

Dear Chair Schauer and members of the Government and Veterans Affairs committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1437. We are writing on behalf of Bismarck State College (BSC) Faculty Senate to express our strong opposition to this bill and to highlight its potential consequences for the North Dakota University System, particularly BSC's polytechnic mission and our ability to attract and retain highly qualified faculty.

Collaborative Efforts to Strengthen Faculty Evaluation Policies

Since February 2024, BSC administration and Faculty Senate Leadership have worked extensively to create policies regarding the evaluation of probationary and tenured faculty, addressing concerns raised by the legislature.

The draft policies outline detailed expectations and review processes, ensuring accountability and alignment with institutional goals. These changes reflect a commitment to fostering excellence among our faculty while maintaining the integrity of tenure.

The Importance of Tenure in Two-Year Colleges

For all colleges, including two-year institutions, the value of tenure cannot be overstated:

1. **Attracting and Retaining Talent:** North Dakota's higher education institutions must remain competitive in attracting highly qualified educators and industry leaders. Without tenure, BSC would struggle to compete with lucrative opportunities in both academia and private industry, particularly in emerging fields like AI, cybersecurity, automation, and robotics.
2. **Enhancing Institutional Reputation:** The presence of tenured faculty enhances the credibility and prestige of an institution, signaling a commitment to long-term academic excellence. Tenured faculty are a crucial part of building and maintaining institutional stability. Vested in their institutions, these faculty members serve on committees, work with advisory boards, and use current research in their classrooms: all things that drive innovation and contribute to student success.
3. **Supporting Academic Freedom:** Tenure protects faculty members' ability to innovate in their teaching and research without fear of political or administrative repercussions. This freedom is essential for fostering critical thinking and preparing students to address complex challenges in their industries.

The Broader Impact on North Dakota's Economic Growth

North Dakota is currently experiencing an economic boom, with opportunities to expand in industries that will define the future. BSC is uniquely positioned to support this growth by preparing the next generation of skilled workers. However, HB 1437 would create a significant barrier to achieving this goal. Without the ability to offer tenure, BSC loses its competitive edge, both in attracting talent and in delivering innovative, industry-relevant education.

A Call for Legislative Support

We understand and respect the legislature's interest in ensuring accountability within the North Dakota University System. BSC has demonstrated its commitment to addressing these concerns through the collaborative development of new, rigorous evaluation policies for faculty. These efforts are a testament to our shared goal of fostering excellence in education.

However, HB 1437 would hinder these efforts and weaken the very foundation of what makes institutions like BSC successful. We ask the committee to recognize the vital role of tenure in supporting academic freedom, attracting top talent, and advancing North Dakota's economic growth. By opposing HB 1437, you can ensure that BSC and other institutions in the state continue to thrive and fulfill their missions. We urge the committee to consider a **do not pass** recommendation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Bismarck State College Faculty Senate Executive Committee

Kevin Cavanagh - President

Danica Allard – Vice President

Amy Helgeson – Secretary