The President's Letter
continued from page 7

Jager felt their concerns “fell on deaf ears.” In turn he decided to send an anonymous e-mail to the college’s Board of Trustees with the attached grievances, asking them to “please seriously look at these talking points, know that we are ready for a change and that we don’t feel the current leadership is working.” According to Jager, the college responded by conducting an investigation to reveal the author. It was also reported that they saw the anonymous letter as a threat and contacted Homeland Security. Jager said when they found out it had been him; he was given the option of resigning as Student Life Coordinator and from the commencement committee (note that these are charges the university subsequently denied).

Similar threats to academic freedom have come in the form of the creation of a “Professor Watchlist,” created by Turning Point USA, an organization having representation on over 1,100 high schools and college campuses nationwide, over 75 full time field staff, and as of 2015, 8 million members. According to their website, Turning Point USA is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded in 2012 by 22 year old Charlie Kirk, who also serves as the organization’s Executive Director. Kirk has been referenced as the “conservative boy wonder” by Bloomberg Politics. The organization’s mission is to “identify, educate, train, and organize students to promote the principles of fiscal responsibility, free markets, and limited government.” The Professor Watchlist website, which seeks to “expose and document college professors who discriminate against conservative students and advance leftist propaganda in the classroom,” is a clear and direct threat to academic freedom and free speech.

On a side note I can’t help but find it fascinating that Kirk never attended college, still sleeps in his childhood bedroom, and that the Turning Point office is housed in a garage. While Kirk’s website has been described in relation to other “citizen journalist” vigilantes of the far-right, the real and more obvious point is that individuals on this list – although there is little accountability for the truth – face potential real consequences for being named and therefore caught in the crossfire. In response the AAUP has developed an open letter to the creators which, as of the middle of December (2015), has 6,700 signers. See it at: https://actionnetwork.org/forms/add-my-name-to-the-professor-watchlist.

At the level of our own Conference there are also a number of changes taking place. One of the main changes involves the resignation of our Executive Director, Tom Polizano. Tom has served the NYS AAUP with nothing short of devotion and astute insight for the last 10 years and, while we will miss him greatly, we honor his decision to engage in other pursuits, such as his love of travel and photography, and hope that he will remain active in the Conference. We also have seen an upsurge of activity at the Chapter level and, with the information we garnered at the most recent training on political mobilization, we will be moving forward in creating a more aware and active presence so that we can have our voices and our needs heard.

Along that same path, I have contacted the Department of Organizing and Services at AAUP National and they have pledged their support in helping the NYS AAUPC build and develop a more effective conference. These plans include doing some basic strategic planning, leadership development, and organizing training.

As we move forward into the new year, and as we move forward as a Conference, I am confident that our struggles, challenges, and victories will meet with confidence, cooperation, and celebration.

In closing, allow me to leave you with one last quote by Martin Luther King Jr., “Before the victory is won, some will be misunderstood and called bad names. Some will be dismissed as dangerous rabble-rousers and agitators. Some will lose their jobs. Some will have restless nights and will be forced to stand amidst the chilly winds of adversity. We shall overcome.”

As always, please feel free to contact me directly at sdearhealeyaaup@gmail.com.

continued on page 7

Appeals Court Reinstates Lawsuit Against NYU Handbook

In a victory for faculty, a New York State appellate court has reinstated two professors’ lawsuit against New York University, where they claimed that the institution’s violations of their rights under the faculty handbook, broke what amounts to a de facto contract with them. The ruling, while preliminary, is significant in that it suggests that policies outlined in a faculty handbook can amount to a kind of contract.

The lawsuit, an Article 78 proceeding, was brought by two tenured professors at the NYU School of Medicine, Marie Monaco and Herbert Samuels, who saw their salaries reduced for not meeting external funding requirements in ways that they argued violated the faculty handbook (Matter of Monaco v New York Univ. 2015 NY Slip Op 51025(U) Decided on July 14, 2015 Supreme Court, New York County Hunter Jr., J.). In their case, which was dismissed at the Spring 2016 meeting of the State Conference, they claim that tenure, as defined by the faculty handbook, ensures academic freedom and economic security and so is incompatible with salary reductions related to external funding metrics. A New York State Supreme Court

Columbia Seeking to Nullify Graduate Student Union Vote

Columbia University is challenging the December 9 vote by its graduate student teaching and research assistants to unionize and select the United Auto Workers (UAW) as their collective bargaining agent. While graduate student collective bargaining exists at a number of public institutions, it was not until August when the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), reversing an earlier decision, granted graduate stu- dent employees the right to organize an engage in collective bargaining.

