



NEWSLETTER

A Publication of the University of Nebraska at Omaha AAUP Chapter

The Year in Review

As the 2006-07 academic year comes to an end, the UNO AAUP can look back on another successful year of representing the bargaining unit. Most notable of this year's accomplishments is the negotiation of a very good contract for 2007-2009. By the decision of the Special Master, the UNO faculty will receive a 4.3% salary increase in each of the two years of the contract, rather than the 3.5% that was offered by the University. The distribution of the increase will follow the customary break-down of 70% across-the-board and 30% merit, so each unit member who received a satisfactory performance evaluation will receive approximately 3% in across-the-board plus whatever merit is determined by the academic unit. It was agreed outside of the Special Master process that promotion to the rank of Lecturer after six years of service as an Instructor will carry a promotion stipend of \$2,000. Previously, there had been no stipend attached to this promotion.

In addition, several potential grievances were resolved without recourse to the formal grievance process. Thanks to the hard work of Grievance Officer Sandra Squires, no formal grievances had to be filed this year. We would like to thank Sandra and to wish her all the best in her retirement, after twenty-six years of service to UNO.

The UNO AAUP awarded three Bernie Ko-

lasa Memorial Scholarships to graduates who are going on to graduate school in the fall. The recipients are: Jenna Grotelueschen, who graduated in the summer of 2006 with a BA in Social Work and will pursue graduate studies in Social Work in the fall; Yun [Lilly] Li will receive her BA in Chemistry and has been accepted into the graduate program at Washington University in Saint Louis in the fall; Alyson Roach will receive her BA in Political Science and plans to pursue an MA from UNO and ultimately a Ph.D. with a goal of university education. Congratulations to each of these fine students.



Kolasa Scholars Honored

UNO graduates Yun Li, Jenna Grotelueschen and Alyson Roach were special guests at the UNO AAUP Spring Dinner, where they were presented with scholarship checks. The scholarships are awarded annually in memory of the late Bernie Kolasa, Professor of Political Science and founding member of UNO AAUP.

AAUP DEFENDS FMLA

The American Association of University Professors has called upon the U.S. Department of Labor to preserve and strengthen the protections offered by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993. The department issued a notice in December soliciting comments on the act, which raised concerns among work and family advocates that the department may be considering changes that would diminish the FMLA's protections and scale back coverage for workers' health and family needs. The AAUP strongly opposes changes that would limit the scope of the FMLA.

In its comments to the Department of Labor, the AAUP recommends that the FMLA regulations be interpreted to provide protections for contingent faculty who may not be employed continuously, and that normal breaks in the academic calendar not be counted as part of an FMLA leave. The statement also recommends that federal FMLA leave not run concurrently with any pregnancy disability leave a woman is entitled to under an employer's disability policy, and that the department refrain from regulatory changes that would narrow the definition of "serious health condition." The AAUP calls for colleges and universities to provide more information about the FMLA to their employees, and for the Department of Labor to increase its public education efforts.

The AAUP has long advocated on behalf of college and university faculty for policies that provide the security of employment necessary to protect academic freedom, along with compensation and leave policies that are sufficiently generous to attract persons of ability to the academic profession.



Squires Honored

Sandra Squires, Professor of Special Education, was recognized at the UNO AAUP Spring Dinner on the occasion of her retirement. Sandra served as President of the Chapter in 2004-2005 and as Second Vice-President/Grievance Officer in 2006-2007. Current President Sharon Wood presented Sandra with flowers and a plaque expressing the appreciation of the unit for her service.

Looking Ahead

The UNO AAUP is already planning events for the coming academic year. Shortly after this academic year comes to a close, a workshop, jointly sponsored with Academic and Student Affairs, will be held for all heads of academic units, focusing on responsibilities under the contract. At the beginning of the new year, a luncheon will be held for new faculty members, to explain their rights under the contract. The annual fall wine and cheese reception to welcome new faculty will be expanded to a Meet Your Senator event, to which all metro area state legislators will be invited, so that UNO AAUP members can have a chance to express their concerns for higher education in Nebraska. Watch your mail for notes on these and other events.

The “Academic Bill of Rights” and Our Neighbors

David Horowitz’s so-called Academic Bill of Rights has been introduced in nearly half of the states over the past few years, but failed to gain traction as legislators and campus communities saw past the misleading rhetoric. The catch phrase has been replaced with “Intellectual Diversity”. So far, it has not become a legislative issue in Nebraska, but several of our neighboring states have battled with the issue, not always for the best.

In Colorado, legislation was set aside last year in favor of a “memorandum of understanding” among the presidents of the state’s major public colleges and universities.

The Kansas House Committee on Appropriations held a hearing on March 15, 2006 to consider HCR 5035, expressing the sense of the legislature that public colleges and universities in Kansas adopt an “Academic Bill of Rights.” Joe Yanik, President of the Kansas Conference and professor of mathematics at Emporia State University testified on behalf of AAUP and distributed the Committee A statement on the Academic Bill of Rights. David Horowitz also testified in favor of the resolution and spent much of his time attacking womens’ studies programs in particular.

On February 23, 2006, the South Dakota State Senate defeated a dangerous intrusion into the academic freedom of colleges and universities. The bill, HB 1222, would have required South Dakota’s public universities to annually report to the legislature regarding intellectual diversity. This legislation had been pushed by outside forces bemoaning an alleged liberal bias on college campuses.

The Missouri House of Representatives passed a bill (H 213) which ostensibly “ensure[s] intellectual diversity and the free exchange of ideas.” The AAUP opposes this bill because it threatens to impose legislative oversight on the professional judgment of faculty and to deprive academic institutions of their authority from making decisions that are central to their academic purpose.

AAUP President Cary Nelson and Executive Director Ernest Benjamin have released a statement regarding Missouri Bill H213, reading in part:

The Missouri House of Representatives has passed a bill (H 213) which ostensibly “ensure[s] intellectual diversity and the free exchange of ideas.” The bill, sponsored by legislators and others who are concerned about what they see as the politicalization of the classroom, directs public colleges and universities to report annually to the state legislature steps they have taken to achieve these goals.

The bill threatens to impose legislative oversight on the professional judgment of faculty and to deprive academic institutions of their authority from making decisions that are central to their academic purpose. It would substitute a political body for academic ones, replace academic decisions with political judgments, and therefore open colleges and universities to greater politicalization, not less. The bill’s proponents have not put forward any compelling reasons for adopting a measure that is so at odds with the principles of academic freedom. Indeed, the bill itself would limit and constrain intellectual diversity and the free exchange of ideas. The bill’s infirmities run too deep to be cured with textual refinements. It should be discarded entirely.

2006-2007 Executive Committee

UNO's current list of peer institutions

President: Sharon Wood, History
First Vice President: Joseph Brown, Psychology
Grievance Officer: Sandra Squires, Special Ed.
Secretary: Claudette Lee, Social Work
Treasurer: Don Greer, HPER
Full Professor Rep.: Roger Hoburg, Chemistry
Associate Professor Rep.: Maria Arbelaez, History
Assistant Professor Rep.: Robert Darcy, English
Other Unit Member Rep.: Maria Knudtson, English
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Geology
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