

February 10, 2025

The ideas expressed in this testimony are mine as an individual faculty member and President of the Washburn Chapter of AAUP. My comments do not represent Washburn University or Washburn University College of Arts and Sciences.

Esteemed Legislators,

First and foremost, I would like to thank you for your elected service to our beloved state. It is my honor to testify before you today because I, too, share your commitment to service to Kansas. My name is Kim Morse and I am a proud fifth generation Kansan.

It is also my honor to serve as the President of the Washburn University chapter of the American Association of University Professionals. I am here to testify in opposition to HB2348. Section 1(a) of HB2348 states that “tenure shall be discretionary and conditional.” We agree. According to the Faculty Handbook of Washburn University section V(A):

The [University] President may terminate the services of a member of the faculty at any time, for cause. Cause for termination consists of demonstrated incompetence or dishonesty in teaching or research; substantial and manifest neglect of duty; personal conduct which substantially impairs the individual's fulfillment of his/her University responsibilities; engaging in or substantially contributing to actions materially disruptive to the effective operations of the University; substantial falsification of credentials; or violation of other faculty, staff, or student's civil rights.

In other words, existing university governing documentation defines tenure to be “discretionary and conditional.” Given the binding documentation already in place, we understand HB2348 to be unnecessary.

Furthermore, we fear that HB2348 could threaten high-quality higher education in Kansas by undermining the obligations explicit in tenure. Tenure is a privilege that obligates faculty to continuous and assessed excellence in teaching, research, and service. When we earn tenure and maintain the associated obligations, we honor our commitment to educational excellence for Kansas students. Per section Section III, IIA of the Washburn University Faculty Handbook, tenure is central to “the means by which the quality of the faculty is maintained and improved” for the good of Kansas students. Without tenure, we lose that most essential tool that ensures high-quality education for the good of Kansas students. We untether faculty from the obligation to excellence explicit in tenure.

In sum, faculty do not enjoy unlimited rights with tenure. We know tenure to be conditional and discretionary. We know we have obligations when we earn tenure; we know we serve Kansas students when we earn tenure, and we know Kansas institutions attract the best faculty to Kansas to serve Kansas students through the rights and obligations of tenure. Help us serve Kansas by protecting tenure and voting against HB2348.

Sincerely,
Kim Morse, PhD
President, Washburn Chapter of AAUP
Professor of History

