

AAUP Report

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American Association of University Professors
Bloomington Chapter

From the President... Jeff Stake

The following is based upon a speech presented by Jeff Stake at the AAUP-Bloomington Chapter annual meeting, Wednesday, April 21, 1993. The historical reference is already a bit dated, but its point, we think, still holds.

"The Politics of Productivity: Teaching, Research, and Service on the Academic Assembly Line"

The title of this program promises politics, and that is where I would like to start. For many years, politicians and others fought against the threat of communism. Well, the anti-communists seem to have won that battle in Russia. Indeed, the collapse of the Soviet Union has confirmed for many in the United States that a market economy is the best way for us to provide ourselves with what we need, at least if supplemented with charity and volunteerism (a thousand points of light).

The idea of governmental provision of goods was resoundingly defeated. That lesson has now been learned. The lesson has been learned well and the principle has now been turned upon those of us in the teaching profession. We are increasingly called upon to justify ourselves to the consumers of our teaching products and the sponsors of our research. What are we adding to the market value of our students? What new products are we bringing to consumers in Indiana and the nation?

This call for university accountability seems to be yet another wave (fad?) of accountability that swept through lower education a few years ago. How should we respond?

There are at least two basic responses. One response is to help educate those who call for accounting. Teach them why a public university deserves support. Teach them that the very reason for the existence of a publicly supported university is that it produces what economists call public goods. Is education a public (continued on page 2)

What the Free Ride Costs You. . .

Ed Greenebaum

The Bloomington Chapter of the American Association of University Professors stands watch over the administration and Trustees, recruits and recommends candidates for faculty council who will responsibly represent their constituencies, and counsels and supports faculty colleagues whose status or work may be improperly prejudiced by University action, thereby protecting the academic freedom and tenure and economic interests of all Indiana University faculty. Whether or not you are an AAUP member, you benefit from these services, as well as from the important work of the national AAUP (newly invigorated by the leadership as General Secretary of our own Mary Burgan). In fact, about the only benefit one misses locally by not being an AAUP member is receipt of the chapter's Member's Update which supplements AAUP Reports about five times during the school year. To date, we have sufficient dues paying members to keep the chapter "going."

Assuming guilt is not a problem, why should one not enjoy the free ride? Two years ago, during my tenure as chapter president, the Executive Committee wrote the Trustees about an issue of current concern. I received a call from a Trustee, saying he was always interested to hear from significant constituencies. His first question, however, was how many members did we have. Approximately 200, I answered, stretching the reality just a little bit (as the he no doubt understood me to be doing). We have not heard (continued on page 3)

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good? Public goods are things that when provided to one, generate benefits that are available to all, and consumption of which by one does not prevent consumption by others. In what ways do the benefits of education fall on persons other than the educated? As one measure, I benefit from the education of my neighbors in the city, county, and state because they, with their votes, will govern me well, or less poorly than they would if ignorant. And my benefiting from my neighbor's education does not prevent you from benefiting from our neighbor's education.

So education can be a public good. So what? It is generally accepted that market economies will not supply enough public goods. My neighbor's education benefits you and me, but there is no easy way for him to get you and me to pay the tuition and there is no market mechanism for a school or university to sell those benefits to me. If his costs outweigh his benefits, he will choose not to buy education even when the net benefits to all of us are greater than the costs.

Because of their very nature, because the benefits of education cannot be contained and withheld from those who do not pay, the market will not demand enough education. Private markets alone will not supply an efficient level of education.

Nor can we expect private donations to fill the gap. However generous in certain ways, many people will take a free ride on the efforts of others if they are not forced to pay their fair share.

So one approach is to teach the public this lesson of public goods. The other response to the call for accounting is to actually do an accounting. An accounting could be done in two ways. We could portray to the Trustees, the Commission for Higher Education, the legislators, and the People of Indiana what we do with our time. We could describe in rich detail our provisions, our processes, what we do in our professorial lives. Or we could try to convince them rhetorically that we make a good product; we can try to prove that we have added some value to those who learn from us.

