

Michigan Conference

American Association of University Professors



50 YEARS OF SERVICE
by President Tom Dietz

This academic year will mark an important milestone in the history of the Michigan Conference – AAUP. The April 5, 2003 Annual Meeting and Dinner will mark the 50th anniversary of the MIAAUP founding. It will start a yearlong celebration of historic past accomplishments and provide an opportunity to develop bold, new programs for the future.

Over the years the Conference has seen many changes. What remains constant is the commitment to preserving and defending the principles and values that the AAUP has long espoused – academic freedom, tenure, and the faculty's role in academic governance.

The Structure

When first established, the Michigan Conference was comprised of traditional advocacy chapters. Those chapters still play an important role in defending AAUP values on their campuses as they work through institutional channels and

utilize their visible presence as the voice of the professoriat.

Today the largest chapters in the Conference are the collective bargaining chapters. Collective bargaining not only allows the membership to address economic issues but to provide contractual language to defend AAUP's principles. Further, the Conference has expanded to include chapters in community colleges, recognizing that academic freedom and tenure must be protected at these institutions as well.

Changes

One of the most significant changes that the MIAAUP has witnessed, however, is the increased reliance on contingent faculty, both adjunct and part-time. There is little need to recount the situation of aspiring scholars, trapped in a cycle of annual or biannual teaching contacts or term-to-term appointments, who hope finally to land a tenure-track position or of the confirmed "road warriors" resigned to their fate.

The issue is not merely whether contingent faculty deliver quality education – most strive diligently to do so under the constraints imposed by their schedules and/or the institutional support they receive. Two issues are relevant – the impact of such labor on academic freedom and tenure and the economic conditions under which adjunct and part-time faculty struggle.

Those who attend the AAUP Annual Meetings are aware that each

year contingent faculty looms ever larger as a concern on the agenda, in committees, and during informal conversation. Every member of the AAUP must recognize that the increasing use of non-tenure track instructors represents a threat to the core values of academic freedom and tenure. Equally important, we must be cognizant of, and work within our institutions to address, the economic exploitation of adjuncts and part-timers. I see the latter as a question of economic justice but it should readily be apparent that it is also a case of economic self-interest. In this anniversary year, the MIAAUP must actively address the issue of contingent faculty.

Other Issues

The Conference is also active in other issues that may not immediately seem as relevant. Take prison reform. Many professors at public colleges and universities in Michigan teach undergraduates in the 1950s/1960s-era buildings that would be indistinguishable from overcrowded prisons if only the classrooms had more windows.

Perhaps you may think I'm being facetious but the reality of the Michigan budget is that there are only limited categories that the legislature and the governor can control; much of the budget is controlled by legislative and constitutional constraints. The "discretionary" portions of the budget include funding for prisons, local revenue sharing, community

health, and education including higher education. As prison costs rise and tax revenues decline, other items in the discretionary budget are subject to cuts or funding increases that do not keep pace with costs.

Read MIAAUP Executive Director Bob Grosvenor's article in this issue about the need for prison reform and the role the Conference is playing these efforts. Study the matter carefully as you decide how to vote on the proposed constitutional amendment about prison reform in the November general election. The Conference Executive Board is on record in support of it.

Another Ballot Issue

Another ballot question the MIAAUP has addressed is the initiative that would constitutionally mandate the use of the so-called "tobacco money". One can make a persuasive argument that these funds should be allocated to health-related expenditures as the settlement anticipated. Similarly, one might argue that college and university scholarships ought to be funded from some other more secure revenue source.

An equally serious consideration is whether or not the tobacco funds should be restricted constitutionally and administered by an un-elected commission. The Executive Board studied the question, felt such restrictions were imprudent, and supports the coalition opposing this initiative.

The Future

These are some of the concerns we face as we enter our jubilee year. There are others, not least the precarious health of the state budget. For 50 years the MIAAUP has been a respected voice on matters of higher education before legislative committees. The officers and members of the Executive Board take seriously our responsibility to build on that record.

We need, however, the support and

active involvement of AAUP members throughout the State. I want to close with an appeal to each member of the Association to become more active in your local chapters and to encourage your chapter to play a leading role in the state conference. The pioneers who formed the MIAAUP in 1953 recognized that only by working together could we make our influence felt. The need to do so is no less important today.

KVCC FACULTY ASSOCIATION CHAPTER REPORT

The KVCC Chapter begins this academic year with a two-year extension of our previous contract. The contract provides raises of 4.0% in 2002-03 and 3.5% and 2003-04 for traditional faculty. Educational professionals represented by the FA will receive 5% salary increases in each year of the extension.

The extension continues to provide for "equity adjustments" that enable instructors to reach the maximum for their educational column after 15 years of service with KVCC. (In lieu of academic ranks, instructors are placed in "columns" that reflect their educational attainment, i.e., MA, MA+ 15 graduate hours up to Ph.D.) The equity adjustments were the major accomplishment of the 1997 agreement. They addressed the reality that across the board percentage raises had resulted in significant and inequitable salary discrepancies within columns.

As a result of the equity adjustments and the revision of column minimum, mean, and maximum salaries (to insure that KVCC salaries remain competitive with other community colleges), actual average salary increases for instructors will be 5.25% and 5.0%. All instructors re-

ceive the base increases but some faculty will receive as much as 7% raises as a result of the other adjustments.

The KVCCFA felt that an extension at this time that addressed only compensation was the prudent course. The extension did not resolve some serious issues. The precarious health of the state budget, rising health care costs for the college, and the possible expansion of KVCC into neighboring Allegan County (since defeated in a special election), were among the reasons the FA Executive Committee decided not to re-open the contract and to pursue the best economic settlement possible.

The PA was also pleased to see that the College not only replaced retiring faculty with tenure-track appointments but continues to increase tenure lines. In part, this reflects an administrative decision to expand course offerings at its downtown campus. Good news is often tempered with new concerns. In this case, the PA will be watching the impact on faculty assignments as the downtown campus becomes, for lack of a better term, somewhat more autonomous vis-à-vis the main campus.

FLINT CHAPTER ELECTS NEW OFFICERS

In May of this year Lois Alexander completed her tenure as President of the UM-F/AAUP and we are very grateful for her advocacy of the principles of AAUP. She did an excellent job. Thanks Lois. The present slate of AAUP officers at UM-F now includes Nathan Oaklander, President; Robert Stack, Vice-President; Charles Bailey, Secretary; and R. Shantaram, Treasurer.

The main issue of concern to the UM-F/AAUP this year will center