Columbia students voted 1,602 to 623 to unionize, according to a tally posted online by the National Labor Relations Board, becoming the first students at an Ivy League school to do so. The UAW currently represents 60,000 academic workers across the United States.
New Report: Student Journalism Under Fire

On December 1, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the College Media Association (CMA), the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC), and the Student Press Law Center (SPLC) released a report, Threats to the Independence of Student Media, shining a light on threats to student media and reaffirming and expanding upon basic principles of a free student press.

The report cites multiple cases in which college and university administrations exerted pressure in attempts to control, edit, or censor student media. This pressure has been reported in every segment of higher education and every institutional type: public and private, four-year and two-year, religious and secular. The report finds that administrative efforts to subordinate campus journalism to public relations concerns are inconsistent with the mission of higher education to foster intellectual exploration and debate.

The white paper released by CUNY Raising explains the success of ASAP and CUNY’s other targeted student success programs. It also details the disinvestment that imperils CUNY’s mission to educate “the children of the whole people” of New York. From 2008 – 2015 per-student funding from the State fell 17% at CUNY senior colleges and 5% at community colleges, while adjusted state aid per-student fell 13% over the same period, when adjusted for inflation.

New Report: Student Journalism Under Fire

The AAUP’s Assembly of State Conferences (ASC) is seeking nominations for one of the member-at-large positions on the ASC Executive Committee.

The Nominating Committee shall consider nominations from any member resident in a state with an active state conference of AAUP members whose name is recommended to the AAUP Nominating Committee by representatives from three or more state conferences shall be included among the nominees.

The nomination and election of candidates is governed by the ASC Constitution and bylaws. The ASC election for this position will take place at the June 16, 2017, ASC meeting in Washington, DC, by conference delegates to that meeting.
Why We Protest and the Meaning of AAUP Censure

continued from page 3

meaning, our academic freedom is still compromised: Many of the cuts still make no sense, and in some cases the cuts are proving difficult to implement.

In addition, it appears that large sums of money have been used by the senior administration to pay for severance settlements, and new hires—belying the union’s Executive Board

They also protest against the kind of censoring that now pervades many parts of our community. Indeed, many faculty (and even more staff) seem scared to speak out—they say they are keeping their heads down. Still others have decided to just teach their classes and just go home—withdrawning from many of the extra activities they used to engage in that enriched our students and our entire campus community.

Finally, here is the key reason we will continue to protest: We want our Saint Rose back—a true collegial community, committed to academic excellence through shared governance, academic freedom, free speech, and tenure that is respected by our leadership in both words and actions.

Our new “Home” does not feel like the place so many of us have loved and served for decades, so we are fighting for the Saint Rose mission and spirit—so that it survives and flourishes into the future for generations of students to come.

NYS AAUP Executive Director's Report

continued from page 4

Who protest are not “whining” over the loss of a few liberal arts courses that students don’t want to take anyway—but which they very well may need as they enter a globalized, competitive marketplace that requires ongoing adaptation and learning; often outside of one’s dated college major.)

No, instead, we are protesting the ongoing loss of the rightful role of the faculty, the rejection of our acknowledged expertise regarding the curriculum, and the utter loss of our contractually guaranteed tenure rights, role in shared governance, and academic freedom.

We also are protesting to fight against the sense of fear and hopelessness that now pervades many parts of our community. Indeed, many faculty (and even more staff) seem scared to speak out—they say they are keeping their heads down. Still others have decided to just teach their classes and just go home—withdrawning from many of the extra activities they used to engage in that enriched our students and our entire campus community.

At least two incidents of hate have occurred on SUNY campuses since Nov. 8. On Nov. 11, a swastika and the word “Trump” were discovered in a residence hall on the campus of SUNY Geneseo. “Hate graffiti that read in part, “This is calling for Muslims to leave!” with a drawing of a heart next to the word “Trump” was found inside a residence hall at SUNY New Paltz on Nov. 10.

Both cases are under investigation by police.

The UUP resolution calls on SUNY’s administration and the SUNY Faculty Senate to join the union to counter any and all expressions of hate.

The UUP resolution calls on SUNY’s administration and the SUNY Faculty Senate to join the union to counter any and all expressions of hate.

The location, agenda and registration information will be posted on the nysaau.org website.

Should you be interested in having your chapter host this conference please get back to us.

So our protests are not just because some important programs were cut, but because the academic mission and the integrity of shared governance (in which the faculty are supposed to have primary control of the curriculum and academic policies) have been wholly compromised by this executive administration. For example, our faculty manual states that tenured professors cannot be fired for financial reasons unless the President formally declares a state of financial exigency and opens the books for all to see. She never did that. As many may recall, these violations also led to a faculty vote of “no confidence” in the President by a margin of 125 to 35 last spring semester—a significant majority of the full-time faculty of the College.