I think this last alternative, attempting to prove we are making good human products, is highly dangerous for a number of reasons. First, it is conceivable that the criteria we choose to show value added will not show that we add value. Additionally, expectations may be raised that an accountable institution is one that continuously raises productivity. Comparison of test results over time--especially, but not only, on crude criteria--

could show that we are not getting any better at adding to the market value and earning potential of our students. In other words, it is possible that we will fail by our own criteria. This would, of course, be a public relations disaster for the University and the cause of education.

Of course, we will not let that happen. We will respond to evidence of inadequate processes or products by changing our teaching so that we get good results. I, like you, want to be a success in the eyes of the University. Rather than fail, or in response to apparent failure, I will do two things. I will choose new criteria on which I can show success. I will change my teaching to be successful on those criteria.

Under pressure, when choosing new criteria, I will select those on which it is easy to achieve and document success. Take, for example, my efforts to produce students who know about the law of trusts and estates. When choosing criteria, I will choose to be evaluated on whether my students know how many witnesses have to sign a will to make it valid. I will not choose to be evaluated on whether my students have a sophisticated notion of how to analyze the policy implications of repealing the complex "Rule against Perpetuities".

And then, when making my lesson plans, I will spend more time on the formalities that must be observed in the execution of a valid will, so that I can achieve success on my chosen criteria. Because my classroom time is finite (I know you are wishing I would act like your time for reading this newsletter were finite), my choice to spend more time on will formalities will force me to spend less time on the policy analysis of how we could improve our law. I will also spend less time trying to foster a love of learning in my students because successes of that sort would be difficult to document and hard to claim as my own. And I will spend less time on other things that are difficult to measure, such as developing in students a keen sense of professional responsibility and good citizenship.

Educators have long known that "teaching to the test" becomes a problem when the success of a teacher's students depends on their performance on a test. The problem of teaching to the test is at least as serious when the success of the teachers themselves depends directly on student performance on a test. It does not matter what kind of test is used, and it does not matter who makes the test. Assessment will deflect me from the very sort of teaching that rests at the heart of the University's reason for being, teaching that results in citizens better able to govern themselves.

We will get more of whatever we measure. We will get less of whatever we do not measure. To allow, without protest, our teaching to be assessed as good or bad, as improving or not, when we know that the assessment will shift our methods and goals is to admit that our current goals are not worth defending. Externally imposed assessment is bad enough, but it leaves us free to fight the negative curricular changes it may induce. Self assessment for purposes of proving "success" is much more dangerous because we will not be free to challenge the criteria or conclusions. We will be forced to change the curriculum for cosmetic reasons. Because self assessment for external audiences will, necessarily, change our curriculum in unforeseen ways, our complicity in it now would admit either that we care little about the goals of education or that we have little confidence in our past determinations of how to use our time and our students' time.

We have spent years deciding what we should teach in each of our courses. We have critiqued our thoughts and experiences with each other. We have practiced our disciplines in the world (the world of law, in my case) and the sum of our experiences is reflected in our lesson plans and materials. Let us not admit what is not true. We continue to determine what is best to teach. Changes made in response to assessments made for public or administrative demands for accountability are much more likely to worsen the curriculum than improve it. We would better serve the interests of public education by teaching the lessons of public goods than by publicly assessing the good lessons we teach.

Self assessment for purposes of improving our teaching, as opposed to proving its effectiveness to others, is another matter entirely. It is essential. The role of an enlightened administration is to assure that disciplined and effective self assessment occurs, not to translate our real accomplishments into simplistic indicators of productivity.

I chose for this discussion an example of how assessment harms teaching, but the same analysis applies to research and service. No matter how well the criteria of educational productivity are chosen, with university operations increasingly politicized, the very process of measuring the products of education will warp and distort both the process and the products of education.

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from that Trustee again. There is no evading the fact that an organization's political influence varies directly with the constituency it can demonstrate it represents, and the effectiveness of the AAUP's representation is limited by the size of its membership.

