

Statement against the Temporary Policy for Covid Related Reductions in Force.

Dear Regents,

We write in strong opposition to the recently approved policy that, among other things, allows for universities to close departments or fire staff and faculty (including tenured faculty) without having to declare financial exigency. Although this policy is wrapped around a need for reductions due to Covid-19 the financial reality of our universities has been around for many years, and shared governance should still be the priority.

The process of financial exigency is critical to making decisions in times of financial crisis because it relies on the process of shared governance. Shared governance is the tool that engages faculty, staff, administration, governing boards, and students in developing policies that allow for institutions to make critical academic, policy, and financial decisions. Shared governance implies that all parties, faculty, staff, administration, governing boards, and students, act transparently and accept collective responsibility and ownership in the creation and consequences of all decisions. This new policy eradicates shared governance processes and collective ownership.

Tenure is the foundation for shared governance in a university setting and it is a practice that allows faculty the freedom to teach, research, and engage in the university without fear of retaliatory termination. Tenure is more than job security. It allows faculty to do the research, scholarship, and creative activity that helps move society forward. It fosters the development and practice of teaching pedagogies that challenge students and prepares them for the world. Tenured faculty are also at the financial heart of a university. They bring research funding that is essential to universities' financial stability. It is the faculty and staff who recruit and retain students, and bring to universities the tuition income fundamental to their bottom lines.

This policy damages the core of the university - the education, research, and new knowledge provided to students, the community, the state of Kansas, and the world. It undermines KBOR institutions' abilities to solve the world's big problems. We applaud the university CEOs who have publicly stated their intention to not use this policy. We have deep concerns that any regent university that uses this policy will do irreparable damage to the function and reputation of all of our KBOR institutions.

This policy creates an environment of fear for faculty and staff, which is antithetical to sustaining a healthy learning environment necessary to recruit students, create solutions for global issues, and offset financial losses incurred by state funding cuts. We ask that you consider revoking this policy and preventing the long-term damage that it will bring to our state university systems.

Additionally, we are greatly disappointed that the Board did not seem to follow board policy that states "As a general rule, individuals and groups who are directly affected by a proposal, or have a vested interest in a proposal, shall be given an opportunity to review and provide advice about the proposal prior to its final adoption." We feel a reasonable opportunity to review and provide advice was not given prior to the adoption of this proposal.

Sincerely,