

Faculty Welfare Committee/AAUP

Excellence in Education



Catch up with colleagues and get a really good head start on your grading with a nice glass of wine:

FWC

Wine & Cheese

Grade-a-thon

Sat., December 16

4:00-7:00 PM

BCC 206



#solidarityisthirstywork

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by Jonathan Rees, Professor of
History, Colorado State
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President

Update on Custodian Issue:

Thanks to the 53 faculty members who signed our letter to David Frassinelli regarding the ongoing situation with custodial workers on campus, who have reported a range of concerns including intimidation and other issues. FWC members who are active with the Fairfield University Workers United coalition delivered the signed letter on November 21, 2017. We also emailed the regional manager of ABM, Inc., the employer who holds the cleaning contract and directly employs the workers, letting him know about our concerns on campus. ABM responded within a few days of receiving the letter and followed up with a meeting on campus with members of the Facilities staff. In addition FUWU members have been active in following up on specific grievances filed by custodians through their union local, SEIU 32BJ. On Nov. 21 faculty members Sonya Huber and Jocelyn Boryczka, members of FUWU, also met with Interim Provost Christine Siegel, along with two student activists Sean Tomlinson and Nadra Al-Hamwy, who have been deeply involved in the issue. We presented the array of current concerns as well as giving Provost Siegel a copy of the 1999 policy passed by the Board of Trustees concerning the treatment of outsourced workers. This policy had been developed in the wake of the original outsourcing of the custodians, an issue that ignited concern and activism across campus, and we were very grateful that FWC member Betsy Bowen was able to locate a copy. Provost Siegel felt this was an important piece of institutional history, and we are working with her office to both address the specific issues of safety, job security, and well-being expressed by the custodians as well as the larger need for contracted workers to have a voice on campus regarding their working environment when it involves issues that extend beyond the concerns covered by their collective bargaining agreement negotiated by their union representatives. -S. Huber

One Faculty, One Resistance:

The AAUP recently launched a new website as part of a campaign that brings together faculty, academic professionals, and supporters to fight for higher education. The site serves as a hub for our work on fighting harassment of faculty members, protecting academic freedom, and uniting the faculty. Check it out at <https://onefacultyoneresistance.org/>



National Security, the Assault on Science, and Academic Freedom

A new report, National Security, the Assault on Science, and Academic Freedom, released by the AAUP, details troubling threats to academic freedom in the physical and natural sciences that have been exacerbated by the Trump administration's hostility to science. International scientific exchange and, especially, the charging of innocent Chinese or Chinese American scientists with espionage in the name of national security is one focus of the report. The second is climate science, which has

been subject to vicious attacks that have intensified significantly under the current administration. Read the report at <https://www.aaup.org/report/national-security-assault-science-and-academic-freedom>

Academe: The new issue of *Academe* examines political and other divisions within higher education. Contributions from faculty members, AAUP chapter leaders, and an undergraduate activist consider how to advance learning and social justice in tense campus climates. <https://www.aaup.org/issue/november-december-2017>

“What I do know,” she added, “is that we must take better care with one another, even if we do not like each other.” That is true on far more levels than I think Professor Cottom originally intended, but I choose to interpret her advice this way: If the good ship Academic Freedom sinks we will all drown.

It only takes a few of these cases to make a tipping point. The 2014 controversy surrounding Steven Salaita was a very early sign of what was to come. While I certainly supported his efforts to take his job at the University at Illinois, I recognize that his comments were — at the very least — actually controversial.

But there are other academics who are targeted based on a complete misunderstanding of their views. This past summer Johnny Eric Williams, an associate professor of sociology at Trinity University, came under attack from right-wing online commentators “over something he was reported to have said — but never in fact said.” When something you didn’t write on Facebook can force you to flee with your family to another state for safety, then something is seriously wrong in our society and our political culture.

There’s no point spending my time here lecturing internet mobs about the vital importance of academic freedom (they wouldn’t listen anyway). But to the campus administrators and trustees who read this publication: I would hope that you already know something about academic freedom. If you don’t, then my colleagues at the American Association of University Professors would love to sit down and have a chat. Or perhaps you can just follow the simple advice of David Perry, an undergraduate adviser in history the University of Minnesota, and “learn to write this statement: ‘We do not let right-wing media influence our hiring or firing decisions. That will be our only comment on the matter.’” Yes, he was talking about college PR officers, but presidents, deans, and provosts can say those same words just as easily.

