February 4, 2011

**AAUP General Secretary Testifies Before Committee**

On February 3, AAUP General Secretary Gary Rhoades testified before the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity. The committee advises the Secretary of Education on matters of accreditation.

Grounding his comments in AAUP’s 1968 statement, “The Role of Faculty in the Accrediting of Colleges and Universities,” Rhoades emphasized the fundamental importance of faculty involvement in accreditation at various levels, including the preparation of the institutional self-evaluation and meeting with the visiting committee. He testified, moreover, against the one-size-fits-all approaches of standardized national indicators. He stressed the need for faculty and academic professionals to be involved in developing locally meaningful and useful evaluation instruments to measure student learning in ways that remain true to the institutional mission.

Given the overriding emphasis on student learning outcomes, Rhoades cautioned the committee not to forget key input measures, financial and academic. Regarding the former, he emphasized the need for accrediting agencies to pay attention to how institutions use their resources. He urged colleges and universities to get back to academic basics, emphasize their core academic missions, and shift the balance back from non-educational to educational expenditures.

With regard to measures of academic matters, Rhoades spoke to the value of focusing on those things that we know to be directly related to quality education and strong student learning: the proportion of full-time and tenure track faculty, the working conditions of faculty in contingent positions, class size, and faculty to student ratio. He highlighted one of the key areas of learning and student development in college: the network of relations with faculty and academic professionals that impact students in ways that are not captured by simple, quantitative metrics.

Finally, Rhoades pointed to the need for a more focused, governmental response to consumer protection. He stressed the need for government to address patterns of predatory student aid and recruitment practices, particularly in the for-profit world of higher education. The accreditation process, he suggested, is not well suited to identify and sanction such practices.

To learn more about the committee and the hearing, read the articles in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed*. 