



THE TENNESSEE CONFERENCE

Academic Freedom for a Free Society in Tennessee

Newsletter of the Tennessee State Conference of the AAUP Ed. J.A. McQuail TTU

March 27, 2020

UNCERTAIN TIMES: State Conference Meeting of the Tennessee AAUP Postponed

We had hoped that our spring meeting of the TN conference would be hosted by one of our newest chapters, Roane State Community College. We were to have met at the Harriman campus of RSCC. We are thinking that in April we will have a “virtual” meeting. The Covid-19 situation may be disrupting things but we can’t let it stop us! Already there are many challenges that have come up as some campuses seek to take advantage of the disruptions caused by the Corona virus.

Fall 2019, the Tennessee State Conference of AAUP met at Tennessee Tech University. State representative Paul Bailey (R., dist. 15) spoke to the assembled Tennessee State Conference members, and Provost Lori Bruce of TTU welcomed us and generously spared quite a bit of time for us. We promised her an AAUP Red Book!

Similarly, Paul Bailey spent more than an hour discussing issues involving higher ed and listened to concerns including the situation of outsourced workers, long-standing low per course pay rates for adjunct faculty in the state, erosion of Academic Freedom and Academic Freedom issues in the state. Senator Bailey recommended getting to know our legislators. In order to inform them on what is going on in higher education from the faculty perspective — Troy D. Smith, Tennessee AAUP State Conference President

DELEGATES for the national conference. The Procedure for the national meeting of the AAUP has changed; individual conferences may unite as “sections” and be represented at the national convention by an elected delegate (1 delegate for every 250 members or fraction thereof). The deadline for chapters to sign on is April 1, 2020. If there is no more than one candidate for delegate no election needs to be held; if an election needs to be held then there are new guidelines for election of national delegates. — J. McQuail

2020 Summer Institute

The AAUP Summer Institute will be held in Reno NV, July 25-28. Early registration closes July 1. Three years ago TN AAUP state conference member Pippa Holloway attended the summer institute for the first time. She said that she learned more about academic freedom and shared governance over those four days than she had in her entire career before that. Every year, AAUP brings together hundreds of higher education professionals from around the country for workshops and special programs. Attendees can select from a huge variety of workshops. In the past, for example, these included topics ranging from “Reading and Using the Redbook” to “Faculty Support for Student Activism” and “Advocating for Academic Freedom in an Age of Contingency.” Attendees have access to organizers, data analysts, seasoned campaigners, and issue experts to build skills as an advocate for AAUP principles, collective bargaining, and higher education.

Pippa was the only attendee from Tennessee. She learned so much that she went back again. We’d love to see more colleagues from Tennessee there. Please consider it. AAUP National especially welcomes minority applicants.

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TENURE

Given that I am a college professor, sometimes I hear from people who I know not in academia that they don't understand why faculty "have a job for life" — i.e. tenure. For one thing, college professors don't have a job that is guaranteed "no matter what." Annual reviews by academic chairs and administrators are not just an empty exercise, but can lead to dismissal if a faculty member operates consistently at an "unsatisfactory" level. For another thing, no one ever brings up that hostile question when it comes to another group that is far more privileged than college professors: Supreme Court justices.

Supreme Court justices have tenure to ensure that their pronouncements on court rulings can be unbiased, and that they will not be retaliated against by having their appointments as justices terminated because of an unpopular or controversial ruling. How could justices possibly feel they can give a controversial ruling on an issue that might arouse anger from not only citizens, but from politicians and other officials — like the President her or himself — who might "fire" the justice?

It is exactly the same type of situation with university professors. In covering one's subject area, one must have absolute freedom to discuss issues pertaining to the academic subject matter without threat of retaliation or being fired.

A timely example of this necessity is the example of climate scientists. We all know that some people question climate science and seek to discredit scientists who offer data for it, or speak publicly regarding the issue. Close to home was another controversy relayed in the last issue of our TN Conference newsletter (in a piece originally included in the Academe blog) by University of TN Knoxville faculty who related the debacle of the Diversity Office at UTK. The Diversity Office and its recommendations drew the ire of state legislators who baldly intervened in the affairs of the university, leading to the ultimate dissolution of the Diversity Office and re-assignment of faculty.