While I recognize that the good ship Academic Freedom probably has to take on a little water as we work out the limits of speech at its extremes, something much more pernicious has been going on with this year’s spate of professors who have somehow Tweeted themselves into trouble. Ideas that really aren’t that controversial in academic circles are becoming so as they get chewed up and regurgitated by the enemies of higher education into forms that their originators wouldn’t even recognize. You may think you can avoid being targeted by staying in the mainstream, but what constitutes the mainstream is shrinking every day.

What do administrators get by protecting the academic freedom of their faculty?

Freedom from expensive lawsuits filed against, and by, professors who have suddenly found themselves to be the wrong kind of famous. Just because faculty members work for a university doesn’t mean they somehow give up their rights as citizens. Your institutional branding concerns are not sufficient justification to violate our constitutional rights. If big donors don’t want to give because someone on your faculty has controversial views, then you probably don’t want their money because they don’t really understand why universities exist in the first place.

The open exchange of ideas — whether it happens in the middle of campus or on Twitter and/or Facebook — is not worth sacrificing for a short-term infusion of cash.

The Faculty Welfare Committee/AAUP at Fairfield University is an ad hoc committee of the General Faculty and an affiliate of the national AAUP. We promote the professional and economic interests, broadly defined, of the Fairfield University Faculty. All our activities are open to all members of the faculty but we are funded entirely by our dues-paying members. To join, contact any member of the FWC/AAU Executive Committee: Irene Mulvey, President; Jocelyn Boryczka, Vice-President; Bill Abbott, Secretary; Paul Baginski, Treasurer; At-large members: Maggie Labinski, Anna Lawrence. Immediate Past-President Rona Preli

From the FWC/AAUP President:

Dear Colleagues,

First things first– I hope you will join me and other members of the FWC leadership at an **FWC Wine & Cheese on Saturday 12/16 from 4:00 to 7:00 PM in BCC 206**. Come before or after your Saturday final - bring your grading and get started on it with a nice glass of wine while you catch up with colleagues! Whenever we hold one of our gala receptions after a meeting of the General Faculty, I am reminded of how valuable these simple times for unstructured conversations are to our campus community. The FWC EC is delighted to organize one more event for faculty before we stumble off, exhausted, for the “break.” I really hope to see you there!

Thank you to all of the FWC members who signed the letter from concerned faculty to Associate VP for Facilities Management David Frassinelli asking him to meet with faculty and students to discuss our shared concerns regarding the custodial staff. VP Frassinelli’s response to me sidestepped the question of a meeting by “ask[ing] that we use appropriate channels to address worker issues” and included what I found to be an inexplicable reference to “a potential violation of the National Labor Relations Act.” Profs. Huber and Boryczka decided the best course of action would be to meet with the Provost, which they did right before Thanksgiving. I asked them to provide an update to our members, and this appears elsewhere in this newsletter. In my view, FUWU, the coalition between worker groups on campus, along with some incredible student engagement, continues to be an important force for social justice and equity for all workers on our campus. I am proud of the FWC’s involvement and extremely grateful to the faculty members that are working so hard on this front.

Jonathan Rees, my friend and colleague on National AAUP Council, gave me permission to reprint *The Wrong Kind of Famous*, his recent article related to targeted online harassment of faculty. I thought it was particularly relevant at this time. I hope you enjoy it. We’ve also included an AAUP flyer for your door, standing with grad students against the idea of taxing tuition waivers.

National AAUP continues to brace for the verdict in the *Janus* case currently before the Supreme Court. It is widely expected that the verdict will be a devastating blow to unions and to workers all over the country. I will try to have more information on that for you in the spring semester.

As always, I have a lot more to say but I’ve run out of room, so with visions of sugar plums, I wish you a restful and rejuvenating “break,”

Sincerely,

Irene Mulvey
FWC/AAUP President