NjP *Journal of Business Ethics Education 23.*
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Case A: "Is This Fair?" The Professional Situation

Yang Zhang
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, USA

Abstract. Dr. Hsu was a tenure-track assistant professor of human resource management (HRM) at a public American teaching university. From her first day of work, she carefully followed the recommendations of her college tenure-review committee and the guidelines outlined in the university's publicly available policies on early promotion. Over the next three years, she accumulated direct and indirect evidence of her performance and eligibility for early promotion. However, just before she submitted her dossier, Dr. Hsu was notified that the university's Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (EVCAA) had denied her access to the university systems required to submit her dossier officially. Was this fair? Was Dr. Hsu qualified for early promotion?

Keywords: tenure, promotion, performance review, and fairness.

Policies & Dr. Hsu's Progress

"Tenure" is a status granted to a professor and provides a high level of job security and academic freedom. Before receiving tenure, candidates (tenure-track professors) work in their probationary periods. During this time, universities rigorously evaluate them on research, teaching, and service. However, the specific rating criteria vary by university.

Dr. Hsu worked in a large public university system, which had a publicly available faculty manual: "Early promotion should be considered only in unusual cases when the individual has demonstrated excellence in more than one of the areas of evaluation." Granting tenure to foreigners required permanent residency, but granting promotion didn't have this restriction. See Exhibit 1 for the timeline and key components of Dr. Hsu's university promotion and tenure (P&T) review in the regular track and in the early track. At Dr. Hsu's university, candidates could only apply for early tenure after being granted early promotion.

Candidates had to submit their dossiers through the university's electronic systems. This was an essential step in advancing from the college-level review to the university-level review. For both regular-track and early-track candidates, their individual colleges (or college deans) would evaluate the candidates and recommend them for review by the university review board. However, the university's Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (EVCAA) controlled access to the dossier submission systems. Without an access code,

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