These facts make it clear that it is not just a small group of protesters who are outraged by the actions taken by Dr. Stepnowsky but a clear majority of the full-time faculty.

This is another reason why some of us exercise our Constitutional rights to free speech and raise our voices in protests.

And because we believe these important issues must be fixed, we will continue to demand change and to protest ongoing violations of our contract, faculty manual, and agreements on shared governance. We also will continue to demand a restoration of the principles upon which Saint Rose was founded—its social justice mission and ideals, and promises that were made to the faculty in writing. So to be clear, we faculty members are not merely complaining about the loss of important programs or even the loss of our very dear college (who in some cases have lost their very livelihoods). We are protesting past and ongoing abuses of tenure, shared governance, and academic freedom.

It also is important to note that the faculty did NOT protest when, in May 2015, health care costs doubled (or tripled in many cases), tuition remission was reduced to 80%, professional development support was eliminated, and the College’s contributions to our retirement funds were wiped out. Many of us had our compensation reduced by 20% or more—a huge financial blow to faculty struggling to pay Mountain Rose health insurance, and save for retirement on salaries that were already very much below those of our peers at comparable institutions.

We did not protest because most faculty and staff believed these cuts were needed based on a purported financial crisis described by the President (but who did not declare formal financial exigency), and we were willing to do our part to save our beloved College.

Nor did we protest when, in clear violation of AAUP policies on freedom of speech and academic freedom, our access to group email for the full faculty was cut off by the College. We did protest when the undergraduate transfer credit academic policy was unilaterally changed above the vocal objections and votes of the faculty—the professionals who are presumed to have the expertise to determine academic policy in a shared governance model.

We ultimately protested only when the executive administration terminated the tenure of some individuals. It was nothing short of a financial miracle that the curriculum from faculty by making unilateral cuts that threatened the very fabric of our academic mission, and destroyed what had been until 2014 a collegial and collaborative approach to shared governance. The majority of voting faculty also objected to the unbelievably short time frame under which the cuts were made (around six weeks), the lack of what faculty—the professionals who were presumed to have the expertise to determine academic policy in a shared governance model.

Finally, we also protested the absolute absence of required faculty votes on these major cuts—some of which made no sense and still seem unjustified. It is difficult to fathom how Spanish, Environmental Science, Sociology, or the money-making Masters of Fine Arts programs were “low cost” and costly and no hard data have been provided to faculty to justify those decisions.

So why don’t we just get over it and move on? The answer is because we continue to lack shared governance, tenure currently has no substantive


The Crisis at the College of New Rochelle

by David Linton – President Emeritus – NYS/AAUP

The unfolding story at the College of New Rochelle (CNR) might be seen as an object lesson in the importance of shared governance and faculty involvement in all aspects of an institution’s affairs.

In September 2016 it was discovered that for two years the CNR management had been delinquent in submitting payroll taxes amounting to $20 million. In addition, they were also remiss in paying another $11 million in outstanding debts to various service providers and vendors.

Though a full investigation is not yet complete, as of this writing the college has amassed at least $31 million in debt and several vendors have filed suits against the school.

When confronted with these findings, the CNR President, Judith Hastings, resigned and the auditing firm that had certified the veracity of the financial reports, KPMG, was terminated. The comptroller had already resigned a few months before the problem came to light. It is not clear if the administration is being truthful about the growing shortages.

Following its original internal examination of the financial problems and possible violation of law, the Board of the College announced that the U.S. Attorney’s Office was now involved and was in the process of conducting its own investigation. Further at a December 15 Town Meeting it was announced that faculty layoffs would be announced in March and that the procedures for determining which individuals would lose their jobs would not follow those that are prescribed in the faculty handbook. Understandably, faculty, students and staff were dismayed to learn of such severe mismanagement and the college is now faced with a financial crisis unlike any in its history. So far none of the administrators have been accused of having made any personal gain. However, the institution is now faced with making hard decisions.

The Board of Trustees has announced plans to auction off several pieces of real estate that it owns in the vicinity of the campus and has either let go or not replaced a number of staff who have the most to offer and the most to lose. Further, as above suggested, there is a lessor to be found here it is that college faculty must always be vigilant in looking out for their own interests by insisting on policies that guarantee the reasonable sharing of governance and that they have the kind of collective structures such as a strong AAUP chapter to enforce and protect their rights.

For another perspective on the unfolding story, here are two news items from a local media outlet:
