



June 3, 2022

Academic Freedom and Tenure: Linfield University (OR)

The report of the investigating committee concerns the summary dismissal of a professor of English in his tenth year of service at the institution. Soon after the faculty had elected him as its representative to the board of trustees, he began receiving complaints from female colleagues and former students of their having experienced sexual misconduct by trustees at social events held in connection with board meetings. In the belief that his role as “faculty trustee” obligated him to do so, the faculty member forwarded these allegations to the board’s leadership, and, eventually, to the administration, and asked for remedial action. After sharing additional such allegations with campus authorities in the months that followed and ultimately concluding that the board and administration were not taking adequate steps to address the underlying problem, the faculty member made the sexual misconduct charges public on Twitter, along with his own charges of antisemitism (the professor is Jewish) against certain administrators and board members. Several weeks later, the Linfield administration abruptly terminated his tenured appointment “for cause” without having afforded him any procedural rights, much less the academic due process required under AAUP-recommended standards.

The investigating committee found that the administration,

- by dismissing the faculty member without having first demonstrated adequate cause before an elected faculty hearing body, violated the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure;
- by refusing to afford the faculty member at least one year of severance salary or notice, violated Regulation 8 of the Association’s Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure;
- by acting against the faculty member in evident retaliation for speech and conduct he exercised in fulfilling his responsibilities as a faculty trustee, violated his right to participate in institutional governance under principles of academic freedom set forth in the 1940 Statement and derivative AAUP documents; and
- in taking these actions, violated the institution’s own regulations, since the faculty handbook incorporates key applicable AAUP policy documents in their entirety.

Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure accordingly recommends to the Association’s governing Council that Linfield University be added to the AAUP’s list of censured administrations.