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Undermining Principles of Academic Freedom:
“The Academic Bill of Rights” Movement

by

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Introduction

The “Academic Bill of Rights” movement, launched by right wing activists in 2003, has sought to legislate control over student rights, the hiring of faculty members, and curricula. It activists claims to seek academic freedom in an academy that has been virtually taken over by leftists aiming at indoctrinating students into their vision of the world. Through a variety of groups, including Students for Academic Freedom, the movement claims to base its initiatives on principles established by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). These efforts, which seek to bring academia under governmental control and which seek to extend a state-dominated version of academic freedom to all stakeholders in higher education, distort and undermine AAUP principles. AAUP statements on academic freedom go back to 1915. These carefully crafted statements aim at establishing the autonomy of the academic profession and its independence from political, economic and social pressures in the pursuit of knowledge and in teaching. The “Academic Bill of Rights Movement” uses AAUP principles rhetorically for political purposes.

The “Academic Bill of Rights” movement not only distorts AAUP principles of academic freedom, but also detracts from the need to confront the fiscal crisis of academic life and the damages done to the academic profession and to students by revenue cuts at the national and state level. For the AAUP, academic freedom has been tied to security of employment in the form of tenure so that faculty members are free to
teach, engage in research and participate in shared governance. By attempting to draw
the focus of legislators and the public away from the fiscal and normative conditions of
academic freedom, the “Academic Bill of Rights” movement has detracted attention from
the underlying structural requirements for academic freedom.

This essay develops these themes by providing some background on AAUP
principles of academic freedom and the AAUP activities that support them. It then
discusses some of the contemporary challenges to academic freedom including fiscal
crises, the structure of the profession, national security, and the “Academic Bill of
Rights” movement’s activities.

AAUP Principles of Academic Freedom

From its inception, the AAUP has argued for academic freedom in terms of a
broad public interest in teaching and scholarship that is best realized by individual
scholars and teachers subject to the judgments of members of their own profession.
While supporting first amendment rights and intellectual freedom, academic freedom is
reserved for faculty members within their institutions and in their roles as citizens. A
1915 statement on academic freedom said that while individual academics are
responsible to the “authorities” of the institutions in which they serve, primary allegiance
“is to the wider public to which the institution is itself morally amenable. . .” (1915).
When it comes to scholarship and teaching, the individual faculty member should be “no
more subject to the control of trustees, than are judges subject to the control of the
President, with respect to their decisions” (“General Report of the Committee on
Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure,” Bulletin of the American Association of
University Professors, 1915: 26). The academic quest for truth requires distance and freedom from the particular social interests and cultural values which characterize not only the broader society, but which fund and have governing authority over colleges and universities.

Academic freedom is more formally articulated in the 1940 Statement on Academic Freedom and Tenure, which resulted from a series of conferences between the AAUP and the American Association of Colleges and Universities. It is specified through principles underlying the rights of teachers to engage in research, freedom to discuss their subject in the classroom, and their rights and responsibilities as citizens. The 1940 statement, along with subsequent interpretations of it, tied “freedom of teaching and research and of extramural activities” to “economic security” and tenure which are “indispensable to the success of an institution in fulfilling its obligations to students and to society” (AAUP: Policy Documents and Reports, 1995: 1940 Statement). Moreover, the 1940 statement provides a procedural framework for making tenured appointments, for termination for cause, and for termination based on economic exigency. In this light, academic freedom, the core value of higher education, is constituted not only through principles that enable autonomy of knowledge in the pursuit of knowledge, but also through security of employment, procedures establishing due process, and acceptable forms of governance through which professional status and independence can be secured.

From these founding statement to recent statements by Roger Bowen (University of Delaware Faculty Forum, 2006), General Secretary of the AAUP, academic freedom ties the search for knowledge through scholarship and the dissemination of knowledge through teaching to a broad interest in the public good. Knowledge for the public good
is most fully realized by the autonomy of scholars through their professional associations which tie them to one another and in their independent research and teaching activities. Through the individual academic’s free scholarship and teaching subject to the professional judgment of peers, knowledge that serves the broadest public interests and values, independent of particularistic identities, relations of political and financial power, and commitments to particular values and worldviews, is most likely to be created and disseminated.

