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**Administrative Costs Rise as State Support Dwindles**

AAUP-CBC’s Response to the Goldwater Institute’s Report

The Goldwater Institute report *Administrative Bloat at American Universities: The Real Reason for High Costs in Higher Education* highlights dramatic growth from 1993–2007 in administrative positions in universities as compared to positions in instruction, research, and service.

Although the report does not disaggregate among types of nonacademic professional positions, the AAUP Collective Bargaining Congress considers the overall, continuing trend in position priorities deeply troubling. Disproportionate increases in nonacademic positions accompany increases in tuition and fees that far exceed increases in cost of living and faculty salaries. Students are paying more for less access to full-time, tenure-track faculty (and to contingent faculty and other professionals who do the instructional, research, and service work of higher education). If we hope to successfully engage, educate, and graduate a larger number of students, it is time to reverse the decades-long trend and systematically reinvest in academic positions, particularly full-time, tenure-track positions. This includes the conversion of faculty and positions that are contingent to tenure-track lines.

Yet the Goldwater Institute report’s conclusion that state support of public higher education should be cut in order to force universities in turn to cut inefficient administrative bloat, has it backwards. The relative decline in state support for public higher education over the past two decades has contributed to the bloat—the disproportionate increase in nonacademic positions. As universities increasingly compete for students, they invest in various nonacademic positions, activities, and facilities in an effort to attract high paying “customers” (and potential donors). As these institutions try to increase fund-raising, external grant, auxiliary unit (e.g., residence halls and food services), and technology transfer revenues, they increase positions in these realms. Moreover, universities too often invest in ill-fated, costly ventures with little or no input from those who do the work of the academy. Certainly, other factors, such as increased state regulation and accountability demands, also contribute to climbing administrative costs. The key point, though, is that efforts to generate monies from external grants, fundraising, auxiliary services, and other nonacademic activities increases administrative costs and can never fully replace state support for the core academic functions of the academy.

In short, privatization of not-for-profit higher education has disproportionately increased administrative costs, to the detriment of the common good. Forcing further cuts in state funding will only further exacerbate the problem the report seeks to remedy. The AAUP-CBC
calls for state and federal reinvestment in not-for-profit higher education. It calls for states to encourage, and institutions to emphasize, rebuilding capacity in academic positions that serve the core academic missions of instruction, research, and service. Unless universities reinvest in full-time, tenure track faculty, students’ educational experience, quality, and success will be compromised. The AAUP-CBC encourages faculty, academic professionals, and graduate student employees to call states and institutions to account in the interests of students and the common good. It is time to rebalance the academy to put the emphasis back on academic positions and the core academic missions of higher education. It is time to stop privatizing, thereby increasing administrative bloat. It is time to put the public good back into not-for-profit higher education.

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