

Statement by UIUC AAUP Policy Committee Regarding Recent Attacks on Academic Freedom
and Tenure

April 7, 2017

The Policy Committee of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Chapter of the AAUP is very concerned about recent attacks on university tenure and academic freedom. Several attacks have occurred in neighboring states, including the following two examples.

House Bill No. 266 introduced in the Missouri General Assembly reads "... no public institution of higher education in this state shall award tenure to any person who is hired by such institution for the first time on or after January 1, 2018." For all faculty, including adjunct, part-time, and full time, the bill requires publication of instructors' course schedules, and student instructor ratings. It also requires publication of the estimated cost of each degree offered, including books, on-campus housing, duration of the degree program, the current job market, the number and percentage of graduates employed in the field within one year, and other information.

A bill SF 288 pending before the Iowa State Senate's Education Committee would require that the state's three public universities make new faculty hires based on the candidates' political voter registration. The intent is that Democrats or Republicans on a faculty would not outnumber each other by more than 10 percent. Opponents in the Senate say that such a political litmus test is abhorrent and is a blatant violation of academic freedom. And that even filing a bill like this will make recruiting top faculty more difficult. (And it's also unworkable because faculty hired from some other states e.g., Illinois, do not register to vote in a specified political party.)

This is not new and has happened periodically in the past. In 1996 then Vice-President for Academic Affairs (later UIC Chancellor) Sylvia Manning, amid concerns expressed in the Illinois Legislature, pro-actively appointed a 15-member University-wide committee ("Seminar on Tenure") to examine the entire issue of academic tenure, both in broad general theory and in terms of actual academic practice at the U of I.

This group met numerous times, both in Urbana and in Chicago, and issued a 63-page [report](#) containing several recommendations, some of which have been implemented. One strong recommendation was that the U of I should retain the present system of academic tenure as the best means of guaranteeing both academic freedom and educational quality. And the question was posed: "Would faculty members living in perpetual fear that their very livelihood was at stake be more effective teachers, more thoughtful scholars, or more dedicated citizens of the institution in the absence of a tenure system? Our answer is no, and the state of Illinois itself, we believe, would be poorly served if that situation were to obtain at the University of Illinois or in any of the state's universities."

The UIUC AAUP Policy Committee strongly concurs in the Seminar on Tenure recommendation that our current system of academic tenure be retained and that attempts to weaken or eliminate it or any of the provisions of academic freedom be strongly opposed.