

Don Eron, Writing and Rhetoric, University of Colorado, Boulder

Candidate Biography

I am the treasurer of the University of Colorado-Boulder (CU) chapter of the AAUP. I sit on the executive committee of the Colorado Conference. I serve on the Colorado Committee for the Protection of Faculty Rights and have participated on numerous levels of the CU faculty government. I am currently on the Personnel Committee of the all-system Faculty Council and was a long-time member of the Faculty Benefits and Compensation Committee. I have spoken and testified about faculty working conditions before numerous audiences, including the Colorado legislature. I am a Senior Instructor in the writing and rhetoric program at CU, where I have taught since 1989.

As the founder, along with colleagues in Colorado, of the Instructor Tenure Project (ITP), I have long battled the perma-temping of faculty. Two efforts we've launched have received national attention. The ITP, our first strategy, is a campaign to make all faculty members eligible for tenure. The proposals and reports that I authored or co-authored on this topic have gained significant traction on our campus and have influenced national AAUP statements and policies, helping to direct more of the Association's efforts to the critical issues of contingency.

The second initiative—the decentralization of the watchdog function of Committee A—relates to several prominent cases of academic freedom violations. This strategy would extend the expectation to serve as the watchdog of academic freedom to chapters and conferences. In connection with this effort, I am the primary author of the book-

length report, "The Colorado AAUP Report on the Terminations of Phil Mitchell and Ward Churchill," which examines the University of Colorado's systematic abuses of the academic freedom of two long-time faculty, one an un-tenured instructor, the other a full professor. Please read the text of this report and those of the Instructor Tenure Project, at <https://sites.google.com/site/doneronaaup/>.

Candidate Statement

The AAUP has come a long way in its advocacy for contingent faculty, from indecision as to whether contingent faculty deserve due process, to increased awareness, to inclusion, culminating in the significant 2010 statement, "Tenure and Teaching-Intensive Appointments," which stipulates, "The best practice for institutions of all types is to convert contingent appointments to positions eligible for tenure with only minor changes in job descriptions." This statement features several proposals designed to achieve that "best practice," including the Instructor Tenure Project at Colorado.

As Second Vice President, I would strive to see every AAUP chapter introduce a proposal that all faculty members at their institution be on a tenure track. These tenure tracks need not lead to professorships—only to job permanency at every rank. Now that over 2/3 of our faculty are contingent, I see no other way for the AAUP ideals of academic freedom, shared governance, and due process to survive.

My second solution is to decentralize Committee A as the watchdog of academic freedom. The deterrent influence of Committee A has diminished with the perma-temping of faculty. Today, the few investigations per year that Committee A

has the resources to conduct (out of hundreds of worthy cases) are insufficient to make administrations hesitate. Local and regional initiatives may also help educate tenured faculty who are often oblivious or indifferent to violations of the academic freedom of colleagues on contingent appointments. “The Colorado AAUP Report on the Terminations of Phil Mitchell and Ward Churchill,” of which I am the primary author, offers a blow-by-blow account of the experiences of two very different faculty on opposite ends of the political spectrum and the academic hierarchy. This initiative was undertaken by the Colorado Conference with the intention of persuading other state conferences to conduct academic freedom investigations. As Second Vice President, I will urge similar initiatives to help restore the watchdog function of the AAUP.

As is the case with anyone liable to read this, I am enamored of the principles that the AAUP has instilled in our institutions of higher education. I love the ideal of a

university as a haven for the free exchange of ideas, and the corresponding notion that—as a university teacher charged with participating in that exchange—I serve not my department chair or the trustees of my university, but the good of society. But I have also spent my career as an at-will employee, subject to termination at any time for any reason. Unlike workers in other sectors, I am professionally obligated to participate in the free exchange of ideas. Yet I can be terminated for doing so. As a further disincentive to fulfilling my professional responsibilities, my administration requires me to reapply periodically for my job, as if to ensure that I never venture an opinion that might displease my “boss.”

The tolerance of contingency enforces the divide between principle and practice. Restoring tenure, and the decentralization of Committee A, are solutions that will invigorate the practice of our profession.