



The Purdue-Fort Wayne chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) opposes Indiana Senate Bill 202 in its current form. In doing so, it joins AAUP chapters across the state as well as the Purdue Fort Wayne Senate.

SB 202 purports to protect academic freedom and diverse viewpoints, but it will have the opposite effect. The bill increases the power of political appointees on university boards of trustees, greenlights chilling ideological surveillance of faculty and students in the classroom, undermines basic tenure protections for faculty—the long-term job security that allows educators to promote the free flow of ideas in the classroom without fear of retaliation, and defunds programs that make campuses more inclusive of diverse Hoosiers. Less obvious but just as concerning, the bill requires the creation of a huge bureaucracy to carry out the surveillance, policing, and ideological litmus testing it decrees.

The SB 202 gives political leaders and institutions control over “cultural and intellectual diversity” on campuses. In other words, it further politicizes a sector (public higher education) that was created and invested in as a public good, that citizens of our state and in our democratic nation depend on to serve as a free space where political platforms and issues can be scrutinized, challenged, and improved. One of the unintended consequences of SB 202 is creating fear on campuses that will chill free speech. By instituting ideological scrutiny in tenure and post-tenure review of faculty, it will pit faculty against faculty and faculty against students.

As the Indiana University-Bloomington and Purdue University-West Lafayette chapters note in their statement, it took a century to build a public higher education system in Indiana that is the envy of educators across the nation and around the world. This system has brought economic, scientific, cultural, and health benefits to Hoosiers, building a cutting-edge workforce of skilled graduates that has attracted industry, enterprise, and cultural entities to the state. It has considerably more to offer. Maintaining that profile is dependent on our ability to draw top-quality faculty to the state. Indiana’s exceptional success could be quickly and permanently lost if SB 202 eliminates the academic freedom that outstanding faculty consider essential to their careers and that nurtures the intellectual vitality that keeps our top young Hoosier students studying in their home state.

The bills’ promoters have sincere concerns about ideological diversity on campuses. We share their passion for free speech, and we will join them in their efforts to protect public campuses’ ability to promote free and diverse intellectual activity, but not in the way this bill does so. Through its vague language, redundant bureaucracy, and elevation of the well-being of specific student

populations over others, this bill will have far-reaching and devastating unintended consequences on our public universities and colleges. We urge legislators to listen to educators—those of us who are on the ground in these classrooms—about the potential way these policy changes around free speech and diversity could play out on the ground. We call on business leaders, entrepreneurs, health care leaders, cultural institutions, and citizens who benefit every day from our universities' outstanding contributions to communicate their opposition to SB 202.

Passed by AAUP chapter of Purdue Fort Wayne 2/16/24

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