

Assistant Dean Hurtado:

Thank you for your two recent e-mails regarding my views on AAUP. I'm copying all BPS faculty since one of your e-mails did so, prompting notes from a few faculty members implying that my simultaneous involvement in AAUP and Faculty Senate represents a conflict of interest. I welcome this opportunity to further explain the importance of AAUP principles to faculty, as well as to you and other administrators on our campus. Your questions come at a time when the core values of academic freedom, shared governance and due process/tenure have never been more important.

First, regarding the claims of a "conflict of interest"; since its inception, our Faculty Assembly has elected senators by a vote of faculty. Removing senators because of unfounded charges of conflict of interest runs counter to the principles on which the Assembly was founded.

I have been a member of Sinclair faculty assembly for 13 years and a senator for three years. My record of attendance and active participation at senate meetings demonstrates that I have vigorously represented the BPS division. Last year when I ran for Senate I clearly stated that, "I am a firm believer in shared governance and support a strong faculty voice." I was duly elected to Senate after stating I was president of the Sinclair Chapter of AAUP.

The issue of meaningful Faculty Senate functions and the presence of collective bargaining is important to understand. From its inception in 1915, the AAUP has consistently advanced shared governance-- epitomized in the academic senate--as the desired structure of decision making in higher education.

After the advent of collective bargaining in higher education, the AAUP affirmed that collective bargaining can and should be used to "increase the effectiveness of those institutions [of faculty shared governance] by extending their areas of competence, defining their authority, and strengthening their voice in areas of shared authority and responsibility" (Statement on Collective Bargaining, 1973). AAUP contracts (such as those found at <http://sccaup.org/samplecontracts.html>) typically contain language affirming the importance of academic senates and strengthening their role in governance. In its 1988 Statement on Academic Government for Institutions Engaged in Collective Bargaining, the AAUP emphasizes the importance of contract language that ensures sufficient information and communication to make faculty involvement in shared governance meaningful, and that delineates joint participation in decision making on committees.

My involvement with AAUP is consistent with my service on Faculty Senate. My interest in AAUP arose out of my concern in seeing how little influence Senate has on Sinclair's campus. In one of your e-mails you wrote, regarding Faculty Senate, "I have always been pleased with the voice I felt I had in faculty governance." Did you feel pleased when the Provost rejected Senate's recommendations that a faculty representative sits on the committee deciding how to realign the college, and on the committee deciding how to restructure the Instruction Division? Do you feel pleased that the Provost has failed to respond to Senate's recommendation that faculty be given an opportunity to evaluate their chairpersons and deans in a meaningful way? Are you pleased with the run-around the administration gave Senate when Senate asked for data on the growth in administrative positions in recent years, and

on changes in expenditures on administration versus instruction?

You ask how I think that affiliation with AAUP will benefit Sinclair's faculty. I am certain you are in complete agreement that academic freedom, real shared governance, and due process/tenure are valuable and necessary on every college campus. These values are shared by other faculty and by AAUP. The point to be emphasized is that the three core values are inextricably tied together. If one is weak, the others are weakened. Without tenure, there is no real academic freedom. Without a real voice in the governance of our institution, including on issues such as the continued hiring of faculty off the tenure track, the assignment of teaching load, and scheduling of classes, the issue of tenure steadily becomes less important to the institution.

You and I disagree on whether these principles are secure at Sinclair. In one of your e-mails you wrote, "We feel we have academic freedom." Most administrators "feel" good about academic freedom until they examine the principle more closely and see that without tenure and job security, without an avenue to address grievances impartially, and without a strong faculty voice in the governance of our institution, academic freedom is moot. Just to say we have it doesn't make it so.

For example, at Sinclair the increase in the percentage of the classes that are taught by contingent faculty (part time and annually contracted faculty) has increased. By the very nature of their employment, which is contingent on variables beyond their control, these faculty members are in a vulnerable position that prevents them from speaking out on issues that concern them, for fear of being labeled trouble-makers and simply not re-hired. If Sinclair were serious about academic freedom, it would take steps to increase the number of faculty on the tenure track, so that more faculty would have a real stake in the institution's future.

Regarding communications between the faculty and the administration, you wrote that "we feel we have excellent communication." But what administration calls "communication" is often a lecture. When an administration issues edicts or announcements of decisions that have been made without meaningful faculty involvement, this is "monologue," not dialog. Examples include the decisions to increase reliance on part-time faculty, to demand huge growth in distance learning, to mandate how distance learning courses are to be taught, and so on. Administrators may "feel" that their communications structure is good, and that faculty can "freely voice concerns," but many faculty certainly do not share your confidence.

Regarding issues of compensation, you praised the administration's "willingness to provide the additional 2.4% to our ongoing base salary we originally did not receive." I think that it is not a coincidence that there was no talk about following the agreement until the collective bargaining process started.

You express "embarrassment" over faculty raises "when our community and even Sinclair staff members do not enjoy the same economic benefits." SCCAAUP shares your embarrassment regarding staff members being poorly paid; we just identify the source of the embarrassment differently. While our

administration may not have control over the local economy, it certainly does have the ability to examine the living wage issues of our college staff and provide increases they all deserve. With millions of dollars going to the Warren County campus, millions more going into the "rainy-day fund," and tens of millions in reserves (some of which the state now apparently plans to distribute to other colleges), one might rightly ask why our colleagues on staff are not better paid.

Finally, I wish to correct the several logical errors you made in expressing the misgivings you have about AAUP. In one of your notes you wrote:

"The vague promises of a better life and references to areas in which we are already satisfied are not sufficient to make an impression on our willingness to give over self-governance to become beggars of a collective bargaining unit. You've gotta do better."

1. You seem to be making a personal statement of satisfaction and I do not think that you speak for all faculty when you say, "areas in which we are already satisfied."
2. I disagree that the faculty has "self-governance" since administration makes all the decisions and faculty has no contractual rights. I believe that meaningful shared governance is essential to a strong college.
3. You say that we will become "beggars of a collective bargaining unit." With collective bargaining faculty decide what to negotiate for, they make their own decisions. I have seen that our colleagues across the state who have collective bargaining are enjoying the core principles of AAUP while keeping higher education safer and more secure from political and economic intrusion.

I believe that academic freedom, real shared governance, and due process/tenure are valuable and necessary at Sinclair. I am proud to be part of the Sinclair community and together with open discussion between faculty and administration we can strengthen Sinclair College and its tradition of academic excellence.

Thank you,

Jim Shimko

Professor, Accounting Instruction

BPS Senator