

Hello, my name is Carl Bybee and I will be serving with you as a senator in this year's University Senate. I am a past-president of the University Senate, and I am currently serving as the president of the University of Oregon's chapter of the American Association of University Professors, commonly known as the AAUP. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words about our local AAUP chapter and its core mission in the defense, promotion and strengthening of academic freedom for faculty, instructors, adjuncts and students: for the higher education community as a whole.

I want to join in welcoming you to what promises to be a very challenging year. Not only will we be engaged in the important routine work of the senate, but we will also be taking up the task of reconsidering the structure of faculty governance on our campus. And we will be doing all of this work against the background of "the great recession" and the uncertainties of our budget even for this academic year as well as the years to come.

As Woody Allen once said, "Today we are at a crossroads. One road leads to hopelessness and despair; the other, to total extinction. Let us pray we choose wisely."

Let's hope things aren't quite that bad. I do want to say a few words about the centrality of academic freedom, not just to the work of the university, but to whether we are a university or not. And I want to contextualize these remarks with regard to our "budget crisis" and the AAUP.

The AAUP has been around for almost one hundred years fighting for academic freedom for faculty, students and other higher education professionals, from adjuncts to instructors, through good times and bad. Our local chapter, an advocacy chapter, has been working toward this same goal for nearly as long.

But back to academic freedom and our budget crisis.

I want to make three points.

1. Academic freedom at this campus and across the country is under siege, but it is not due to this "budget crisis."
2. Academic freedom and the business side of a university are not two separate concerns. They are deeply interconnected concerns.
3. Academic freedom requires a strong, independent, informed, voice of higher education professionals capable of exerting significant, visible influence on

university governance.

Let's take each of these points briefly in turn.

First, academic freedom at this campus and across the country is under siege, but it is not due to this "budget crisis." This current budget does pose significant threats to academic freedom and to the very ability of our University to carry out its public mission to the citizens of Oregon and to the nation. However, the budget challenges we face today are the result, in part, of over three decades of federal and state disinvestment in higher education, as well as other crucial state institutions.

Three decades of going to the state legislature and experiencing declining state support have taught us a valuable but, perhaps, wrong message. That message is that these declines are irrevocable, that they are the new economic reality. To survive we will need to continue to raise tuition and find ever-increasing sources of outside support. We have taken these actions. And as necessary, we will continue to take them. But these strategies come at a cost. A cost in terms of student access. A cost of redefining the structure of the university for efficiency but not necessarily learning. Potential costs in terms of the ability of faculty to define the shape and direction of the institution. These are academic freedom issues.

But what if there is another message to consider in this experience. Thirty years of disinvestment in not 150 years of disinvestment. There are major transformations taking place today in terms of how we understand economics, the value of public institutions, and the ideas themselves of what freedom and a free society mean.

Given the new outlook on public investment in health care, housing or jobs or bailing out financial institutions, maybe *this is the time* to talk about re-investing in education as a crucial public resource.

Let's consider the second point. Academic freedom and the business side of a university are not two separate concerns. They are deeply interconnected concerns. We have long recognized that tenure is a crucial means to the achievement and protection of academic freedom. Tenure protects faculty in their research and in the classroom. It does this by providing the crucial economic security that makes academic freedom more than a slogan.

Academic freedom and economics are linked.

So when we look at the number of tenure-related faculty on our campus and see that

over the last fifteen years their number has grown by less than six percent, while our overall enrollment has increased by more than twenty percent, we see a matter of concern. In 1992 tenure-related faculty made up approximately one-half of the teaching staff. Now they account about one-third.<sup>1</sup> Does this question the contributions of adjuncts and instructors? Of course not, they are an important part of our campus community. In fact, the AAUP in recognizing the dramatic rise of adjuncts and instructors on campuses incorporated into its “Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure” specific steps moving adjuncts, fixed appointment faculty and part-timers to more secure, stable economic footing.<sup>2</sup> Do these numbers about who teaches with what protections raise questions about the health of academic freedom on our campus that need to be addressed? Definitely.

What about students? The AAUP helped formulate and adopt a “Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students” which takes up many crucial issues regarding students’ freedom to learn,<sup>3</sup> These include links between that freedom and economics, including access to higher education, the protection of freedom of inquiry and expression and the rights and means to participate in the formulation and application of institutional policy affecting academic and student affairs.

When the academic freedom of a member of the professional higher education community is challenged, does the university need to provide the economic support for the faculty member to engage that challenge? Definitely.

When there are calls for budget cutbacks, where and how they will fall and take place, are these matters of academic freedom? Definitely.

When the legislature allocates resources to the University, are tracking the flow and distribution of these resources matters of academic freedom? Definitely.

When fund-raising priorities are set are these matters of academic freedom? It would

---

<sup>1</sup> “Data and Analysis,” Office of Institutional Research, the University of Oregon.  
<http://ir.uoregon.edu/data>

<sup>2</sup> “Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure,” AAUP Policy Documents and Reports, 2006. <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/RIR.htm>

<sup>3</sup> “Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students,” AAUP Policy Documents and Reports, 1992. <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/stud-rights.htm>

seem so.

The distribution of resources, money, time, access, set the operating boundaries for academic freedom.

Which brings me to my third and final point.

Academic freedom requires a strong, independent, informed, voice of higher education professionals capable of exerting significant, visible influence on university governance.

How does this happen? This is, of course, the question being taken up by the Faculty Governance Committee. An administration committed to shared governance is, of course, important. But it isn't enough.

The idea of shared governance doesn't work without substantial resources for faculty and other higher education professionals to *act*, to have timely access to crucial materials *they* deem relevant to their work, and to *see the outcome of their work in determining crucial university decisions*.

The boundaries between what have traditionally been seen as the preserve of academics and what have been seen as business/administration will need to be carefully examined, with the faculty having an authoritative say in the drawing of these boundaries.

So what can the AAUP do for this University Senate and our higher education community, including our students?

If a faculty member or a member of the higher education community is concerned that his or her academic freedom is being challenged, call me, or a member of our executive board, or the AAUP national office. We can provide advice and assistance or find someone who can. Whether that person is an AAUP member or not. Whether that person is an adjunct or a full-professor.

As matters of academic freedom become more intertwined with financial issues call our chapter officers, our national offices, or take a look at the substantial resources our national organization has put on line, to answer questions ranging from best-practices, to how to consider furloughs, to issues of due process.

The AAUP advises, provides policy statements, report information, conducts, when

necessary, investigations regarding issues of academic freedom and in some cases moves to the level of censuring higher education programs for not observing the principles of academic freedom and tenure endorsed by the AAUP and more than two hundred other professional and educational organizations.

The AAUP is an invaluable resource for our faculty and higher education professionals and community. Turn to us, join us, work with us.

Academic freedom in times of “budget crisis”? If we are going to have a public university serving a public mission in a democratic society, there can be no budget cuts to academic freedom or to the institutional resources and culture that support academic freedom.

Thank you.