



Dr. Douglas A. Girod, Chancellor
Office of the Chancellor
University of Kansas
Strong Hall
1450 Jayhawk Blvd., Room 230
Lawrence, KS 66045

January 29, 2021

Dear Chancellor Girod,

On behalf of the Organization of American Historians, we write to express our deep concern over the recent decision by the Kansas Board of Regents to allow public higher education institutions in the state to terminate or suspend employees—including tenured faculty—without formally declaring a financial emergency. The Board of Regents policy upends established procedures of tenure, shared governance, due process and transparency, and runs counter to [standards of academic freedom](#) and [standards of shared governance](#) that are espoused by the OAH and applicable to instructors in higher education regardless of rank or employment status. While recognizing the significant financial strains and operational challenges currently facing institutions like the University of Kansas, we urge you to join with the other leaders of campuses in the state university system in rejecting this Board of Regents policy.

The American Association of University Professors 1940 Statement on Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure states that, “Termination of a continuous appointment because of financial exigency should be demonstrably bona fide,” and pursued with faculty input. Exercising unilateral administrative action on faculty dismissals broadly threatens the principles of academic freedom—ensuring the liberty to conduct research and instruct students without fear or favor—that the tenure system is meant to protect. Faculty input through a robust system of shared governance is a core component of academic freedom, and a bulwark against the long-term diminishment of teaching capacity and competencies that are a likely outcome of short-term cost-cutting measures.

As the largest professional organization in the country representing historians of U.S. history, the Organization of American Historians is dedicated to promoting excellence in the scholarship, teaching, and presentation of American history. As such, the OAH remains committed to advocating and developing best practices for academic freedom and shared governance. We thus stand together with other professional and learned societies in urging you to respect the long-standing standards of the academic profession around faculty retention, academic freedom, and shared governance.

Sincerely,

George J. Sánchez
President

Beth English
Executive Director