



# American Association of University Professors Michigan Conference

## Across the State

### 2007 Legislative Reception

The 2007 Legislative Reception will be held on Tuesday, February 13 from 5-7 pm in the Ballroom of the Lansing Radisson Hotel. Admission is free, but we request you RSVP either through your chapter or by contacting the conference office at (517) 482-2775.

### National AAUP Election

This year we have two very able individuals running for the AAUP's National Council, a body which sets AAUP policy and oversees the activity of the staff. This 39 member body decides how to spend the dues money we pay.

[Read more>>>](#) [Candidates bios>>>](#)

### Court Rules on Domestic Partnership Benefits

Last week, the Michigan Court of Appeals overturned a previous ruling allowing domestic partner benefits at state institutions. In the case of *National Pride at Work v. Governor of Michigan*, the three justices unanimously ruled the language of the amendment "unambiguous and plainly precludes the recognition of same-sex domestic partnerships."

[Read more>>>](#)

### State Budget Crisis

With lawmakers preparing to tackle the 2008 budget, the state is already looking at a \$3 billion shortfall, a situation which will surely impact higher education funding.

[Read more>>>](#)

### [Update from Delta College](#)

Volume 12

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Winter 2007

## Still No Contract

The Faculty of Eastern Michigan University still do not have a contract. On December 19, the union offered its recommendations of comparable institutions to the fact-finder. Six of the seven selected were put forth by the faculty. On February 13, presentations will begin. As of yet, the administration has given no assurances that the fact-finder's ruling will lead to productive negotiations, even in the wake of the resignation of three regents.

[Read more>>>](#)

## From the Desk of the President

by Joel Russell

For this newsletter I wish to show how two bargaining groups at Oakland University responded during last year's negotiations to demands from the administration to restrict the university's financial exposure to costs of retiree medical benefits. Although the recent changes in accounting requirements in no way changed these costs, these new requirements ...

[Read more>>>](#)



## Academic Freedom Beyond the Campus

By Jeffrey Lee, Executive Director, MIAAUP

Academic Freedom is designed to guarantee all faculty the right to research, publish and teach without fear of censorship or reprisal. While this right is most often exercised in the academic setting, education and the expansion of knowledge is not limited to one's campus. Throughout their careers, faculty members pursue new knowledge, seek to prove or disprove new theories and generally attempt to understand more of the world than has previously been the case. Unfortunately, academic facts do not quickly or easily translate into policy changes.

[Read more>>>](#)

Opinions and Viewpoints are of the Editorial Staff and not that of the Michigan Conference or the National AAUP. Please contact the conference office if you have any questions or comments.

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# Academic Freedom

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## Fulfilling the “Common Good” aspect of AAUP mission

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By Jeffrey Lee

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Take, for example, the debate over global warming. The vast majority of the scientific community accepts the idea of global warming. This has done little to incite governmental action. As with any change in public policy, there are political considerations. In this case, concerns over the economic impact have blunted efforts by the scientific and environmental communities. Major policy shifts nearly always occur in response to a corresponding shift in public opinion.

Faculty, as a whole, stands as one of the most highly educated groups in the world. While education is the cornerstone of your profession, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage you to expand your effective classroom. Take the time to educate the general public in your field of expertise. In this day and age, information may be readily available, but its form may not be readily understandable. Consider the

improvement in comprehension, when lectures and discussions supplement assigned reading. Similar avenues can be used for the general public. Here are several examples:

- Offer a local television station your expert opinion on a news story
- Offer to discuss and answer questions on talk radio
- Write an Op-Ed for a local newspaper
- Speak to a local organization. This could be any group from local charitable organization (e.g. Kiwanis) to a religious group to a small non-profit
- Coordinate your research/outreach projects with an organization whose mission is tangentially similar

No matter the outlet, most of these activities will only take a couple of hours and may only be a one time events. Regardless, public opinion hinges on facts and discussion. One of the AAUP's missions is to “ensure higher education's contribution to the common good.” The common good does not end with registered students, but with the general public. The vibrancy of a democracy is limited only by the actions and decisions of its citizens. Let us aid that democracy by assisting its people in understanding the facts and seeing the whole picture.

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## Annual Meeting of the Michigan Conference of the AAUP

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The 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Michigan Conference of the AAUP will be held on Saturday, April 14, 2007 at the Radisson Hotel in downtown Lansing. A short business meeting is scheduled for 9:30 am with the main program beginning at 10 am. The event will focus on ways to strengthen faculty governance and improve faculty/administration relations. A \$35 registration fee can be paid in advance to the conference or at the door. If you plan to attend, please RVSP with the conference office or through your chapter.