This great University is blessed with enduring commitments to academic freedom and faculty governance. President Brand, Vice-President Gros Louis, and several other of our senior leaders have longstanding associations and commitments to the AAUP and its principles. Nevertheless, only those with their heads in the sand will not be aware that there are political armies afoot that do not understand the genius of higher education and the essential structures that make it possible for academia to benefit society with its inquiry and teaching. We cannot expect others to act for us to defend the principles in which we are most interested and which we are most qualified to articulate.

How can you join the AAUP? It's easy: phone or e-mail our treasurer Dick Carr (5-1134; CARRR) for an application form. By payroll deduction, even after the substantial discounts for new membership are exhausted, the cost is only \$12 a month (of which \$1 is local dues). We will all benefit from the added strength which your joining us will contribute.

The 1994/95 Bloomington Chapter Executive Committee would all welcome hearing from you (chapter members, non-members, possible members) about matters you think should be on the AAUP agenda

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Washington... A Letter Home from Mary Burgan

As I reported to the Bloomington chapter of the AAUP at the new faculty reception on October 24, I find coming home a true respite from the ringing telephones and cascading mail in the national AAUP office on 14th Street in Washington. No, I haven't met Bill or Hillary. Yes, the job is exciting and, as I get deeper and deeper into it, very important. Without being apocalyptic, I think I can safely say that the American professoriate is under siege as it has not been since the late sixties. Despite the well publicized ideological critiques of higher education, however, I believe that the motivating energy behind our current problems derives from the frequently misguided economics of the post-Reagan nineties. In an era in which no job seems secure, academic tenure has come under increasing pressure. In a time in which the nightly news reports ever more severe job losses in down-sized companies, the turning in of tenure-track for "associate" (read "temp") positions seems only fair. And yet, in an era which has not yet renounced its romance with the glamour of the take-over entrepreneur, there is still support for an academic star system in which those who obtain the highest tenured ranks receive ample rewards while their students despair of finding entry-level academic positions.

I worry more about this pattern than about engaging in the canon wars, once again, with William Bennett or Harold Bloom. And I worry more about faculty failure to clearly analyze the crisis than about attacks on the tenure system by associations like the Education Commission of the States. I believe that scattered efforts to "do away with tenure" around the country may be less threatening than faculty complicity with the erosion of tenure through the creation of a non-tenure track class of academic appointments in universities across the country. In assenting to this new layer of non-ranked instruction, faculty may not see that they have surrendered introductory teaching to academics who lack time to keep up with their disciplines, the protections of academic freedom, and the authority to determine what and how they should teach their courses. Further, and most troubling, such economy moves "permanent" faculty away from general students even as it preserves for them the authority to manage a curriculum they may never teach.

It is true that there are other problems that we are working hard to solve at the national level of AAUP. Many of you have commented upon the situation at Bennington College, and noted that AAUP has ap-

pointed an investigating committee to visit that campus and to interview all concerned parties. Here, as elsewhere, we seek mediation and resolution, but when such outcomes are impossible, we know that our sanctions and censures are powerful impediments to administrative neglect of well-established policies of academic governance. We are also involved in the difficult effort to balance the rights of students to work in a hospitable learning environment—free of hate speech and demeaning biases—with the rights of faculty to exercise free speech—even when it tests the limits of current social norms. We have sent an investigating committee to the University of New Hampshire, and its report on the case of Professor Silva will be published in the next *Academe*. That case revolves around the issue of how to assess sexual harassment, even as it questions the nature of current remedial efforts through reliance on psychological counselling. The Association will continue to monitor possible infringements of academic freedom through well-intentioned systems of surveillance and discipline.

There is, clearly, a full agenda for the American Association of University Professors in Washington. The national office (a very small band of professional staff members, actually) can hardly hope to handle every issue that is referred to it, and we therefore are depending more and more upon help from our state conferences and our local chapters. The Indiana State Conference met together recently at Ball State, and I was heartened by the renewed efforts of faculty from a variety of Indiana schools to work effectively together. I hope that in the next two or three years, we will have established a network of local experts who can multiply the efforts we are making at the national level. As an association, we have been determinedly "grass roots," and my experience in Washington convinces me that any association can only be as viable as its members are.
