Resolution for May 4 Faculty Senate meeting

Resolution of No Confidence in System President Ray Cross and the Wisconsin Board of Regents by the Faculty Senate of UW River Falls

WHEREAS the Faculty Senate of UW-River Falls having read the following resolution put forward to the UW-Madison Faculty Senate are in agreement with the following resolution and the events and actions mentioned below dutifully endorse this resolution and also have no confidence in UW System President Ray Cross and the Wisconsin Board of Regents

WHEREAS in March 2015 UW System President Ray Cross pledged to resign if he failed to protect tenure, shared governance, and academic freedom for all University of Wisconsin universities and colleges;

WHEREAS UW System President Ray Cross, after giving assurances to the contrary, declared in October 2015 that the regents would only consider campus-specific tenure policies after passing a System-wide policy;

WHEREAS on November 2, 2015, the UW-Madison Faculty Senate adopted new policies relating to faculty layoff and termination that largely complied with Act 55;

WHEREAS the UW System Tenure Policy Task Force issued a report that none of its members were ever asked to endorse, which failed to outline many concerns expressed by non-regent members of the committee, and which was released too late for adequate consideration;

WHEREAS in March 2016 the Board of Regents adopted new UW System tenure policies based on the report of the UW System Tenure Policy Task Force without adopting any of the modifications requested by UW System faculty, thereby further weakening professional standards of academic due process beyond what Act 55 requires;

WHEREAS on April 4, 2016, the UW-Madison Faculty Senate resolved that UW-Madison policies relating to faculty layoff and termination should be accepted by the Board of Regents of the UW System without material alteration, or if alterations were deemed necessary, the Board should return the UW-Madison policies back to the Faculty Senate for modification;

WHEREAS on April 6, 2016, UW System general counsel Tomas L. Stafford made material and substantial changes to the UW-Madison policies to be considered by the Board of Regents on April 7-8, thus violating shared governance and failing to provide Chancellor Rebecca Blank, Provost Sarah Mangelsdorf, and the University Committee time to review and consider the additional changes;

WHEREAS Chancellor Rebecca Blank, Provost Sarah Mangelsdorf, and University Committee members Dorothy Farrar-Edwards and Amy Wendt were asked by the Board of Regents education committee for their opinion of these changes without time for consideration or counsel;

WHEREAS, owing to the changes to UW-Madison policies that UW System general counsel made and the Board of Regents adopted, administration now need only “consider” (not “pursue”)
alternatives to layoff, the chancellor no longer needs the approval of faculty governance bodies (only to consult with them) to discontinue academic programs leading to layoff, a faculty hearing committee is no longer authorized to question whether program discontinuation is based on primarily educational reasons, Faculty Policies & Procedures 5.02 is not applicable to program discontinuance based on educational considerations that may result in faculty layoff under Faculty Policies & Procedures 10, program changes may now be made on the basis of non-educational criteria such as “comparative cost-effectiveness” and budgetary prioritization, severance pay is now at the chancellor’s discretion and no longer guaranteed, and funds for retraining displaced faculty are no longer guaranteed;

WHEREAS the UW-Madison policies relating to faculty layoff and termination, as modified by UW System general counsel and adopted by the Board of Regents, are not consistent with the American Association of University Professors Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure;

WHEREAS the process by which these changes were made—by UW System general counsel and the Board of Regents instead of returning the policies to the UW-Madison Faculty Senate for modification—violates shared governance as it has historically been practiced;

WHEREAS the UW-Madison Faculty Senate previously resolved to “engage in all appropriate collective action” to “uphold and defend” the principles regarding tenure that the Faculty Senate endorsed on November 2, 2015 (Faculty Document 2586);

WHEREAS the actions of the Board of Regents and UW System President have damaged the reputation of UW-Madison as a great state university that encourages continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found;

WHEREAS program changes based on non-educational considerations, the erosion of academic due process, and the circumventing of shared governance jeopardize the quality of students’ education;

It is hereby RESOLVED that the UW-River Falls Faculty Senate condemns the weakening of tenure and shared governance within the UW System;

It is further RESOLVED that the UW-River Falls Faculty Senate has no confidence in UW System President Ray Cross or the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents to protect tenure and shared governance.