In this light, academic freedom is rooted in internal and external relations that establish capacities and boundaries for the autonomy of scholarship and teaching for the general good of society. Internally, it is an ongoing effort to construct academic professions and academic institutions with occupational, ethical, financial and organizational capacities for directing and supporting their own activities. Central to these internal capacities are principles that underlie, define and support academic tenure, the independence and legitimate governance of scholarly associations, and shared governance within universities and colleges, especially in matters dealing with tenure and promotion, curricular matters, and standards of ethical and professional conduct.

Externally, academic freedom is an effort to demarcate and establish these spheres of academic activity, especially in research and teaching, from broader political, financial and economic power relations on which, to some degree, they depend. In this sense, academic freedom is an active and constant struggle to enhance the autonomy of scholars and teachers and their associations in relation to broader political, cultural and economic forces which may undermine their mission of developing knowledge for the broadest social good.
AAUP Activities that Support Academic Freedom

The AAUP plays a major role in defining and realizing academic freedom. Its key policy statements, including 1940 statement on academic freedom, have been incorporated in the faculty handbooks of institutions of higher education across the country and have been cited in key Supreme Court cases. By 2006, 186 scholarly and educational associations have endorsed the 1940 Statement. In its 1967 decision in Keyishian v. Board of Regents (U.S. 589), the Supreme Court recognized academic freedom as a “special concern” of the First Amendment “which is of transcendent value to all of us and not merely to the teachers concerned.” It is no exaggeration to say that the 1940 Statement and subsequent policies and statements are the most central and enduring definitions of academic freedom.

The AAUP has fifteen committees that deal with various aspects of academic freedom. Most especially, the activities of Committee A, the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure, date back to 1915 when thirty one complaints were brought to the AAUP. In a typical recent year, Committee A receives about 2,000 communications from faculty members and administrators about academic freedom issues. Most of these communications are faculty complaints that allege breaches of AAUP policy. Based on the preliminary information and the importance of the complaint, the General Secretary may determine that Committee A should investigate the complaint. If an investigation is warranted, an investigation committee is established which conducts a thorough examination of documents, conduct interviews, and visit the institution. Investigations go through rigorous procedures to ensure their accuracy. Based on the investigating...
committee’s report, Committee A may vote that the institution be censured for violating principles and policies of academic freedom that typically involve violations of due process. A censure vote by Committee A then goes to AAUP national council for discussion and a vote. Should national council decide to censure the institution, the censure comes as a motion to the AAUP annual meeting held in June. Following a report by the chair of Committee A, there is discussion and a vote on whether the institution should be censured for violating academic freedom and tenure procedures. Should this vote be positive, the institution is placed on the censure list which is published in Academe.

Two other committees are vital to the AAUP mission of articulating and actively supporting academic freedom. The Committee on Governance, is empowered to conduct investigations and publish findings on complaints dealing with potential breaches of shared governance. The Committee on Government Relations focuses on a variety of legislative matters dealing with federal and state funding of higher education and issues that impact the integrity of the academic profession and institutions of higher education.

Contemporary Challenges to Academic Freedom

While the general activities of the committees that I have mentioned have been essential to the routine business of the AAUP, contemporary challenges to the autonomy of teachers, researchers and to institutions of higher education have opened new areas of activism. These challenges are rooted in the fiscal crisis of higher education and its impact on the structure of the faculty across the country, the direct consequences of the legislative response at the national level to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and a heightening of
right wing political and cultural attacks on academics, especially in the humanities and social sciences. The remainder of my comments will focus on these challenges and the AAUP responses to them. While they may have separate sources and have some independent effects of academic freedom, their combined effects constitute a serious weakening of the structural sources of academic freedom and a growing crisis that have increasingly become the focus of AAUP analyses and activities.

**Fiscal Crises and the Structure of the Profession**

Based on research and analyses conducted by the College Board, State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEEO), and the AAUP, it is clear that there has been a decline in financial support for higher education both by the federal government and by states. This decline in financial support has led to increases in tuition at both public and private institutions of higher education, and has shifted the costs of higher education to students and their families primarily through increased borrowing. As a report by SHEEEO demonstrates, in 1981 net tuition was 21.5 percent of total education revenues. This increased to 36.7 percent by 2005. In constant 2005 dollars, state and local support per full-time student was $5,833 in 2005 compared to $7,121 in 2001. At the federal level, by 2003-2004, more than 70% of federal aid was in the form of loans, 21% in grants, and 8% in tax benefits according to the College Board. Between 1993-04 and 2003-04, the number of borrowers under Parent Loans for Undergraduates (PLUS) increased from 310,000 to 735,000.

