A Few Takeaways from the Fall 2023 Texas AAUP Conference Meeting
Sept. 30, 2023. Agenda. Brian Evans, Interim President (aaup.texas@gmail.com). Officers.

About AAUP. We champion academic freedom, advance shared governance, and organize all faculty to promote economic security and quality education. All AAUP members automatically become members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). All AAUP members in Texas are part of Texas AAUP. Please follow us on X (formerly Twitter) @TexasAaup and @AAUP.

Action Items
- **Be involved in dept. and university governance.** Faculty have academic freedom in teaching, research and expression [1], have primary authority over the curriculum as well as faculty hiring, evaluation, and dismissal [1-3], and should elect their dept. chair [3].
- **Work closely with your Faculty Senate** on policies. Consider running for the Senate.
- **SB 17:** Work with Faculty Senates to develop policies without overcompliance. SB 17 exceptions include academic instruction, research, and student orgs. See our blog.
- **SB 18:** In campus policy, clarify due process for regular and summary dismissal [2], as well as frequency, severity, intent for dismissal for cause. See TTU's policy and our blog.
- **Recruit others to join AAUP.** Here are several reasons to join. Link to join AAUP. PowerPoint flier to join AAUP and a flier to join AAUP and our allied orgs.
- **Be part of an AAUP chapter.** List of chapters. Officer names can be kept confidential. -OR- **Form an AAUP chapter.** 7 AAUP members needed. Step-by-step instructions.
- **Nominate AAUP members** for Texas AAUP Elections in Feb. All officer positions are up for election for two-year terms. Send nominations to Jim Klein (jeklein20@gmail.com)
- **Advocacy training.** Censorship (anti-CRT) SB 16 & other bills likely in the next session.

Recap of Legislative Advocacy at the Texas Legislature - Visual Summary - AFT Slides
- Texas AFT and NAACP LDF greatly amplified advocacy by Texas AAUP and other orgs
- Coalition met Legislators, testified, wrote op-eds, held pressers & Tweeted, and helped defeat censorship SB 16 and make anti-DEI SB 17 & tenure SB 18 somewhat less bad

SB 17 on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion - Blog
- For legal protection, institutions will likely interpret this law as broadly as possible. Faculty, staff and students should try to push back against this tendency.
- SB 17 does not prohibit or limit teaching, research, or student org activities in any way.
- Diversity statements for employment banned; some using mentoring statements instead.
- Institutions are determining workarounds for external grants evaluated on DEI support

SB 18 on Tenured Faculty - Slides - Blog - Texas Tech SB 18 policy - See Action Items above
- 7 of 10 reasons for regular dismissal are vague and can be weaponized against faculty.
- Sets minimum standards for summary dismissal that lack due process
- Summary dismissal is optional for an institution to adopt

AAUP/TFA faculty survey on effects of political climate on working conditions - Slides - Blog
- About 2/3 do not recommend their state to colleagues as desirable to work.
- About 1/3 are actively seeking academic jobs elsewhere.
>40% at public & private campuses say candidates declined jobs at their campus

**Campus Reports**

- **SB 17 DEI.** Self-censorship and actual censorship in public and private higher ed.
  - Dept. Chair at a public university asked faculty to remove DEI from their syllabi even though SB 17 has exceptions for academic instruction.
  - Renaming e.g. “Chief Diversity Officer” became “Chief Experience Officer”.
  - Dept. Chair removed anti-racist statement without any input with faculty.
  - Newsletters from campus institutes studying race disappeared without faculty input.
  - What will happen to strategic plans based on DEI goals, e.g. at Alamo Colleges and Austin Community College?

- **SB 18 Tenure.** Due to the UT Board of Regents adopting SB 18 rules so late (Aug. 24), UT campuses are still updating their policies. See changes to UT Board of Regents Rules for SB 18 and UT Austin AAUP Chapter's suggestions for campus policies.

- **Faculty governance.** Faculty at two different universities said that faculty there do not get to choose their department chair, which is at odds with shared governance [3].

- **HB 8 Community Colleges.** New funding for community colleges, but based on outcomes-based education. This is dangerous to academic freedom. If funding is based on outcomes instead of enrollment, pressure will be put on instructors to give students better grades. This will go from community colleges to university in future.

- **Interactions with Administrators.** Concerns about administrators lying to them. Ideas:
  - Document meetings.
  - Record meetings – Texas Law allows recording of any conversation you’re in
  - Bring allies/advocates to meetings with administrators (AAUP can help)
  - Bring the concern to the Faculty Senate President
  - Ask AAUP to file open records requests using the Texas Public Information Act

- **Sul Ross Rio Grande College** Faculty Senate voted to disband after years of conflict with the administration.

- **New AAUP chapters** forming at Lamar, Sam Houston State, Texas State, and Texas Woman’s Universities. See the List of chapters which has the contact info for organizers.

**AAUP Principles**

[1] **Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom & Tenure**, jointly formulated by American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) representing college and university administrations and American Association of University Professors (AAUP) representing professors. AAC&U has more than 800 college/university members.

[2] **Statement on Procedural Standards in Faculty Dismissal Proceedings**, jointly formulated by the AAC&U and AAUP.

[3] **Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities**, jointly formulated by the AAUP, American Council on Education, and Association of Governing Boards of Universities & Colleges. The AAUP represents faculty members, ACE represents university administrations, and AGB represents University Systems, Boards of Regents and Boards of Trustees. ACE has more than 1500 college and university members and AGB has more than 1300 college, university, and system members.