It might be said that even the protection of tenure is not enough. Not long ago, *The New York Times* did a piece on a biologist whose subject of study — wolves — proved controversial. Professor Rob Wielgus was a respected faculty member at Washington State University, until his research on wolves proved controversial. Wolves and their predation on livestock are contentious issues with farmers and ranchers. Wielgus's research on wolves upset that constituency and certain state legislators as well. In response to the controversy, WSU actually publicly denounced its own faculty member and shifted grants out of his lab. Wielgus responded with a lawsuit. He hadn't been fired but the university effectively nullified his faculty position and his authority and took his grant money.

Wielgus eventually filed suit for multiple violations of his academic freedom, and resigned with a \$800,000 settlement. Yet, no one won this fight, especially not Dr. Wielgus's graduate students, and definitely not the wolves,

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The crux of Dr. Wielgus's suit against WSU was that his Academic Freedom had been violated. In AAUP's 1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure the 20th century American university was explored as the place where scientific inquiry of all kinds was carried out, and "In all these domains of knowledge the first condition of progress is complete and unlimited freedom to pursue inquiry and publish its results" (4). Dr. Wielgus was called an "animal's rights advocate," a stance that was said by a state legislator to have skewed his research. Still, no one impugned his research data, though there were attempts to disprove it.

That someone with not just tenure but with the status of Dr. Wielgus could be treated so shabbily and unprofessionally is shocking and disconcerting. What does his situation bode for those WITHOUT the protection of tenure?

Increasing reliance on adjunct faculty, including lecturers, weakens the tenure system and undermines academic freedom. As more and more universities in the nineties and aughts began relying on adjunct faculty, who, in Tennessee's TBR universities, at first were hired on terms that could be extended no longer than seven years (implied tenure), it was convenient to make the terms of adjunct faculty unlimited. This was clearly exploitative of adjunct faculty who continued to be hired on 3 year terms, but were not eligible for promotion or even raises in most cases. Thereafter, the position of "Lecturer" was proposed.

In many ways the position of Lecturer is an improvement over the old system of "full time temporary" adjunct instructors. For one thing, lecturers are eligible for promotion and raises. However, the position of lecturer is still tenuous and policies regarding the rank are also fraught with confusion and redundancy. At my university, lecturers' dossiers must be reviewed EVERY year by peers.

At our cancelled spring meeting, we planned to have as a speaker Dr. Warren Tormey, MTSU Master Instructor (the highest level of Lecturer). Dr. Tormey was instrumental, working with the MTSU faculty senate and other faculty members and administrators, in establishing the rank of Lecturer at MTSU, gradations of promotions within that rank, and many other policies relating to Lecturers and other full time adjunct positions.

We hope to have Dr. Tormey speak next month via Zoom conferencing or Facetime, and in person when, hopefully soon, our lives return to normal.

Cited: Christopher Solomon, "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf Scientist?" *New York Times Magazine*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/05/magazine/whos-afraid-of-the-big-bad-wolf-scientist.html>

AAUP Policy Documents and Reports, 11th edition.

TN Conference of the AAUP Newsletter, spring 2019, <http://taaup.org/NEWSLETTERS/Spring%202019.pdf>

AAUP convention in
Washington, D.C. June 18
-21, 2020

Are you curious about
what happens at the an-
nual national AAUP con-
vention? Are you willing
to serve as a delegate at
the convention? Consid-
er serving as a delegate
at the national AAUP con-
vention. You can partici-
pate in Lobby day, attend
informational sessions
and serve your AAUP!

The meeting itself will in-
clude opportunities to
discuss the proposals for
restructuring, as well as
additional business ses-
sions regarding restruc-
turing planning.

The state conference will
help with a portion of the
expenses, and there are
also scholarships from
national AAUP for attend-
ing AAUP conferences for
delegates. MARCH 15 is
the deadline for scholar-
ships) (perhaps an exten-
sion is possible in these
fraught times?); early bird
registration ends May 7.

There is also the Mary
Burgan fund.

