

Why Join the AAUP?

Why would a junior faculty member at a school with good, cooperative administrators and a strong tradition of shared governance join the AAUP?

There are many reasons, but six have been particularly important to me. First, on a very basic level, I believe in, and want to help sustain, a democratic workplace. Democratic workplaces are not only more just, but also healthier, happier, and more productive than those constrained and weighed down by a heavy-handed and micromanaging administration.

My second reason also connects to my career. To be happy and productive in this job for the next 30+ years, I need all parts of my work -my teaching, my research, and my service- to be protected from unwarranted sanctions and supported by my institution. A damper on any one of these three spheres of my work would cause considerably more stress and strain in the others.

Third, I see the AAUP as an important way to begin my career of service to my university. This is service in the most basic sense –not only to faculty colleagues but to all constituents on my campus. For example, the July-August issue of *Academe* had a great article by Greta Perry that outlined 10 ways that faculty and staff issues overlap. Membership in the AAUP helps me see those connections in the issues of workload creep and job security, to name only two. Students also benefit. Our ability to teach and model intellectual inquiry is core to a liberal arts education. As an organization, our AAUP chapter also recently wrote an open letter to our student newspaper in support of a student who had been censored at a public forum on campus. We are also planning an info session this semester where we hope to educate students about the value that tenure contributes to their education.

Fourth, the national AAUP publications have helped me learn the ropes of higher ed. In graduate school, I had no real understanding of the concrete struggles and strategies related to university governance, the impact of state funds and endowments on our work, or the challenges facing our profession at the national level. I think of the AAUP publication, *Academe*, as our “trade mag”, and I find its articles both informative and compelling. In just a short amount of time, I have already come to consider my membership in the AAUP as important as my membership in the American Sociological Association, my national professional organization.

The fifth reason my membership is valuable is that it provides a great way to connect with talented senior colleagues, particularly those outside my division, with whom I might not otherwise work closely this early in my career. These faculty members have the institutional memory, the experience, and the wisdom to make sense of current university decisions and help shape future directions for our work. Several of these folks have also become friends and mentors –not just for AAUP matters but also for other aspects of my career.

Finally, the final and perhaps most crucial reason I’ve joined the AAUP is to prepare for the fight to defend our work in the face of national attacks on tenure and shared governance. While I believe that our relationships and structures are healthy on my campus, they need to remain healthy, and I need to be able to prepare for the corporatizing and ideological challenges that higher education will face nationally in the coming decades. I can think of no better reason for junior faculty and other early career scholars to join now.

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