In the face of this decline in government support, the AAUP has published a report that demonstrates a transformation in the composition of faculty at institutions of
higher education. In *The Devaluing of Higher Education: The Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession* (2006) documents the increasing numbers of non-tenure track and part-time faculty that staff institutions of higher education. Since 1971, the percentage of faculty members teaching courses on a part-time basis has doubled from 23% to 46%. Many faculty classified as part-time do the equivalent of four courses a semester, which according to AAUP guidelines, is a full-time workload. They often commute from one campus to another, are typically paid by the course, and do not receive health insurance or other benefits. In addition, between 1980 and 2001, the number of full-time non-tenure track faculty grew by about 35 percent. Indeed, since the mid 1990s, the majority of new hires have been non-tenure track. Non-tenure track positions account for 65 percent of all faculty appointments in higher education.

The AAUP’s Committee on Contingent Faculty and the Profession has developed analyses and policy proposals that confront the ongoing degradation of the occupational status of faculty. The condition of contingent faculty is not only directly exploitative of highly educated professionals, but it also undermines the quality of the educational experience for students as a result of their high turnover, their limited or nonexistent interaction with students outside of the classroom, and their marginal relations with the educational community. The degradation of the faculty through the growth of part-time and contingent faculty weakens not only the autonomy and academic freedom of the individuals, but also the academic freedom of the faculty as a whole. The insecurity of employment, lack of participation in governance, and lack of full involvement in institutional and scholarly associations, makes it less likely that contingent faculty will take risks in teaching, scholarship or service. They are more
vulnerable for dismissal for engaging in controversy. As the ranks of contingent faculty have grown, the structure of autonomy that supports academic freedom has been weakened.

In confronting these issues, the AAUP has advocated for a variety of policies for overcoming this structural threat to the economic status and autonomy of the faculty. First, the AAUP maintains that part-time and contingent faculty should only be used for specialized and emergency situations. Contingent faculty should not provide more than 15 percent of the instruction at an institution and no more than 25 percent in an individual department. Contingent faculty should have job security, due process protections, inclusion in governance, and a full range of faculty responsibilities. The ultimate goal should be to change the status of current contingent faculty to tenure appointments and to reduce the overall number of non-tenure track lines through conversions. The AAUP has been active in the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor (COCAL) in order to realize improvements in the conditions faced by contingent faculty so that justice and academic freedom can be more fully realized.

The Committee on Government Relations has ongoing efforts to lobby Congress for more funding for higher education and for research and to maintain and enhance access to and high levels of quality in higher education. On Capital Hill Day, which coincides with the annual meeting in June, the Government Relations Committee organizes AAUP members for a day of lobbying their Congressional Representatives and Senators on higher education priorities. Typically, the offices of more than one hundred Representatives and Senators are visited on Capital Hill Day. In addition, the committee has prepared *Ensuring the Nation’s Future: Preserving the Promise of Higher Education*
in an Era of Fiscal Challenges (2003). This compilation of analyses and policy recommendations focuses on both state and federal issues. It provides concrete suggestions for lobbying organizing activities around fiscal issues.

National Security Issues and Academic Freedom

The fiscal crisis of higher education and the corrosive effects it has been having on the security of employment and economic status that underlie academic freedom is an ongoing issue that the AAUP confronts. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the AAUP has also been confronting the national security policies which challenge and undermine academic freedom that have been promulgated by the Bush Administration and by Congress.

The fullest statement of the AAUP’s position on these issues is presented in a 2003 report, Academic Freedom and National Security, which was prepared by a Special Committee which was established in the fall of 2002. The committee is composed primarily of members of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure, the Committee on Government Relations, and staff members assigned to these committees. The committee, whose work has been ongoing since it was appointed in 2002, is chaired by Robert O’Neil, Professor of Law at the University of Virginia Law School and Director of the Thomas Jefferson Center for Freedom of Speech.

The AAUP recognizes that terrorist threats are very real and that the powers of government are essential to the prevention of terrorist acts. At the same time, the history of prior national security crises during the World War I era, World War II, the Cold War, and during the War in Vietnam demands great vigilance regarding expanded powers of
government. These powers have been used to throttle oppositional views, punish dissenters, stifle debate, conceal government failures, and undermine the autonomy of the faculty and institutions of higher education.

