

University of Missouri-Columbia AAUP Meeting

Saturday, January 12, 2008
S203 Memorial Union – 10:00am

Present:

Approximately 30 people were in attendance.

Announcements:

The State AAUP Conference will be holding its meeting at the University of Missouri-Columbia in February. The date of this meeting will be February 23, 2008. Katie Mackie and Erika Gubrium (AAUP National Office) are expected to speak. The exact time and place is yet to be determined.

Minutes:

Agendas were distributed to those in attendance as were supplemental materials.

The first item on the agenda was the **faculty complaint website** and the **syllabus statement** (which was distributed to all MU faculty earlier in the week). Associated materials were distributed to all in attendance which contained the Syllabus Statement, the website for the MU System Policy and Collected Rules for student grievances which are already in place, the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities (OSSR) website, the definition and statement of “Intellectual Pluralism” as appearing on the OSSR website, the American Council of Education’s statement on Intellectual Pluralism as linked to by the OSSR and a copy of the MU Intellectual Pluralism Report Form which students are being told they can use.

General concern over the Curators’ decision regarding the implementation of a student complaint website via OSSR, run by an Ombudsman (Michael Prewitt), without input from faculty. The ACE statement was discussed by those in attendance. In general, concerns were raised that: students would not read these supplementary materials; that such a move creates a culture of complaint; that as it is currently structured, the process is ambiguous and invites confusion; and, it may unnecessarily may frighten faculty and decrease morale. The question was asked what the AAUP wanted to do about this faculty complaint website. Discussion ensued.

Several issues/possibilities were raised. Some argued that we could create our own statement and present it to faculty council. Some stated we could ask for rewording of the existing statement. Some said that including the statement is optional and that faculty need not place it in their syllabi or hand it out to students as it is part of orientation – this also raised concerns that orientation will not present the issue to students in an appropriate manner the professoriate would agree to. There were questions as to where all of this is coming from in the first place and a critique leveled at the system and MU administration regarding how issues like this become established without faculty input on the matter. Several in attendance were concerned that this establishes a poor protocol for usurping existing procedures, which have been in place a long time, for student grievances, and, that the confidentiality of the website (and the

unknown process from complaint to action) could be used against the faculty, without evidence. Others voiced concern that even under the existing procedures, administrators use the grievance process in a discriminatory and nepotistic manner depending on their favor with a particular faculty. This led into vigorous concern and numerous examples of administrative and Curator cronyism, nepotism, patronage, and in general, violations of faculty autonomy. Discussion regarding what AAUP can do about this.

After several motions, a **final revised motion** was made that the MU-AAUP oppose the faculty complaint website and form a committee to decide what to do, create a procedure for doing it, and act. **The motion was seconded and voted unanimously in favor of.**

The second item on the agenda was to discuss, in general, the extant problems of an **unresponsive administration**, the waning of **faculty morale**, the **recruitment and retention of faculty** at MU, and the implications of **Forsee** as the system's new president.

It was acknowledged that there needs to be a place/an organization where faculty can come to for help, protection. AAUP needs to *actively* protect faculty in this climate and celebrate our victories and successes collectively as a faculty. News about faculty issues needs to get out to all faculty on a regular basis – perhaps the AAUP is the outlet for this. Concern that the administration is not interested in evidence – AAUP could be in the business of bringing *everything* to the public's attention. Evidence needs to be mounted regarding faculty grievances, administrator responsiveness to faculty concerns and suggestions, and racism and sexism in the MU system. It was mentioned that an "Administrator Accountability System" was created some years ago – where is it now? "No confidence" faculty votes were discussed – where are they in the regulations? Several proposals were formulated, but not formally presented, for instance: the AAUP listserv be used to let faculty know that they have recourse and support, that we renew our administrator accountability review process, and that we have a Curator Complaint website.

An attorney who was present stated that all the grievances that have won have been "dumbed down" by the chancellor by not truly addressing the issue, providing no real remedies and that there were no consequences for administrators who did this or broke the rules. It was discussed that evidence was very important in the grievance process (even though administrators did not seem to accept evidential claims), that facts be assembled by a committee and presented to AAUP. That faculty rights are violated when the collective rules/regulations are violated and that there is a power-check on this campus. Several discussed the need, again, to get the AAUP's message out, the message of shared governance, the examples of breaches of the collective rules and regulations, examples of the "cruel" grievance procedures here, with a focus on the profession and education as well as Missouri. AAUP's possible censuring of MU was

discussed as a possibility (MU was blacklisted in the 1970s, based on violations of the grievance process).

A **motion** was put forward that AAUP-MU form a “Top Issues” committee to investigate the top issues that are pressing for MU faculty including, but not limited to, grievances and dismissals. The committee would collect the relevant data, keep files, create records of connection between complaints and actionable AAUP items, and ultimately present these to the National AAUP as well as investigate Censure. The motion was seconded. **The motion passed unanimously.**

The third item on the agenda was the **Missouri Legislature, Curator, and Administration Accountability website** creation. The AAUP-MU desired to discuss the content and implementation of such a website. A subcommittee was formed at the last meeting and has done some work. The table was canvassed for various skill sets needed to implement this item. A discussion ensued regarding other actions similar to this which have been done at other places – in general, it was desirable to look into the degree of and data secured by exit interviews (of faculty who have left, those who were forced to transfer depts., and/or those who do not get promoted) here at MU. It was mentioned that the number of non-tenured and reclassified faculty is increasing. Concern was voiced that President Bush has signed a new regulation that allows companies to deny total or partial pensions to those who refuse to retire according to organizational guidelines – this could be applied to faculty. General consensus was a strident need for an accountability system for legislature, curators, and administration. No motion was put forward.

The fourth item on the agenda regarding increasing membership via a membership subcommittee was tabled. However, a sign-up sheet for interested parties was circulated.

The fifth item on the agenda was to hold bi-yearly elections. Nominations were sought the previous week. Eddie Adelstein was elected President of AAUP-MU. Victoria Johnson was elected Vice President of AAUP-MU. Stephen Montgomery-Smith was elected 2nd Vice President of AAUP-MU. David Brunsma was elected Secretary-Treasurer of AAUP-MU.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by David L. Brunsma (brunsmad@missouri.edu)
January 17, 2008