



Representing UW-Madison Faculty.
Strengthening Wisconsin.

June 18, 2015

Dear Faculty Colleague,

As you are probably aware, the state budget process has stalled while the Joint Finance Committee works through remaining details on the state transportation budget and Milwaukee Bucks arena deal. On a positive note, the delay has extended the window of opportunity for PROFS to seek the removal of non-fiscal policy language that would aggressively redefine shared governance and tenure.

The Faculty Senate held an emergency meeting last week and overwhelmingly passed a [resolution](#) that calls on the JFC to remove all non-fiscal language from Omnibus Motion #521 relating to the University of Wisconsin System. The resolution also calls on the Board of Regents, UW System President Ray Cross, and Chancellor Rebecca Blank to use all means at their disposal to lobby for the removal of the non-fiscal language.

Chancellor Blank offered [this statement](#) of support of tenure and shared governance before the senate meeting:

"I will re-state emphatically what I have said earlier: I will not accept a tenure policy that is inconsistent with our peers, or that violates accepted standards. I pledge to make no changes in existing practice at UW-Madison until such a policy is clearly established."

Despite outspoken opposition by the chancellor and faculty to language in the JFC motion affecting tenure and shared governance, some legislative leaders have reaffirmed their support of those changes. Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald (R-Juneau) [recently said](#) changes to tenure had been discussed for several years and there has been very little pushback from other legislators. He said he does not foresee a reversal in the proposal "at all."

"The idea that somebody should be completely protected from any type of criticism when they make public comments, or even the way they handle themselves on campus, is just not sitting well with many of us. So it's not only in Wisconsin, I think it's a national discussion that's been going on about tenure."

State Senator Sheila Harsdorf (R-River Falls), chair of the Higher Education Committee and member of the Joint Finance Committee, also [reaffirmed](#) her support of the motion:

"I recognize tenure as an important tool to keep and attract the best and brightest faculty on our University campuses. Currently, Wisconsin is unique in having tenure policy in state statute. The changes recently approved by the Joint Committee on Finance seek to bring Wisconsin in line with other states and institutions by enabling the Board of Regents the ability to establish tenure policies that are most appropriate for the University of Wisconsin System."

"The Board of Regents has indicated its intent to adopt tenure policies that will align the UW System with our peer institutions. I applaud the Board's efforts and believe that the policies they develop will provide certainty for faculty."



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Support for faculty from various quarters has been swift and strong. Last weekend the American Association for University Professors led by president Rudy Fichtenbaum offered a [resolution](#) opposed to the changes:

"These changes in tenure and due process and the \$250 million proposed cut to the UW System amount to a direct attack on higher education as a public good."

The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* offered a strong [editorial](#) opposed to the changes and said that calling tenure a "job for life" as Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Burlington) has said many times, is a "willful misreading of the whole idea of academic tenure."

"But Walker and his Republican allies in the Legislature have gone too far; they are putting academic freedom at risk with language inserted into the proposed budget bill that creates, effectively, tenure-lite."

PROFS will continue to lobby to remove non-fiscal language from the budget even if OM #521 is not changed by the JFC. The budget bill must be passed by both houses of the legislature before heading to the governor for his signature.

In the meantime, updates on the budget situation, along with links to relevant news stories and opinion pieces (no endorsement implied!), will continue to be disseminated via the [PROFS website](#), [Twitter feed](#), and [Facebook page](#).

Last but not least, I would like to thank those individuals who responded to our recent appeal to help us carry our stories to the Capitol. Some of you have already met with key legislators or their staffers, and additional meetings will be arranged as long as there remains some hope of moderating some of the more objectionable provisions in the omnibus motion.

Looking beyond the current budget process, PROFS is committing to a sustained campaign, between budgets, to engage and help educate lawmakers and the general public about the value of public higher education in Wisconsin. Our hope is that this will improve our position in future budget deliberations. If you can spare even a little time to be part of this effort, please let us know! And of course your financial support in the form of PROFS [membership](#) is always welcome.

Regards,

Grant Petty