

# INDIANA ACADEME

NEWSLETTER OF THE INDIANA CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

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DAN MURPHY

Our fall meeting will take place November 2nd at the University of Indianapolis. *Save the date!*

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On July 22nd, the Purdue faculty issued this open letter to university President Mitch Daniels, concerning his memos while Governor about using Howard Zinn in teacher education.

Dear President Daniels:

We are writing in response to the recent news reports about emails you wrote while governor of Indiana. In those emails, you criticized the historian Howard Zinn and his work, and you sought to find ways to “get rid of” Zinn’s ideas in Indiana schools. However much we disagree with your past statements, we are more troubled by the fact that you continue to express these views today, especially since you are now speaking as the chief representative of Purdue University with the responsibility to embody the best of academic inquiry and exchange. We appreciate the fact that you have articulated your support for the idea

of academic freedom for tenured professors, but such reassurances do not go far enough. In this letter, we’d like to explain what we find so troubling about your continued insistence that Zinn’s works are “truly execrable” and fraudulent.

First, your assessment of Zinn’s work goes against the judgment of Purdue’s own faculty members, many of whom do include his work in their syllabi or in their published research—not to mention historians across the nation and the world.

Whatever their political stripe, most experts in the field of U.S. history do not take issue with Howard Zinn’s facts, even when they do take issue with his conclusions.

Second, we note that you quote several scholarly critics of Zinn’s works in the statement posted on your Purdue President’s page. It’s important to recognize that Oscar Handlin and Arthur Schlesinger made assumptions about how to study and interpret history that were fundamentally at odds with Zinn’s assumptions. Handlin and Schlesinger and others of the so-called “consensus school of U.S. History” that flourished in the 1950s believed that they could use the sources generated by the people with power to speak for ALL Americans. In the 1960s, Zinn and many others of a rising generation of scholars questioned that original assumption and practice; they sought the voices and perspectives of people who did not have power. They discovered through diligent research that working people, black people, women, Native Americans,

and immigrants expressed views that were at odds with their political, military, and economic leaders.

Such disagreements about scholarship in the fields of humanities and social science are not unusual. In fact, we expect that generational change in the academy and the publication of innovative, exciting work by scholars in good standing should spark this kind of debate. Such discussions make for better history and for better teaching in the wider community!

Third, we also note that you do not quote the many positive reviews of his work—just the kind of biased presentation you accuse Zinn of making in his publications. For every negative comment that you note in your letter, you can find a positive one published in expert venues. As just one example, Eric Foner, the Dewitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University and a former president of the American Historical Association, insisted in a review that appeared in the New York Times Book Review that Zinn’s *A People’s History* ought to be “required reading.” On another occasion Foner said of Zinn, “Over the years I have been struck by how many excellent students of history had their interest in studying the past sparked by reading Howard Zinn. That’s the highest compliment one can offer to a historian.”

Throughout his career Zinn was a dedicated teacher, and until his death he was a well-respected member of the American Historical Association. You can find the

association's memoriam to him, which details his contributions to the field of U.S. history here. To call him "a fraud" and to charge that he "purposely falsified American history," as you do in your statement to the Associated Press released on July 17, and "irredeemably slanted," as you do in the letter published on your Purdue President webpage, reflects a misunderstanding of the nature of academic discussion. Scholarly debates and disagreements create ferment that leavens the study of history. Without vigorous disagreements about the meaning of the American experience, the field would not have moved in such important directions as the study of women's history, African American history, labor history, the history of sexuality, and so on. Moreover, to insist that Zinn's critical perspective is anti-American is to miss his commitment to bringing out our better collective selves—living up to the great ideals of egalitarianism and democratic involvement upon which this republic was founded.

