

American Association of University Professors

Guidelines for Good Practices for Chapters and Conferences

The AAUP's success in advancing its principles throughout the academy is dependent upon the vigilance and activism of its members and others committed to the academic profession. Chapters and state conferences play a central role in accomplishing the work of the Association by enabling members to speak and act in concert.

The Association's constitution prescribes few requirements for establishing chapters^[1] and conferences^[2] and provides only broad terms for the standards of chapter and conference conduct. AAUP's governing Council has the authority to revoke the charter of a chapter and withdraw its approval of the existence of a conference in cases of "financial malpractice," "disregard of democratic procedures," and "disregard of other principles, policies, or procedures of the Association." Additionally, for collective bargaining chapters, a charter may be revoked for "improper performance as a collective bargaining representative."

These Guidelines for Good Practices for Chapters and Conferences are intended to amplify the constitutional standards of conduct for chapters and conferences and provide guidance for chapter and conference officers.

AAUP's influence in colleges and universities as well as in other public arenas, including the media and state and national legislatures, is primarily attributable to its impartiality, its integrity, and the care taken in its conduct of its work. Conversely, AAUP's effectiveness is eroded and eventually seriously impaired by actions or words that bring it disrepute. Because chapters and conferences are often seen within their institutions and their states as "the AAUP," despite the fact that each organization is a separate entity, it is especially important that they avoid bringing reproach on the Association and that they conduct their affairs in harmony with the constitution and policies of the Association.

Financial Rectitude.

Officers of membership organizations have a special obligation to administer the organization's funds honestly and openly. In addition to the AAUP's constitutional proscription of "financial malpractice," chapters and conferences might also be held to standards imposed by state or federal law both in terms of reporting financial information and administering funds.

For many chapters, meeting this obligation is neither onerous nor costly. For larger conferences and chapters, especially collective bargaining chapters, the administration of finances is time-consuming and may require the expense of an audit or other formal review of the

organization's finances.^[3] Good sense, careful bookkeeping, and regular disclosure of the organization's finances, far more often than not, will assure fiscal propriety.

Democratic Governance.

As a democratically governed organization, the national AAUP must expect that its chapters and conferences maintain democratic practices and procedures in their administration, adhering to the constitution of the Association as well as their own constitution or other governing documents.

Because of the informality that often characterizes the conduct of chapter and conference affairs, which are often administered by volunteers rather than local staff, lapses in attention to national and local governance documents and sound democratic practices may occur (e.g. elections of officers are not conducted as required; chapter or conference officers act on their own initiative without consultation with or concurrence of the membership; a chapter or conference becomes the personal domain of one or a few rather than an organization committed to the principles of the Association). Departures from stated governance requirements or basic democratic norms should be promptly corrected.

Sound Representation.

Those AAUP chapters which also serve as collective bargaining representatives are subject to a standard not applicable to other chapters or to conferences to avoid "improper performance as a collective bargaining representative."

As collective bargaining representatives, such chapters are subject to other standards of conduct imposed by either state or federal law that regulate union finances, relationships with members and non-members, and internal governance.

Although the array of standards of conduct for collective bargaining chapters, organizational and external, is formidable, AAUP chapters have rarely run afoul of either set of standards. Although it is difficult to speculate on hypothetical circumstances, it can be said with a fairly high degree of confidence that chapters that conduct their affairs in accord with the standards imposed by law will also be in compliance with the AAUP's constitutional standards.

Regard for Association Principles, Policies, and Procedures.

The source of the Association's influence in higher education is the power of its policies and principles and the integrity and care with which the Association has carried out its work since 1915. On occasion, the Association has suffered discredit because of the actions or communications of chapters and conferences. Unfortunately, only a few such instances can undo decades of painstaking work.

Administrators, legislators, the media, the public, and even faculty colleagues often take the utterances of a chapter or conference as representing the Association's position. Care must be

taken by chapters and conferences not only to speak responsibly but to state clearly that their positions are their own and not necessarily those of the national Association, and that they are not authorized to speak for the national Association. Letterhead stationery used by chapters or conferences should also clearly identify the specific organization.

When Association principles, policies, or procedures are implicated in a matter being addressed by a chapter or conference, advice from the Association's national office may need to be obtained before any public statement of position on the matter is made. Good faith and good sense will guide chapter and conference leaders in their determination of what issues require consultation with the national office. The higher the stakes, the more volatile or contentious the issue, the more complex the issue, or the more serious the issue, the greater the need for consultation.^[4]

The most visible work of the AAUP is its investigation of alleged violations of fundamental principles of the profession, its publication of findings, and its imposition of censure or sanction. In important respects, this work of the AAUP is a form of academic jurisprudence: scrupulous regard for fair and regular procedures (due process), thoroughness in assembling all relevant facts (a complete record), consistency in its determinations (the importance of precedent), and impartiality in its decisions (adherence to principle rather than sentiment).

