Many of these first professors wrote important books, moulded public opinion, won Nobel Prizes without any incentive of rank or money being offered to them.

Regrettably, time and parsimony eroded the foundations of the academic republic. Lecturers, tutors, demonstrators and assorted part-time staff were grouped together below each of the professors. The gulf which yawned between these now legendary god-professors and the teaching dogs-bodies below was awesome and demoralising for those on the bottom. Chairs were rarer than hen's teeth and when one did fall vacant it was usually filled by an outsider. The lot of newcomers to academic life was glory or obscurity, power or servitude, Sydney or the bush.

This system was bad in so many ways that there was considerable optimism when, in 1950, senior lecturers and readers were established in The University of Adelaide.[1] The merit of long-suffering junior staff could now be recognised by promotion. New blood and talent could be attracted by the higher salaries attached to the new grades. New incentives might stimulate new research, books and articles. Mobility of staff between universities might produce a fertile cross-pollination as lecturers throughout Australia competed for the new senior lectureships and readerships.

During the post-war years of expansion these hoped-for benefits may actually have been achieved. In 1950 eight junior staff at Adelaide were suddenly elevated to readerships and one reader came from outside the university. During the next decade twenty more readers were created by promotion and seven readers were recruited to the university. By the end of the nineteen-sixties it was clear, however, that senior lectureships and readerships were to be primarily promotional grades. Advertisements at these levels dwindled and now have virtually ceased.

Statistics on the recruitment of readers and professors at The University of Adelaide shed some light on the frequently debated metaphysical question: how do readers differ from professors? Mr. Justice Eggleston once ventured the opinion that "a Reader is either an unlucky person for whom no Chair is currently available, or he is a person who, while of outstanding academic calibre...misses professorial rank because his qualities or inclinations leave him short of the administrative or organisational or leadership qualities required for a professorship."[2] Whatever the case may be elsewhere, a different answer may be given at Adelaide: Readers are senior academics promoted from within the university (127 out of 159); professors are senior academics brought from other places (72 out of 92).[3]

Over the years, the senior lectureship has also been made a promotional rank for most purposes. It is now the normal practice in The University of Adelaide that when a senior lectureship or readership falls vacant it reverts to a lectureship (except in the professional faculties). Many more chairs have been advertised than senior lectureships during the last few years.[4] There is an important difference, however, between the qualities required for promotion to senior lecturer


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