

The Minnesota Academe

A Publication of the Minnesota Conference of the American Association of University Professors

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Summer / Fall 2009

A Message from the President

Greetings all...

This fall is a period of beginnings and transitions for many of us, and this is certainly the case for me as I come on board as the new president of Minnesota AAUP. As many of you know, I come to this position after years of experience with the Hamline University chapter of AAUP and serving on the Minnesota AAUP Executive Committee. I am excited and pleased to be elected as your president, and look forward to working with AAUP members.

We are already busy with a number of activities. First, in early October, we sent an open letter to presidents and administrators of colleges and universities across the state encouraging the practice of good governance especially in times of financial crisis. A copy of this letter is published in this newsletter as well.

We hope to continue to promote widely the notion that faculty, adjuncts, graduate students, and staff in higher education can all be creative and important resources for economic recovery both on campus and be-

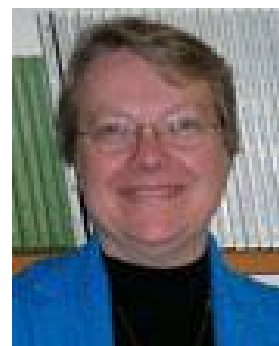
yond. Over the coming months, watch for announcements about our upcoming fall forum on strategies and approaches to shared governance, our annual meeting in February, and other possible workshops and speakers on issues in higher education in the spring.

Know that the Executive Committee of Minnesota AAUP is here to assist with resources, consultation, and advice on issues of academic freedom, shared governance, best practices for tenure and promotion, and other key areas of academic policy.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our past president, Eric Wiertelak, for all his efforts over the last three years. He helped update our Minnesota AAUP website, organized several forums and meetings, served as consultant and advocate for AAUP members, and was instrumental in bringing national AAUP's Summer Leadership Institute to Minnesota. Thank you Eric!

I look forward to serving you. I can be best contacted through email at: kvogel@gw.hamline.edu. Good luck as the new fall term begins, and we will be in touch.

Sincerely,
Karen J. Vogel
President, Minnesota AAUP



Report from the National Committee on Adjunct Faculty
Jeremy Nienow

“...We still believe in the importance of essential faculty rights and responsibilities, as part of our larger roles as citizens of the academic community “

Over the past year, a subcommittee of the AAUP's Committee on Adjunct Faculty has been working together to generate a report on ongoing, and proposed, methods for stabilizing the profession, specifically as it relates to contingent faculty. Obviously, the best way to accomplish this is the wholesale conversion of contingent appointments to the tenure track. However, this is often not possible or practical, for a variety of reasons, at any given institution. Recognizing this, we still believe in the importance of essential faculty rights and responsibilities, as part of our larger roles as citizens of the academic community – and we hope that institutions will adopt some measures to generate teaching stability.

The report begins with a brief discussion of the collapsing faculty infrastructure across the country. From there, two smaller sections outlining the need for stabilization and the best practice of adjunct to tenured conversion is discussed. While this work is certainly not new to any of us that have spent some, much, or all of our professional lives as contingent workers, the two appendixes at the end of the report will likely be of greatest use.

Appendix A includes a variety of specific conversion practices and proposals that have been attempted or proposed over the last several years at various schools. The second appendix describes stabilization practices that have fallen short of tenure but have still been successful at stabilizing adjuncts. Schools included in this report range from a wide variety in California to Colorado in the West, to Michigan in the Midwest, and several schools on the east coast.

After the subcommittee completed its work, the document was forwarded for comment to Committee A. Now that their discussions have completed it will now be published in the November-December issue of Academe and will also be released on the Web ahead of that publication.

See the AAUP national website (www.aaup.org) for more information.

Open letter from MN AAUP to University and College Administrators

October 2009

An Open Letter to Presidents and
University Administrations at
Universities and Colleges in Minnesota

RE: Importance of Shared Governance in Times of Financial Crisis

Greetings:

Once again, a new academic year is beginning at universities and colleges across Minnesota. While this is often a time of excitement and optimism as the fall semester starts, many of our schools this year are facing tough economic times. Concerns exist about retention, recruitment, decreasing endowments, and lack of sustaining donations to institutions.