Fourth, we see that your response to the AP reporting draws a line between academic freedom in higher education and K-12 classrooms. And yet, in your January "Open Letter to the People of Purdue," you suggest that the tenure system—the bedrock on which academic freedom in higher education is built—should be reconsidered: "The academies that, through the unique system of tenure, once enshrined freedom of opinion and inquiry now frequently are home to the narrowest sort of closed-mindedness and the worst repression of dissident ideas." When we put this statement next to your excoriation of a respected scholar, we are concerned that in fact ideas that don't find favor at the highest levels of

our institution will be discouraged, and ideas that are celebrated by our top administration rather than by those scholars whose expertise makes them uniquely qualified to make such judgments will be promoted. Whether or not our fears reflect your point of view accurately, when we put your public statements together, we find them to have a chilling effect on untenured scholars and to affect the morale of Purdue's long-time faculty as well.

Finally, we note that in the original emails you were concerned in particular with a summer institute taught at Indiana University for high school teachers, not students. Surely you don't believe that fully accredited teachers need to be protected from Zinn, whatever you may believe about children being "force-fed" information that you find objectionable. We know better of our K-12 colleagues. As do all teachers, they need to read peer-reviewed scholarship from across the spectrum and be challenged with points of view that they may not hold; as we all do, they crave energetic, vibrant discussion with other professionals—just the kind of experience the program at Indiana University was designed to provide. And then, as all teachers should, they bring the insight and energy of such experiences back to their own classrooms.

We trust our colleagues to introduce young people to the facts of history, but also to the much more difficult, much more essential practices of critical thinking. We trust our K-12 colleagues to know how and when to present challenges to received knowledge and how to encourage their students to judge such challenges for themselves. And we trust them to decide how and when to

use controversial scholarship such as Zinn's in their classrooms. This kind of academic freedom is essential to all levels of education, whether within a tenure system or not. And we promise you, this kind of challenging, stimulating approach will result in better, more engaging education of all Indiana students, from our five-year old kindergartners, to members of Purdue's class of 2017, and beyond.

In the end, this issue transcends one author and one book. It concerns the very legitimacy of academic discourse. Scholarship emerges virtually every day that challenges the "conventional wisdom" of prior generations. Do we assess such scholarship critically, or do we censor uncomfortable ideas out of hand? The very viability of academic inquiry and the university's mission is at stake.

Sincerely,  
Professor Susan Curtis, History and American Studies  
Associate Professor Kristina Bross, English and American Studies  
(with supporting signatures from nearly 100 other faculty members at Purdue)

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**The next day (July 23rd), Daniels publicly issued this reply:**

Dear Colleagues:

I appreciate your thoughtful letter received this morning, and your giving me this opportunity to respond.

While more extensive exchanges may ultimately be useful, in the interest of responsiveness let me reply in brief fashion today, as your eloquently expressed concerns can be addressed straightforwardly. The short answer is that we are in strong

general agreement, much more so than your letter suggests.

1. I am not only in agreement but passionately dedicated to the freest realm of inquiry possible at Purdue. My every word and action to date does I believe support my commitment to this outlook; in fact, we have been examining all existing policies to see if our protection of free speech on the campus needs strengthening in any way. I have never made any suggestion that any university cease teaching whatever its faculty pleases, or cease using any book.

2. I support the tenure system as a protection of academic freedom. There is nothing in my open letter to the contrary, and it is a complete misunderstanding, innocent I am sure, of my letter to assert anything different. I have nothing to do with faculty tenure and promotion decisions and would never seek any role. I have already made it plain that, were Howard Zinn a faculty member, I would defend ardently his right to express his views and publish his particular form of scholarship.

3. I understand fully that there are multiple competing theories of historiography, and of the proper understanding of American history in specific. On this campus, all should be free to contend, with the beneficial consequences your letter discusses. I do respectfully disagree that Prof. Zinn's work is as widely accepted or as mainstream as you portray it. By his own avowal, it expresses his biases in what it includes and just as notably in what it omits. That is why it has been criticized all across the ideological spectrum, including by so many who share his strongly negative view of the Amer-

ican experiment. That is also why I believe other, more mainstream textbooks should be used in Hoosier K-12 schools, a position that apparently every school board in the state to date shares and has adopted.

