March 25, 2010

Faculty Unions and Governance

The AAUP's Collective Bargaining Congress today issued this statement in response to the Association of Governing Boards’ newly released "Statement on Institutional Governance."

CBC Executive Committee Comment on the AGB Statement on Institutional Governance

The Collective Bargaining Congress Executive Committee of the AAUP is pleased that the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) has released its Statement on Board Responsibility for Institutional Governance, which acknowledges that academic senates and academic unions can effectively coexist, with clearly defined responsibilities. That acknowledgment undermines the false claim of some antiunion campaigns that collective bargaining is a threat to traditional academic structures of governance; it also supports the position of bargaining units on the importance of ensuring that governance structures and the definition of responsibilities are embedded in collective bargaining agreements. Jointly, unions and senates can help develop the strong, independent faculty voice that is essential to sound governance.

At the same time, the CBC Executive Committee rejects the idea in the AGB statement that there should be any limitations on union officials’ involvement in institutional governance. This AGB position does not recognize that faculty union leaders are full members of the faculty who are democratically elected by their peers to their leadership positions. Disenfranchising such faculty, academic-professional, or graduate student employee leaders or delimiting their role in institutional governance runs counter to the ideal of an open collegium that encourages academic engagement in institutional matters. It also runs counter to the principle in labor law that a member’s decision to be involved in union leadership should not in any way limit his or her involvement in organizational activities. In academe, such involvement includes sitting on academic senates, promotion and tenure committees, and the like.