

Indiana University Bloomington



Indiana University Indianapolis



IUB-AAUP and IUI-AAUP Executive Committee Statement on the Termination of Jessica Adams **07/20/2026**

The Indiana University Bloomington and Indiana University Indianapolis chapters of the American Association of University Professors condemn the recent decision to terminate the employment contract of IU School of Social Work faculty member Jessica Adams. We call on IUI Chancellor Latha Ramchand, School of Social Work Dean Kalea Benner, and the IU administration to reverse this decision and restore Professor Adams to her position.

Jessica Adams is a lecturer who teaches at IU Bloomington, but is officially considered a faculty at the IU Indianapolis campus, given the administrative structure of the School of Social Work. Her academic freedom was initially breached when she was investigated for an alleged SEA202 violation following her teaching about racism and white supremacy in a required Masters course for the School of Social Work taught on the Bloomington campus. Professor Adams showed her students a graphic that listed the “Make America Great Again” slogan as an example of covert white supremacy. One of the students in her class reported this use of the graphic to Senator Jim Banks. Dean Benner officially filed an SEA 202 complaint against her based on this student complaint, and she claimed that the graphic lists “Make America Great Again” as a form of white supremacy that is “worse than police killing people of color.” This claim was not true, however, as the graphic, which is widely used in social work courses, does not suggest that. The “Make America Great Again” slogan was placed above the term “police killings of people of color” in the graphic, but the items were not listed hierarchically. Instead of taking the context into account, Dean Benner accepted the student’s interpretation of the graphic at face value.

Professor Adams’ teaching content and approach were within the accepted scope and pedagogy of her graduate-level course titled “Diversity, Human Rights and Social Justice,” and the materials she chose came from sources accepted by the accrediting institution. In short, she was teaching within the parameters of her academic discipline. But the investigation found her guilty of academic misconduct—an outrageous and unwarranted finding.

The investigation itself was filled with procedural irregularities: the Dean of Social Work positioned herself as the *complainant* in the case, when the [IU Indianapolis Procedures for Intellectual Diversity-Related Complaints](#) designates the Dean as the *administrator* of the policy. One cannot be both judge and prosecutor. The Dean also refused to seek an informal resolution as outlined in the policy.

While Professor Adams proceeded with her appeal of the charges, Dean Benner issued severe sanctions, including removing her from teaching for six weeks and, upon return, requiring that she record her classes for monitoring by faculty colleagues, actions for which there is no precedent or written policy or procedure. On May 29, 2026, Professor Adams was informed by Dean Benner that her contract would not be renewed, stating that she had not met the terms of a performance improvement plan (PIP). The implementation of the PIP, however, was clearly perfunctory. The PIP started on April 9, 2026 (near the end of the spring semester), giving Professor Adams less than a month to demonstrate “improvement” in her spring 2026 courses.

The non-renewal of Professor Adams’ appointment is, in the view of the AAUP, a clear case of retaliation and suppression of academic freedom. She was terminated from employment, despite consistently excellent student evaluations and in violation of clear procedures regarding contract instructors, such as [BOT-18](#), which states that "For non-tenure-track faculty on year-to-year, full-time appointments, notice of non-reappointment shall be given in writing ... at least twelve months before the expiration of an appointment after two or more years of service." Professor Adams has worked as a lecturer at IUB for six years; yet she was only given a one-month notice of her termination.

The actions of university leaders involved in this case demonstrate a lack of commitment to freedom of speech and expression, a commitment outlined in the recently adopted Chicago Principles. The [Chicago Principles](#), which Chancellor David Reingold and President Pamela Whitten endorsed publicly in 2025, state that “the University has a solemn responsibility not only to promote a lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it.” Yet, Chancellor Ramchand has restricted debates about how white supremacy should be taught in classrooms by firing a lecturer whose pedagogy conflicted with the opinions of a student.

In taking these actions, Indiana University has once again violated its own policies, eroded shared faculty governance, and contributed to a hostile work environment, where faculty can be terminated based on false accusations. The termination is a dangerous escalation by the School of Social Work and Indiana University, and sets a perilous precedent for all teaching faculty, research staff, and students.

IUB-AAUP and IUI-AAUP call on IU School of Social Work and IUI Chancellor Ramchand to immediately rescind the SEA202 charges and restore Professor Adams to her position.

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