



WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

July 6, 2015

Professor Jon Butler
President, Organization of American Historians
112 N. Bryan Avenue
Bloomington, IN 47408-4141

Dear Jon:

Thank you for your letter of June 22. I am grateful for the OAH's support and include a letter I've shared with your fellow scholarly associations. Please share with your membership.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Blank". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 'l'.

Rebecca Blank
Chancellor

Enclosure

Office of the Chancellor

Bascom Hall University of Wisconsin-Madison 500 Lincoln Drive, Madison, Wisconsin 53706
608-262-9946 Fax: 608-262-8333 TTY 608-263-2473



June 15, 2015

Sent Via Email: aha@historians.org

Dear Distinguished Scholars:

Thank you for your letter. I appreciate your respect and support for the foundational traditions of academic freedom and shared governance at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I am also thankful for your unwavering support for our faculty during these challenging times.

I know, as both chancellor of the flagship Madison campus and as an economist who has helped shape national policy, that what is happening here in Wisconsin has implications for public higher education across the country.

Tenure and shared governance are bedrock principles of this institution. That these changes are being recommended abruptly without public discussion or consultation from those who will be most affected adds to our collective concern.

For this reason, I am very pleased that the Board of Regents of the UW System voted unanimously to put into Regent policy the exact language defining and authorizing tenure as had previously existed in state statute. As you know, Wisconsin was unusual in establishing tenure at its state universities in state statute, and this change makes us more comparable to our peers. Despite misleading reports in the national press, this action by the Board of Regents makes it clear that tenure is very much in place at the University of Wisconsin.

That said, there is ongoing concern about the language proposed for faculty layoff, which includes 'program discontinuance, curtailment, modification or redirection.' We are working with legislators to seek changes to this language and, if necessary will also be requesting the governor use his veto pen on the provisions. But we are aware that despite our best efforts, changes may not occur. For that reason, we are preparing to implement strong tenure protections through administrative policy within the Board of Regents.

If the Legislature adopts statutory language as outlined in Section 39 of the Omnibus Motion, it merely authorizes the Board of Regents to determine the conditions under which they may consider the layoff of tenured faculty. I am confident that we will be able to write administrative policy that clearly defines how such authority would be used and how such decisions would be reached; it is important that this policy be consistent with tenure standards at our peer institutions. UW-Madison has been given approval by the Board of Regents president and UW System president to draft our policy language for this campus.

Office of the Chancellor

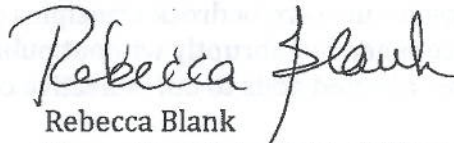
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Our University Committee, the executive board of our Faculty Senate, is appointing a committee of faculty to recommend such a policy. My hope is that the committee can complete its work in time to take a proposed policy to the first fall meeting of the Faculty Senate this coming October. Like all such policies, our final language will require Board of Regents approval, which I am confident will be forthcoming for any language consistent with standard tenure policy. This helps establish the stability and credibility of these policies by enshrining it as Board policy.

I have pledged that there will be no changes to policy and practice here at UW-Madison until we have new approved policies in place that are consistent with widely accepted tenure standards.

Since arriving on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus nearly two years ago, I have been continually impressed with the quality of our faculty and staff and how committed they are to the Wisconsin Idea of service to the university and our state. I share that commitment, just as I am committed to maintaining academic freedom through strong tenure protections.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Blank
Chancellor, University of Wisconsin-Madison