One of many faculty members who wrote me supportive messages pointed out that Prof. Zinn's disdain for the idea of objective truth went far beyond American history. In his essay, "The Uses of Scholarship", Prof. Zinn criticized "disinterested scholarship," "objective study" and the "scientific method" across the disciplines, thus attacking the foundations of Purdue's entire research enterprise.

Just to repeat: My only concern in two e-mail questions years ago was what was being taught to middle school children in their formative lessons in American history. My questions expressed no interest in higher education, only to inquire whether a book I (and legions of other, more expert commentators) consider highly misleading was in use in our elementary or secondary schools, or whether the state should encourage and reward its teaching through professional career advantages it awards as "professional development".

Please note all that did not happen. I never made any public comment about this topic, or about Prof. Zinn, other than a mention of him in a book I wrote in 2011, until attacked in the recent AP story. No change of any kind occurred with regard to the summer class for K-12 teachers; its participants received credit, and would today if the class was still offered.

Most important, no one tried to "censor" anyone's right to express

any opinion they might hold. As many others have observed, this was a careless and inappropriate use of that inflammatory word.

Protecting the educational standards of middle schoolers, to me an important duty of any governor, has nothing to do with protecting against encroachments of academic freedom in higher education, a similarly central duty of any university president. I have and will attend to the latter duty with the same resoluteness I tried to bring to the former.

I appreciate the civil tone of your letter and the sincerity I know underlies it. I accepted Purdue's invitation, not to quarrel with anyone, but to support the work of all its scholars and the freedom necessary for them to pursue that work. As time and other duties permit, I will be glad to listen further and respond as needed.

On July 30th, the state conference leadership issued this statement with regard to the controversy:

Since 1940, the American Association of University Professors has stood by the Statement on Academic Freedom and Tenure declared in that year. We support the statement that "Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties." The declaration also states that "Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject." The writings of Howard Zinn are a perfect example of material relevant for discussion

in teacher education and history classes, even though these writings are also controversial. The Indiana Conference of the American Association of University Professors condemns Mitch Daniels' efforts as Governor of Indiana to censor the use of Howard Zinn's works in a summer institute for high school teachers at Indiana University. Although we commend his more recent reaffirmation, as President of Purdue University, of a commitment to academic freedom in higher education, we see a fundamental contradiction between this claim of support for academic freedom and his continued defense of his earlier efforts to control what teachers and professors assign in their classrooms. We urge Daniels to declare his uncompromising support for the right of faculty to research and teach without interference from university or state administrators.

Daniel Murphy  
Conference President

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The AAUP on all levels has been working to support the terminated faculty at Purdue University Calumet.

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On August 6th, the Purdue administration made this announcement (also available online):

### **A Fall Enrollment and Budget Update**

By THOMAS L. KEON

Over the past week, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost Ralph Rogers and I have been meeting with leaders of the Faculty Senate, other faculty members, deans and department heads to discuss projected fall 2013 enrollment, its impact on our projected budget,

and options that are likely to affect faculty and staff.

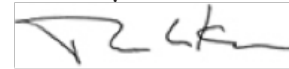
Today, we begin regular updates, which will continue into the fall semester, intended to inform the campus community of ongoing developments. Please continue to watch for updates.

#### **Currently:**

- Credit hour enrollment continues to decline.
- Comparing current fall 2013 credit hour enrollment to that of fall 2012 at this time last year, Purdue Calumet projects a 7 percent decrease.
- The credit hour decline is primarily among General Education courses offered in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (LASS credit hour decline is 12%). We believe the growing popularity of dual credit classes taught in high schools is affecting enrollment in our general education courses.
- Our current budget projections indicate a \$3 million revenue shortfall for Fall 2013. To address this shortfall, the administration anticipates the need to reduce our budget by \$3 million split between instructional and non-instructional areas.
- We are weighing and assessing our options. These options could include possible staff reductions in faculty and staff across campus, as well as reductions of other administrative costs.
- We announced to the campus July 25, 2013 a targeted retirement incentive plan available through Aug. 11, 2013, to better align staffing and student needs.
- The offer is available to tenured faculty, clinical faculty and continuing lecturers on continuing contracts with emphasis in targeted academic areas of:

- College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
- Dept. of Mathematics, Computer Science and Statistics,
- Dept. of Chemistry and Physics;
- Dept. of Construction Science and Organizational Leadership
- Salary and benefit savings from faculty accepting the targeted retirement offer will allow the university to respond more appropriately to changing, current enrollment needs.

