

PROPOSAL

ACTING LIKE UNIONS AND WITH UNIONS:

TRANSFORMING ADVOCACY CHAPTERS INTO FIGHTING PRE-CONTRACT UNION LOCALS

WHEREAS,

intensifying assaults on higher education call for an unprecedented, sector-wide commitment to organizing and the building of political power that can achieve meaningful material gains for members and transform higher education into a system that serves the common good; and

WHEREAS,

building the campus and sectoral power necessary to defend higher education from the decades long neoliberal assault on higher education—including systematic defunding, precaritization of the professoriate, financialization of its institutions and operations, and increasingly aggressive efforts by political, donor, board, and corporate elites to interfere in faculty teaching and research—will require advocacy chapters to prioritize, structurally and culturally, the organizing model necessary to build the political power; and

WHEREAS,

AAUP has enjoyed extraordinary growth in advocacy chapter and at-large membership in the preceding two years, accounting for ~10,000 of AAUP's 14,000 increase in membership; and

WHEREAS,

this membership growth needs to be supported in forming durable, fighting, and growth-oriented labor formations at their local campus levels through adopting organizing-focused programs; and

WHEREAS,

in some institutional contexts campaigns for winning union certification and collectively bargained contracts face legal and other barriers and may be unrealistic or even counterproductive to building power in the near term; and

WHEREAS,

the term “union” should *not* be restricted to labor formations that are officially recognized by their employer as legal entities with which they must collectively bargain, as there is a long history in the labor movement of non-collective bargaining (i.e., pre-majority, pre-contract, no-contract) labor organizing, collective action, and institutional forms that have built power and achieved meaningful material workplace and compensation improvements; and

WHEREAS,

building robust pre-contract union locals across the nation *also* helps prepare fertile ground for future recognition/collective bargaining campaigns, as they can, if properly oriented towards organizing, play a vital role in fostering the development of the institutional structures, networks of worker relationships and community organizations, and union culture necessary for effective and efficient recognition/collective bargaining campaigns;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,

that the AAUP commits to prioritizing resources for programs, such as Dues Sharing or other similar chapter organizing capacity development pipelines, that will encourage, through financial and staff support and accountability structures, the organizational, cultural, and operational transformation of advocacy chapters—in consultation with their leadership—into organizing and power building-focused, pre-contract union locals; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

that the AAUP commits to implementing deliberate and structured programs for the development of leadership in the advocacy chapter and at-large member spaces, with the aim of cultivating leaders from these spaces that can (a) help shift the cultural and organizational orientation of these spaces in the direction of an organizing and power building-focused approach; (b) build regional networks and (co-)lead regional/state-based campaigns; and (c) provide region- and advocacy chapter-specific knowledge and experience to national leadership; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

that AAUP commits to establishing programs that will support (a) at-large members in establishing new chapters, and (b) existing members in early chapter development, in accordance with the aforementioned organizing and power-building-focused, pre-contract local approach; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED,

in an effort to help promote the aforementioned transformation in the advocacy chapter space, AAUP commits to establishing a committee (the “Committee on Advocacy Chapter

Transformation”), composed of advocacy chapter and at-large leaders from across a representative range of regions and institutional types, that will be charged with deliberating on and formulating proposals for consideration at the 2028 Biennial for the formal transformation of advocacy chapters and associated structures and responsibilities, including, but not limited to, their: names; dues structure; relevant AAUP national policies and procedures (e.g., mode of elections); relationships between them and/or their participation in AAUP state conferences and AFT state federations, AFL-CIO state federations, and local labor councils; governance structures; and Local 6741’s position within the AAUP and AFT spheres.