November 5, 2015

To: Dean Van Galen, Chancellor
    116 North Hall
    University of Wisconsin-River Falls

From: James Graham, Chair
      Faculty Senate
      University of Wisconsin-River Falls

Re: UWRF Faculty Senate Resolution 2015-16/6

The following resolution was approved 19/0/2 by the Faculty Senate on November 4, 2015:

Faculty Senate Resolution

Tenure Policy

Introduction:

The American Federation of Teachers-Wisconsin Higher Education Council has drafted a statement on tenure and indefinite status that calls on the UW System Chancellors and Regents to abide by the following principles in policies on tenure and indefinite status:

1. Tenured and probationary faculty should be terminated only for just cause, with a rigorous procedure of faculty review to uphold that standard.

2. Tenured and probationary faculty should not be laid off due to budgetary changes unless a financial emergency exists, as declared after detailed consultation with appropriate faculty governance bodies. A financial emergency is a severe financial crisis that fundamentally compromises the academic integrity of the institution as a whole and that cannot be alleviated by less drastic means.

3. The faculty as a whole, or an appropriate committee thereof, should primarily determine all program changes for their campus, including any changes that might lead to layoffs. Program decisions should be based essentially upon educational considerations. Educational considerations do not include cyclical or temporary variations in enrollment, but rather must
reflect long-range judgments that the educational mission of the institution as a whole will be enhanced by the change.

4. The principles and practices of tenure, and the academic freedom which they enact, should be upheld equally throughout the System, without differentiation between campuses.

5. The individual Chancellors and Regents are also called upon to publicly and privately oppose any and all attempts to abolish or attenuate indefinite status appointments for academic staff.

The Statement concludes: “Finally and most importantly: should any of these principles be violated in practice, we hereby pledge to engage in all appropriate collective action to uphold and defend them, at our individual campuses and in the System as a whole.

Whereas, The American Federation of Teachers – Wisconsin is currently collecting signatures in support of this statement; and

Whereas, the Act 55 passed by the State Legislature and signed into law by Governor Walker last summer gave all effective governance authority to the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents and individual campus Chancellors, at the expense of shared governance; and

Whereas, the Board of Regents Tenure Task Force is currently developing the new tenure policy primarily under influence of politicians who suggest, “maybe it’s time for faculty and staff to think about teaching more classes and doing more work,” and have no understanding of academic work; and

Whereas, eroding tenure and indefinite status will further undermine morale, discourage qualified candidates from applying for open positions, and increase the difficulty of retaining good people; and

Whereas, job security allows faculty and academic staff to focus on their work, rather than always looking for jobs and filling out job applications; and

Whereas, the tenure standards expressed in the statement are recommendations by the American Association for University Professors; and

Whereas, policies for faculty dismissal for cause and economic exigency already exist and are sufficient; and

Whereas, tenure policies protect academic freedom and stop politicians from trying to limit faculty from studying and teaching about such issues as climate change, resource depletion and pollution, stem cells, or causes of income inequality; and

Whereas, all tenured faculty have been granted a contractual relationship by the Board of Regents that followed a lengthy process of review and retention over a period of years; and

Whereas, probationary faculty accepted positions based on a contractual agreement that included tenure as previously constituted in state law and who are also participating in a lengthy process of review and retention decisions over a period of years; and
Whereas, the indefinite status of academic staff (instructional or otherwise) has also been earned after a lengthy process over a period of years; and

Whereas, any change of tenure and indefinite status inconsistent with the recommendations of the American Association of University Professors and published in the American Federation of Teachers’ statement constitutes a breach of contract and broken promise to tenured, probationary and indefinite status personnel;

Therefore, be it resolved, the Faculty Senate of the University of Wisconsin – River Falls, agrees with the AFT-Wisconsin Higher Education Council Statement on Tenure and Indefinite Status and we further, call upon our Chancellor and Provost to publically and privately endorse these principles.