# Can We Save Retiree Benefits?

From the Desk of the President

By Joel Russell



Before discussing attacks on retiree medical benefits I wish to urge every Michigan AAUP member to vote in the national AAUP election later this semester. Since Michigan AAUP membership is now

approximately 10% of the national membership, we now have our own district with three seats on the National Council. In the council election last year when our district also included Wisconsin and Minnesota only 535 total votes were cast. This percentage of members voting is even lower than typical spring school board elections. Let's this year at least achieve a typical general election voting rate. The National Council over the next year will be dealing with a proposal for a significant restructuring of the AAUP as well as other issues that will impact on how the AAUP will continue to be the guardian of the basic tenets of American higher education – academic freedom, shared governance, and tenure – as well as supporting our model for higher education collective bargaining. Charles Parrish from Wayne State University and Howard Bunsis from Eastern Michigan University are running for the open council seat. I urge you to read the statements by Charlie and Howard and cast your vote for whomever you consider is best able to strengthen and help guide the AAUP at this critical juncture.

For this newsletter I wish to show how two bargaining groups at Oakland University responded during last year's negotiations to

demands from the administration to restrict the university's financial exposure to costs of retiree medical benefits. Although the recent changes in accounting requirements in no way changed these costs, these new requirements provide an excuse for administrations and/or governing boards to attempt to reduce retiree medical benefits. If your college or university has such benefits which have not yet been attacked, you can look forward to such action soon whether you are "protected" by collective bargaining or not.

The Oakland faculty first obtained a university contribution toward retiree medical benefits in 2001 with a monthly contribution of \$100/mo.

(single coverage) or \$200/mo. (two-person coverage). These contributions increased each year by 4% such that in 2007 they are \$127/\$254. The other two Oakland unions (clerical/technical and maintenance/grounds/skilled-trades) obtained retiree medical benefit support approximately twenty years earlier such that for 2007 their monthly university contributions are \$343/\$686 which had also been increasing 4% per year. In earlier negotiations the faculty had chosen a higher university contribution to the TIAA-CREF or Fidelity retirement plans. The faculty have received for twenty years 15% of their regular annual salary as a university contribution to the retirement plans with no required personal contribution.

Members of the other unions have seen the university contributions to their retirement plans move up to either 13% (m/g/st) or 14% (c/t) over this same time period.

All unions last year were presented proposals to stop the escalation of retiree medical benefit contributions for anyone retiring after December 31, 2007, freezing monthly contributions at the 2007 level for retirees employed before August 1, 2006, and eliminating contributions for those hired after that date. All groups accepted the

## Summary of Oakland Retiree Benefits History

1980's – Clerical/Technical and Maintenance/Grounds/Skilled Trade union gains retiree medical benefit contribute with annual 4% escalator

2001 – Faculty union gains similar package starting at \$100/month for an individual and \$200 for a couple

2006 – Administration eliminates escalator in negotiations with all three unions and eliminating benefit for new hires

2006 – Union refuses two-tier system, counters with 1% increase in retirement contribute and elimination of retiree benefits

December 31, 2007 retiree date for discontinuing escalating contributions. The faculty refused to treat new hires differently than continuing faculty and elected to accept a \$2000 contribution to the retirement plans on January 1, 2008 and an increase in the university contribution to the retirement plan to 16% starting on that date to drop the contribution to retiree medical plans. The 1% increase in retirement contribution would allow faculty many years away from retirement to have the funds to make up for the lost benefit. However, for faculty closer to retirement a different option was provided. Any faculty member may decide by December 1, 2007 to forego the \$2000 one-time payment and 1% increase in contribution to the retirement plan in order to receive a non-escalating \$160/\$320 per

month contribution to any medical plan if they retire after 2007. The other unions accepted the elimination of retiree medical contributions for new hires to retain for current members the frozen \$343/\$686 per month contribution to a university medical plan. These groups will receive a \$500/year contribution to their retirement plans. These two solutions reflected a philosophical difference in acceptance of two membership classes and the projected future costs of the current escalating contributions.

With advance warning of this trend in reducing retiree medical benefit contributions, perhaps your chapter can devise ways to avoid such reductions or better solutions than the Oakland groups achieved in the closing hours of their negotiations.

For more information on the "Campaign for the Common Good," please see <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/involved/contribute/Endowment+Fund.htm>

For a membership form, click [here](#) or see <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/involved/join/>

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## Bunsis, Parrish Vie for AAUP National Council Seat

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This year we have two very able individuals running for the AAUP's National Council, a body which sets AAUP policy and oversees the activity of the staff. This 39 member body decides how to spend the dues money we pay. Of the 10 total districts, Michigan solely comprises district III. The term lasts for three years.



