

NYT 1/30/19/1  
Freedom of Expression

2024

TO THE EDITOR:

Re "Museum Cancels Big  
Exhibition" (Arts, Jan. 13):

I write as a retired judge  
with definite liberal leanings  
who was disturbed to read of  
the cancellation of the artist  
Samia Halaby's retrospective  
exhibit at Indiana University's  
Eskenazi Museum of Art.

Presumably the reason for  
this action was Ms. Halaby's  
"social media posts on the  
Israel-Gaza war, where she  
had expressed support for  
Palestinian causes and outrage  
at the violence in the Middle  
East, comparing the Israeli  
bombardment to a genocide."

I am a practicing Jew who  
supports Israel's right to exist.  
My religion, my profession and  
my political proclivities all  
dictate not only tolerance but  
also love and respect for free-  
dom of expression through the  
arts. This action by the mu-  
seum implicitly rejects this  
freedom.

ALICE SCHLESINGER, NEW YORK



D 91  
HT 2/18/24

# As a recent IU grad, I am ashamed of my university

**Your Turn**

Carter Sherwin  
Guest columnist

Free speech and democratic values are in grave danger at Indiana University, the institution from which I recently graduated.

Professor Abdulkader Sinno, an associate professor of political science and Middle Eastern studies, was recently suspended from all IU-affiliated activities for two semesters. I was in his Middle Eastern Politics class last fall, and I can tell you that this move is purely political and baseless.

Professor Sinno is a polarizing figure for many on IU's campus. On a campus where a large amount of money for the college comes from Jewish donors and which enrolls many Jewish students, Professor Sinno has never shied away from supporting Palestinian student groups on campus and teaching about the Israeli-Palestinian situation without omitting the facts. Originally from Lebanon, he is passionate about the plight of the Palestinians but performs his activism peacefully and as an academic.

As someone who grew up in an area of Chicago with a large Jewish population, I had moments of skepticism during his class. For the most part, however, I found him to be an academically enriching and inspiring figure.

When we stepped through the doors to his class every day, he was never antagonizing, always jovial, and the very definition of what you would want a professor to be. He would invite us to ask any questions, in any amount, and answered them patiently. He would ask us to fact-check him on some of the more hotly contested aspects of the class, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, and let him know if he got anything wrong. Most of all, he reminded us several times that he viewed us as "his own children," having none of his own, and that he cared deeply about everyone in the room.

Professor Sinno is not a danger to students at IU. He has done nothing to warrant the cowardly response from President Pamela Whitten and her administration. But for them, Sinno presents a clear threat to the monetary flow to the university, from politicians within the state of Indiana, and their stance on Israel.

It is no coincidence that this action follows a letter to President Whitten, sent by Rep. Jim Banks, that demanded the university do more to battle anti-semitism on campus or face consequences. After all, that is what this suspension is actually about.

IU's reasoning for Sinno's sanctions was that he planned an event for the Palestinian Solidarity Committee with several errors on the form he used and he went ahead despite a late notice of disapproval from the university. Of course, it was approved by IU but canceled just hours before it was supposed to take place. That's absurd.

As a recent graduate of IU, I know these issues with event planning happen frequently, yet other culprits within the faculty have somehow avoided any punishment. IU, a university that prides itself on being an academic beacon and a stalwart supporter of democracy, has shown its hypocrisy with this latest episode.

Yes, Professor Sinno taught a class on the Middle East with a plethora of tough topics. Yes, he sponsored and aided the PSC. Yes, he should have received a reprimand for the event — perhaps a warning of future action — but a complete suspension for two semesters? The administration can entirely disagree with Sinno's opinions, but until they're a "clear and present danger" to the University, the administration never should have gone this far. The reasons given to justify this activity are wholly lacking.

College learning is supposed to be a challenge to student's opinions as well as their intellect. By removing Professor Sinno's worthwhile contributions to its campus, IU is depriving students of diversity of thought, and what's more, the PSC of one of their only adult advocates in the area.

As a recent graduate of IU, I am ashamed of the actions IU's administration has taken in this case. I hope students and faculty there recognize the abhorrence of this event, and move to hold the University accountable for what they have done.

*Carter Sherwin is a recent graduate of Indiana University Bloomington and a resident of Bloomington.*



# Indiana Senate Bill 202 should worry us all, not just educators

## Your Turn

William E. Scheuerman  
Guest columnist

11/21/2024  
P. 84

The state's GOP supermajority is fast-tracking a bill (SB-202) that threatens to destroy public higher education as we know it. Anyone who cares about Indiana's public colleges and universities should worry.

On the surface, SB-202 merely creates a mandatory post-tenure review for faculty, who will need to demonstrate teaching "multiple, divergent, and varied scholarly perspectives on an extensive range of public policy issues." It also strengthens complaint mechanisms so students and others can report on faculty who fail to do so. In an email exchange with me, the bill's architect, state Sen. Spencer Deery (R, IN-23), insisted that the legislation simply codifies what faculty should be doing anyhow.

Where's the problem?

Tenured faculty are already subject to extensive annual reviews. Tenure is not, in fact, a free pass to do or say whatever faculty want. Tenured faculty can be fired for just cause — for example, sexual harassment, or other egregiously unprofessional behavior. If I turn my political science courses into vehicles for discussing my favorite NFL team, Indiana University has a legal basis to terminate me. And it should.

What SB-202 does is codify a vague political litmus test that opens the door to firing faculty who are doing their jobs. As the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled, tenure provides faculty with protections necessary to the "marketplace of ideas" on campus. It protects all scholars, and thus those with both right- and left-leaning views. We have our system of tenure because faculty were once regularly fired when their perspectives angered campus administrators, politicians, and wealthy donors. Without tenure, faculty are forced to look over their shoulders, worried about alienating powerful people. Tenure is essential to a free society, where faculty pursue knowledge without kowtowing to Big Brother or Big Donor.

Where are tenure protections lacking? In dictatorships, where government keeps faculty on a tight leash. Tenure has helped make American higher education the envy of the world.

But doesn't SB-202 simply guarantee that faculty teach a diversity of perspectives?

Universities should, of course, offer a variety of viewpoints. However, to require that of individual

What SB-202 does is codify a vague political litmus test that opens the door to firing faculty who are doing their jobs.

faculty is misconceived. We hire people to represent one perspective or type of research — a specific approach to political science, for example, or physics. SB-202 ignores that fact and threatens scholars' freedom to teach what they deem appropriate.

The bill effectively mandates, for example, that individual Kelley School of Business faculty should teach not only free market economics, but also socialism. In my political science courses, my students and I discuss Nazism. Will I be expected to include pro-Nazi perspectives? Perhaps invite skinheads to discuss their take on the Holocaust?

What about U.S. history faculty? Will they need to devote time to (alleged) virtues of slavery or segregation? Should biology professors provide a forum for creationists?

SB-202 is a Trojan Horse for a clampdown on academic freedom. Since it will deter good faculty from joining or remaining at Indiana's universities, it is also a recipe for mediocrity.

SB-202's real aim is to discipline so-called "woke" faculty.

Yes, many faculty — and young people — now lean left. There are many reasons for that. One is that the extreme right-wing demonizes science. Republicans once took climate change seriously, for example, and listened to what scientists had to say. Now many ignore science and would prefer that those doing it shut up.

And that's what SB-202 does. It tells college faculty that we should anxiously look over our shoulders: we could lose our jobs if we fail to pass SB-202's dangerously vague political litmus test. SB-202 is a disaster for higher education and should be stopped.

William E. Scheuerman is James H. Rudy Professor of Political Science and International Studies at Indiana University Bloomington.



HT 2/25/2024 P8 opinion

# SB202 threatens Indiana's entire 'knowledge economy'

## Your Turn

Michael Hamburger, Armin Moczek and Steven Vigdor  
Guest columnists

A dangerous new piece of education legislation is making its rounds through the State Capitol this week. Indiana Senate Bill 202 promises to radically restructure higher education at public institutions in the state. The bill, now under consideration by the House Education Committee, would remove the protection of tenure, placing long-term academic appointments in the hands of a small group of political appointees, who ultimately, would be given the power to decide what ought to be included or not within course curricula. This broad legislative action is likely to have a range of unintended consequences.

