



April 9, 2020

Statement of Solidarity with Essential Workers

AAUP president Rudy Fichtenbaum has issued the following statement of solidarity with essential workers:

We all have been touched by the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. Our system of higher education has been upended in the course of only a few weeks. AAUP members in medical school and health center chapters and other faculty members supporting their efforts are on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19. We and our students, colleagues, and family members have faced the sudden and profound loss of what we knew as “normal” and have experienced or live in fear of sickness and unemployment. We might remember “before” as imperfect but reassuringly familiar or predictable. Amid so much uncertainty, the path to “after” remains unclear and daunting.

But there have been glimmers of hope—signs that what lies ahead could be a great moment of solidarity, of workers fighting together to create a system in which higher wages and health and safety protections are not just emergency provisions for a pandemic but part of a new normal. A time when hazard pay becomes a living wage. A country where free access to coronavirus testing leads to accessible, affordable health care for everyone.

All across this country, and in spite of difficult conditions, workers from a diverse group of backgrounds—supermarket employees, gig and delivery workers, Amazon employees, nurses, doctors—are joining together to demand a better, safer, fairer system. We know it takes great courage to organize under even the best conditions. To do it in these uncertain times shows a clarity of purpose and a knowledge: if we fight together, we can win a better system together.

The AAUP will continue to share resources and help the profession prepare for what comes next. In the weeks and months ahead, we will continue to fight for academic freedom, for the faculty role in decision-making, for economic security for our profession, and for our rights to protect the knowledge we create.

As we do that, we stand in solidarity with those who are at the front lines of this pandemic. To our members who are working in hospitals and in health care, to transit and postal workers, to the Instacart and Amazon workers who are demanding safer working conditions and wages as they risk their health to serve customers, to everyone working in stores and in other essential services, to all those who do not have the luxury to stay at home, know this: you are leading the way, and we are with you.