Sincerely,



Thomas L. Keon  
Chancellor

Administrators told the PUC campus community in Hammond that it would end its employment contracts with seven faculty members as a result of the \$3 million budget shortfall. Another 12 faculty members accepted early retirement buyouts. The action attracted the scrutiny of those who said the action wasn't merited since Purdue Calumet is still hiring administrative staff and investing in its athletics programs.

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On August 12th the Purdue Chapter of the AAUP issued this statement:

### **Faculty Terminations at Purdue Calumet**

The recent announcement of faculty terminations by the Administration at Purdue Calumet is extremely troubling. These terminations do not appear to have been conducted with the proper faculty input, in contradiction to the concept of shared governance. The timing of this announcement, coming in the week before the academic faculty return to teaching, under scores this apparent lack of shared governance. The justification for terminating

faculty has centered on Purdue Calumet's claim of financial difficulties. The faculty has yet to be able to confirm this assertion, as the administration seems reluctant to share financial information. However, while claiming that they are in such dire financial trouble they must lay off instructors, lecturers, and tenure track faculty, Purdue Calumet is actively hiring more administrators, increasing funding to the athletic program and hiring fitness assistants.

Lower than expected enrollment numbers has been cited as the primary contributing factor to the financial problem. According to the administration, reasons for the low enrollment range from the impact of advanced placement and dual credit programs in the high schools; the previous administration's lack of ability and foresight in automating the admission process while there is an admission that enrollment is actually up in some areas.

The AAUP's position is that in the event of a legitimate financial crisis, negatively impacting the educational mission of the university should only be considered when all other cost cutting alternatives have been exhausted. We have yet to see sufficient evidence that this formula has been applied at Purdue Calumet.

The AAUP further advocates that faculty must be actively and appropriately included in any discussions or plans related to potential program cuts, modifications and/or possible faculty reductions. The current plan will have a direct negative impact on available curricula and the quality of education. The faculty has not been properly included in the process of determining that the financial situation is severe enough

to contemplate only faculty terminations or in the termination process itself.

The decision to cut the education delivery process itself has a chilling effect on the University and the community. People's lives and potential educational opportunities for students are impacted. The AAUP recognizes the seriousness and the difficulties surrounding these decisions. It is for these very reasons that it is imperative that such decisions proceed in a transparent fashion and with appropriate faculty inclusion.

We strongly urge President Daniels, Chancellor Keon and the Board of Trustees to reconsider the termination of faculty at Purdue Calumet and to actively engage with faculty and their appropriate representatives in order to work through the anticipated budget crisis and find alternative solutions that are less devastating to Purdue's mission, values and goals and to the citizens of Indiana.

Dr. Marcus K. Rogers  
President Purdue AAUP Chapter

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On the same day the Executive Board of the state conference issued this statement in support of the PUC faculty:

The Executive Board of the Indiana Conference of the American Association of University Professors would like to join with the Purdue Chapter of the AAUP in expressing its concern about the recent actions taken by Chancellor Thomas Keon of Purdue University Calumet. Citing revenue shortfalls, Chancellor Keon terminated instructors, lecturers, and tenure track faculty, while at the same time PUC advertised

for new positions in the administration and the athletic program. The faculty has not been provided detailed information concerning the financial situation at PUC. Nor was the faculty meaningfully involved in determining where cuts should be made. Chancellor Keon's actions raise questions about academic shared governance at PUC. In addition, it should be clear to all citizens of Indiana that something is wrong with an educational institution's priorities when in the face of supposed financial difficulties it fires teachers, while leaving untouched, and even expanding, its administrative bureaucracy. We urge Chancellor Keon and the administration of Purdue University to revisit these terminations, and actively work with the faculty to restore financial health to Purdue University Calumet.