Although SB202 appears to target teaching of "controversial topics" in the humanities and social sciences, the bill would have a powerful, chilling effect on research and education in science and engineering. There is not a topic in the history of science — plate tectonics, the heliocentric solar system, geologic time, the theory of relativity, evolution, or the development of vaccines — that was not at some time considered controversial by some members of the broader community.

Efforts to provide "equal time" for all points of view undermines the very process by which science determines the most effective methods to explain natural phenomena through observation, experimentation, and rigorous testing. In the case of evolution, politically motivated efforts to demand that science classes provide for coverage of a non-scientific alternative were correctly shut down by U.S. courts. The courts understood that science develops theories to account for reproducible experimental evidence, while alternatives preferred by some are intended to manipulate evidence to support predetermined conclusions — ultimately undermining America's leadership in science.

We believe that the proposed legislation would place the entire academic enterprise at risk, by placing decisions on what should or shouldn't be taught in university science classes in the hands of a small group of politically appointed bureaucrats — with little or no expertise in the fields they are judging. The

goal of universities is to equip students to understand the world around them through the tools of academic inquiry. This fundamental basis of our educational system is threatened by legislation that limits the independence and academic freedom of Indiana's universities.

Indiana's "knowledge economy" is entirely dependent on the highest quality of research and education of the next generation of students. Our pharmaceutical industry depends on biomedical research and education; our automotive industry depends on state-of-the-art physics and engineering; our growing data management and analysis economy depends on high-quality computer science research.

Without unfettered access to state-of-the-art science and engineering, our faculty and students — and ultimately the communities we belong to — will be the long-term losers if this bill passes. Our continued ability to recruit and retain the best and the brightest future leaders from America's top academic institutions depends on the integrity of our universities — and by how they are perceived from outside the borders of our state. SB202 will ultimately diminish the stature of our educational system, the quality of our workforce, the safety of patients or consumers, and the ability of our citizens to make informed, evidence-based decisions as parents or voters.

Indiana has a great history of public education, with two major flagship universities and a diverse range of critical statewide systems and community colleges. We rely on the leadership of our state to sustain and support this critical, but ultimately fragile, system of higher education. As Indiana universities face a daunting "enrollment cliff" — and our universities will be competing even more fiercely with other institutions across the region — there could not be a worse time for SB202 to become reality. We therefore strongly urge the House Education Committee, and all Hoosiers, to oppose this dangerous piece of legislation.

*The authors are faculty members at Indiana University Bloomington. Michael Hamburger is Professor of Earth & Atmospheric Sciences, Armin Moczek is Professor of Biology, and Steven Vigdor is Professor Emeritus of Physics.*



# Call Gov. Holcomb and your state senator to stop SB 202

HT 3/3/2024  
P5A

## Your Turn

Craig A. Stewart  
Guest columnist

Every Hoosier should grow up knowing there is a place where they will be welcomed within the Indiana public higher education system. That is an idea that the vast majority of Indiana residents certainly support. Achieving this is the stated goal of Senate Bill 202. But SB 202, as written, won't accomplish this and will have many negative side effects, including damage to our state's economy.

Last year, Indiana University received \$772 million in new grants and contracts. Purdue University received \$613 million. That money comes predominantly from outside our state, contributing significantly to Indiana's economy. The impact of these funds on the Indiana economy can be estimated with the widely used U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis Regional Input-Output Modeling System (RIMS II). The RIMS II data for Indiana suggest grants and contracts to IU and Purdue add over \$2 billion in direct and indirect value to Indiana's economy annually. This amount of funding supports an estimated 14,000 full-time jobs annually.

Most tenured faculty could make more money outside of academia. World-class experts are attracted to academia to make a difference: to spend a career pursuing research, scholarship, creative activities, and teaching. They receive the assurance of such a career once they have proved their merit through the tenure process.

That is the deal in almost all other states. It has been the deal in Indiana in the past, but SB202 would end that here.

Faculty of all political perspectives have objected. For example, Purdue University's Faculty Senate voted 81-5 to oppose SB202. If SB202 is enacted into law, Indiana's very best faculty members will leave to go to other states. If that happens, our universities will become less competitive for grants and contracts. Vacated faculty positions can be filled with other PhD holders — but these replacements will be much less qualified than current faculty. For most grant proposals, an important



# Stewart

HT 3/3/2024 p 74

Continued from Page 6A

evaluation criterion is a faculty member's ability to complete the work. SB202 calls that into question, further damaging the competitiveness of Indiana faculty. If SB202 passes as currently written, much less grant and contract money will come into the state of Indiana.

If, for example, grant and contract income to IU and Purdue drops to 25% of current levels, the Indiana economy will lose \$1.5 billion in total economic

activity. More than 10,000 jobs will disappear, following grant money to other states. Competition for grant funding is already intense. The percentage of proposals submitted to granting agencies that are rejected can be as high as 95% to 98% of those submitted. A reduction of grant and contract funding to 25% of current levels seems plausible.

Indiana would suffer other economic impacts as well. If the best faculty members flee, Indiana's public universities will have lower rankings and may lose accreditation in some specialties, meaning

fewer out-of-state students. Losing the higher tuition these students pay (which also subsidizes tuition for Hoosier students) would mean further financial losses for Indiana.

If SB202 is enacted as currently written, pharmaceutical, defense, and high-tech firms in Indiana will lose the existing pipeline of excellent students from our state's leading universities. Native Hoosiers will miss out on the great opportunity for high-quality jobs available through this pipeline. Indiana will no longer keep the many bright young people who come here to

get a university degree and stay here to work in Indiana's leading tech firms. Pharmaceutical companies will also have far fewer opportunities for local research collaborations that accelerate the development of new, needed, and sometimes lifesaving medical treatments for Hoosiers, their pets, and their agricultural animals.

Indiana State Sen. Spencer Deery cited survey data showing a sharp decrease in confidence in higher education among Republicans as a key reason for authoring SB 202. This decrease in confidence should be a grave

concern for all. But the current situation took years to create. The current situation will take years to correct. Neither the speed pursued by the right nor the dramatics of the left will help our state achieve a good long-term solution.

SB 202 in its current form will hurt all Hoosiers, and yet it has now passed the Indiana House and the Indiana Senate. To avoid it becoming law, first Gov. Holcomb must veto SB 202 and then enough votes have to change in the Indiana House or Senate for a veto override to fail. If you don't want to see this

bill become law, first write to Gov. Holcomb at <https://www.in.gov/gov/ask-eric/>. Then write to your legislators — particularly those in areas that are home to a college or university. And do it quickly! This bill is headed to the governor's desk right now.

*Dr. Craig A. Stewart is a PhD biologist and an adopted Hoosier of more than four decades' standing. He recently retired from a career in advanced research computing and has extensive experience in grant-funded research and analysis of the economic value of scientific research.*



# Indiana's higher ed bill isn't perfect, but it is necessary

## Your Turn

Scott Pell  
Guest columnist

As Indiana Senate Bill 202 awaits Gov. Eric Holcomb's signature, public discourse on this bill has reached a high point. Though some critiques of SB 202 are certainly legitimate, many objections — made overwhelmingly by left-wing professors — strike me as disingenuous.

Commonly asserted, for example, is that the bill codifies into law political litmus tests. It is difficult to take this claim seriously, given that this cohort has largely ignored the proliferation of ideological litmus tests in the form of requiring, or "encouraging," diversity, equity and inclusion (D.E.I.) statements from faculty members, which coerce professors into arbitrarily linking their work to D.E.I. initiatives.

Far from encoding ideological litmus tests, SB 202 actually bans them. Ch. 3 sec.1(b) states "An institution may not require an applicant or an employee...to pledge allegiance to or to make a statement of support for any political or ideological movement." Reflecting on the dystopian-level conformity that litmus tests

HT 3/17/24 84  
have imposed on grad students and professors, this measure causes all but the most partisan among us to breathe a sigh of relief.

Similarly misguided is the allegation that SB 202 is intended to target "wokeness" on campuses. No provision in SB 202 prohibits the teaching of controversial material; in fact, the authors went out of their way to reassure the public that this would not be one of the bill's effects. Ch. 6 sec. 1(3) states "[Nothing in this bill should be interpreted as] limiting or restricting the academic freedom of faculty members from teaching, researching, or writing publications about diversity, equity, and inclusion or other topics."

