

AFT-Wisconsin Higher Education Council Statement on Tenure and Indefinite Status

When the Wisconsin state legislature and Governor Walker passed and signed into law Act 55, the law gave all effective governance authority to the University Wisconsin Board of Regents and individual campus Chancellors, at the expense of any truly shared governance for faculty, academic staff, and students. We recognize this even as we stand opposed to such changes.

But while state law has radically curtailed shared governance, it has not removed the ability, and the responsibility, of Regents and Chancellors alike to uphold standards of tenure and academic freedom *in practice*, as well as policy, while acknowledging the new powers granted them under state law. Such standards guarantee the ability of faculty and academic staff to engage in excellent, cutting-edge research and to provide instruction to students, citizens, and entrepreneurs in every corner of the state and beyond. With this in mind, we call upon our individual Chancellors and the Regents to affirm and practice the following principles in regard to probationary and tenured faculty, in maximal accordance with both the state standards established by law and administrative rules immediately previous to Act 55, and the national standards summarized in the American Association of University Professors document *Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure*:

1. Tenured and probationary faculty should be terminated only for just cause, with a rigorous procedure of faculty review to uphold that standard.
2. Tenured and probationary faculty should not be laid off due to budgetary changes unless a financial emergency exists, as declared after detailed consultation with appropriate faculty governance bodies. A financial emergency is a severe financial crisis that fundamentally compromises the academic integrity of the institution as a whole and that cannot be alleviated by less drastic means.
3. The faculty as a whole, or an appropriate committee thereof, should primarily determine all program changes for their campus, including any changes that might lead to layoffs. Program decisions should be based essentially upon educational considerations. Educational considerations do not include cyclical or temporary variations in enrollment, but rather must reflect long-range judgments that the educational mission of the institution as a whole will be enhanced by the change.
4. The principles and practices of tenure, and the academic freedom which they enact, should be upheld equally throughout the System, without differentiation between campuses.

Governor Walker has also called for further study regarding whether or not to prohibit probationary and indefinite status appointments for academic staff. Any such changes would increase the employment insecurity of academic staff, and thus further undermine academic freedom and excellence at the University of Wisconsin. Therefore, we also call upon our individual Chancellors and the Regents to:

5. Publicly and privately oppose any and all attempts to abolish or attenuate indefinite status appointments for academic staff.

Finally and most importantly: should any of these principles be violated in practice, we hereby pledge to engage in all appropriate collective action to uphold and defend them, at our individual campuses and in the System as a whole.