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LETTERS

Academia has an obligation to build tenure track for faculty of color

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Outside the Baker Library on Dartmouth Green in April. A group of alumni and current students denounced the college recently after it denied tenure to Patricia Lopez, an assistant professor of geography. CHARLES KRUPA/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Once again, a woman of color beloved by her students has been denied tenure at a prestigious university, and once again the objection to the denial seems mainly to center on her strong teaching record and caring relationships with students ([“Rejected bid for tenure at Dartmouth causes rift,”](#) Metro, May 23).

At schools like Dartmouth (and the one where I was a tenured professor for more than 30 years, serving on the faculty tenure committee and as department chair, where I shepherded through more than one tenure case), teaching is and should be an important part of the evaluation for tenure. But to be granted the lifetime guarantee that a tenured position offers, it's not enough to pass on through teaching (however brilliantly) knowledge created by others. Tenured university professors must be making their own contributions to knowledge through their own scholarship. (And yes, scholarship by faculty of color frequently offers new ways of thinking, for which new and evolving standards of evaluation may need to apply.)

The professor denied tenure at Dartmouth might well have a scholarly record deserving of tenure — I have no information other than the Globe article — but the focus of appeals should be on what schools do to make it possible for faculty of color to achieve that scholarly record. Demands on faculty of color are often far greater than on white professors like me, and they include regularly being asked to appear in public relations materials and speak at campus events and being called upon to provide personal counseling to large numbers of students, especially those of color. Universities have an obligation to provide supports, such as paid leave for time to do scholarly work, paid assistants, and funding to support the costs of good scholarship. Such changes offer hope for achieving the academic excellence that higher numbers of tenured faculty of color can provide to universities that have all too few.

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