We appreciate the need for university administrators and institutional boards to be good custodians of an educational institution's financial health, and we acknowledge efforts at various universities and colleges to engage members of their communities in these decisions. We congratulate the University of Minnesota for being recognized recently by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression for unani- mously adopting academic freedom and responsibility policy amendments. These amendments provide an important confirmation of the rights of faculty to speak out on matters related to professional duties and the functioning of the university as well as on matters of public concern.

At the same time, we at Minnesota AAUP would like to remind our colleagues across the state about the continuing importance of shared governance, academic freedom, and the need for open, collaborative discussions about budget and curriculum decisions - especially in times of financial crisis.

Faculty, staff, and graduate students are critical resources. As was recently noted in a national AAUP statement, "the sustainable path to higher education's recovery, and contribution to the nation's recovery, lies not in further depleting our faculties, the country's intellectual capital, but in building capacity, reinvesting in faculty and academic professionals, who are essential to increasing student access and success, thereby expanding the nation's human, cultural, and social capital" (www.aaup.org).

National AAUP has a number of suggestions for best practice and means of working collaboratively and effectively with faculty and staff in making difficult decisions. Just a few of those recommendations are listed below:

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(Open Letter, cont.)

“When faculty, graduate students, adjuncts, and staff are disempowered, dismissed as obstructionist, inflexible, or out of touch, or exploited for cheap labor, everyone loses: students, administrators, and the institution as a whole.”

- Availability of information - Faculty should have access to full information on university budget, expenditures and assets. Detailed and timely reports should be provided to faculty representatives on a regular basis. According to national AAUP guidelines, faculty can request and should receive full information on financial matters. An informed faculty can be very helpful in participating in key decisions affecting the institution.
- Timely, proactive, and open discussions – Rather than the administration providing information after the fact or pre-selecting policy responses, faculty should be allowed to participate with the president, the board, and key committees, in timely, proactive discussions about upcoming problems and possible solutions. Faculty and staff can be important sources of thoughtful suggestions and creative ideas.
- Collaborative and mutually agreed upon decisions - Faculty and staff should be viewed as important partners in collaborative and meaningful decisions. Faculty committees should not just be informed of policy from the top down, but actively involved in decision-making throughout its process. Key policy options or decisions should not be kept secret or held away from constituencies. Even if discussions and open deliberation take more time, in the long run, better, more productive, and mutually helpful and supported policies will result.
- Importance of mutual trust – Building trust and positive morale in any organization is key to good work. When faculty, graduate students, adjuncts, and staff are disempowered, dismissed as obstructionist, inflexible, or out of touch, or exploited for cheap labor, everyone loses: students, administrators, and the institution as a whole.

Many guidelines and recommendations can be found at the national AAUP website or in the latest edition of *Policy Documents and Reports* (also known as the Redbook.). Copies of key Redbook statements on governance are available from Minnesota AAUP upon request.

Members of the Minnesota AAUP Executive Committee are also available to administrators as well as faculty and staff for consultation on best practices and strategies for shared governance. Contact information is available on the Minnesota Conference of AAUP website at: www.mnaaup.org. We are glad to be of service any time.

Respectfully,
Executive Committee for Minnesota Conference of AAUP, 2009-2010

Making Hard Times Our Times: Highlights from AAUP 95th Annual Meeting, Conference on Globalization, Shared Governance, and Academic Freedom, and AAUP Summer Institute 2009

By Karen Vogel, Minnesota AAUP Conference President

This summer was a busy one, and Minnesota AAUP was represented at several key meetings and conferences. In June, I attended national AAUP's 95th Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., and the simultaneous AAUP-sponsored academic conference on Globalization, Shared Governance, and Academic Freedom at the Omni Shoreham Hotel. Cecilia Farr, past Minnesota AAUP President and current member of the national AAUP Council was also at the national meeting. Then in July, Minnesota AAUP hosted the national AAUP Summer Institute. A few highlights from all these activities are presented here.

