

2/10/2025

To State Legislators,

I am writing in regards to state bill 2348, which effectively removes the employment protections offered by tenure for faculty at state universities. First of all, I would ask that Legislators ask why there was tenure in the first place. I think we can see that the purpose of tenure was always to protect faculty members who published research that offended others. That is, it is a freedom of speech thing for faculty. I think you will find that it protected the free speech by people like Jordan Peterson, a strong advocate for leaving behind “woke” policies.

Furthermore, if you look at the development of fundamental technologies, and fundamental physical ideas that lead to new technologies, I think you will find most of this was done at universities. Quantum mechanics, and understanding of which is necessary for the development of the transistor, the laser, high density data storage, LED’s among other devices was entirely developed by faculty members of various universities. In the US, technologies like NMR ( the principle behind which MRI machines work), many different types of transistors, solid state lasers, etc. were developed at universities. At one time, there were company laboratories that were able to develop fundamentally new technologies, like Bell Labs (where the transistor was first developed) and Hughes research laboratory (where the laser was developed), but the people who did this worked closely with faculty members of major universities, and later became faculty themselves. If you look at, say, the physics papers that are driving new technology forward, you will find that almost entirely all the work is done at various universities. The researchers do not work at the universities because they are making money, but because it is a good environment for research, and by training and teaching students, they learn themselves.

Now, by eliminating the protection of tenure—effectively eliminating tenure in all but name—there is no hope that a really top-notch researcher would ever come to Kansas. Moreover, there will likely be a brain-drain to other states, and this is a drain of talent that also trains other people. Kansas wants to develop economically by developing talented engineers and scientists. These generally only get trained by professors who really know what they are doing. You won’t be able to attract many of these anymore if you allow this bill to pass. The effect may not be immediate, but 10 or 15 years down the line, you’ll notice being left further behind other states. Catching up at that point is another 10 to 15 year process, if it is possible at all given the damage to the state’s reputation as a place to conduct research.

Sincerely,

Eric Deyo (of Hays KS)