The AAUP report maintains that the ultimate security of the United States is threatened by policies that undermine and hobble freedom of inquiry:

This report rests on the premise that freedom of inquiry and the open exchange of ideas are crucial to the nation’s security, and that the nation’s security and, ultimately, its well-being are damaged by practices that discourage or impair freedom. Measures to ensure the nation’s safety against terrorism should therefore be implemented with no greater constraint on our liberties than necessary. The report questions whether security and freedom are inescapably opposed to one another. In such important areas as scientific research, the free exchange of data may better enable investigators to identify the means for preempting or neutralizing threats posed by information falling into the wrong hands. We contend that in these critical times the need is for more freedom, not less (ACADEME, 2003: 34).

In keeping with the belief that the role of the AAUP and other supporters of civil liberties, intellectual freedom and academic freedom is to consider the “secrecy, surveillance and suppression” in light of both prior historical experiences of abuses of power by government leaders and institutions and the underlying national interest in freedom of inquiry and discussion. Appropriate governmental policies and actions during a time of heightened threats, policies to secure the nation should meet three major
criteria: (1) Governmental measures should be responsive to factual threats and not to “fear, conjecture, or supposition” (2003: 37); (2) Government officials should “demonstrate how any proposed measure will effectively deal with a particular threat” (2003: 38); and (3) There should be accountability for the proportionate response to factual threats. “The government must show why the desired result could not be reached by means having a less significant impact on the exercise of civil liberties or academic liberties” (2003: 38). In effect, government policies and, indeed, the broader media and political culture, should use “only as much constraint on our freedoms as that effort demonstrably demands” to realize our national security in a time of terrorism (2003: 38).

In its substantive analysis of policies affecting intellectual and academic freedom, the report focused on central policy changes that have the potential to create mistrust among members of the scholarly community, undermine the exchange of ideas, and restrict the flow of information and people. The report analyses key provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act that severely weakened the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (1974) and the Electronic Communication Privacy Act (1986), and the extension of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA) to libraries, university bookstores, and Internet service providers through Section 215 which prohibits record keepers from disclosing to anyone that information was sought or obtained. It also analyses heightened restrictions on governmental information by classifying more governmental research and by expanding the use of the designation “sensitive but unclassified information” a range of documents in the area of homeland security and scientific research. In addition, the report analyzed heightened visa restrictions and
requirements for information about foreign students and visiting scholars that were poorly administered and unclear in their application.

The report provides recommendations at the national level and the campus level to guide coordinated action among the AAUP, scholarly associations, civil liberties community, and academic administrators to engage government officials, legislators and the general public to “the vital and durable values of academic freedom and free inquiry” (2003: 57). Nationally, the AAUP has sought to form alliances with others in order to gain greater Congressional oversight of federal policies and actions that affect intellectual and academic freedom and to support efforts to limit burdens on institutions of higher learning and scholars that may hamper the free flow of ideas and people, especially with regard to visa procedures. The AAUP has sought to mobilize its chapters and state conferences to greater vigilance on the impact of the culture of fear engendered by terrorism and the potential exploitation of it by the media and politicians who may seek to stifle inquiry and academic discussion. At the campus level, faculty must develop information about how federal policies are being implemented and affirm the freedom to conduct academic life freely, including the invitation of outside speakers who may be controversial. Faculty should participate in institutional policies that protect against undue government constraints by working with key administrators who are responsible for implementing such policies. Faculty should inform the wider campus community about potential and real threats to academic freedom and strive to build alliance with administrators, students, and professionals to resist specific actions that would undermine rights to inquiry and teaching and a general culture of self-censorship and limitations on discussion.
“Academic Bill of Rights” and Political Threats

A right-wing national movement emerged in 2003 that has been advocating and organizing around “Academic Bill of Rights” legislation in states and federal government. The demand for this legislation is predicated on the claim that the academy, especially in the social sciences and humanities, is dominated by leftists who are prone to political indoctrination in their classrooms, engage in political discrimination against conservative students, impose their leftwing views in hiring new faculty, and establish leftwing political dominance in scholarly journals, research and literature. Citing data that faculty members registered as Democrats greatly outnumber their Republican colleagues, advocates for ABOR argue that there has been a warping of academic culture to leftwing standards and viewpoints. As a result this leftist, Democratic dominance, the movement alleges, academic life has been drained of its vitality, the potential for debating alternative viewpoints, and a weakening of pluralism.

