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September 7, 2026

Ms. Orice Williams Brown
Acting Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Acting Comptroller General Brown:

Colleges and universities across the country employ tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure track faculty to educate students. According to data from the U.S. Department of Education, about 58 percent of colleges and universities had tenure systems in the 2023-2024 academic year.¹ Since the American taxpayer has a vested interest in the educational outcomes of our colleges and universities, the Committee on Education and Workforce (Committee) seeks information about the landscape of faculty tenure across higher education.

Tenured faculty typically enjoy certain benefits that non-tenured faculty do not, such as employment security that cannot be terminated except under very limited circumstances. Other instructional faculty hold positions with varying degrees of job security and other benefits, including full-time positions outside the tenure track and part-time adjunct positions.

Despite differences in job security and benefits, tenured and non-tenured faculty may have similar responsibilities, such as teaching courses, conducting research, and advising students. For example, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) previously found that non-tenure track

¹ National Center for Education Statistics, *Table 316.80 Percentage of degree-granting postsecondary institutions with a tenure system and percentage of full-time faculty with tenure at these institutions, by control and level of institution and selected characteristics of faculty: Selected academic years, 1993-94 through 2023-24*, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d24/tables/dt24_316.80.asp.

faculty taught between 45 and 54 percent of courses at four-year public institutions in three states it reviewed.²

In recent years, some state governments and governing bodies of public universities have made efforts to reform tenure systems at public institutions. For example, several states, including Florida, Utah, and Ohio, have enacted laws to create or expand post-tenure review, broaden grounds for dismissal, or tie tenure to state-defined criteria.³ Others have considered proposals to eliminate tenure.⁴ These efforts reflect growing skepticism about whether traditional tenure protections continue to serve students, institutions, and the public interest, or whether they instead limit accountability and flexibility at public colleges and universities.

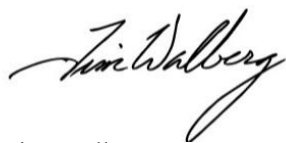
Taxpayers provide billions of dollars in financial aid each year to postsecondary students and have a vested interest in student success. Given this substantial investment, Congress has an ongoing interest in understanding whether tenure systems promote institutional efficiency, educational quality, and student success. The Committee would like to better understand the landscape of faculty tenure across higher education, changes in tenure over time, and the impact of several states' efforts to reform tenure.

The Committee requests GAO's assistance in answering the following questions:

1. How has the number of tenured and various types of non-tenured instructional staff changed over time across colleges and universities?
2. What has been the impact of tenure reforms in selected states or at selected colleges and universities, such as on faculty courseloads, reliance on part-time adjuncts, faculty compensation, and student success?

Should you have any questions, please contact Kent Talbert of the Committee staff at kent.talbert@mail.house.gov or 202-225-4527. The Committee looks forward to working with you on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Tim Walberg
Chairman
Committee on Education and Workforce

² Government Accountability Office, *Contingent Workforce: Size, Characteristics, Compensation, and Work Experiences of Adjunct and Other Non-Tenure-Track Faculty*, GAO-18-49 (Washington, D.C.: October 2017).

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2025/06/18/tenure-college-faculty-republican-challenges/>.

⁴ *Id.*