On September 11th, the PUC administration announced that its budget shortfall was not as great as originally thought, and the terminations of the tenure-track faculty have been rescinded. Congratulations to our colleagues at PUC!

President Obama's proposed new system for ranking higher ed institutions has been making headlines lately. Here is a thoughtful opinion piece written by AAUP President Rudy Fichtenbaum and VP Hank Reichman on the likely impact of the proposal.

### **Obama's rankings won't solve crisis in US academy**

*(from Times Higher Ed in the UK, 12 September 2013)*

More government cash is the only way to cut student costs, argue Rudy Fichtenbaum and Hank Reichman.



Source: Maxhphoto/Shutterstock.com

In an attempt to rein in rising tuition fees and skyrocketing student debt, Barack Obama has announced a plan for performance-based higher education funding. Under his plan, colleges would be rated on affordability, graduation rates and graduate earnings.

While we applaud the president for raising concerns over rising tuition fees and student debt, concerns we share, this proposal will do little to solve the problem and will likely yield a decline in the quality of education offered to working-class and middle-class students, particularly affecting those from under-represented groups.

The president's plan is based on the premise that if people understand what they are buying they will shop around for the best value. That sounds fine were education simply a commodity. In reality, however, meaningfully measuring the output of our highly diverse colleges and universities is impossible. The institutions do not only produce graduates, but also knowledge and learning.

The fundamental problem with the plan is that it does not get at the root cause of skyrocketing tuition, which is directly related to the escalating debt burdening millions of students and their families. Tuition fees rarely cover the full cost of education, which at public

institutions is subsidised by state appropriations. The most important factor driving tuition increases at US public colleges and universities has been the decline in government support. According to one study, annual revenue per student adjusted for inflation was \$11,084 in 1987 and \$11,095 in 2012. Over the same period, however, the government's contribution declined from \$8,497 to \$5,906, resulting in an average tuition increase from \$2,588 to \$5,189.

The second major culprit driving the increases is rising costs, although these are not escalating as quickly. Some blame the increases on allegedly higher salaries received by supposedly complacent tenured faculty, but faculty salaries have actually declined a bit. The average salary for a full-time faculty member at a public institution in 1999-2000 was \$77,897. In 2011-12, the same figure in constant dollars was \$77,843.

Moreover, tenured and tenure-track academics are now a minority: the majority today are contingent staff, who earn far less and rarely qualify for retirement or health benefits.

A more significant driver of cost increases has been the steady growth of administrative expenses. According to the US Department of Education, between 2001 and 2011 the number of employees hired by colleges and universities to manage or administer courses and regulations increased 50 per cent faster than the number of instructors. For example, at the University of Minnesota the administrative payroll has grown by 45.5 per cent since 2001 while the academic payroll increased by 15.6 per cent. This pattern is typical.

Students most "at risk" are often those who have no choice but to attend a local public college. Under Obama's plans, if that institution "scores" inadequately, federal aid will decline and tuition will rise to fill the gap. Report cards based on graduation rates from often dissimilar colleges serving diverse student populations will drive public universities and non-elite private institutions to standardise curricula to ensure passing grades. Faculty, largely lacking the protection of tenure, will be compelled to teach students simply to take tests.

We need to concentrate less on testing and more on providing the resources necessary to give all students a high-quality education. Were we truly interested in increasing graduation rates, we would enhance funding for schools to ensure that students are better prepared for college. Were we truly interested in controlling or reducing tuition, we would increase public funding of higher education by taxing the rich, particularly the top 1 per cent who have benefited disproportionately from federal bailouts and received the lion's share of income growth since the 1970s.

The solution to the crisis in higher education, characterised by rising tuition and student debt, is not a report card based on poorly defined metrics. As Albert Einstein reportedly said: "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."

Print headline:

Article originally published as: Metrics system failure (12 September 2013)