

American colleges and universities are facing severe financial and operational challenges. The temptation to reduce faculty and staff is great. Even faculty members with tenure – a structure that has been long established to protect the freedom to conduct independent inquiry without facing constraints from political or cultural forces – might face layoffs if an institution is in sufficiently dire financial straits.

Precisely because financial pressure can lead to shortsighted decisions with the potential to do irreversible damage to institutions and to current and future generations of students, the preservation of the established process of tenure except in thoroughly documented cases of the deepest financial exigency has been long upheld by US colleges and universities. It is key to the principles of academic freedom and tenure first articulated by the American Association of University Professors in 1915, promulgated in the 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure* by the AAUP and the Association of American Colleges (now the Association of American Colleges and Universities), and now endorsed by hundreds of educational and scholarly organizations in the United States.

ACLS proudly stands by those principles. We urge the Kansas Board of Regents to withdraw its endorsement of the proposed policy to ease the path to suspending, dismissing, or terminating employees, including tenured faculty members, without undertaking the processes of formally declaring a financial emergency.

As a nation, we should remain steadfastly focused on the urgent need to invest in the future of higher education, maintaining our commitment to the promotion of knowledge – what George Washington called “the surest basis of public happiness.”

We call attention to the [statement co-signed in summer 2020](#) by leaders of cultural institutions and scholarly societies across the country attesting to the importance of teaching and research to sustaining a robust economy and a just democracy. We invite additional institutions to sign on now.