

David B. Downing, English, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Candidate Biography

I received my Ph.D. in English from SUNY/Buffalo in 1980. I began teaching full-time in 1979 at Eastern Illinois University, and in 1988, I moved to Indiana University of Pennsylvania where I currently serve as the Director of Graduate Studies in Literature and Criticism.

Early in my academic career, I became interested in the history of the university, especially the rise and transformation of the institutions, professions, and disciplines of higher education. Beginning in the 1980s, I wrote a series of essays on these topics, and this work led to, among others, the publication of the co-edited collection *Beyond English, Inc.: Curricular Reform in a Global Economy* (2002), and *The Knowledge Contract: Politics and Paradigms in the Academic Workplace* (2005).

During the past decade I have published such directly related essays as “Global Capitalism, Scientific Management, and Disciplinary English” (2004); “Academic Freedom as Intellectual Property: When Collegiality Confronts the Standardization Movement” (2006); “Autonomy vs. Insecurity: The (Mis)Fortunes of Mental Labor in a Global Network;” (2008), and “World Bank University: The War on Terror and the Struggles for the Global Commons,” (forthcoming, 2011).

I edit the scholarly journal, *Works and Days*, with several recent volumes devoted to the transformation of the university and the threats to academic freedom. These include *Information University: Rise of the Education Management Organization*

(2003); *Richard Ohmann: A Retrospective* (2005); and *Academic Freedom and Intellectual Activism in the Post-9/11 University* (2009). A much edited version of the latter volume was recently published in fall, 2010, as a book, *Academic Freedom in the Post-9/11 Era*. Stanley Fish addressed this book in his *New York Times* blog in December, 2010, and in January, 2011, I was interviewed about this project by *InsideHigherEd*.

Candidate Statement

My current interest in being considered for nomination to the AAUP Council stems from my more than 20 years of active research, writing, and scholarship in the academic labor movement and on the history of the university, especially the recent transformation of higher education under the impact of economic and political forces.

The past forty years has largely been the story of how the post-War expansion of higher education shifted into our accelerating period of contraction. The academic job market collapsed, and the rise of contingent, part-time, temporary faculty accelerated, and these reductions in job security have deeply compromised academic freedom. Given these circumstances, I have appreciated the new administration of AAUP and their activist response to the attacks on higher education. I agree with Cary Nelson’s assessment that higher education’s distinctive contribution to a democratic society is based upon the interrelationships between the “three stools” of academic freedom, shared governance, and tenure. And most importantly, the AAUP is the leading organization to define the terms for those struggles and to reach out to all the different constituencies in higher education. With respect to its larger social mission, then, the AAUP must also advocate

for the common ground represented by the rights of all faculty and students to dignity and justice in their workplaces and classrooms.

I am well-prepared to contribute to that mission. For the entire 31 years of my full-time teaching career, I have been a member of organized faculty labor unions, and I have always been working in solidarity with my colleagues to protect academic freedom through negotiating fair and equitable bargaining unit contracts. In short, the core issues and mission of AAUP have also been central to my own academic career.

A great deal is at stake in the coming years as we struggle with the increasing privatizing, vocationalizing, and instrumentalizing of all phases of education. It is, therefore, in everyone's interest to create solidarity around the around the common ground represented by the AAUP.