A central assumption of ABOR supporters is that universities have become so dominated by the left that governmental oversight and intervention are required to make higher education more balanced and to live up to its professed standards of neutrality and independence. In this light, legislative proposals both at the federal and state levels have relied heavily on AAUP standards of neutrality with regard to the hiring and promotion of faculty, on AAUP policies that value diversity of viewpoints in academic pursuits, and to AAUP admonitions that faculty should not engage in indoctrination in their courses. Yet supporters of ABOR differ fundamentally from the AAUP with regard to the
responsibility for articulating and realizing such key principles as neutrality and non-indoctrination.

For the AAUP, these principles, which are central to the values of academic freedom, should be developed and elaborated by higher education faculty, realized through policies and procedures that are administered on the basis on clarity, universality and equality in institutions of higher education, and rooted in norms of scholarly inquiry and pedagogy. The freedoms associated with academic life, in effect, should be established by scholars and teachers in their academic institutions and should serve values of inquiry that are rooted in the search for truth for the general good of society.

For advocates of ABOR, however, the principles of neutrality and non-indoctrination are rooted in political divisions. They reflect the partisan divide in current American life, and are understood in terms of relations of power and cultural meanings. Academic discourse is rooted in ideological disputes that resonate through electoral politics, legislative debates, and the media. Instead of faculty and higher education institutions exercising professional autonomy in matters of hiring, promotion, course content, and scholarship, advocates of ABOR would empower legislators and government officials who would apply political categories to academic life. This would transform academic freedom into a legal and political category, unduly simplify and reduce academic relations to broader relations of political power in society, and make the search for truth a reflection of political power relations rather than a source of independent inquiry with its own criteria and responsibilities. The advocates of ABOR would replace scholarly and professional standards rooted in faculty associations and
institutions with statutory and administrative rules that, ultimately, would be enforced by university administrators and courts.

Much of the effort to enact ABOR has been directed at the state level. Between 2004 and 2006, legislation was introduced in twenty five states (Smith, memo: May 11, 2006). In 2005, California, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Washington all had legislation introduced and all failed. Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York and Tennessee have ABOR legislation pending. In 2004, ABOR legislation was introduced in three states. The Georgia legislature and the Colorado Senate passed resolutions, and the California Senate Education Committee rejected an ABOR bill. To give the flavor of the effort, the Maine Republican Party adopted “A Statement Encouraging Academic Freedom” in early May, 2006. The statement claims, “We believe Maine’s college and university classrooms should be a marketplace of ideas where all individuals’ political and religious beliefs are respected” (Smith, memo: May 11, 2006). In supporting the statement, the Maine Republican Party Chairman said, “Over the last nine months, the Maine College Republicans have set the national standard for fighting for academic freedom and promoting conservative values on campuses.” Maine HB 823 which creates an Academic Bill or Rights that ensures an academic environment for both students and faculty members that allows freedom of political viewpoint, expression and instruction was introduced, but did not pass.

The AAUP, at both the national and state levels, has been active in fighting the ABOR legislative effort in the states. In Colorado, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York, AAUP chapters, conferences, and individual AAUP members have been at the forefront.
of informing their colleagues, the general public, and state legislatures about the perils of making academic freedom into a political issue that would result in bringing the courts and legislators into defining and monitoring how academic institutions go about organizing their curricula, hiring new faculty, teaching their courses, and dealing with students.

The Pennsylvania case is exemplary of AAUP activism on this issue. In July, 2005, the Pennsylvania Assembly passed HR 177 which established a select committee “to examine the academic atmosphere and the degree to which faculty have the opportunity to instruct and students have the opportunity to learn in an environment conducive to the pursuit of knowledge and truth at State-related and State-owned colleges and universities and community colleges in the Commonwealth. Sponsors of the legislation initially intended to conduct fifteen hearings across the state on such issues as the diversity of ideas on campuses, hiring practices, tolerance of political and religious viewpoints of students by faculty, and the freedom of political expression in classrooms. This ambitious hearing schedule was pared down to four which were held in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, and Philadelphia. Joan Wallach Scott, a former chair of the AAUP Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure and Professor of History and Women’s Studies at the Center for Advanced Studies at Princeton University, represented the national AAUP at the first Harrisburg hearing. Her testimony focused on the importance of protecting academic freedom from political intrusions. In addition, Robert Moore, then President-elect of the Pennsylvania Conference, spoke on the specific ways in which the freedom of both faculty and students are protected procedurally within institutions of higher education in Pennsylvania following AAUP guidelines. At the Philadelphia
hearings held at Temple University, Robert O’Neill, alluded to above for his work on the Special Committee on Academic Freedom and National Security During a Time of Crisis, represented the AAUP. His comments focused on academic freedom of students within the context of the purposes, policies and procedures of universities and colleges. At the Temple University hearings, the President of Temple University explained the policies and procedures which guard against faculty discrimination against students for their political or religious views and the openness of the University to guest speakers and rigorous debate on campus. At the Temple hearings and, indeed at the other three hearings in Pennsylvania, there was not one example of a complaint officially registered by a student claiming discrimination in grading or in class participation based on political or religious beliefs. The hearings seriously deflated efforts to pass ABOR legislation in the Pennsylvania.

