

When I think of the threats against academic freedom and tenure, my mind automatically goes to academic gatekeeping. There is external pressure from the government and political bodies seeking to control academic research, teaching and discourse to further their own agendas. These stakeholders are controlling who gets what resources, power or opportunities and who does not. Because of this gatekeeping, many find themselves self-censoring in fear of repercussions or backlash to avoid controversial or sensitive topics, limiting the diversity of ideas of students and faculty. Higher Education Institutions often find themselves conforming to certain ideologies, biases, or restrictions in order to secure funding. It is a vicious cycle and we educators are hostages in a political power struggle.

I believe that we, the NEA, can expand its focus on higher education members and its issues affecting them such as threats to academic freedom and tenure by raising awareness to members and education stakeholders, collaborating with advocacy groups, and engaging with lawmakers. We can continue to raise awareness by educating stakeholders about the importance of academic freedom and tenure. NEA can also bring awareness to academic freedom and tenure issues by offering conferences and workshops specific to these issues and not to just higher ed. Lets educate all members on the best practices and strategies for defending these principles and support our higher ed members. We have a publication that goes out monthly. Let's share stories and speak out against the threats to academic freedom and tenure in those publications. We need open discussion and forums to highlight the value of these principles and the threats they face. We need to find partners with organizations dedicated to defending academic freedom and tenure to amplify voices and advocate for policy changes at the local, state and national level. We are seeing how the erosion of tenure is at the state level. Lets engage with lawmakers and work with legislators to draft and support bills that protect academic freedom and tenure rights. Advocate for legislation that safeguards these principles and the adoption of clear and robust policies that uphold academic freedom and tenure in higher education. Lets Include drafting a Higher Education Bill of Rights to call for fair wages, benefits, protecting tenure, academic freedoms, and working conditions. When we don't speak up we allow others to do it for us. Right now the focus is on critical race theory and eliminating tenure. What will it be next? We can't afford to give legislators more control.

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