

October 2008



NEWSLETTER

A Publication of the University of Nebraska at Omaha AAUP Chapter

AAUP Academic Freedom for a Free Society

New Faculty Luncheon

On September 24, the UNO AAUP hosted a luncheon for new member of the UNO faculty. Members of the Steering Committee were on hand to provide information on rights of faculty members under the provisions of the Contract and to answer questions about the role of the AAUP on campus. Issues of primary importance to new faculty members generally focus on matters of re-appointment, promotion and tenure; personnel files; and procedures for awarding merit. This annual fall event has proven useful to many new faculty and will continue in future years.

Scholarships Awarded

At the Spring Dinner, the Bernie Kolasa Academic Freedom Memorial Scholarships were presented to the 2008 winners. These scholarships of \$1,000 are presented annually to two graduating UNO students who are going on to enter graduate programs. Presenting the awards were Chapter President Ann Antlefinger, [front center] and Past President Sharon Wood [left]. Recipients were Theresa Martin, a biology major who is now in the graduate program here at UNO, and Sam Evan, a graduate in English who is pursuing a doctorate at Old Dominion.

KEEP THE DATES

Several AAUP events are scheduled for the semester. Please note the times, dates and places and attend as many as you can.

Chapter Meeting

The Fall Meeting of UNO AAUP Chapter Members will take place on November 6 in the Jenkins Room of the Milo Bail Student Center. This is a collective bargaining year and Chapter members are encouraged to attend, to be filled in on the status of negotiations and to have their opinions heard on matters of importance.

Fall Chapter Dinner

The semi-annual dinner for Chapter members and their guests will be held on Saturday, November 22 at the Upstream Brewery West, with a social hour at 6:00 followed by a dinner buffet. This event is always a merry one and we encourage all members to try to make it for a fun filled evening. The Upstream always offers a variety of its micro-brews for sampling and enjoying and provides a tempting selection of buffet items. The evening is complimented by the stimulating company of our colleagues and friends. To reserve your place, contact Chapter President Ken Deffenbacher at kdeffenbacher@unomaha.edu.

A bit of wisdom from a college exam paper somewhere“

“When planets run around and around in circles, we say they are orbiting. When people do it, we say they are crazy.”

BARGAINING HAS BEGUN

Collective bargaining between the UNO AAUP and the Board of Regents has begun. The UNO AAUP bargaining team, Bill Pratt, Joe Brown, Jim Shaw and Nora Bacon has met with the Regents' representatives and opened the bargaining process, as dictated by state statute. Thanks to all those, AAUP members and non-members alike, who responded to the survey questionnaire that was distributed in September. The survey results assisted the bargaining team in identifying areas of concern to unit members. Compensation, as always, will be a major issue of the negotiations. But other areas of concern were also identified, such as distribution, merit, work load, stipends, and several others. The team worked these into a series of proposals that was presented to the Executive Committee for approval as items to be brought to the table. Members of the UNO AAUP are encouraged to attend the Chapter Meeting on November 6 to be up-dated on the status of the negotiations. By state law, negotiations must be completed by mid-January. If any items remain un-resolved at that time, a federal mediator will be called in to try to find agreement. If that fails, both sides will submit their final offers to a special master, who will hold hearings and then decide for one side or the other. Whether agreement is reached at the table or by a special master, the final contract must be ratified by the membership of the UNO AAUP and the Board of Regents. Although the contract affects all unit members, only UNO AAUP members are eligible to vote on ratification, so it behooves all unit members to join the AAUP.

NATIONAL AAUP STATEMENT ON UN-L WITHDRAWAL OF SPEAKER INVITATION

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln canceled a planned speech by William Ayers after Nebraska's governor and other politicians and university donors criticized the university for inviting him to speak. Ayers, long a scholar of education, was formerly a founder of the Weather Underground and has received national attention during the presidential campaign.

Ayers was selected for the lecture in February by a faculty committee because of his expertise in research related to small schools and urban education, the university said in a news release. It said the speech was canceled because of security concerns, but faculty groups, including the AAUP, expressed concern that the rescission of the speaking invitation was inconsistent with principles of academic freedom.

[The following statement is taken from a report of the Association's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure. The report was approved for publication as AAUP policy in July 2007. What follows constitutes the first three paragraphs of that policy.]

Incidents in which colleges and universities have rescinded invitations issued to outside speakers have multiplied in recent years. Because academic freedom requires the liberty to learn as well as to teach, colleges and universities should respect the prerogatives of campus organizations to select outside speakers whom they wish to hear. The AAUP articulated this principle in 1967 in its Fifty-third Annual Meeting, when it affirmed "its belief that the freedom to hear is an essential condition of a university community and an inseparable part of academic freedom," and that "the right to examine issues and seek truth is prejudiced to the extent that the university is open to some but not to others whom members of the university also judge desirable to hear."

This principle has come under growing pressure. Citing an inability to guarantee the safety of outside speakers, or the lack of balance represented by the invitation of a college or university group, or the danger that a group's invitation might violate Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, college and university administrators have displayed an increasing tendency to cancel or to withdraw funding for otherwise legitimate invitations to non-campus speakers. Committee A notes with concern that these reasons for canceling outside speakers are subject to serious abuse, and that their proper application should be limited to very narrow circumstances that only rarely obtain. Applied promiscuously, these reasons undermine the right of campus groups to hear outside speakers and thus contradict the basic educational mission of colleges and universities.

It is of course the responsibility of a college or university to guarantee the safety of invited speakers, and administrators ought to make every effort to ensure conditions of security in which outside speakers have an opportunity to express their views. The university is no place for a heckler's veto. In 1983, when unruly individuals on various campuses prevented United States Ambassador to the United Nations Jeane Kirkpatrick from addressing university audiences, Committee A reaffirmed "its expectation that all members of the academic community will respect the right of others to listen to those who have been invited to speak on campus and will indicate disagreement not by disruptive action designed to silence the speaker but by reasoned debate and discussion as befits academic freedom in a community of higher learning." We have always been clear that colleges and universities bear the obligation to ensure conditions of peaceful discussion, which at times can be quite onerous. Only in the most extraordinary circumstances can strong evidence of imminent danger justify rescinding an invitation to an outside speaker.

Our current officers are:

Ken Deffenbacher, President
Ann Antlfinger, Past-President
Loree Bykerk, President-Elect
Joe Brown, First Vice President
Michael Peterson, Second Vice President and
Grievance Officer
Don Greer, Treasurer
Claudette Lee, Secretary
William deGraw, Professor Representative
Donna Dufner, Assoc. Prof. Representative
Larry Menyweather-Woods, Assist. Prof. Represent-
ative
Maria Knudtson, Other Bargaining Unit members
Representative
Jim Czarnecki, Newsletter Editor

UNO Peer Institutions

University of Northern Iowa
Wichita State University
University of Missouri - St. Louis
Cleveland State University
Northern Illinois University
University of Colorado - Denver
Portland State University
University of Texas - San Antonio
University of Arkansas - Little Rock
University of North Carolina - Charlotte

