

CLARKSON COLLEGE (NEBRASKA)

The 1993 annual meeting imposed censure based on the report of an ad hoc investigating committee that found that, in terminating the services of four faculty members who had attained de facto tenure through length of service, the college's administration had afforded them scant notice and no opportunity to contest the action. The report also found that the college's policies lacked provisions affording minimal protections of academic due process (the college does not grant appointments with indefinite tenure). Three of the cases that led to the censure were resolved in 1995, and the fourth professor died in 2003. In 2017 the college's president contacted the AAUP's staff to inquire about removing the censure. The staff informed him that, as redress was no longer an issue, what chiefly remained to be accomplished were revisions to the faculty handbook that would address the procedural deficiency that led to the censure. The staff's letter proposed adding the following sentence to the faculty handbook: "Once a full-time faculty member has completed six years of service, subsequent reappointment is presumed unless cause for dismissal is demonstrated in a hearing before an ad hoc committee of the faculty senate." The staff's letter, however, received no answer.

In February 2020, a new administration contacted the Association's staff to convey the good news that, with the interim president's encouragement, the faculty senate had been reviewing the amendment proposed in the staff's 2017 letter. Following a conference call with the AAUP in which the president, the vice president, and three faculty senate leaders participated, the president wrote to inform the AAUP that within the next few months the faculty senate would vote to add the AAUP-proposed sentence to the faculty handbook. The president further informed the staff that the college would welcome a visit from an AAUP representative to assess current conditions for academic freedom. Despite the difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, on May 28 the faculty senate voted to adopt the AAUP-proposed language, and later that week the AAUP representative met virtually with members of the faculty and administration. Her report confirms that positive conditions for academic freedom and tenure, as well as shared governance, now exist at the institution. Favorable review by two administrative bodies in early June resulted in the final adoption of the proposed sentence.

Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure therefore recommends to the Association's governing Council that it remove Clarkson College from the AAUP's list of censured administrations.