

Psychology Professor's tenure denial questioned

BY LATISHA SCOTT
The South End

Students confused about the recent denial of tenure for psychology Assistant Professor John Mullennix have been searching for answers.

"I was distressed to hear the news and I do not understand it," wrote one of Mullennix's former students, Elizabeth Battjes, in an e-mail message to a fellow student. "Future psychology students have suffered a tremendous loss as well as those of us who are already here."

Psychology major Bob Parker, 49, also alerted approximately 15 students and acquaintances of Mullennix about the professor's tenure denial.

"Earlier this year, Dr. Mullennix was given an award for excellence in teaching," Parker said. "His former students usually evaluate his classes above average and he is often recommended to fellow students as a superior teacher."

Mullennix was one of three assistant psychology professors applying for tenure. His two co-workers, Rita Casey and Sebastiano Fisicaro, were both granted tenure. According to *Grading the Profs: Student Evaluation of Teaching*, which is based on a 1.0 to 7.0 scale,

The South End • Thursday, August 1, 1996

Tenure Professor refused tenure

From page 1

Fisicaro received an overall score of 6.2. Mullennix and Casey were tied at an overall score of 6.4.

However, John Oliver, who works in the Wayne State University office of Academic Affairs under Tilden Edelstein, said tenure is not decided by teaching alone. Research and other activities performed in the University are also factors. According to Oliver, in order to receive tenure, a professor must receive approval from his or her department, the college and, finally, the University.

Mullennix, who currently teaches at the University of Pittsburgh in Johnstown, Pa., said he received approval from his department and college. At the University level, however, his tenure was denied by a committee headed by Tilden Edelstein, vice president for Academic Affairs.

According to a letter Mullennix received from Edel-

stein, he was denied tenure because his research program was not independent and his publication in journals was sporadic. However, Mullennix said he does not believe this was a fair measure of his abilities.

"I was shocked and, truthfully, bitter," he said. "I really feel I put out sweat and blood for the University not put on paper."

Parker, who has written letters questioning Mullennix's tenure denial to Edelstein, psychology Chair Donald Coscina, and dean of the College of Science John Petersen, said there isn't much difference between Mullennix's research efforts and those of other professors who were tenured.

"It is difficult to spot any major differences between Mullennix's publication history and those of the other fine professors who were up for, and were given, tenure," he said.

The Wayne State University Faculty Handbook states that employees working in tenure-track positions who are denied tenure after seven years can no longer continue on in their current capacity. Mullennix has taught at the University for seven years and was up for tenure.