Far from going after "wokeness," what lawmakers are actually targeting is the tendency for class discussions and assignments to go wildly off-topic as part of professors' attempts to meet D.E.I. criteria. A few brave souls have pointed out that D.E.I.-related litmus tests in hiring and promotion often coerce instructors into straying from appropriate course material. As one professor from Reedley College in California put it: "I'm a professor of chemistry. How am I

See PELL, Page 9A

## Pell

Continued from Page 8A

HT 3/17/24 29A  
supposed to incorporate D.E.I. into my classroom instruction? What's the 'anti-racist' perspective on the atomic mass of boron?" As a former Indiana University student, I can assure you that this provision is desperately needed.

Alongside banning litmus tests in hiring and promotion, other positive aspects of SB 202 include: requiring universities and their departments to adopt institutional neutrality; requiring student orientation programming highlighting the importance of free speech and free expression; requiring universities to punish students or faculty members who disrupt protected forms of speech or expression; requiring univer-

sities to conduct surveys on student perception of free speech culture; and protecting faculty members from retaliation based on the nature of their research or commentary.

The common argument that SB 202 would diminish the influx of talent into Indiana's universities is incorrect and made disingenuously for the purpose of rationalizing left-wing professors' fears that they might have to share spaces with ideological rivals. In reality, the quality of instruction and research would improve, since faculty would be hired and promoted on the basis of merit, rather than ideological leaning. Likewise, these changes would undoubtedly improve the free speech climate on our campuses; the fact that a law is needed compelling universities to comply with the First Amendment — in the form of outlawing ideological litmus tests and

punishing those who use heckler's vetoes to shut down speech — suggests that it is in an abysmal state.

None of this is to say that SB 202 is flawless. The bill requires the creation of anonymous reporting systems that are remarkably similar to Orwellian "bias response hotlines," which are already in use. Rather than promoting their proliferation, SB 202 should be amended to ban them altogether.

The stipulation that would require punishing professors for failing to "foster a culture of free inquiry, free expression, and intellectual diversity within the institution" is vague. If lawmakers insist on including such a provision, it should be clarified in a way that targets specific behavior.

Additionally, the clause requiring instructors to "expose students to scholarly works from a variety of political or

ideological frameworks" constitutes a legitimate infringement on academic freedom and should therefore be scrapped.

Republicans would do well to take the high road, in that they should eliminate the types of infringements on academic freedom and anonymous reporting systems that their left-wing counterparts have abused unrepentantly. But, if SB 202 becomes law without these amendments, progressives should know that they brought this on themselves by using their institutional clout to rig the system to ensure that only their own kind could thrive in an academic setting.

Scott Pell grew up in Terre Haute, Indiana, and studied history at Indiana University. He graduated with his bachelor's degree in December of 2022 and currently resides in Martinsville.



# Why academics should probably leave Indiana now

## Your Turn

Susan Luther

Guest columnist

HT 4/7/24 PJ A

I am not an academic. I have followed the rhetoric surrounding SB 202, Indiana's higher education bill, with quite a bit of consternation.<sup>5x</sup>

I am aware that Gov. Holcomb has now signed this bill into law. Under this law, the Board of Trustees at a state-funded university, such as Purdue or Indiana University, must, among other things, make recommendations to promote and maintain cultural and intellectual diversity among faculty members. In addition, if a professor does not expose students to scholarly works from a variety of political or ideological frameworks, they will not achieve tenure.

The bill defines "intellectual diversity" as multiple, divergent and varied scholarly perspectives on an extensive range of public policy issues. As I interpret this, if a history professor who teaches the Civil War disavows "scholarly perspectives" that proffers the war was fought primarily over states' rights, not slavery, then they will not achieve tenure.

If that same history professor does not expose stu-

dents to the "scholarly perspective" that African-Americans were better off under slavery, then tenure is denied. If an African-American Studies professor does not expose students to "scholarly perspectives" of white supremacists, such as the "great replacement theory," tenure is denied. Furthermore, a professor who inadvertently makes a statement during class that a student objects to as "political or ideological" and unrelated to the academic discipline or assigned course of instruction, they may not achieve tenure.

Science classes will not be exempt from this scrutiny. A chemistry professor who makes a statement about the human contribution to global warming during a beginning chemistry class would not achieve tenure. A biology professor who does not allow the "Christian" perspective in class that all life began 6,000 years ago and that evolution is contrary to God's word would not achieve tenure.

If I was an academic, I would be leaving the state of Indiana as quickly as possible. The dumbing-down of our education systems continues under this administration and the gerrymandered legislature.

*Susan Luther is a resident of Monroe County. She is a retired attorney and former counsel, Naval Surface Warfare Center, Crane Division.*



# How Pamela Whitten helped me teach logical fallacies

## Your Turn

Jeff Moscaritolo  
Guest columnist

I'm a graduate worker at IU Bloomington, currently teaching in American Studies. Because my stipend falls well below a living wage, I picked up a side gig teaching online at Virginia Commonwealth University in the Focused Inquiry program, which provides generalized liberal arts courses intended for first and second-year undergraduates.

This semester, I'm working with students on detecting logical fallacies. This can be a tough subject for students, because logical fallacies are by their nature elusive. While isolated instances of logical fallacies sometimes occur, they're best studied in the context of larger conversations.

I realized the students needed some in-depth practice, a concrete example of a text that is responding to other texts, something that could be analyzed deeply for its argumentative sleights of hand. And then I read IU President Pamela Whitten's response to the IU faculty's resolution of no confidence. To my delight, Whitten's writing contained exactly what I needed.

After all, the faculty's no confidence resolution, which was affirmed by 93% of the faculty who voted, laid out very clear concerns, backed by specific examples, about the Whitten administration's failure to protect our academic freedom and free speech, and abetting a toxic environment on campus during an already turbulent time.

Whitten's response addressed none of these concerns directly. It was perfect!

I joyously shared the letter with my students at VCU and read through it with them. Instead of making a good faith argument, the letter dances the glittering dance of generalities, striking a tone that slides delicately between the affable and foreboding. And the fallacies, my goodness — it's a treasure trove.

It has the appeal to celebrity/authority: "We can uphold the legacy of Herman B Wells."

It has a false dilemma: "Institutions are never static. They are evolving, innovating and getting stronger, or they are stagnant and losing momentum and relevance."

It has the slippery slope: "Such difference are not tenable forever."

It combines vagueness with appeals to ignorance: "Demographic changes, resulting financial realities, and political developments are only accelerating."

And then there are all the red herrings — irrelevant points that divert attention from the actual topics at hand. Imagine 800 employees telling you they have zero confidence in you, and still possessing the rhetorical finesse to say, "I welcome thoughtful ideas and consideration." Imagine hearing someone tell you "This relationship is beyond repair," and replying, "I pledge to listen and to learn."

Remember, these are academics who voted on this resolution. People who pick apart language, who would not vote in favor of such a resolution if they had even the tiniest sliver of confidence. Any amount of confidence is more than no confidence, after all.

After a long process of deliberation — petition, assembly, discussion — they determined that indeed there was absolutely no confidence in her to be found. And like a prima ballerina, Whitten deftly twirls aside with her simple "reflections on how we can move forward together."

So thank you, President Whitten, for giving me such a stunning and concise example of fallacious thinking, wielded by a person with entirely too much money and power. You have made me a better teacher.

Jeff Moscaritolo is a PhD student in American studies at IU Bloomington and a writer of fiction. He resides in Bloomington.



# Three words for IU's Board of Trustees: Whitten must go

## Your Turn

Kevin Howley  
Guest columnist

I've got three words for the Indiana University Board of Trustees: Whitten Must Go!

Last month, Indiana University Bloomington faculty gathered to consider a vote of "no-confidence" in President Pamela Whitten, Provost Rahul Shrivastav, and Vice Provost Carrie Docherty. According to The Herald-Times, 93% of the assembled 948 faculty voted in favor of the no-confidence motion against Whitten. Shrivastav and Docherty fared little better.