Contact past TN confer-
ence president Josie
McQuail at
jmcquail@tnitech.edu for
questions

Preliminary Schedule — AAUP Annual Meeting

Thursday, June 18

7:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. Conference Registration/Check-In
8:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m. AAUP Executive Committee Breakfast and Meeting†
12:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m. AAUP Council Session I*
2:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m. Conference Sessions
2:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m. AAUP Expo
2:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m. Organizing and Member Recruitment Workshop
3:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m. State Conference Networking Session
4:30 p.m.–6:00 p.m. Delegate Voting & Elections Process Questions & An-
swers*

Friday, June 19

7:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. Conference Registration/Check-In
7:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. AAUP Biennial Meeting Delegate Credential Check-In
Desk
9:00 a.m.–10:00 a.m. Opening Plenary—speakers Michael Bérubé, Pennsylvan-
ia State University and Jennifer Ruth, Portland State University
10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. Conference Sessions
10:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m. Shared Governance Session
10:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m. Effective Leadership Workshop
11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. Regional Gatherings
NOON–1:00 p.m. Plenary Luncheon (ticket required)—speaker Abby Ferber,
University of Colorado Colorado Springs, “The Politics of Targeted Harassment
and Silencing in [Higher Education](#).”
2:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m. AAUP Biennial Meeting Session I
6:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m. Candidate & Member Cash Bar and Networking Reception

Saturday, June 20

7:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. Conference [Registration](#)
9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. AAUP Biennial Meeting Session II—Including Officer and
Council Elections
9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. Field Staff Association Meeting†
12:15 p.m.–1:30 p.m. Plenary Luncheon (ticket required)
2:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m. AAUP Biennial Meeting Session III

Sunday, June 21

8:30 a.m.–9:00 a.m. AAUP Council Breakfast†
9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. AAUP Council Session II *

Tennessee AAUP Foundation

The Tennessee AAUP Foundation was founded by TN Conference members who
wished to help other TN AAUP members who might need “seed” money for legal aid,
engaging speakers on issues, etc. The TN Conference has revived the Tennessee
Foundation, which is a separate entity from the Tennessee conference of the AAUP.
AAUP members willing to serve on the Board of the Foundation are sought. So far Dora
Estes, Davis Lee, Delphia Harris, and Josie McQuail are serving on the Board of the TN
AAUP Foundation. Donations may be made to the Foundation c/o **Dora Estes, Treas-
urer of the TN AAUP Foundation, 303 Ponder Rd. Smithville, TN 37166**



AAUP ANNUAL CONFERENCE June 18-21 DC Metro area: please consider attending the national AAUP convention as a delegate and getting more involved in AAUP. Also, you can help by recruiting your colleagues. In today's climate, it is even more vital for our state's and our nation's higher education faculty to work together to protect the quality of higher education and the rights of higher education faculty.

YOUR TENNESSEE CONFERENCE OFFICERS :

President: Troy Smith, TTU tdsmith@tntech.edu

Vice President for Public Four Year Universities: Maté Weirdl, Wierdl-mate@gmail.com

Vice President for Private Universities: Delphia Harris

DF_Harris@loc.edu

Vice President for Community Colleges: vacant

Acting Secretary: Josie McQuail

Treasurer: Dora Estes, NSCC dorasts6@gmail.com

Past President; Josie McQuail jmcquail@tntech.edu

Legislative Liaison: vacant



TN AAUP state meeting, 11/2019, TTU, Troy Smith; Sen. Paul Bailey, Dora Estes, Delphia Harris

THE AAUP believes that higher education is a fundamental human right to which freedom of inquiry and expression are integral.

Dr, Troy D. Smith

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Professor of History

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JOIN AAUP

Your AAUP membership gives you exclusive access to the expertise of AAUP staff, members, and leaders. Our lineup of guidebooks, toolkits, and webinars put the resources to defend academic freedom, ensure economic security, and advance faculty governance for all faculty at your fingertips.

When you join the AAUP, make sure you sign up to pay dues to your state conference — we do a lot for you!

<http://www.aaup.org/membership/join>

Many professional development opportunities are available to AAUP members, and through AAUP you can help keep guard the quality of higher ed in TN and protect faculty rights.

PLACE
STAMP
HERE