

**Subject:** Academic freedom / tenure statement

Colleagues,

As you no doubt know, the issue of tenure has been in the public conversation in recent days. I want to take this opportunity to clearly state that we at the University of Iowa, and I personally as the president of the UI, fully and passionately support the tenure system and the principles of academic freedom that underlie tenure, both at our institution and in higher education in general. I also encourage all of you as academic leaders to express your support of tenure and academic freedom, and to take this opportunity to help promote a general understanding of their essential value to our students and to our society as our constituents seek to understand better these fundamental principles.

Of course, the core value of academic freedom—and the core purpose of tenure in supporting and safeguarding it—is the free exploration and expression of ideas, which are essential to the discovery of knowledge and truth. In our teaching, our research, and our creative expression, we must be able to investigate and debate information and viewpoints freely whether they are controversial or not. Cutting-edge research is by definition frequently uncomfortable as it explores new areas and pushes often well-established boundaries. Freedom to push these boundaries is critical and should never be impeded. This freedom is indispensable to our mission of contributing to the common good through our research, scholarship, and creative endeavor, and to ensuring our students' freedom to learn.

We all know—and it's important for our constituents to understand—that the academic freedom that comes with tenure involves significant responsibilities and obligations to the truth and to those in our charge as we teach, research, provide care, and create. That is why our tenure review process is so rigorous and why I support it—it attests to our expectation of the highest-quality work and a trajectory of excellence for our faculty. Academic freedom and tenure, as well as the processes in place to ensure and uphold them, are employed in the service of our students and our society, and they are necessary for us to recruit and retain the best faculty so that we may provide the best possible education and the most valuable new knowledge for our students, our state, our nation, and our world. Our excellence—and our purpose—as an institution lie squarely in our academic freedom.

Academic freedom and tenure really are at the core of who we are, what we are about, what we do, and what our mission in service to society is. My job as president is to make sure that this character is understood, supported, and enhanced at our institution and among the public that supports us. Thank you for all you do in pursuit of the understanding of our mission, and I once again encourage you to help us affirm, communicate, and clarify our principles and values to society at large.

Bruce

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