Highlights from National Meeting

A consistent theme throughout all the meetings this summer was concern about the effects of tough economic times on higher education. Often public education is first on the list of state budget cuts, and at private institutions, the trend is to decrease salaries, retirement benefits, and hiring of faculty. In this climate of uncertainty, another big problem is that some administrations at individual institutions are manufacturing crises in order to make cuts in programs or attack tenure.

At the national meeting, Gary Rhoades, AAUP General Secretary, and Cary Nelson, AAUP President, spoke of redefining faculty expertise as important intellectual capital. National and state governments

should be encouraged to invest in higher education as a tool for recovery, and faculty should be seen as key to the educational process. Without them, institutions of higher education cannot function. Faculties are also professionals with expertise that may be helpful both at their home institutions as well as in the public sector.

Rhoades and Nelson reminded us that faculties should also share responsibility in advocating for themselves and speaking out about fair treatment and faculty rights. We should make these difficult times our times, and use them as an opportunity for redefining the value of faculty work and the critical role that education has to play in the improvement of society as a whole. Faculties need to reengage in institutional governance and not let apathy or frustration overshadow the need for continued vigilance on matters of curriculum, budget, best policy practices, and the future of higher education. We need to educate ourselves about financial information in order to ask questions at our universities and colleges. Faculties also should become public activists, contacting representatives and advocating for better education funding and policies in their home states.

In addition to the annual business meeting where censure actions were reviewed, I also attended the keynote address by Andrew Delbanco, Director of

American Studies at Columbia University. Professor Delbanco outlined several trends in higher education including how the quality of education in the U.S. seems to be falling behind the rest of the world. Budget cuts only exacerbate the problem, affecting financial aid, admissions, and curriculum delivery. Delbanco reinforced the message that faculty need to be involved in decision-making in higher education. If faculty do not care much or do not raise their voices in protest, the public will do so even less.

Delbanco did praise efforts by the Obama administration to overhaul the student financial aid system, increasing opportunities for students to attend college. He also urged faculty to work collectively to support, to enhance, and to protect education for all.

During the annual business meeting, AAUP announced its continuing work on reforming the national office and becoming more responsive to its members. The use of on-line voting for key positions, updating the website, and providing better service are all areas where upgrades are taking place. AAUP has also introduced new resources for dealing with financial crises at institutions on its website. In other areas, national AAUP is also examining policy issues and best practices. For example, a new Committee on the Status of Librarians reviewing policies on the treatment of librarians will be instituted this year.



Cecilia Konchar-Farr (left) and Karen Vogel at the AAUP National Meeting, Washington, D.C.

(Highlights, cont.)

Censure actions were reviewed and voted on at this year's annual meeting. Four administrations were placed on AAUP's censure list: Cedarville University, North Idaho College, Nicolls State University, and Stillman College. Delegates also voted to remove the University of New Haven and Tulane University pending some final language adjustments in the stated basis for censure.

Two other resolutions were also considered. A special resolution honoring the exceptional work of long-time AAUP activist, Ernst Benjamin, passed, and a second resolution expressed support for the option of jury trial in the Whistleblower Enhancement Act of 2009 being considered at the federal level.

Additional highlights and details about censure actions from the national meeting can also be found on the national AAUP website at: www.aaup.org

Conference on Globalization, Shared Governance, and Academic Freedom

This year AAUP sponsored an international academic conference at the same time as the national meeting. Focusing on globalization, shared governance, and academic freedom in education systems around the world, the conference had several panels and presentations ranging from corporate appropriations of academic knowledge to global trends in academic governance. Some presentations included comparative studies and discussions of trends at foreign universities. For example, one panel focused on shared governance ideas at universities in Zimbabwe and China. Another looked at academic freedom and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

One of the panels I found particularly

interesting was "Creating Strategies and Programs to Promote and Sustain Shared Governance" presented by faculty from George Mason University. Their strategies included maintaining well-defined and continuous interactions among faculty, administrators, and board members, whether through direct communication via email, face-to-face meetings, or informal networks. They also called for faculty representation on boards of trustees or regents and key university committees; in other words, for them, getting a seat at the table was important in impacting policy decisions.