In technical terms, it was a blowout. Of course, the Board of Trustees is not bound by the faculty vote. Indeed, in a statement, the board expressed its ongoing support of Whitten and her administration, despite the faculty's unmistakable rebuke. All the same, I like to think the board will agree the optics are lousy. And if there's anything university boards don't like, it's a bad look for their institutions.

But before you could say, "Ceasefire Now," Whitten's administration went from bad optics to authoritarian rule. In the wake of student activists setting up an encampment to demonstrate solidarity with the Palestinian cause, Whitten and company surreptitiously changed the rules governing the use of temporary structures on Dunn Meadow, site of historic anti-war protests in the 1960s and, more recently, rallies for Black Lives Matter.

Rather than substantively engage with representatives from the IU Divestment Coalition, who are calling on Indiana University to divest from Israel and so-called defense industries, Whitten called the state troopers in a ham-fisted effort to clear the encampments. To date, upward of 50 people have been arrested for exercising their First Amendment rights. The board cannot and must not ignore the obvious: deploying militarized police in response to student protests is no way to lead an institution of higher learning.

Sadly, like their colleagues at public and private universities across the country, IUB administrators have capitulated to the New McCarthyism that cynically conflates pro-Palestinian sentiment, solidarity, and commitment with antisemitism and anarchism. It's not enough that the twice-impeached former president challenges democratic norms and institutions each and every day. Now we've got university administrators from Columbia and Emory to the University of Texas at Austin cracking down on dissent like so many tin-pot dictators.

There's a cruel irony in all of this. University presidents never tire of speaking to the importance of leadership. But in recent months, the craven CEOs of today's corporatized universities reveal an abject failure of leadership. Calling in militarized forces to intimidate nonviolent protesters, employing police state tactics to silence dissent, and incarcerating faculty and students is the stuff of tyrants and despots.

To state the obvious, authoritarian rule has no place on college campuses – essential sites of rigorous deliberation and debate on urgent matters of our time: from genocide and class war to systemic racism and climate catastrophe. If the IUB Board of Trustees is looking for leadership, they'll find it on Dunn Meadow. The real campus leaders are sleeping in encampments, speaking truth to power, and laying claim to the moral and ethical high ground that presidents, provosts and other campus administrators have ceded to the forces of intolerance, indifference, and political expediency.

And if the board is genuinely interested in preserving Indiana University's tradition of teaching and research excellence, a tradition founded on the shared values of free expression and academic freedom, listen to students of conscience. Disclose. Divest. Drop the charges.

Kevin Howley, PhD (IUB '98) is a writer and educator based in Bloomington.



# Indiana University's new expressive policy is too restrictive

## Your Turn

Sara E. Skrabalak  
Guest columnist

I'm not a late-night person and have little desire to protest late at night. If I'm up past 10 in the evening, I'd much rather be binging the latest season of a favorite show than because I have the desire to express my opinion on a given issue. Unfortunately, world events that demand an expressive response don't adhere to a specific schedule. For this reason, Indiana University's new expressive activity policy, which prohibits forms of expression after 11 p.m., fails to properly "balance free speech and safety," putting freedom of speech, a core academic value, in deep jeopardy.

I recall a 3 a.m. alarm in my undergraduate dorm. Despite being disoriented, I got up and walked across campus to keep vigil. It was Holocaust Remembrance Day. Candles were lit, and for a set time, I read the names of Holocaust victims until the next reader arrived. This expressive activity occurred when I was an undergraduate student and was a powerful way to remember Holocaust victims and reflect on antisemitism in our daily lives. Yet, it appears that such an event could not be held at Indiana University currently. Indiana University's new Expressive Activity Policy imposes time restrictions on expressive activity, including peaceful assembly, such that it "must take place between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m." Procedures are not given to request exceptions to these time restrictions, and a recent free speech vigil that started just before midnight has led to some participants being summoned to misconduct hearings.

There is a rich history of night vigils in the U.S. that extends far beyond Holocaust Remembrance Day as well. Those advocating for abolition of the death penalty hold vigil through executions, which Indiana code requires must take place before sunrise on the execution day. A National Prayer Vigil for Life is held yearly, with individuals and groups alike keeping watch following an evening mass until the following morning's activities. Advocacy for survivors of sexual assault can involve evening and overnight actions, particularly on college campuses, where an emphasis on taking back the night and making campus safe are common themes. The Bloomington nonprofit Beacon, an anti-poverty organization that supports the local unhoused population, raises awareness and funds to address homelessness through a yearly overnight sleepout.

Beyond raising awareness, these types of expressive activity have long been a way for communities to come together in times of mourning, celebration and reflection. I write this column because the timing of these activities is significant both in symbolism and impact. Was consideration given to the potential impact these time restrictions would have on the ways our community could gather and express itself? The report from the July 2024 Board of Trustees' meeting does not indicate such dialogue and the shared governance mechanisms that would have surely initiated such dialogue were bypassed. The new Expressive Activity Policy is unnecessarily restrictive and should be reviewed and revised with full community input.

Sara E. Skrabalak is the Indiana University James H. Rudy Professor, Robert & Marjorie Mann Chair and professor of chemistry.



Pt. 2

### Macklemore dropped from music festival after controversy

Grammy-winning musician Macklemore will not be performing at the inaugural Neon City Festival in Las Vegas following a controversial comment he made about America during a concert over the weekend.

"Macklemore will no longer be performing due to unforeseen circumstances," according to an Instagram post shared by the festival's organizers on Tuesday.

The festival has not specified why Macklemore was dropped, but the decision comes days after the "Thrift Shop" rapper stirred controversy for a remark he made while performing at a pro-Palestinian festival in Seattle. Videos of the concert circulating on social media captured the 41-year-old saying "(expletive) America" during his set on Saturday.

Macklemore has been a vocal supporter of Palestinians in the past

ODAY NETWORK AND REUTERS

and has criticized U.S. leaders for the country's support of Israel.

The Neon City Festival will now be headlined by DJ Alison Wonderland, rock band Neon Trees, singer-songwriter Russell Dickerson and DJ Seven Lions.

The festival is scheduled to run from Nov. 22-24.

Thursday September 26th 2024

Pt. 1



## Response to recent articles about IU president

Once upon a time, newspapers had an obligation to give both sides on an issue. One would read a newspaper knowing that the paper would let us know what happened and why.

The recent articles about IU President Pamela Whitten painstakingly describe how she is perceived on campus. The articles explain how she was selected. But they leave me at a loss as to why she was selected. If the search committee was aware of the record of ani-

HT  
See **LETTERS, Page 9A**

Sunday September 29th 2024 P+1

mosity she left at Georgia and Kenesaw University, why was she selected? The implication is that the trustees hired her and gave her a mandate to simultaneously provoke and ignore the faculty.

That is almost incomprehensible to me. Possible but improbable.

I know she has hired several good administrators. I know she has turned the athletic program around. I know she has brought in substantial research dollars. I know she has good rapport with the trustees. I think she has not managed the student protests well — but what university president has?

+

HT/Sunday September 29th 2024 P+2

Most importantly, why would the trustees give her a raise after the faculty gave her a vote of no confidence? In the spirit of balanced reporting, I was looking for the newspaper to explain this phenomenon to me.

Change is always hard. A new sheriff in town is not easy. All presidents make mistakes. IU ran off their first Black university president. I hope that IU will not do the same with their first female president.

Frank Motley, retired IU administrator, Bloomington



## About IU President Whitten's bonus

Would anyone protest if President Pamela Whitten donated her \$175,000 bonus to some local charity of her own choosing?

*Kenneth Caulton, Bloomington*

HT / Sunday  
September 29<sup>th</sup>  
2024

## Comments on H-T Whitten series

The notion that leaders of institutions of higher learning do controversial things and upset students and faculty is as American as apple pie.

1. The Herald Times series on IU President Pamela Whitten is in poor taste.

2. The titles of the articles are presumptuous and unseemly.

3. I think what would have been better for the readers and all concerned instead would be history of the leaders at IU, going back to the start, with a summary of the controversies.

4. This would serve the public better. I take no position on Ms. Whitten either way. I do applaud the editor, Ms. Bond, for trying to explain the gist of the articles and their intent.

