

**Approved by Committee A
June 6 and 7, 2008**

PHILANDER SMITH COLLEGE (Arkansas)

The Association's 2004 annual meeting imposed censure on the Philander Smith College administration. The censure followed an investigating committee's report on the dismissal and banishment from campus of a professor who had informed a reporter about the president's directive stating that faculty contacts with the media without her prior approval would constitute insubordination, resulting in immediate dismissal. The report concluded that the dismissal violated the professor's academic freedom and that the academic freedom of every member of the college faculty was threatened by the very issuance of the directive.

Litigation initiated by the professor failed when the federal district court ruled that an annual employment contract signed by faculty members gave the president unfettered authority in implementing a dismissal, whatever the faculty handbook might appear to require.

Within a year after censure was voted, a new president of the college took office. At the suggestion of the Association's staff, he promptly rescinded the directive on contact with the media, referring the faculty to the provision in the 1940 *Statement of Principles* on public utterances as "a fair guideline that we can all support." His consultations with the staff about additional actions regarding college policies that were needed to bring the Association's censure to closure led in 2007 to his issuing a new employment contract, approved by the board of trustees and the faculty senate, ensuring that termination or nonrenewal of faculty appointments would be governed by the faculty handbook's applicable provisions. Finally, as to the faculty handbook itself, the board voted in February 2008 to reaffirm provisions adopted by a previous board regarding dismissal and nonreappointment that adhere respectively to those in the joint 1958 *Statement on Procedural Standards in Faculty Dismissal Proceedings* and in the 1971

Statement on Procedural Standards in the Renewal or Nonrenewal of Faculty Appointments.

As to the issue of redress for the dismissed professor, she told the AAUP staff that she was quite content, for herself, with the knowledge that AAUP-recommended standards have been adopted at the college. Beyond testimony that this has been accomplished, she asked only that the unjust dismissal be cleared from college records and that her banishment from the college premises be ended. The president wrote in February to notify her that her personnel file had been cleared, that she can certainly feel free to visit the campus any time that suits her, that he is “proud to be the president who helped to bring some kind of justice to an unfortunate situation,” and that he looks forward to meeting her on some future occasion.

The officers of the Philander Smith College Faculty Senate and of the AAUP’s Arkansas Conference have written in support of removing the censure.

Committee A recommends to the Ninety-fourth Annual Meeting that Philander Smith College be removed from the Association’s list of censured administrations.