

ASA Urges Kansas Regents to Reconsider Temporary Suspension of Tenure Protections

The American Sociological Association (ASA) supports the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in its [stance on academic freedom and tenure](#). We share the concerns of our fellow sociologists in Kansas about the recent decision by the Kansas Board of Regents to temporarily allow public institutions of higher education to terminate or suspend employees—including tenured faculty—without declaring financial exigency.

We are keenly aware of the serious financial strain faced by institutions of higher education, including those in Kansas, in light of COVID-19, and we understand that extraordinary measures may need to be taken. We are not suggesting that difficult decisions are unnecessary. Rather, we are asking that decisions be made using established processes, including faculty shared governance. These decisions should reflect our shared understanding of the fundamental importance of academic freedom and tenure. This is crucial if we are to ensure that sociologists and others in the academy can continue to work toward understanding topics of vital importance in today's world—from health to poverty to technological innovation. The current policy will not only make those who engage in groundbreaking research and teaching fear arbitrary termination, but it will also make it more difficult for Kansas to attract and retain talented faculty.

Students, faculty, institutions, and our broader society all stand to lose from degrading the principles underlying our long-standing system for preserving academic freedom and tenure. We urge the Kansas Board of Regents to reconsider this policy decision, and we strongly encourage leaders of other institutions of higher education to maintain support for these principles irrespective of the severity of external challenges.