*Roy Graham, Bloomington*

Sunday September  
29<sup>th</sup> 2024 / HT



# Whitten belongs among IU's worst presidents ever

## Your Turn

William E. Scheuerman  
Guest columnist

I am grateful for the H-T's investigation of IU President Pamela Whitten's rocky tenure and the sources of her unpopularity. But the situation is even worse than what the H-T reports.

IU has had some great — and not-so-great — presidents. But anyone familiar with IU's history will grasp why so many of us regretfully have concluded: Whitten belongs among our worst presidents ever.

First, Whitten has regularly rebuffed efforts by faculty, students, and staff to discuss, openly and collegially, widespread concerns about her autocratic management approach. In the aftermath of a series of unprecedented no-confidence votes last spring, she did hold a series of meetings. But those abruptly came to an end when challenged by participants who found her answers evasive and sometimes inane. Vague talk about continuing those conversations this fall amounted to empty promises.

Second, Whitten has surrounded herself with cronies, some of whom partnered with her previously at other universities, whose approach is no less autocratic than her own. The fact they have serious scholarly credentials — frankly, hers are embarrassingly modest — has not improved things much. Whitten and her loyalists have consistently communicated to people on the Bloomington campus that we don't count. Her recent decision, with the disappointing endorsement of IU Trustees, to create a new chancellor's position to run the Bloomington campus simply means another level of redundant, overpaid administration. Conveniently, it will allow Whitten again to shift the blame when things go badly.

In fairness, Whitten does seem to care about IU athletics. Most of her increasingly rare appearances on campus relate to IU sports — for example, her recent participation at a tailgate party for IU basketball players and recruits before the IU-FIU football game. Perhaps this explains IU Trustees President Quinn Buckner's over-the-top enthusiasm for Whitten, something that sets him sharply apart from the vast majority of the IU community. Both Buckner and Whitten have forgotten that there is more to running a major university than cheering on players and hobnobbing with coaches.

Third, there is an increasingly repressive climate on campus, with many younger and untenured faculty afraid to speak their minds. Unsurprisingly, the right-leaning Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), a group that monitors free speech at universities, just ranked IU second worst nationwide among public universities. The left-leaning ACLU is now suing IU for its new Orwellian "expressive activities policy," a poorly drafted set of overly broad rules cobbled together by lawyers who know



Indiana University President Pamela Whitten high fives a graduate during the processional of the platform party inside Memorial Stadium during Indiana University's 193rd undergraduate ceremony in 2022. RICH JANZARUK/HERALD-TIMES

nothing about the First Amendment. Anyone who cares about free expression and the right to peaceful dissent should be cheering for the ACLU.

Fourth, Whitten seems uninterested in the substantial negative publicity her actions have gained within the broader global academic universe. But they matter to those of us who care about IU: it badly impacts IU's rankings and stature and make it difficult to maintain high quality programs.

Fifth, IU's distorted priorities and misuse of resources gets worse by the day. Campus security is now being deployed to patrol, surveil, and report faculty and students attending weekly candlelight vigils protesting IU's clampdown on free speech. Meanwhile, our email boxes are littered with shocking reports of sexual abuse and attempted rape on campus. If this isn't a misallocation of campus police's time and energy, what is?

And just when we thought things couldn't get any worse, the Trustees reward Whitten with an obscene \$175,000 bonus, a kick in the teeth to thousands of us who have dedicated much of our working lives to enhancing IU's now imperiled reputation.

*William E. Scheuerman is the James H. Rudy Professor of Political Science and International Studies at Indiana University. He resides in Bloomington.*



# What Hoosiers want from IU

## Your Turn

Pamela Whitten

Opinion Contributor

As the state's flagship university, Indiana University plays a key role in the economic vitality and culture of the state. When I became IU president, I put forth an agenda to propel IU to new heights in student success, research and service to our great state.

With a sincere commitment to this vision, I contemplated how I could lead the extraordinary students, faculty, and staff of IU to succeed in these three goals. I realized that I needed to hear directly from citizens throughout our state. So, I packed my IU duffle bag and made it a priority to visit all of Indiana's 92 counties.

I recognize that I may be among the few to intentionally visit all 92 counties with no political aspirations, but I would highly recommend this to all who call Indiana home. We live in a beautiful state with kind and thoughtful people.

During my trips, I had important conversations with the citizens of Indiana about how all nine of IU's campuses can improve their lives.

Through these visits, I saw firsthand how IU's commitment to academic excellence, student success, transformative research, entrepreneurship and human capital development are enhancing communities in every corner of Indiana.

I also discovered opportunities for IU to do even more to elevate our state. (And I ate some amazing food — from the world-famous fried chicken at the family-owned Brau Haus in historic Oldenburg to the top-of-the-line steak at Third and Main Restaurant in vibrant Aurora.)

Hearing feedback from people throughout the state was crucial, because at a time when debates abound about the value of higher education, IU must play a key role in the future success of Indiana.

While I'm already looking forward to getting back on the road, here are five lessons I learned through these visits:

- Workforce development remains one of our most important functions as a university. In town after town, I heard how IU graduates were shaping their communities. But, even as we celebrate this success, we must continue adapting our programs and curriculum to meet the changing needs of Indiana's economy. That means establishing new degree programs in microelectronics and nanofabrication, AI and computer science, and cybersecurity risk management that prepare our students for lifelong success while contributing to the talent needs of our state. It also means collaborating with companies and institutional partners to create direct talent pipelines, through initiatives like our co-op partnership with Eli Lilly & Co. and our partnership with Naval Surface Warfare Center, Crane Division to advance microelectronics research and national security innovation.

- College readiness is imperative. If Indiana's future depends on higher education, we must invest in our young people from the start. IU's campuses are renowned for their ability to create economic mobility for graduates. But if a student shows up ill equipped for college coursework, that potential can be lost. I was heartened as educators across the state shared with me their deep commitment to setting students up for success. In Johnson County, I sat down with Franklin School Corp. leaders to discuss

the expansion of IU Columbus' seamless admissions program, which is designed to increase the area's college-going rate. I met with senior executives at Boston Scientific's principal manufacturing facility in Owen County, which seeks innovators and natural problem-solvers to help advance the newest and most effective biomedical technologies used to treat patients around the world. These discussions reinforced the importance for universities to be at the table for conversations about statewide college readiness and curriculum design.

- Attraction and retention are crucial, for both talent and business. Indiana citizens want access to good-paying jobs and growth opportunities, affordable health care and housing, and cultural opportunities. Businesses want to locate where there are talented workers, solid infrastructure and a strong sense of place. IU has multiple roles to play on this front. I met with business and community leaders in Washington County, where IU's Center for Rural Engagement continues to engage IU students and faculty on community projects designed to improve economic development and public health across the region. In Scott County, I met with IU Southeast alumna Jaime Toppe, whose work on "Forward Together," a comprehensive revitalization study done in partnership with our New Albany-based campus, will help identify ways for the community to grow high-wage jobs, increase affordable housing, and support small business development. In Fulton County, I toured Woodlawn Hospital, where IU Kokomo graduate Paula McKinney continues to build and retain a resilient workforce of highly trained physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals.

- We must continue to invest in Indiana's thriving creative economy. After crisscrossing the crossroads of America, I can think of countless moments of beauty and artistic inspiration, like the historically significant Bill Garrett Mural in Shelby County or the spectacular works that capture the heart and history of Jefferson County by Eric Phagan, an award-winning graduate of IU Indianapolis' Herron School of Art and Design. IU continues to build on our strong history of leading in the arts, with efforts like a new degree in music business that leverages the expertise of both the Kelley School of Business and the Jacobs School of Music.

- Hoosier Hospitality remains one of our greatest assets. On every visit I was struck by the kindness and sincerity with which Hoosiers spoke about their desires for their communities. Whether it was sipping coffee with friendly customers at the Sundog Café in Fowler or receiving a tour of New Castle High School's impressive gymnasium, there were countless moments of welcome and shared interest. It is this identity that makes Indiana unique, and our collaborative spirit will help make our state stronger.

I'm excited about what IU is doing to elevate our state. The conversations I had with Hoosiers from all walks of life and different backgrounds confirmed for me that the progress we are making toward our ambitious IU 2030 strategic plan is not just helping our students, but is leading to a stronger, more vibrant, and more prosperous Indiana.

