

Faculty Matters

Spring 2007

Newsletter of the American Association of University Professors

Summer Institute

July 19–22, 2007

Reno, Nevada

Few see their academic careers as a fast track to activism. But every year, some five hundred AAUP members find themselves actively engaged with their local chapters. When it's your turn to advocate for a colleague, lobby your state legislature, or organize a public relations campaign, will you feel ready?

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For more information, see www.aaup.org/AAUP/About/events/2007-SI.

AAUP

American Association of University Professors
Academic Freedom for a Free Society

Undergraduate Labor: The Final Frontier

By Marc Bousquet

In its ruthless quest for super-cheap labor, the university has fastened on new ways of exploiting an old favorite: the student worker. We are all familiar with the figure of a student working a minimum-wage job as “financial aid.” On many campuses, student workers outnumber faculty, staff, and other workers combined.

Undergraduates work for their degree-granting institution as painters, maids, janitors, cooks, groundskeepers, truck loaders, day-care staff, teaching assistants, computer technicians, coaches, security guards, and administrative assistants, typically for wages at or near the national or local minimums. For a significant fraction of these students, on-campus jobs are just one element of their efforts to fund their degrees, which increasingly involve unsustainable debt loads and additional off-campus employment.

Nearly twenty million students are enrolled in postsecondary institutions. Eighty percent work to finance their educations. Almost half of that number—between seven and eight million undergraduates—work full-time or work multiple part-time jobs approaching a full-time equivalent.

I first started thinking about this issue at the University of Louisville, where I first received tenure. I arrived in 1998, shortly after the university began a much-ballyhooed “partnership” with United Parcel Service (UPS), the city of Louisville, and other local colleges. The partnership’s sole function is to entice students to sign contracts committing them to provide cheap labor in exchange for education benefits. This arrangement alone has provided UPS with more than ten thousand ultra-low-cost student workers since 1997, the same year that the Teamsters launched a crippling strike against the carrier. Currently there are six thousand undergraduates working at the UPS Louisville hub, with plans to hire thousands more. Currently about three thousand local undergraduates work a midnight shift that ends at UPS’s convenience—typically 3 or 4 a.m., later during peak shipping seasons.

Between 1997 and 2003, UPS hired undergraduates to staff more than half of its one hundred and thirty thousand part-time positions. Students are currently the majority of all part-timers, though only some receive education benefits. By allocating many of its “Earn and Learn” benefits primarily to students willing to work undesirable hours, UPS has over the past decade recruited approximately fifty

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thousand part-time workers to its least desirable shifts without raising pay. The largest benefits are reserved for students who think they can handle working after midnight every night of the school week.

The consequences of night work are well documented, and the available evidence suggests markedly negative effects for the Louisville students. Every instructor to whom I spoke reported excessive fatigue and absenteeism (due to both fatigue and an extraordinarily high injury rate). Students participating in the UPS program showed substantial failure to persist academically. In a desperate attempt to stem this tide, faculty scheduled UPS-only sections between 5 and 11 p.m. both on campus and at the hub. They even began a ritual of 3 a.m. advising, sending as many as a dozen faculty out to the airport before dawn in order to catch the exhausted students coming off the sort. Since nearly all of the faculty involved taught and served on committees five days a week, these efforts resulted in a bizarre twenty-four-hour cycle of work for themselves.

The UPS partnership appears to have increased rather than decreased the economic distress of participants. According to the company's own fact sheet, student workers giving up five nights' sleep will typically be paid for just fifteen to twenty hours a week. Since the wage ranges from just \$8.50 to \$9.50, this can mean net pay below \$100 a week, and averaging a little over \$120. The rate of pay bears emphasizing: because the students must report five nights a week and are commonly let go after just three hours, their take-home pay for sleep deprivation and physically hazardous toil will generally be less than \$25 per shift. In fact, most UPS part-timers earn little more than \$6,000

in a year, and most have at least one other job.

UPS presents a triple threat to students' prospects for academic persistence: sleep deprivation and family-unfriendly scheduling, low compensation resulting in secondary and tertiary part-time employment, and a high injury rate. UPS refuses to provide meaningful persistence figures for the more than fifty thousand students it has "aided" over the past decade. But of the ten thousand at the Louisville hub, it could account for little more than three hundred bachelor's or associate's degrees earned. The most generous interpretation of the few statistics made available suggests persistence to degree of about 12 percent.

Marc Bousquet is associate professor of English at Santa Clara University and a member of the AAUP Council. This piece was adapted from How The University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation, forthcoming from NYU Press.

