

To whom it may concern,

I support tenure and am against Bill HB1437

The 2-year schools teach the same undergraduate classes (Common Course Numbering) as the 4-year schools. So, there is no difference in the need for Academic Freedom. If an administrator does not agree with the scientifically supported information for a topic such as climate change or evolution, without academic freedom, the instructor could be fired. It is imperative that the students of North Dakota have access to the most up to date information to be well informed citizens. Information supported by scientific research and the scientific community. Not the opinion of an administrator, especially one supporting pseudoscience.

I teach Biology, Microbiology, Genetics, Biotechnology and Astronomy and have taught Agriculture classes too. Academic freedom to teach the scientifically supported topics such as Climate Change and Evolution is a critical need. I teach what is accepted by most scientists, but not necessarily understood by the general public. So yes, academic freedom to teach discipline accepted ideas may be critical to more academic areas of study than might be obvious. I can see the fields of psychology, biology, geology, astronomy, nutrition, anatomy and physiology could cover controversial topics in the mind of the general public. The medical field is slow to change, and recent research in the fields of nutrition and anatomy and physiology contradict some long-held beliefs of the mainstream medical field. (Part of the reason may be the financial influence of pharmaceutical companies on the medical field.) I point these out in my biology classes. The microbiology for nursing and other students majoring in biology covers topics that can be controversial such as COVID-19. The argument of evolution also impacts the fields of astronomy and geology as creationists believe the age of the earth to be 6000 to 10,000 years old. Mainstream scientific evidence points to the age of the earth to be about 4.6 billion years. Geology contends with flat earthers and psychology contends with scientology. With the recent advent of AI, holding students accountable to do their own work is harder. I can see English classes needing Academic Freedom to enforce their requirements. History and anthropology are always changing and updating with new discoveries. The general public may not understand the new scientific evidence and thus the need for Academic Freedom.

We want the students of North Dakota to be the best informed and to be able to think critically so Academic Freedom is critical for all disciplines

The high percent of tenure at an institution may reflect the age of the faculty and the length of time they have been there. The thought of age discrimination crosses my mind. The older faculty do have a lot to offer. I don't understand the problem with the percent of tenured faculty. If they are not doing their job, then there are ways to remove them. Good faculty can be difficult to replace. Tenure can be a critical recruitment tool.

To attain tenure in the first-place, faculty need to go above and beyond. (I had the first online lab science class in the state of North Dakota.) When Common Course Numbering was initially started in the 1990's, I was the chair for the 2-year schools and the co-chair for the state for the Biology Discipline. I spent countless hours assuring the commonality/transferability of Biology classes for students of the state of North Dakota. I also volunteered to take 18 graduate credits in Space Studies from UND so I could teach Astronomy for the Elementary Ed students.) This is an incentive for new faculty to aspire to higher levels of achievement.

Our tenured faculty have always been evaluated by both students and administrators. WSC has recently developed specific guidelines to address evaluation of tenured faculty.

I see the job security issue and this aspect of tenure differently than you, I think. In past decades the faculty have playing a greater role (shared governance) in the institutions of higher ed. A book you could read on this topic is *The Fall of the Faculty* by Benjamin Ginsberg. The job security of tenure from my perspective is the ability to hold administrators accountable for their actions. The faculty input for institutional governance is important. The book I mentioned may help with this. I don't think the longer contracts would address the real issue. The faculty member would be dismissed, just a year or two later.

Please support and celebrate the value of the faculty in North Dakota. Do not devalue tenure and do not limit our institutions to a particular percentage of tenured faculty. This could lead to the loss and discarding of valuable human resources. Ultimately it will be the students and citizens of North Dakota who are hurt by this short sightedness.

If you would like I can consult with other colleagues to look at other discipline specific controversial topics to address the Academic Freedom issue.

Sincerely,

Susan Zimmerman Professor Biology WSC