



AN AAUP CHAPTER CAN *Transform* YOUR CAMPUS

BY CARY NELSON

Big or small, established or fledgling, an AAUP chapter on your own campus can accomplish a surprising number of things that even the most committed faculty member can't do alone.

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A chapter can help institutionalize AAUP policies. Many campuses already incorporate the AAUP's principles and recommended standards—including explicit AAUP language—in their faculty personnel policies. But many more AAUP principles should be built into your faculty handbooks and campus regulations, from the joint statement on student rights to guidelines on maintaining academic freedom in electronic communications and on college and university websites. As the world changes, the AAUP clarifies and strengthens its policy statements and recommended institutional regulations. We are now, for example, urging that better protections for speech related to shared governance be adopted on campuses nationwide. Your AAUP chapter can promote the adoption of these policies and be an articulate source of information about them. It is a continuing project, one that can have an immense impact on campus life.

A chapter can speak truth to power. The most immediate difference an AAUP chapter can make is to be a source of frank, honest, and forthright commentary on nearly every aspect of campus life. A chapter, moreover, is not a voice crying in the wilderness. Whenever possible, it should represent the consensus view of a core faculty group formally recommending actions, issuing warnings about real problems, and deflating administration hyperbole about false emergencies. An AAUP chapter provides the faculty with a voice that can shed sunlight on cant, self-interest, and deception and applaud good practices. Then, of course, the chapter needs to promote solutions to problems.

A chapter can organize the faculty. Even a small chapter can fulfill the first and second functions, but with greater numbers comes greater impact and influence. To reach the highest plateau—majority membership in a chapter—it is necessary to walk the halls encouraging colleagues to join the chapter through one-on-one conversations. Our experience shows that faculty members will join if approached individually by a knowledgeable colleague. The best practice is to approach new faculty members in their first weeks on campus. An organized faculty can press the university to increase the percentage of full-time, tenure-track teachers. It can press the administration to spend more resources on instruction. It can be a coherent voice founded on continuing solidarity. A faculty senate can represent the faculty and can build effective consensus around an issue, but it typically cannot organize

the faculty. For a senate is an organic part of the institution and is dependent on the institution for its continued existence. An AAUP chapter, by contrast, is an independent faculty organization that is beholden to no person and no other entity; it is beholden instead to the principles and standards of the profession.

A chapter can promote sound governance. An AAUP chapter should be an ally, partner, and political advocate of faculty governance and its processes and products. When necessary, it can remind the senate, campus committees, and the administration of good governance principles. It can sound a warning when people—whether administration, faculty, or governing board—deviate from those principles.

A chapter can issue its own position papers. An AAUP chapter can harness faculty skills at research and writing and apply them to the general good and welfare. On a whole range of issues, the faculty needs a well-reasoned, well-researched, well-documented point of view. Detailed position and policy papers that address local issues or give a local context to national concerns are one way to shape institutional policy, build consensus, and avoid errors that are all too often the product of governance by administrative fiat. Oral opinion is more easily dismissed, but a high-quality white paper can carry the day, at least with those who value and respond to reasoned argument. But words also need to be supplemented by constructive actions.

A chapter can pursue grievances. A collective bargaining local will inevitably have a grievance officer to assist individual faculty members who have been mistreated or ignored. People often are not very good at being their own champions. At the very least, a chapter needs a local committee on academic freedom to assist people who are filing grievances. A more dispassionate third party can do better. Campuses without collective bargaining often have inadequate grievance procedures or none at all. Even without a union contract, your AAUP chapter can form a grievance committee to assemble evidence, pursue cases, and obtain justice for aggrieved faculty members. It can negotiate informally but effectively with the administration. It can seek assistance from the AAUP's national office and pursue some cases jointly with the national staff. Doing a good job at providing these services can enhance a chapter's credibility with both the faculty and the administration.



A chapter can collect dues. A faculty that wants to act collectively needs the resources to finance some of its activities. Faculty senates, unfortunately, too often have no financial resources. As a voluntary organization, however, an AAUP chapter can add modest local dues to the cost of a national membership. Dues can support member travel to state and national meetings, finance a local website, fund release time for an organizer, pay for copying and distributing documents, assist with legal costs, or pay for professional analyses of campus finances. An AAUP chapter bank account gives the faculty a degree of independence it can have no other way.

A chapter can obtain and distribute information about campus finances. This chapter function deserves an entry of its own because of its increasing importance in tight times. The AAUP has members who specialize in campus finances and who can—for a fee—analyze campus budgets and financial statements. You cannot negotiate with the administration about resources and priorities unless you know how much money is available and how it is being spent. You also need to know the history of campus spending and the likely status of future revenue streams. Where money is concerned, knowledge really is power.

A chapter can educate the entire community. A chapter should aim to reach not only faculty members and administrators but also students, board members, community

newsletter will be read. The AAUP conducts workshops on communications and media relations at its annual Summer Institute.

A chapter can build relationships with the national professoriate. Faculty members mostly build relationships with people at other campuses in their own disciplines. However rewarding those connections are, they are not sufficient to stay well informed about how to deal with the many general challenges higher education as a profession now faces. Membership in the AAUP—the only fully multidisciplinary national faculty organization—gives both individuals and chapters input, connections, support, and inspiration from colleagues everywhere.

A chapter can become active in a state conference. Most states have statewide organizations for chapters—called state conferences—that give chapters a way to consult with one another and plan actions relevant to state concerns. State conferences organize lobbying efforts, support membership drives, inform members and chapters about emerging issues, and help with local academic freedom and shared governance problems.

A chapter can collaborate with an experienced national staff to solve local problems. The various departments in the AAUP's national office offer experienced assistance to individuals, chapters, and state conferences—membership;

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members, legislators, and all employee groups. A chapter should be the key democratic voice on campus, and it should be clear to all that it is devoted to the general good and welfare. A chapter can use all the resources available to communicate its messages—from newsletters and press releases to websites and e-mails to teach-ins and social networks. By listening to and learning from other constituencies, a chapter can help articulate positions that reflect the interests of multiple groups. A chapter needs to communicate with all key constituencies regularly. If a newsletter gives people information they cannot get elsewhere, including detailed information about campus finances, the

academic freedom, tenure, and governance; organizing and services; communications; finance; government relations; law; and research. A century of knowledge and experience is available with a telephone call or an e-mail. An immense array of resources is available on the AAUP's website.

A chapter benefits from national representation. The national office represents faculty interests at a national level. We monitor legislative proposals, submit amicus briefs to the courts, conduct research on higher education trends, track salary patterns in an annual report, and issue strong statements on critical issues. ■