



COSFL Statement on Kentucky Budget Bill

**Submitted by Enid Trucios-Haynes, President of COSFL
on behalf of COSFL Membership**

April 4, 2018

FOR GENERAL DISTRIBUTION

The Kentucky Coalition of Senate & Faculty Leaders [COSFL] strongly opposes the pending Budget Bill reducing funding for higher education and the provision that would permit the summary dismissal of tenured faculty. The Budget Bill permits Boards of Regents and Trustees to eliminate or modify majors or degree programs due to “low utilization, financial feasibility, budgetary constraints, or declaration of financial exigency” and to terminate tenured faculty after a ten-day notice.

Salaries are the largest and most controllable expense for universities. Shortsighted strategies designed to achieve immediate financial savings, such as eliminating programs, their supporting staff, and faculty, including those with tenure, will cripple universities as engines for growth and development in our communities. The devastating harm to our students and state will reverberate for decades to come. The Budget Bill devalues the integrity of universities, and our students, faculty, and public education. It will not yield savings because of our ethical responsibility to “teachout” students to degree attainment. This obligation takes years to accomplish and is an accreditation requirement for many institutions and programs.

Faculty believe that public universities have a collective mission to provide access to education to *all* Kentuckians. Decisions to close or modify academic programs require careful consideration relying on faculty expertise to evaluate current trends, long term projections, and historical data in their academic fields. While “low utilization” or low enrollment may seem like an obvious reason, there are cycles in the popularity of some programs and other programs must be continued to provide the well-rounded education students need and expect in order to compete in a global economy.

Universities have an ethical obligation to our students to avoid what seems like an “easy fix” to eliminate majors and degree programs based on financial feasibility and budgetary constraints. Rather, faculty and university administrators must evaluate these challenges with integrity and transparency, and work collaboratively to avoid the extreme measures proposed.

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution protects freedom of speech and this is the bedrock of American universities. Tenure is the method by which U.S. universities establish teaching and learning environments free from ideological constraints, and advance new ideas regardless of controversy in research, scholarship and creative activity. Faculty, protected by this academic freedom, are the heart of U.S. universities which make us attractive to students from across the globe. Tenure protects the academic freedom to teach unpopular topics and to explore the full range of thought on a topic, ensuring students develop the critical thinking skills most valued by U.S. employers.

COSFL is a statewide forum of senate and faculty leadership representing the eight public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS). It was formed July 13, 1979 as a collective advocacy body of public higher education faculties.
<https://www.wku.edu/cosfl/>