



MINNESOTA CONFERENCE

March 21, 2016

Dear faculty colleagues, students, and members of the University of Minnesota community,

The Executive Committee of the Minnesota conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) recognizes that the faculty at the University of Minnesota are at a crossroads in their development as an organized professoriate. We write to provide our support for the University of Minnesota Academics United's efforts to improve the working conditions and fair access to academic freedom, shared governance and distribution of wage resources for all of the University's faculty.

Nationwide, over the last several decades, the institutional supports for an empowered faculty have eroded, making it more difficult for faculty to effectively do their work. U.S. Department of Education data compiled by the AAUP indicate that between 1975 and 2011 the academic workforce changed dramatically. In 1975, 57% of faculty was tenure-line and 43% was contingent. As of 2011, 70% of all faculty positions were contingent, with a mere 30% of their colleagues occupying tenure-line positions. The growing reliance on contingent faculty labor in higher education has meant not only unjust compensation for many non-tenure line colleagues, but also, uneven academic freedom protections and an undermining of the effectiveness of shared governance at colleges and universities. Too often, contingent, non-tenure line colleagues have been left out of salary increases, decision-making relative to academic affairs, professional development opportunities, and other basic guarantees. This is the national context in which faculty at the University of Minnesota will consider joining a union in order to bargain together for better working conditions.

Both nationally and here in Minnesota, the AAUP is committed to the principle of "One Faculty." Regardless of whether or not one is tenured, contingent or adjunct, we seek to improve working conditions for all faculty. The Minnesota conference of the AAUP draws upon this "One Faculty" principle in our call for faculty action at Minnesota's college and university campuses toward equitable compensation, academic freedom protections, and professional development supports for non-tenure line faculty. Our "One Faculty" principle unites us with the organizational efforts of University of Minnesota's Academics United.

The University of Minnesota's Academics United envisions a faculty union that would "be an inclusive and unifying organization that represents our common interest in improving the conditions of teaching and learning at the University, shared by tenured and contingent instructional faculty alike." Accordingly, Academics United has filed for a union election for a bargaining unit that includes contingent faculty (instructors, Lecturers, Teaching Specialists, and Extension Educators) alongside their tenure-line colleagues. Academic United's proposal is consistent with the AAUP's "One Faculty" position.

The contributions that America's institutions of higher education make to the common good – through education as a source of civic and economic development, through research, creativity, and innovation, and by fostering public debate of matters of common concern – rely upon the empowerment of faculty. An empowered faculty is a faculty that works together with the confidence provided by academic freedom, and with the dignity and security offered by proper compensation. An empowered faculty is a faculty that shares the responsibility and agency of shared institutional governance.

The Executive Committee of the Minnesota conference of the AAUP urges the university community to recognize the core values of faculty unity and solidarity. Only together can we make the "One Faculty" principle a reality.

Sincerely,

David Schmit, (St. Catherine University), MN AAUP President

Robert Cowgill, (Augsburg College), MN AAUP Vice-President

David Lesniaski, (St. Catherine University), Treasurer

Kate Bjork, (Hamline University)

Bruce Campbell, (College of St. Benedict/St. John's University)

David Bernstein, (University of Minnesota, retired)