Charles Parrish  
Wayne State University



Howard Bunsis  
Eastern Michigan University

The candidates are Charles Parrish from Wayne State University and Howard Bunsis from Eastern Michigan University. Both serve as the President of their respective chapters. Each has a unique background and would bring different strengths to the council. Please take a moment to review their [biographies and personal statements](#). This election is the lone opportunity every member has to directly shape the future actions of the AAUP. Please take the time to vote.

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## Michigan Court of Appeals Denies Domestic Partner Benefits

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On February 2, 2007, the Michigan Court of Appeals overturned a previous ruling allowing domestic partner benefits at state institutions. In the case of [National Pride at Work v. Governor of Michigan](#), the three justices unanimously ruled the language of the amendment “unambiguous and plainly precludes the recognition of same-sex domestic partnerships.” Ingham County Circuit Court Judge Joyce Draganchuk previously ruled domestic partner benefits would not be affected under the 2004 Michigan Marriage Amendment.

Although spokespersons for the city of Kalamazoo, University of Michigan and Wayne State University have not publicly commented on the future of the case, an appeal to the Michigan

Supreme Court is likely. The Michigan Conference of the AAUP filed an amicus brief in 2006 in support of domestic partner benefits. If the case is appealed, the conference will, in all likelihood, file another amicus brief with the Supreme Court.

In 2004, Michigan voters approved Proposal 2, a constitutional amendment for the “recognition of marriage.” The measure passed 59% to 41%. The amendment from Article I Section 25 reads “To secure and preserve the benefits of marriage for our society and for future generations of children, the union of one man and one woman in marriage shall be the only agreement recognized as a marriage or similar union for any purpose.”

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## Governor Prepares State for More Cuts, Maybe More Taxes

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With lawmakers preparing to tackle the 2008 budget, the state is already looking at a \$3 billion shortfall, a situation which will surely impact higher education funding. The demise of the Single Business Tax (SBT) is responsible for \$2 billion. The remainder is due to the different growth rates of expenditures and tax revenue streams. While the SBT will be replaced by another business tax, its revenue may not match its predecessor. Republican lawmakers, business leaders and business associations such as the Michigan Chamber of Commerce have called for a cut in the new business tax in an effort to bolster Michigan’s struggling economy and attract new companies. Governor Granholm has insisted that the new tax completely replace the SBT revenue.

In January, the Governor appointed an Emergency Financial Advisory Panel co-chaired

by former governors Milliken and Blanchard to review the current fiscal dilemma and provide options to improve the long-term budgetary crunch. Their [report](#), released February 2, advises the governor and legislature to restructure the tax system to reflect economic growth and to invest in higher education as a means of building a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.

Regardless of this report, it seems likely that 2007 will see a drop in higher education appropriations. Either party will be hard pressed to introduce new taxes for fear of the repercussions. Before the report was even released, the Detroit Free Press ran a [front page story](#) detailing how much people could expect to pay for a sales tax on services. While tax reform must occur, its passage is unlikely to balance the 2008 budget.

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# Freedom of Expression Crackdown at Delta College

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by Raymond Pfeiffer, President, Delta College Chapter of AAUP

Fall 2006

## *Defeat of Proposal to Include Delta College Support Staff in the College Senate*

The Delta chapter facilitated discussions about a proposal to include the college "support staff" as fully represented in and full-fledge members of the college senate. The college senate is currently composed of two groups of college full-time employees: faculty and administrative and professional staff. The faculty currently has a nearly 2/3 majority vote in the senate. A senate ad hoc committee proposed that the faculty reduce its majority vote to a minority vote in the senate in order to make way for support staff membership. The senate is the body that forms all of the major academic policies for the college and submits them for approval to the college president and the board of trustees.

The senate ad hoc committee argued that many support staff members are highly educated and qualified, and should have power in the forming of academic policies that they carry out. Opponents argued that the faculty has the basic responsibility for making academic policy, and should not give up its majority. The faculty members favoring inclusion of support staff said that faculty rarely vote as a block on major issues. Opponents argued that there are indeed genuine faculty interests, that these are important, and that there is no good reason for faculty to surrender their authority. Those in favor argued that democracy would favor inclusion, and that the current exclusion is discriminatory and demeaning.

There were, among the AAUP chapter, some who favored the inclusion proposal. The Delta chapter decided not to take a position on the issue, since several of its members had actively argued at various college meetings repeatedly for the proposal, and others had argued repeatedly and openly against it.