Getting to hear firsthand how IU is making a difference in the everyday lives of Hoosiers only increased my love for this great university. And visiting all 92 counties made me grateful to call Indiana my home.

*Pamela Whitten is president of Indiana University.*



HT 11/29/2024 P6A

# What Beckwith got wrong about democracy in IDS attack

Jeffrey C. Issac

Guest columnist

The Indiana Daily Student recently ran a piece lamenting Donald Trump's election. Micah Beckwith apparently didn't like it.

Disagreements among citizens will occur in a free country. But Micah Beckwith is no ordinary citizen. The recently elected lieutenant governor, he took to social media to attack what displeased him.

Posting on X, he shared a screen shot of the "offending" IDS front page with these words: "This is from the Indiana Daily Student, the student newspaper at Indiana University after Trump won. Your tax dollars at work. They called him a 'moron,' a 'fascist,' and a 'threat to democracy' (even though we aren't a democracy, but I don't expect students at IU to know that.) This is WOKE propaganda at its finest and why most of America looks at higher education indoctrination centers like IU as a complete joke and waste of money. This type of elitist leftist propaganda needs to stop or we will be happy to stop it for them."

With these words Beckwith did not simply denounced the student newspaper. He threatened it, along with Indiana University itself. His threat is chilling and authoritarian, and any effort to act on it would certainly be litigated in court.

Even more troubling than the threat is the nasty comment placed in parentheses: "even though we aren't a democracy, but I don't expect students at IU to know that."

Beckwith's remark about democracy is a staple of far-right discourse. Back in 2020, conservative Utah Sen. Mike Lee made waves by publicly claiming that "Of Course We're Not a Democracy," maintaining that we are instead "a constitutional republic."

It is true that the U.S. Constitution does not contain the word "democracy." But it is also true that what the U.S. was in 1787 is not what it is now. And over the centuries since the U.S. Constitution was ratified, the U.S. has been democratized, by citizen movements demanding rights and succeeding in having these demands incorporated into U.S. Constitutional amendments, state constitutions, and laws such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The U.S. might have been a "constitutional republic, not a democracy" in the early years of the nation, but it has become constitutional democracy in the years since, due to the efforts of activists such as Frederick Douglass, Ida Wells-Barnett, Susan B. Anthony, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Don't take my word. Listen instead to J. Michael Luttig, a distinguished conservative Republican who worked in both the Reagan and Bush administrations; was appointed as a federal judge by President George H.W. Bush; mentored a number of conserva-

tive leaders, including Ted Cruz; and was the man to whom Mike Pence's staff turned on Jan. 5, 2021, for advice.

Asked if Pence had the legal authority to follow Donald Trump's orders to overturn Joe Biden's electoral votes on Jan. 6, Luttig said no. Pence followed Luttig's legal advice, and obeyed the law; he was then treated to a mob shouting "hang Mike Pence."

Luttig, whose 2022 testimony before the House bore the title "Democracy is on Knife's Edge," has very publicly described Donald Trump as a dangerous authoritarian. So, too, have retired Gen. Mark Milley, Trump's appointed head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Gen. John Kelley, Trump's Homeland Security secretary and then-White House chief of staff. Indeed, the IDS statements that Beckwith hates were not from IDS reporters or editors; they were quotes from Republicans who had worked with Trump and now say he represents a threat to democracy and, yes, the republic. Have they all suddenly become "woke?"

In Luttig's testimony, he stated: "Those who think that because America is a republic, theft and corruption of our national elections and electoral process are not theft and corruption of our democracy are sorely mistaken. America is both a republic and a representative democracy, and therefore a sustained attack on our national elections is a fortiori an attack on our democracy, any political theory notwithstanding."

Why these words? Because he knew that the very idea that "America is a republic, not a democracy" was being promoted by people, like Lee and Beckwith, to justify Trump's effort to overthrow an election.

I have been teaching about democracy at Indiana University Bloomington for over 37 years. I teach about the Constitution and its history, and about democratic theory. My students read James Madison, and Abraham Lincoln, and conservative scholars like Luttig, and Bernard Dobski, a Heritage Foundation fellow who also pushes the "republic, not democracy" line. In class we discuss how "republic, not democracy," has a troubling recent history that goes back to Southern segregationists and the John Birch Society. And we discuss how the U.S. was founded as a constitutional republic, and how it has over time become a constitutional democracy in which all citizens have basic rights, including freedom of expression.

It is troubling that Beckwith — a man just elected to high public office, who will soon take an oath to uphold the Constitution — would so casually threaten a student newspaper, and would just as casually scoff at the idea of democracy. Perhaps instead of threatening Indiana University, he ought to sit in on a class.

Jeffrey C. Issac is James H. Rudy professor of political science at Indiana University. The views expressed are those of the author only and should not be attributed to Indiana University.



# Whitten's string of firsts doesn't inspire much trust

**Russ Skiba and Heather Akou**  
Guest columnists

President Pamela Whitten's State of the University address last week highlighted a seeming string of firsts for Indiana University in the past year. But she neglected to mention a number of other firsts that have characterized her presidency. Across a proud 200-year history spanning 19 presidents, Whitten is the:

- First to suspend a Palestinian professor for failing to complete paperwork for a speaker on a topic about which President Whitten did not wish to hear.
- First to receive a 93% vote of no confidence from the faculty.
- First to violate a 55-year-old policy setting aside Dunn Meadow as a free speech zone in order to arrest over 50 students, faculty and staff engaging in peaceful protest. Monroe County's prosecutor refused to press charges, calling the process "constitutionally dubious."
- First to post a sniper on an IU rooftop. Of 1,100 Gaza protests that occurred around the country there were only five incidents where a weapon was trained on students. IU was responsible for two.
- First to be called out or urged outright to resign in votes in nearly every academic unit on campus.
- First to ban constitutionally protected free speech after 11 p.m. in an expressive activity policy rammed through in the dead of summer vacation. One constitutional law school scholar at IU said, "The problem with this policy is that it doesn't withstand contact with reality."
- First to sanction and threaten to terminate faculty, students and staff for participating in a candlelight vigil.
- First to be called out by a national free speech advocacy group as the second worst public university in the nation as far as free speech.

None of these issues received a word of mention anywhere in Whitten's State of the University address. Which state is she living in?

In her speech, the President spoke of enhancing student success — ensuring that an IU education remains accessible to first generation attenders and mi-

nority students. Yet out of the blue this fall, the administration announced the termination of the Intensive Freshman Seminar, a nationally recognized program that, for over 30 years, introduced first generation attenders to Indiana University, dramatically increasing retention.

Whitten touted IU's "steadfast commitment to multidisciplinary research." Yet her administration just cut university-wide funding for the Center for Research on Race and Ethnicity in society, a multidisciplinary consortium of faculty that has attracted strong postdoctoral fellows and helped them access university positions across the nation.

President Whitten expressed pride in the \$30 million Presidential Diversity Hiring Initiative, seeking to diversify IU's faculty. But the reality is that program was paused after only three years of a seven-year commitment. Many faculty fear these and other cuts to programs supporting marginalized faculty and students signal a slow-walk towards complete abandonment of all DEI initiatives here, as has happened in Florida, Texas and Kentucky.

In his book "On Tyranny," Timothy Snyder noted it's up to those who are part of an institution — in this case, faculty, staff, and students — to defend the values of that institution.

In response to the ongoing chaos and conflict that this administration has brought to IU for the past three and a half years, the University Alliance for Racial Justice (UARJ) has developed an alternative vision for Indiana University, called Protect IU. The components are shared governance, diversity, due process, academic freedom, protect students and staff, and protect the future.

We will continue to defend the values and principles that have made our university a world-class institution, and look forward to the day we can work together, rather than at odds, with the administration and the Board of Trustees to reach those goals.

*Russ Skiba is professor emeritus in the School of Education and co-founder of the University Alliance for Racial Justice. Heather Akou is associate professor in the Eskenazi School and a member of the University Alliance for Racial Justice steering committee.*



# The Herald-Times

The policy of this paper is to strive for accuracy. Like perfection, total accuracy may be unattainable; however, it will remain our primary goal and we will not feel satisfied until it is within our grasp.

Jill Bond News Director

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor's note: The Herald-Times received numerous letters in response to three columns published last month by local guest opinion writers. Here we publish a selection of those letters.

