

Testimony on Substitute House Bill 66

Ohio House of Representatives Committee Higher Education and Workforce
Development
Representative Mike Duffey, Chair

Dr. Dan E. Krane,
Chair, Ohio Faculty Council

Chair Duffey, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Sweeney, and Representatives Clyde, Edwards, Gavarone, Goodman, Ingram, Perales, Riedel, Romanchuk, Smith, and Zeltwanger, my name is Dan Krane and I am a professor of Biological Sciences (with an affiliate appointment in Computer Science) at Wright State University. I also have the honor of serving as the Chair of the Ohio Faculty Council which represents the faculty at all of the four-year public universities in the State of Ohio. Thank you for allowing me to appear before you today to give a faculty perspective on substitute House Bill 66.

I would like to start by reminding your committee that first and foremost the Ohio Faculty Council is committed to supporting and bringing attention to the critical role that Ohio's institutions of higher education play in revitalizing the economy of the State and the nation by attracting and training an educated workforce. The Ohio Faculty Council agrees that students are entitled to receive full value for their investment in both their university and their education and that students derive the greatest benefits from exposure to experienced and accomplished tenured and tenure-track faculty.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to give a faculty perspective on tenure and the many roles that tenured faculty play in addition to teaching undergraduate students.

In 2016 the OFC launched a Technology Commercialization Award that is presented annually to recognize a faculty member in the state university system in Ohio for exceptional research discoveries and the role they have played in supporting the translation of those discoveries into marketable products and/or services. We celebrate the successes of faculty like those of the 2016-17 winner, Dr. Jason Heikenfeld, an electrical engineering professor from the University of Cincinnati. Dr. Heikenfeld has developed a sweat bio-sensing technology that has wide market applicability in many aspects of medicine, industry and sport. He has been able to leverage the technology and 26 associated patents into the creation of a start-up company, Eccrine Systems, that has already grown to several dozen employees and has been recognized by Bloomberg as one of the fifty best startups in the country. His work is an outstanding example of how faculty across the state are working to

create a collaborative and resourceful statewide entrepreneurial ecosystem that allows high-potential companies to grow and prosper.

Tenure assures quality

- Tenure demands excellence. Tenure is only granted to faculty who have shown evidence of excellent teaching and, where appropriate, research and commercialization. Tenure applicants must impress their peers, administrators, and prominent external reviewers and demonstrate that they will continue to excel even after they have obtained tenure.
- Tenure requires consistency. Before receiving tenure, a faculty member spends years in a probationary period—usually seven at four-year institutions. During this time, the faculty member’s contributions to the mission of the institution are regularly and rigorously assessed. Every detail of his or her teaching, research, and service to the school, as well as any commercialization activities, are reviewed every year during this time.
- Tenure protects Ohio’s best faculty. Despite misconceptions, faculty can be fired for incompetence or misconduct or if an institution discontinues their program or is in a financial emergency. The dismissal process typically requires several steps to make sure that due process is observed, but it is not more difficult than dismissing Ohio’s classified state employees. Tenure doesn’t grant privileges to poorly performing faculty: it protects and rewards excellent faculty.

Tenure saves taxpayer money

- Tenure offsets higher wages faculty might earn. The relative job security that comes with tenure offsets the higher wages that talented and highly-educated individuals could reasonably expect in the private sector. People are attracted to tenured positions because of the educational mission of higher education, but also because even a lower-paying tenured post provides families with greater stability. Without tenure, faculty conducting research in biomedical sciences like Professor Heikenfeld, for example, would be far less likely to bring their expertise to universities. Tenure allows students access to the cutting edge of their academic discipline with lower costs in tuition and state funding.
- Tenure retains excellent faculty. Weakening tenure has resulted in the loss of quality, high-profile faculty to other states and also higher costs for retaining faculty. For instance, when Wisconsin considered weakening tenure in 2015-16, the University of Wisconsin—Madison committed \$23.6 million to counter offers highly productive faculty received from other institutions. Ultimately, the university still lost 29 faculty members.

Tenure protects Ohio’s future

- Tenure builds foundations for future research. Economic development and quality of life cannot improve unless society's best minds work on the fundamental problems in their fields. Tenure creates opportunities for faculty to conduct research that may not produce results in the short term, but typically generate results benefitting future research. Advancements in STEM and other fields have their roots in foundational research conducted in universities, even if that basic research itself does not have immediate commercial application.

It is important to bear in mind that Ohio derives great benefit from its wide variety of teaching, research and service contributions by faculty and the wide range of missions at each of our public institutions of higher education. We expect each individual faculty member and each of the institutions of which they are a part to be deeply committed to revitalizing the economy of the State and the nation by attracting and training an educated workforce. Given the very wide ranges of student abilities and interests, faculty skills, and institutional missions, it seems unlikely that criteria could be identified that would result in a reliable, objective ranking "with respect to contribution to the undergraduate mission" (Section 1. C. 1. c.).

I also want to echo the opinion of OH-AAUP's Steve Mockabee when he suggested in his testimony before you on October 11 that the study proposed by HB 66 might more appropriately focused on the best ratio of tenure-track to part-time faculty at the State's public institutions of higher education than the specific role of tenured faculty in teaching undergraduate students.

The Ohio Faculty Council appreciates that the committee that would be created by substitute House Bill 66 would explicitly include faculty representatives (Section 1. A. 3 and 4). Given that the Ohio Faculty Council represents the faculty at all of Ohio's public four-year institutions of higher education we also very much appreciate that the membership of the committee has been amended to include at least one representative from the Ohio Faculty Council. Thank you for that consideration.

Chairman Duffey and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share with you a university faculty perspective on substitute HB 66. I would welcome any questions you might have for me or the Ohio Faculty Council.