It was about three weeks before the final vote that a senior member of the faculty, who is also a member of the AAUP chapter at Delta, wrote a letter of objection to all full-time faculty, printed it and mailed it in the interoffice mail. Although there were murmurs of growing faculty awareness of the disadvantages of the proposal, no one felt sure how the vote would, in the end, turn out. The

final vote rejected the proposal by approximately 8 votes in a voting field of over three hundred.

Whether or not the first, failed proposal will be followed by another, different one is unclear. What is clear is that the Delta College chapter of the AAUP played a major role in raising the consciousness of the faculty about a measure of broad and deep importance.

## *Freedom of Expression at Delta College*

Some half dozen Delta College students with conservative and Christian views, all of whom were home-schooled, and all of whom were in their second year at Delta, decided, during the summer, to print their own newspaper at Delta, *Vox Veritas*. This was intended to be an organ for expression of their religious, political, ethical and aesthetic ideas. They produced the first number around the end of September, and handed it out to students in the hallways between classes.

Problems arose, however, with the students' efforts to distribute their second issue. The dean of student affairs found copies of the paper lying on tables in various locations, picked them up and kept them. Then, the chief of campus police encountered one the students handing out the paper, and escorted him and a box of several hundred of the copies to the dean's office. The dean explained college policies and procedures to the student as best she could, and then released some of the confiscated copies to the student, who then departed. He proceeded to tell the others on the staff, who then notified the dean of their intent to pursue legal means. Shortly afterward, all copies were returned, and distributed by students again in the hallways.

This was, of course, the lead story in the next issue of *Vox Veritas*. The paper, 8 pages long, printed in black and white on 8 1/2 by 11" white paper, had earlier, in its second issue, included a cover page opinion piece accusing modern art of being fraudulent, akin to "The Emperor's New Clothes." It lambasted an art show in the college Galleria as being worthy of the attribution of a four-letter word! It stated "We have enough Modern "art" at Delta. It's time for something with meaning, and actual value, even if it is only aesthetic value."

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## Delta College (con't)

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The Executive Committee of the Delta chapter of the AAUP decided before Christmas to have a meeting to discuss the issues of *Vox Veritas*. The chapter secured a commitment by the dean of student affairs, the faculty adviser to the Delta Collegiate, the regular student newspaper, and college's general counsel to serve on a panel along with the editor of *Vox Veritas* at the January meeting. Hopes ran high.

### **Winter 2007**

Santa Claus delivered sticks and stones to the administration of Delta College in the form of a letter from an attorney in MO, working for the American Family Association, who promised legal action if Delta continued to inhibit the right to freedom of expression of *Vox Veritas*. All but the editor of *Vox Veritas* quickly reversed their decision to participate in the panel discussion. However, the editor, Mr. Heston Glenn, did attend, as did a member of the public press, and the meeting, with a dozen present, was a civil and engaging discussion. Publicity in The Midland Daily News was not unbecoming of a college.

What had become clear, as members of the AAUP explored college rules and procedures, is that college policy on such matters follows AAUP guidelines, quotes AAUP statements on the subject, and does allow student freedom of expression, and does allow distribution of such materials. However, the means of distribution allowed are somewhat hazy due to some highly objectionable language in the college's procedures. And confusion among administrators and faculty about the procedures is reflected in the materials made available to students in the college catalog.

The AAUP chapter officers have encouraged the college's faculty executive committee and also the college senate to initiate a study of the procedures and also the policies in order to develop consistency and a coherent presentation to the students and, of course, college employees.

The Delta College chapter of the AAUP continues with a number of issues on its plate, and to play a vibrant role in the academic life of the college.

**AAUP MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION – MICHIGAN CONFERENCE**

Check Membership category (2007 National Dues):

Full-time (\$155)     Associate (\$117)     Public (\$117)     Entrant (\$78)  
 Joint (\$78)     Retired (\$78)     Part-time (\$39)     Graduate (\$39)

Note: Entrant membership is only offered to non-tenured faculty for four years. Previous AAUP members are not eligible. Membership will extend for twelve months from the month payment is received at the national office.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_    E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Tenured:  Yes  No    Academic Rank & Field: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Status:  New Member     Renewal     Reinstatement

**PAYMENT**

Total Dues:            \_\_\_\_\_ National Dues  
                              + \_\_\_\_\_ Michigan Conference - \$37  
                              + \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter Dues (GVSU, MSU, U-M Ann Arbor - \$10, U-M Flint - \$12)  
                              = \_\_\_\_\_ Total Dues Owed

Check: Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_    Please make check payable to: AAUP

Charge: Amount Authorized \$ \_\_\_\_\_    Visa \_\_\_\_\_    MasterCard \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby authorize AAUP to charge my credit card my annual dues split over three consecutive monthly payments.

Card No. \_\_\_\_\_    Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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