### Letter was 'gross distortion'

Mr. David M. Litman regards Professor Benjamin Robinson's letter, in response to a Jewish student's defense of Israel's genocidal policies, as full of straw-man arguments and ad hominem attacks, malicious, schoolyard bullying which supports student anti-semitism at IU, and a justification for the growing social skepticism toward academics.

This is a gross distortion of Prof. Robinson's editorial which, for reasons of space, did not engage in a professorial lecture, but cited what most of the world regards as objective, independent sources for the charge of genocide, e.g., Amnesty International, the International Criminal Court, the UN, and universally recognized scholars. He might also have cited President Carter's book, "Palestine: Peace not Apartheid."

Litman's assertions today, as in the responses to Carter's book, echo what Carter called powerful forces in the U.S., e.g., American Israel Public Affairs Committee, that seek to suppress any criticism of Israel vis-à-vis Palestine and the Palestinian people. It is with great regret that this observer has to say that there has not been any more powerful catalyst for despicable, ever-recurrent antisemitism than Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

And there has been no greater and more eloquent criticism of Israel's genocidal war than from Jewish Voices for Peace and the Jewish community itself.

James G. Hart, professor emeritus at Indiana University, Bloomington

### Claims fail to show of standard for genocide

If you want to demonstrate that Israel is guilty of genocide in Gaza, you have to prove that it has committed mass murder of civilians "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." That's how it was defined in the internal Genocide Convention of 1948. The arguments offered by Benjamin Robinson (Dec. 22, 2024, opinion) fall far short of that standard.

Robinson claims that "Israel has killed 44,758 Gazans," as if the mere fact that many people have died makes it genocide. But many people die in every war, that doesn't constitute genocide.

Unlike Israel, the Allies in World War II sometimes deliberately targeted civilian areas in Germany and Japan; that did not make President Franklin Roosevelt or Prime Minister Winston Churchill perpetrators of genocide. They were fighting a war of self-defense, just like Israel. The Israelis, however, have risked their own soldiers' lives in order to spare Gazan civilians, for example, by giving civilians advance notice of impending military action, so they can flee — which is the very opposite of genocide.

Robinson's figure of 44,758 deaths in Gaza is the number supplied by Hamas, an international terrorist group that, among other things, claims the Holocaust is a hoax. Holocaust-deniers are not usually considered a reliable source of information. Close to half of the Hamas number are armed terrorists — the same ones who committed mass murder and gang rapes in Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. Of the civilians killed in Gaza, the Hamas number includes thousands of people who died of natural causes as well as civilians who were killed when rockets fired by terrorists at Israel fell short and exploded within Gaza.

It would be wonderful if Israel could fight a war in which no civilians were harmed. But in the real world, Israel is pursuing thousands of killers and rapists who are hiding in school buildings, hospitals, and

## To our readers

You can send letters from the form on our website: Go to HeraldTimesOnline.com/opinion, scroll down and click on "Submit a letter."

Letters submitted by regular mail should be addressed: To the Editor, The Herald-Times, 1840 S. Walnut St., Suite 110, Bloomington, IN, 47401.

Letters must be signed by the writer and names will not be withheld from publication. Please include an address and daytime telephone number for verification.

First and last names must be used. We reserve the right to condense all letters, and those longer than 300 words will be rejected or shortened. Letters we believe to be libelous or in poor taste will not be published.



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hundreds of miles of tunnels underneath Gaza. Inevitably, some bystanders will be harmed. But that doesn't make Israel any more guilty of genocide than it makes Barack Obama guilty of genocide for launching the battle of Mosul in 2016, which (according to an Associated Press investigation) resulted in 9,000 to 11,000 Iraqi civilian deaths.

Moshe Phillips, national chairman, Americans For A Safe Israel, New York, N.Y.

### Claims about Israel are false, play into antisemitism

Rather than address Rachel Applefield's concerns about Jew-hate at Indiana University, Benjamin Robinson attacked her with false claims about Israel. Faculty like Professor Robinson have played a pivotal role in the surge of violent antisemitism gripping U.S. campuses since the Hamas attack on Israel in October.

Israel has done more to reduce harm to Palestinian civilians than Gaza's own leadership, which has deliberately put residents in harm's way. Israel is fighting terrorists that want to annihilate it. Robinson ignores the fact that Hamas carefully constructed a battlefield designed to maximize the loss of civilian life. He ignores Israel's legitimate right to defend itself against terrorist attacks. He ignores facts about Israel's assistance to the civilian population of Gaza; Israel has delivered 2.2 billion pounds of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Amnesty International had to create a new definition of "genocide" to apply it to Israel. Alice Nderitu, who was the special adviser on the Prevention of Genocide at the International Criminal Court, said Israel's campaign in Gaza doesn't meet the definition of genocide. It's Israel that has been the victim of a genocidal attack launched by Iranian proxies. World Central Kitchen dismissed 62 employees in Gaza (12% of their Gaza staff) over involvement in terror activities. CAMERA (Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America) is a non-partisan organization whose sole raison d'être is to ensure accuracy in Middle East reporting.

Holly Rothkopf, Boynton Beach, Florida

### Column 'crosses the line into antisemitism'

How discouraging it is to read guest columnist and Indiana University faculty member Benjamin Robinson's ill founded exhortation of student Rachel Applefield's truthful description of campus antisemitism, and consider that students at Indiana University are subjected to the kind of vicious and biased anti-Israel propaganda Robinson platforms. And yes, his column crosses the line into antisemitism.

Here's how. There are scholarly criteria for when criticism of Israel morphs into antisemitism. For example Natan Sharansky, the great Soviet-era refusenik, elucidated three such criteria, termed the Three D's: demonization of Israel or its supporters, delegitimization of Israel, holding Israel to a double standard applied to no other country.

Let's examine some of Professor Robinson's responses to Applefield, and see how they fit Sharansky's antisemitism criteria. First he labeled Applefield as being "heartless" because she truthfully wrote about her experiences of being a Jewish student on a campus flooded with antisemitic, pro-Hamas propaganda. This is an example of demonization.

Robinson assembled a motley group of anti-Israel organizations, sources and non-democratic countries and cited their obsessive anti-Israel screeds and actions to try to buttress his own distaste for the country. For example, Robert Bernstein, the founder of Human Rights Watch, a group whose obsessive hostile focus on Israel Robinson cited, criticized his own group for this hatred and disassociated himself from it.

Robinson cited the anti-Israel positions of human rights violators like Cuba, Libya, Turkey, and Egypt as buttressing his own Israelophobia, and Robinson platformed Hamas propaganda about casualties in Gaza to libel Israel's self defense actions. Yet experts like Professor John Spencer of West Point's Modern

War Institute; Col. Richard Kemp, who commanded the British Expeditionary Forces in Afghanistan, and seven former Department of Justice prosecutors who brought legal actions against Nazi war criminals have all lauded the IDF's efforts to minimize civilian casualties, and have denied that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza.

Yet Robinson demonized Israel's self-defense actions and delegitimized the country's rights to self defense. In effectively denying Israel's rights to defend herself against Hamas terrorism, Robinson held Israel to a double standard expected of no other country.

In a similar fashion Robinson denied the painful lived experience of a Jewish student suffering from the well publicized surge of campus antisemitism, a denial that (as far as I know) he doesn't inflict on any other student minority or protected class. Therefore Robinson's column meets Sharansky's double standard criteria, much to the detriment of Indiana University students.

Daniel Trigoboff, Williamsville, N.Y.

### Professor's column only enforced student's opinion

Abraham Lincoln once asked his Cabinet: "If I call a dog's leg a 'tail,' how many legs would that dog have?" To the perplexed members he responded: "Four. Calling a leg a tail doesn't make it so."

Just so, calling Israel's defensive war against Hamas a "genocide," doesn't make that so.

Although Prof. Benjamin Robinson (addressing Rachel Applefield's "Apology for Israel's Genocide") and questionable cited sources, wishes a more "expansive" definition to use as a cudgel against Israel, genocide is well defined: "intent to kill all or part of a recognized ethnic group." No more. No less. Indeed, actual genocide is such an enormous crime, any attempts to dilute its enormity, to score political points, is highly irresponsible.

