

2023–2024 BOARD OF OFFICERS

Association Officers

R. Lanier Anderson, *Chair*
Richard Bett, *Vice Chair*
Matthew O'Brien, *Treasurer*
Amy Ferrer, *Executive Director*

Central Division

Marya Schechtman
President
Robert Pasnau
Vice President
Connie Rosati
Past President
Elizabeth Purcell
Secretary-Treasurer
Rachel Zuckert
Representative

Eastern Division

Lisa Tessman
President
Michele Moody-Adams
Vice President
David Chalmers
Past President
Andrew Cullison
Secretary-Treasurer
Janice Dowell
Representative

Pacific Division

Margaret Gilbert
President
Amy Kind
Vice President
Debra Satz
Past President
Rebecca Copenhaver
Secretary-Treasurer
Clair Morrissey
Representative

Committee Chairs

Lauren Ashwell
Academic Career Opportunities
Julia Jorati
Inclusiveness in the Profession
Martin Pickavé
International Cooperation
Mark van Roojen
Lectures, Publications, & Research
Lynne Tirrell
Status and Future of the Profession
Fritz McDonald
Teaching of Philosophy
Sean Costello
Graduate Student Council

Members-at-Large

Gwen Bradford
Jennifer Morton
Sarah Stroud

February 28, 2024

To the Members of the Nebraska Legislature Education Committee:

We are writing on behalf of the American Philosophical Association, the main professional organization for philosophers in the North America, to urge you to vote against Nebraska LB 1064. This bill would “prohibit the practice of academic tenure at postsecondary educational institutions governed by the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska, the Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State Colleges, or a community college board of governors for any community college area established by section 85-1504 as prescribed.”

By prohibiting the practice of academic tenure, this bill will severely undermine higher education in Nebraska and will prevent the University of Nebraska System from fulfilling its mission, which is “to transform lives and communities in Nebraska and around the world.” We predict that without tenure protections the University of Nebraska system will no longer be able to produce cutting edge research or to give its students a high-quality education. It will be difficult for the University of Nebraska System to continue to claim that it is “the primary intellectual and cultural resource for the state.”

Tenure protections are essential for attracting top researchers to a university. Without tenure, there is little incentive for someone who has invested many years in a PhD to choose to work at a university rather than in industry. With tenure, faculty develop a strong commitment to the success of their university and are less likely to look for work elsewhere. Tenure is therefore a cost-effective way for universities to ensure that they hire and keep the best talent. Moreover, with job security, tenured faculty have the breathing space to take risks and to produce truly innovative new research. With the elimination of tenure, the University of Nebraska System will most certainly lose many of its top researchers to other university systems and fail to attract new professors who are as highly qualified.

In fact, states with strong tenure protections have already begun to see an increase in applications for jobs at their universities from faculty in other states where tenure protections are at risk. This kind of “brain drain” poses a potentially serious problem for Nebraska's economy. We note that the 2023 report of the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education ([PDF](#)) states: “For every 10,000 working-age (22 to 64) Nebraskans with a bachelor’s degree or higher, there was an average annual net out-migration of 113.9 people from 2017 to 2021. Put another way, Nebraska experienced a net loss of over 28,000 people with a bachelor’s degree or higher to other states over the past decade.” Eliminating tenure would only make this situation worse.

2023–2024 BOARD OF OFFICERS

Association Officers

R. Lanier Anderson, *Chair*
Richard Bett, *Vice Chair*
Matthew O'Brien, *Treasurer*
Amy Ferrer, *Executive Director*

Central Division

Marya Schechtman
President
Robert Pasnau
Vice President
Connie Rosati
Past President
Elizabeth Purcell
Secretary-Treasurer
Rachel Zuckert
Representative

Eastern Division

Lisa Tessman
President
Michele Moody-Adams
Vice President
David Chalmers
Past President
Andrew Cullison
Secretary-Treasurer
Janice Dowell
Representative

Pacific Division

Margaret Gilbert
President
Amy Kind
Vice President
Debra Satz
Past President
Rebecca Copenhaver
Secretary-Treasurer
Clair Morrissey
Representative

Committee Chairs

Lauren Ashwell
Academic Career Opportunities
Julia Jorati
Inclusiveness in the Profession
Martin Pickavé
International Cooperation
Mark van Roojen
Lectures, Publications, & Research
Lynne Tirrell
Status and Future of the Profession
Fritz McDonald
Teaching of Philosophy
Sean Costello
Graduate Student Council

Members-at-Large

Gwen Bradford
Jennifer Morton
Sarah Stroud

In addition to the economic costs that result from eliminating tenure, there is also a great social cost. In their 1940 Statement of Principles of Academic Freedom and Tenure, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) wrote that “institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition.”

We note that in 2018, the University of Nebraska Board of Regents reaffirmed Nebraska's endorsement of the AAUP statement and wrote a “Commitment to Free Expression” policy in response to concerns regarding recent national and local events ([PDF](#)). Without tenure, faculty will lose precisely the protections that Nebraska's Board of Regents recently affirmed. As a result, they will be less likely to support diverse research projects. Moreover, in the classroom, faculty will be hesitant to discuss controversial topics or to present a range of viewpoints for discussion. Students whose views cannot be safely challenged will not learn how to be critical thinkers or to recognize the diversity of possible viewpoints and negotiate that diversity rationally.

Tenure is especially important to the thousands of members of the American Philosophical Association. In order to be able to engage in honest and open debate with each other and our students about the ideas that are central to our democracy, we need to have the protections that are guaranteed by tenure.

It should be noted that even when a faculty member receives tenure, their performance is reviewed annually. Faculty who violate professional standards can be dismissed. Tenure therefore does not, as some believe, release faculty from any responsibility to perform their job according to the highest expectations.

It is thus to maintain the high level of quality in research and education, to ensure the free expression of ideas, and, therefore, to ensure that the University of Nebraska system remains “the primary intellectual and cultural resource for the state,” that you must vote against this bill.

Sincerely,

The Board of Officers of the American Philosophical Association



Amy Ferrer
Executive Director



R. Lanier Anderson
Chair of the Board of Office