The Association's procedures reserve to the General Secretary the exclusive responsibility to authorize an investigation of alleged violations of fundamental principles, a decision that is made only after a comprehensive preliminary investigation and consultation with the Staff Committee on Investigations. Chapters and conferences therefore must not undertake investigations, although if an investigation is authorized the assistance of both is highly desirable in the handling of a case by the national office and by the committee of faculty investigators.

Chapters and conferences engage in the critical work of the Association by acting to advocate and implement the principles of the profession in their institutions and in their states. Most of this work is appropriately undertaken without consultation with the national office.

The harm that can befall the Association and its reputation for integrity through the missteps of a chapter or a conference can be avoided by attention to a few basic precepts.

---the Association represents principles not individuals. A lack of attention to this distinction can lead to advancing the cause of an individual or taking a politically expedient position at the expense of principle.

---chapters and conferences should avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest. Again common sense will dictate that, for example, a chapter or conference officer should have no involvement in the handling of his or her case or a case in which the officer has a personal stake. Similarly, chapters and conferences must avoid becoming the personal stalking horse for a member or a small group of individual members.

---*ad hominem* attacks should be avoided. Personal attacks are ineffective and are particularly out of place in the academy.

Organizational Requirements and *Desiderata*.

The hallmark of the organizational relationship between chapters and conferences and the national Association is the lack of formality, although officially we are separate organizations that promote one mission. Chapters and conferences are held and should hold themselves to a high standard of care in carrying out their work.

Regular communication by and among the chapters, conferences, and national Association serves to promote common objectives and to avoid working or speaking at cross-purposes. Direct communications with the members from chapters, conferences, and the national Association enhances the effectiveness of each and of the Association as a whole. The usual form and regularity of the national Association's communication with individual members is the semi-monthly publication *Academe*. There may of course be other occasions for direct communications from the national Association to all members, the members of a particular chapter or conference, other groups of members, or individuals.

Regrettably, there are occasions when even the most basic expectations are unfulfilled. The most basic expectations include the following. Collective bargaining chapters shall remit dues or the appropriate proportion of agency fees to the Association on behalf of all members of the bargaining unit who pay dues or fees to the chapter. Other chapters that collect member dues must remit that portion that represents national dues to the Association in a timely fashion. Further, chapters may not accept "local only members," i.e. individuals who pay some amount to the chapter but are not members of the Association.

Chapters and conferences should send to the national office their constitutions, bylaws and subsequent emendations to them to serve as a ready reference. Finally, chapters and conferences should send to the national office current lists of officers (name, discipline, address, phone number, e-mail address).

[1] "Whenever the active members in a given institution number seven or more, they may constitute a chapter of the Association and receive a charter from the Association. More than one chapter may be established in an institution when its parts are geographically separate. Each chapter shall elect, from its active members, at least biannually, a president, a secretary, and a treasurer (or secretary-treasurer), and such other officers as the chapter may determine. It shall be the duty of the secretary of the chapter to report to the secretary-treasurer of the Association the names of the officers of the chapter and to conduct the correspondence of the chapter with the secretary-treasurer. "Article VII, 1.

[2] "Upon approval by the Council, several chapters may organize a conference of the American Association of University Professors which shall be open to all members within the state. The members may be represented through their chapter affiliation. A conference may establish conference dues and may consider and act upon professional matters which are of concern to the members and chapters, but its action shall not bind the members or chapters without their authorization and shall be in harmony with the principles and procedures of the Association." Article VIII.

^[3] There are various sources of information and guidance on the administering of an organization's funds, including the AAUP national office. Another useful source is the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Labor-Management Standards at <http://www.dol.gov/esa/regs/compliance/olms/compllmrda.htm>, and those specifically related to financial matters addressed at <http://www.dol.gov/esa/regs/compliance/olms/smunion/smunions.htm>. Note: these regulations and standards apply ONLY to unions in the private sector. For all other organizations, they provide benchmarks for sound conduct.

^[4] The Association has distributed various articles, guides, and checklists that provide guidance to chapters and conferences handling cases implicating academic freedom and other important principles. A comprehensive guide is being assembled and will be widely distributed.; chapters and conferences will receive copies.