While much AAUP attention to ABOR legislation has been at the state level, the AAUP has also been active in opposition to efforts to include provisions in Higher Education Reauthorization bills from the House and the Senate which include ABOR concepts. The AAUP has informed House and Senate committees that it is strongly opposed to any effort that would define and implement academic freedom legislatively. In addition, the AAUP joined its fellow members of the American Council on Education in a June 2005 statement affirming academic freedom in a manner that runs contrary to ABOR. The statement includes the following two key principles:

--The validity of academic ideas, theories, arguments and view should be measured against the intellectual standards of relevant academic and professional disciplines. Application of these intellectual standards does not mean that all
ideas have equal merit. The responsibility to judge the merits of competing academic ideas rests with colleges and universities and is determined by reference to the standards of the academic profession as established by the community of scholars at each institution.

--Government’s recognition and respect for the independence of colleges and universities is essential for academic and intellectual excellence. Because colleges and universities have great discretion and autonomy over academic affairs, they have a particular obligation to ensure that academic freedom is protected for all members of the campus community and that academic decisions are based on intellectual standards consistent with the mission of each institution (American Council on Education, June 2005: Statement on Academic Rights and Responsibilities).

Another issue at the federal level is efforts in Congress to establish an advisory board to monitor international programs which fall under the Higher Education Act. A June 2006 AAUP position paper called attention to Section 633 of HR 609, the College Access and Opportunity Act, in which the House sought to establish a politically appointed “International Advisory Board” that would “annually review, monitor, apprise, and evaluate the activities of grant recipients based on the purpose of this title.” Based on its work, the Board would make recommendations to Congress and the Secretary of Education. The AAUP is opposed to this effort because the legislation aims to assure that “authorized activities reflect diverse perspectives and the full range of views on world regions, foreign languages, and international affairs.” This, in effect, would politicize decisions involving curricula and the content of courses.
Conclusions

This essay has sought to locate the “Academic Bill of Rights” movement in the context of AAUP principles of academic freedom and the variety of deep challenges that academic freedom is facing. It highlights some of the key principles of academic freedom as articulated and implemented by the AAUP. The “Academic Bill of Rights” movement not only distorts AAUP principles, but detracts attention away from the underlying conditions in fiscal politics and the structure of the profession that are the bedrock of academic freedom.

In addition to the topics that I have focused on, we could add the tremendous pressures that financial cutbacks are having on the capacity of colleges and universities to exercise independence from corporate interests. While government intrusion is a deep cause of concern for those who value academic freedom, it is important to recognize that ongoing efforts to commingle university research and corporate research in joint ventures and shared patterns of property ownership weakens the culture of independence needed for the exercise of independence. Along with these corporate pressures, heightened claims by Boards of Trustees to engage in decision making that involve hiring, promotion, and curricular matters is a threat to the autonomy of the faculty and their exercise of academic judgment. Also, efforts to subordinate scholarship and teaching to particular religious doctrines poses threats to the independence of scholarship and teaching. Finally, the “bowling alone” ethic is certainly affected academic life, committing faculty to their own research, areas of expertise and career, and limited their...
concerns for the governance of their own campuses and broader issues of academic freedom.

While academic freedom is being severely challenged in our time by the “Academic Bill of Rights” movement and by other factors I have pointed to, it is important to foster those organizations that are most concerned with articulating its value to both academics and the wider society. The AAUP has long been at the forefront of the ongoing struggle to keep academic life alive and free and continues to maintain academic freedom in the new and trying circumstances of the present.