Furthermore, communication with key state legislators about issues of higher education was encouraged by calling for AAUP members to write their representatives about funding for higher education and other matters. George Mason AAUP also worked with the Virginia AAUP State Conference to promote a resolution calling for a cap on administrative pay at universities and colleges state-wide. All these strategies were practical ways to increase faculty voice, educate the public and the university community, and enhance faculty participation in policy-making processes. Some of their strategies may be useful at some of our own Minnesota schools.

Summer Institute Highlights

An important event a little closer to home this summer was the AAUP Summer Institute held at Macalester. Over 200 participants attended workshops and panels with representation from institutions as far away as the U.S. Virgin Islands. Presentations covered topics such as strengthening faculty handbook language, administering grievances, analyzing institutional data, and building a better tenure process.

Along with Jack Rossmann, Professor

Emeritus of Psychology, from Macalester College, and Greg Stoltz, staff from national AAUP, I chaired a panel on best practices for faculty participation in accreditation. We discussed the importance of faculty participation in the accreditation process, learning about accreditation requirements, and using accreditation reviews as a way to draw attention to needs for improved shared governance within institutions. Conversation was lively and useful, so much so that participants called for expanded accreditation workshops at future AAUP events.

For additional highlights, check out the review, "Faculty Activism and AAUP Principles Shine at the 2009 Summer Institute" by Jenn Nichols at <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/academe/2009/SO/nb/nota1.htm>.

FALL FORUM

Watch the Minnesota AAUP website for information on this year's Fall Forum

The Forum will address shared governance issues

www.mnaaup.org

HOW TO REACH MN COMMITTEE A:

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We're on the Web!!
www.mnaaup.org

HOW TO APPLY TO MN AAUP LEGAL DEFENSE FUND:

The State conference legal defense fund has \$3,000 available to members or chapters needing legal council. Maximum grant is \$1,500 per chapter or \$1,000 per individual. To apply contact the conference president Eric Wiertelak at wiertelak@macalester.edu

How to contact the Minnesota AAUP

Visit us at our website <<http://www.mnaaup.org>> or contact one of the state executive committee members listed here.

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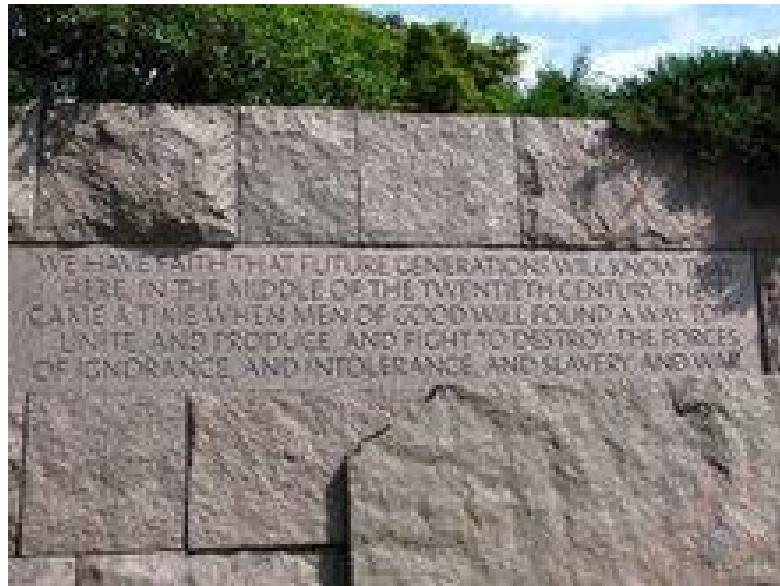


Image of the FDR Memorial in Washington, D.C., site of the AAUP's National Meeting, courtesy of Cecilia Konchar-Farr, MN AAUP Past President