

Arkansas AAUP Newsletter

Fall 2013

www.arkansasaaup.org

State Meeting This Weekend

The annual meeting of the Arkansas AAUP Conference will be held on Saturday, October 26th, at the Little Rock Comfort Inn adjacent to the Clinton Library. Conference President Brian Bolter has scheduled sessions featuring two significant figures in Arkansas higher education: Shane Broadway (below left), Director of the Department of Higher Education, and Gilbert Baker (below right), who served as both a tenured faculty member at UCA and a senator in the Arkansas Legislature.



Bolter says of the meeting, “We know that AAUP can be a force on university campuses but can its impact extend beyond that? This year’s Arkansas State AAUP Conference in Little Rock focuses on that question, specifically, how can the state AAUP impact the legislative processes that affect higher education in Arkansas?”

The meeting starts with an 8:30 coffee mixer, during which Rebecca Williams, a retired UCA faculty member who has been a highly effective advocate for academic freedom and shared governance in Arkansas, and who in

recent years has done a great deal of work for AAUP’s national office, will address questions regarding chapter formation and development. Shane Broadway will speak at 10:00, Gilbert Baker will speak at 1:30 (with lunch between these sessions), and the conference business meeting will follow, including further discussion of chapter formation with all interested parties. Registration and lunch are free to all AAUP members (non-members are welcome to attend for a five-dollar fee).

Prior to this meeting, the State Conference Executive Committee will meet at 7 pm on Friday, October 25th, at the same location, the Comfort Inn Downtown at the Clinton Library.

Every campus chapter in the state is welcome to send a representative to this meeting, and interested AAUP members on campuses without an official chapter are welcome as well. Attendees should meet in the Comfort Inn lobby at 7.

Bolter Succeeds Mitchell as Conference President

Following last Spring’s statewide election, Brian Bolter, Associate Professor of Psychology at UCA, has begun his first term as State Conference President, succeeding Jeff Mitchell, Professor of Philosophy at ATU, who had reached the conference’s constitutional limit of two consecutive terms.

Regarding his priorities for the organization, Bolter says, “as the new president of the state chapter, I hope to continue the good work done by past presidents. Looking forward, I believe

now is an important time for AAUP to be more vocal about financial support for higher education in Arkansas.



Brian Bolter

“The push from some political groups to limit government funding has caused a squeeze on many campuses. We’re facing limited salary increases and little money for new tenure-line positions. As we all know, tenure-line faculty form the core of a university, and without a strong core, we deliver far less than we promise our students.

“University presidents and chancellors work hard to make clear that higher education needs an increase in funding. However, the current political climate indicates that legislators have very little appetite to increase allocations to higher education. Adding to the problem is the pressure from governing boards to not raise tuition.

“So how are Arkansas universities going to not only keep the best and brightest but attract them as well?

“I believe AAUP can help explain the necessity of increased funding and why tenured faculty—both the ones we currently employ and the ones we would seek to employ—are important to higher education in Arkansas.

“I look forward to making the voice of AAUP heard around the state.”

Reflecting on his achievements over the past four years, which include the establishment of shared-governance report cards under the auspices of the

conference (see story below), Mitchell says, “It was a privilege to be able to work with faculty across the state. Our members should be proud of the fact that our conference continues to be characterized by a culture of collegiality which is all too often lacking in the contemporary university.”



Jeff Mitchell

In other election results, Jim Vander Putten, Associate Professor of Higher Education at UALR, has begun his first term as Conference Treasurer, succeeding Jean Hendrix, Associate Professor of Computer Information Systems at UA-Monticello.

The conference extends its sincerest thanks to Jim and Jean, who have served most ably and selflessly.

First Shared-Governance Grades Submitted

Thanks to an initiative proposed by then-Conference President Jeff Mitchell, Arkansas AAUP has established a process for the AAUP chapter on any campus in Arkansas to prepare a report grading the state of shared governance on that campus. In 2013, only two chapters, at ATU and UCA, submitted reports.

The ATU chapter awarded their campus a grade of D, citing a lack of

“established channels by which components of the academic community (other than the president), can communicate with the Board of Trustees,” the university president’s “interference with the faculty’s ability to conduct teaching and . . . dictatorial style of leadership,” and a “general fear of retribution [that] has muzzled faculty protests.”

The UCA report was somewhat more positive, awarding a C+. On the positive side, the report noted a strong faculty handbook; an active faculty senate, handbook committee, and strategic planning committee; and regular, institutionalized communication channels between the faculty and the administration. More negatively, the report concluded that the university still suffers from “lack of clarity in the role of faculty on some issues, such as the hiring of administrative positions, as well as frustration in the lack of a role in [many] administrative decisions.”

The guidelines for preparing such a report will be available at the state conference meeting, and other chapters are encouraged to participate in 2014.

Allen Wins Shared Governance

Bob Allen, retired Professor of Chemistry at ATU, is the 2013 winner of the Arkansas AAUP Shared Governance Award. In making this decision, the State Executive Committee noted Bob’s long and varied service, including two terms as Conference President and his continuing work maintaining the conference website. Bob has tirelessly sought to make faculty voices heard in Arkansas, and this award is the conference’s official vote of thanks for his courage and conscience.

Conference Officers

Brian Bolter (UCA)—President
Bill Rowe (ASU)—Vice President
Mike Schaefer (UCA)—Acting Secretary
Jim Vander Putten (UALR)—Treasurer
Mike Schaefer (UCA)—Newsletter Editor