

TO: Ohio Senate Higher Education Subcommittee  
RE: HB49

Dear Chairman Gardner, Vice Chair Williams, and Senators Bacon, Dolan, Kunze, Thomas, and Wilson:

I am an Associate Professor in the Department of English at the Ohio State University, where I have worked since 2003. I am writing because, like many of my colleagues, I am concerned about the effects of some prospective higher-educational legislation in HB 49. More broadly, however, I write to offer myself as an ongoing resource for information on the Ohio higher-education system. I consider myself as, like you, a public servant; as such I would be eager to help you to ensure that our institutions are superior places of learning and work for Ohio citizens.

I would like, first, to address three proposed changes in this assembly's budget bill:

Section 124.38 creates a separate category of sick leave for university and college employees, proposing that they receive 3 1/10 hours with pay, as opposed to the 4 6/10 received by other state employees. It also attempts to bar any future agreements that run counter to this legislation. It is hard to fathom why the Ohio legislature would want to create this discrete, effectively punitive category. OSU alone is a huge employer in Ohio, and there are obviously many other state higher-educational institutions. This proposal thus flouts the interests of many, many Ohio citizens. Additionally, in any workplace context, denying workers adequate sick leave risks damaging their health and wellbeing, thereby reducing morale and productivity. This proposed change thus militates against what I presume is the legislature's central goal of maintaining robust and productive Ohio workplaces.

Section 102.023 requires all faculty assigning textbooks to file an annual financial disclosure statement with the Ohio ethics commission. I am puzzled as to what the perceived need is here, given that all OSU faculty already fill out regular conflict-of-interest forms requiring them to be forthcoming, and therefore ethical, on the question of textbook profit. The requirement seems not only necessary but also burdensome, if I'm correct that the disclosure statement requires a filing fee. Lastly, the requirement significantly underestimates faculty dedication to and caring for students. My colleagues and I do not seek to add unfairly to students' costs by profiting through textbook assignments.

Section 3345.451 requires that the board of trustees of each higher-educational institution establish a post-tenure review plan, mandating continuous professional development and accountability, and including the categories "meets expectations," "does not meet expectations," and "exceeds expectations." Again, I am unclear about perceived necessity. I can assure you that post-tenure faculty go through regular, exacting annual accounting of their work. Yearly in my department, for example, all colleagues—both tenured and untenured—submit to the chair and to the executive committee an activity report that becomes the basis of their performance and salary review. Within professional networks, moreover, faculty face considerable pressure to remain informed, up-to-date, regularly contributing members of their disciplines.

This brings me to a larger point: judging by the above HB 49 legislative proposals, there seems to be a profound legislative misunderstanding of the nature of faculty work. I would not purport to know the ins and outs of what legislators do, daily, weekly, and yearly. Presuming the reverse to be true, I would like to offer some clarification on the details of our work—especially because there seem to

be two common misperceptions about it: one, that our teaching amounts primarily to contact hours in the classroom; and two, that teaching is the only substantial component of our jobs.

On the first point: faculty time in the classroom actually constitutes only a small fraction of our teaching responsibilities. In my case, for example, for any one of my courses, my duties include the following: rereading assigned books; composing lectures or lesson plans; composing handouts, assignment sheets, and exams; holding office hours with students; answering student emails; managing online course sites; and grading student work. For every one hour I spend in the classroom, I easily spend several more outside of it (and many more around grading periods). Making sure lessons and assignments are challenging but clear, being available to help students, and offering regular and thoughtful assessment all take considerable time and effort.

On the second point: faculty jobs actually break down into three components: teaching, research, and service. Like teaching, research and service involve numerous responsibilities. Researchers spend many hours reading, writing, experimenting, combing archives, authoring grant proposals, and building professional networks and partnerships. Service is probably the least well-known part of faculty work, but it is considered essential for sustaining the operation of departments, higher college/university units, and professional organizations (and service expectations often ratchet up after tenure). Faculty have a yearly service obligation to their departments, which often entails committee work or program directorships; they also take on institutional positions outside their departments, as well as in national and international organizations; and lastly, many are involved in some form of community outreach. Teaching, research, and service are weighted differently at different institutions across Ohio, but when one requirement (for example, research) is lower, the expectations for the other two are higher (entailing a higher course load or more events with students, or more committee or outreach work).

I have tried to clarify what we do because I know you value hard work, and I want to convey that we do, too. I love my job not only for itself, but also because I am constantly struck by how committed my colleagues are to worthwhile, top-notch work—even when it means spending many extra hours “off the clock” on behalf of students, on research projects, or helping to sustain an important program.

As I said initially, my main goal in writing is to offer myself as a ready point of communication. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to talk to you or your staff, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you very much for your time.

Best wishes,  
Jill Galvan

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