Prof Robinson is entitled to present his own opinions as fact, but it is rather unseemly to attack a student for supposedly doing the same, and surely for attacking her as being "heartless" and "feeling no empathy" for this war's innocent victims.

Her well-reasoned column ("Antisemitic pro-Hamas propaganda at Indiana University must stop") evinced no evidence of such animus. Even more appalling was his insinuation that her not uncommon minimal stipend from a national advocacy group paid for her opinion. His fevered attempt to squash her many excellent points only furthered how spot-on was her column's title.

Richard Wilkins, Syracuse, N.Y.

### Fallacies of response reviewed

Benjamin Robinson's response to Rachel Applefield's cogent essay is not a response at all. It's a pastiche of logical fallacies. His headline and article waste no time trotting out these fallacies:

- Rachel Applefield's essay was NOT an apology.
- Israel is not committing genocide, and mere assertion doesn't make it so.
- Her job is to track anti-Semitic falsehoods. She doesn't need "to discredit Israel's critics"; like Robinson, their lies discredit them.
- His mischaracterization of CAMERA, is classic ad hominem. Instead of supporting his assertions with facts, he resorts to name-calling — the desperate tactic of losers.
- He doesn't define genocide (deliberate destruction of people based on their identity) because it doesn't apply to Israel's actions. Instead he names Jew-hating leaders and far left pro-Hamas organizations who falsely accuse Israel. The associate professor doesn't seem to understand that if Israel's defensive war were "genocidal," the Israeli Defense Forces could have simply carpet-bombed Gaza and won the war in a week without casualties.

Notably absent from Robinson's little essay is Hamas, which uses civilians as human shields, steals their food, started this war and could have ended it a year ago — Hamas to whom Palestinian dead are merely a propaganda ploy.

Rosette Liberman, Pittsford, N.Y.



# Rep. Hall, here's what lawmakers have done to our schools

## Your Turn

JoAnne E. Himebaugh  
Guest columnist

Dear Rep. Hall,

I recently received your annual "Issue Survey;" thank you. This year, a survey cannot possibly express the concerns I have, so I have taken your invitation to write you.

My letter is to address legislative actions taken on education in Indiana over the past 20-plus years, how those changes have benefited some, hurt some and the changes I have witnessed in my community schools, your community schools.

As you know, in 2009 and since, steps have been taken by the Indiana General Assembly to completely reshape school funding. Lawmakers moved funding away from funding buildings/academics to funding students. This funding restructure has allowed for successive legislation to fund charter, for-profit private, parochial, virtual and public schools out of a child's community in the form of vouchers/grants.

The restructure has also moved funding from smaller, poorer communities to larger, wealthier communities in an attempt to close the funding gap per child in the old funding model. At the same time, legislation has been passed lowering state standards for teaching.

The voucher program, which started as an alternative for impoverished inner-city children in failing public schools to receive a better education, has grown each biennial budget year. Alternative schools today are no longer alternatives to failing public

See HIMEBAUGH, Page 7A

## Himebaugh

Continued from Page 6A

schools (which our schools were never failing) for lower-income families, but are considered marketplace competition for all public schools.

This year, vouchers/grants were made available to families making up to \$250,000 per year. Could we not have first considered expanding the 21st Century Scholar program for families making up to \$60,000?

Authorizers of these alternatives to public schools make 3% of the tuition paid by the state. Ball State being the biggest recipient of tax dollars for authorizing 28 alternative schools (seven with F ratings and six with D ratings and only two with A ratings), took in \$2.9 million in the 2021-22 school year. Of the \$2.9 million, \$900,000 was paid to seven administrators, seven!

In the 2023-24 school year, four alternative schools in Indiana will close due to not being reauthorized or lack of enrollment, while six new ones will open. In fact, 75% of alternative schools opened in Indiana since 2010 have closed. Some have closed their doors in the middle of a school year, displacing children and causing parents the undue stress of finding another school. Several failing alternative schools that did not receive re-authorization will reopen under a different name with a different authorizer. Is this model sustainable?

Currently, the state is suing two of these failed alternative schools for over inflating enrollment numbers and paying for services never provided. The amount the state is seeking is \$154 million, \$65 million for tuition over payment and \$89 million paid to associates and family members of school administrators for services never performed.

The alternative school authorizer is not named in the suit. If alternative

school authorizers are not responsible for auditing these schools, who is? If a state audit was only performed after these schools closed their doors, how many other alternative schools might be bilking tax dollars?

I have to wonder if this new formula has met legislators' initial goal of streamlining and making more transparent our state school funding, or if it has only made it more complex, complicated, inequitable and very lucrative for a few. While the issues I have addressed may be headline news in the education section of the Indy Star, the affect the restructuring has had on small rural schools is not.

How do budget cuts each year limit the tools available to our teachers and administrators to provide a world class education that every child in the State of Indiana, which they are constitutionally privileged to?

Shortly after the initial restructuring in 2010, the changes I saw came first to our elementary children. Administrators forced to make budget cuts let licensed physical education/health teachers at our elementary schools go and replaced them with non-licensed staff that had no previous experience. This did not reflect the goals stated in the Indiana Healthy Weight Initiative published that same year, but those goals did not come with funding.

In the following years, I witnessed our licensed elementary art teachers being replaced, again, with non-licensed staff with no previous experience in the field they were charged to teach. Music classes at our elementary schools dropped to one day per week with a single music teacher traveling from school to school. So much for fostering creativity and attracting families to our community.

Then, in or around the 2014-15 school year, our licensed librarians at the elementary levels left one by one and were replaced, again, with non-licensed staff

with no previous experience as a librarian. This move directly correlates with the onset drop of reading scores for our third grade students. In subsequent years, libraries at our elementary schools have closed completely, putting an additional burden on our teachers to select and provide age-appropriate learning materials in classroom libraries.

Forecasting and budgeting for dropping enrollment, administrators have consolidated, then consolidated again, and closed one of our schools. (We are fortunate that our superintendent at the time had the foresight to move our Career Resource Center to this building to prevent having to sell it to an alternative school for \$1.)

Our teachers and administrators have had to campaign twice for a property tax referendum in order to attract and maintain teachers. This is not in their job description; it is the constitutional duty of the Indiana legislative body to ensure the equitable education for every child in Indiana. The last referendum campaign failed. The blame for failure is in large part due to the wording the state required of school board members to put on the ballot that read "home owners property taxes will increase by 30%."

From the 2017-18 to the 2020-21 school year, our teaching staff has dropped from 123 to 104 as teachers seek higher pay in surrounding counties (marketplace competition) or leave the field all together. While the state average annual salary for teachers is \$52,000, our district's starting salary has dropped to \$29,000; our medium salary is \$48,000, far less than the state average. Our substitute teachers, who are no longer required to have even an Associate's degree, make \$7.90 per hour, while neighboring counties pay \$11.40 - \$14.90 per hour.

This is not equity! This is not going to attract recently graduated teachers!

This does not help maintain the highly qualified teachers we currently have! Adjunct teachers are brought in at low rates and their classroom experience is "virtual school." The lack of hands-on teaching is proving too much for some of these teachers to complete even one full semester. Our students are the ones who suffer.

This year, we have cut our "We the People" program because, according to some, we cannot afford a qualified candidate. National Champions! Not just state champions, but national champions! This is utterly disheartening, discouraging and demoralizing. All the call for "civics education" in schools is just hyperbole.

The current school funding model is failing Hoosier children. Indiana lawmakers threw out an equitable school funding model and since then we have steadily been in a race to the bottom in our Indiana K-12 education. Our communities have been torn as we watch career teachers depart, as neighbors argue over whether to increase property tax to educate our children and as our children increasingly become disengaged watching the opportunities for a rich and full educational experience go out the door with the funding.

The top rated schools in the nation are in Massachusetts; their funding model looks very much like Indiana's old model of funding buildings/academics!

We are at a crisis point, the experiment has failed. Just like the removal of hand writing, long division and phonics has proven harmful to K-12 education and is now being re-implemented, we need to take a long look at our current failing funding model. Please, at the very least, consider a bi-partisan summer study committee. Our kids are worth it!

Sincerely, JoAnne E. Himebaugh  
JoAnne Himebaugh is a resident of Nashville, Indiana.