Government Relations Newsletter

The AAUP government relations team has introduced a monthly electronic newsletter. Each month, we bring you up-to-date news on higher education legislation and policy discussions, familiarize you with friends of higher education on the Hill, and facilitate communication between state conferences. Contents include issue updates, discussion of pending federal bills, and an "Action of the Month." Please visit www.aaup.org/AAUP/GR/NewsLets/ to read the newsletter, or send an e-mail to Nicole Byrd (nbyrd@aaup.org) to subscribe. We look forward to hearing from you! •

New Orleans Report

The AAUP's Special Committee on Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans Universities, having investigated the hurricane's impact on the academic programs and faculties of the city's universities, has conveyed its findings and conclusions in a draft report that has been sent to concerned parties in New Orleans with an invitation to comment. The final report is expected to be published with the May-June issue of *Academe* and to be on the agenda of the 2007 annual meeting for potential action. •

Faculty Matters

Vol. 3, No. 1

Spring 2007

Editor

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Retirement Incentives on the Rise

U.S. colleges and universities are increasingly offering tenured faculty incentives to retire, according to the AAUP's *Survey of Faculty Retirement Policies 2007*. As many faculty approach traditional retirement ages, institutions seek ways to renew their faculties while continuing to draw on the expertise of long-time professors. Retirement incentives and phased retirement—in which faculty continue working part time after relinquishing tenure—are both growing in popularity.

The survey, available on the Web at <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/issued/retirement>, updates a similar study published in 2000.

Among other findings are:

- At 82 percent of responding institutions, faculty retirees continued to be eligible for group health insurance (other than as required by law through the COBRA program); at 80 percent of the institutions, spouses also continued to be eligible. The amount of cost borne by institutions varied, however.

- Fifty-seven percent of responding institutions permitted part-time faculty members to participate in institutional retirement programs.

- Although a shift continues from defined-benefit retirement programs toward defined-contribution programs, the default plan, if there is one, is defined benefit. •

Working for the New Academic Workforce

As the professoriate changes, the AAUP continues to disseminate information about and protect academic freedom for all faculty. Locally, AAUP chapters and members work to improve conditions on their campuses. Nationally, the AAUP works with government and higher education stakeholders and provides tools and information that enable local efforts.

Reversing the trend toward an increasingly contingent professoriate and improving working conditions for contingent faculty are priorities for the AAUP. At the Conference on Contingent Academic Labor in August, AAUP leaders and staff shared and gathered strategies for reversing the erosion of the tenure track. In November, we convened a meeting on the state of the academic workforce which gathered representatives of the Modern Language Association, the American Historical Association, the National Council of Teachers in English, the Community College Humanities Association, and other groups. A new policy, adopted as part of the AAUP's long-standing *Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure*, delineates protections that should be afforded to all part-time faculty and to those with specific years of service. And the *AAUP Contingent Faculty Index 2006*, a major research report, discusses the work situations of different categories of faculty, and lists the numbers of full-time tenure-track, full-time

non-tenure-track, part-time, and graduate assistant faculty employed at more than 2,600 institutions.

Women faculty and work-life balance continue to be a focus for the AAUP as well. The report *AAUP Faculty Gender Equity Indicators 2006* provides data on four specific measures of equity for faculty at more than 1,400 institutions. And the AAUP recently called upon the U.S. Department of Labor to preserve and strengthen the protections offered by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993. The department had solicited comments on the act, raising concerns that it might be considering scaling back the FMLA's protections.

To read the publications described above, visit www.aaup.org. For more information, contact Gwendolyn Bradley (gbradley@aaup.org). •

Ninety-Third AAUP Annual Meeting

Telling the Truth in Difficult Times
June 7–10, 2007, Washington, D.C.

The annual meeting will feature:

- Speaker Joan Bertin of the National Coalition Against Censorship
- Speaker Andrew Ross of NYU
- Capitol Hill Day June 7
- Robert Shetterly art exhibit

www.aaup.org/AAUP/About/events/2007AM

“Ideological Exclusion” Lawsuit Continues


The AAUP’s lawsuit on behalf of professor Tariq Ramadan continues against the U.S. State Department and Department of Homeland Security. The case, which was filed jointly with the American Academy of Religion and the PEN American Center and is being litigated by the American Civil Liberties Union, challenges the “ideological exclusion” provision of the USA Patriot Act. That provision allows the government to exclude from the country prominent persons who have allegedly used their positions to endorse or espouse terrorism. The lawsuit challenges both the use of the provision to exclude Ramadan from this country (the reason given by a government official in 2004) and the provision’s constitutionality.

We have filed an amended complaint to incorporate the government’s most recent contention (reported in the January–February *Academe*) that Ramadan’s exclusion was based on supposed “material support” that he provided to terrorist

groups. Ramadan himself had informed officials about the approximately \$940 he gave to two Palestinian relief organizations, which were registered charities in France but are now alleged by the U.S. government to have funneled money to Hamas. The AAUP is pleased that the government has finally provided a rationale for Ramadan’s exclusion after several years of delay and repudiation of its stated reliance on the ideological exclusion provision.

The AAUP and other plaintiffs had also filed a Freedom of Information Act suit against government agencies to compel them to produce information about other occasions on which the ideological exclusion provision was used. The court ordered the government to produce a number of the requested documents and statistical information, which it did, and the AAUP agreed to dismiss the case on January 22. If new information comes to light, however, the AAUP will be able to submit new requests. •

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