From the President's Desk

by Mary Rose Kubal

I have a confession to make. I checked out this summer. Really checked out. (Ask Jeff Kraus our NYS Academe editor—I am dreadfully late getting this column to him.)

After starting the spring semester still recovering from Covid and finishing my final semester chairing my university’s faculty Senate I was exhausted. I decided to work to rule for once. My administration sticks by the convenient fiction that I have only nine months of contractual work obligations, so I figured I would take them up on this.

I had a great summer doing summer things. I picked blueberries, rode my bike, hiked, cleaned out my disgusting basement, played with my cats, cooked healthy food for myself and my friends, visited family, read for pleasure, improved my cribbage skills, and breathed (when the smoke from Canadian wildfires subsided).

I scheduled health care appointments I had put off. Did my physical therapy exercises. Took a serious look at my personal finances. Generally did adulting that I don’t seem to have time to do during the semester. I helped older relatives with their adulting.

I had heartening conversations with colleagues who have amazing and creative ideas about collaboration and change as we watch the bedrock of higher education collapse around us—declining enrollments, slashing programs, generative AI, changes in NCAA rules putting more pressure on academics, challenges to academic freedom and tenure.

I am excited to see students back in my classes. I have the energy to focus on saving the academic programs I am responsible for on my campus. I am looking forward to working with colleagues in our state conference help our NYS members and chapters deal with the challenges they face on their campuses.

continued on page 7

State AAUP to Hold Fall Meeting October 27-28

The New York State Conference (NYSC) of the AAUP will be holding a virtual fall business meeting and Conference. The NYSC AAUP business meeting (open only to NYS AAUP members in good standing) will be on Friday, October 27th and the conference (open to AAUP members in good standing and invited guests) will be held on Saturday, October 28th.

The theme of our fall conference is The Meaning, Limits, and Defense of Academic Freedom. In addition to hearing current research on academic freedom, “lessons from Florida,” academic gag laws, and other attacks on academic freedom, you will also hear stories from the field and leave with practical suggestions, skills, and tools you can use to create an “Academic Freedom-Friendly Initiative” on your campus.

Some of our invited speakers are Joerg Tiede, Director of Research, AAUP National; Dr. Sharon D. Wright Austin, a political scientist from the University of Florida who is currently writing a book about academic freedom; Dr. Paul Ortiz, historian and President of United Faculty of Florida, University of Florida; Irwin Yellowitz, Chair of the NYSC AAUP Committee A; and Ellen Schrecker, American historian and author who is currently writing a book on authoritarian universities. More details will be available on the Conference Website: https://nyscaaup.org/

The fall meeting and conference will be held virtually, please plan to attend!

Fall 2023 Academic Issue:

- President’s Report..................................................page 1
- State AAUP Fall Meeting October 27-28..............page 1
- New Interim Director for National AAUP ..........page 2
- Third Consecutive Year Wages Short of Inflation ..page 2
- AAUP Applauds Ending Legacy Admissions .........page 3
- Affordable Access Fight to Higher Ed Continues ...page 4
- Higher Ed Must Protect Equity in Education...........page 4
- New Data on the Academic Workforce.................page 5
- Executive Director’s Report.................................page 6
- AAUP National Leadership ...............................page 8
- AAUP New York State Conference Leadership........page 9
New Interim Director for National AAUP

AAUP executive director Julie Schmid has begun a new position with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) as the special assistant for higher education to AFT president Randi Weingarten. In this role, she will work to ensure that the AAUP’s affiliation with the AFT best serves both organizations’ members and that together our two organizations can best defend academic freedom, students’ freedom to learn, and the right of academic workers to organize.

The AAUP has been extremely fortunate to benefit from Julie’s service as Executive Director since 2013 and as a senior program officer in the Department of Organizing and Services from 2002 to 2008. Her expertise in academic organizing and her management skills have been vital assets to the AAUP’s elected leadership in carrying out the AAUP’s mission. AAUP leaders and members can take comfort from the deep understanding of and commitment to AAUP principles and values that Julie brings to her new position with the AFT, where she will be a valuable resource and advocate for all who teach and conduct research in colleges and universities.

AAUP Reports Third Consecutive Year of Faculty Wages Falling Short of Inflation

On June 14, the AAUP released the 2022–23 Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession, which presents key findings from the AAUP’s annual Faculty Compensation Survey. Data collection for the survey concluded in March 2023, with nearly 900 US colleges and universities providing employment data for more than 370,000 full-time and 90,000 part-time faculty members as well as senior administrators at more than 500 institutions.

Key Findings

■ Despite increases in average salaries of 4.1 percent for full-time faculty members from fall 2021 to fall 2022—the greatest one-year increase since 1990–91—real average salaries decreased 2.4 percent after adjusting for inflation.

■ Real average salaries have declined sharply for three consecutive years, with a cumulative decrease of 7.5 percent from fall 2019 to fall 2022.

■ Average full-time faculty salaries for women were 82.3 percent of those for men in 2022–23, and the gender salary-equity ratio—the ratio of women’s salaries to men’s—is 87.0 for full professors. Women make up an average of 48.2 percent of all full-time faculty as of fall 2021, and only 35.7 percent of full professors.

■ Part-time faculty members who were paid on a per-course-section basis in 2021–22 received an average of $3,874 per course section, a 0.8 percent increase from 2020–21, when the average pay was $3,843, but an 8.9 percent increase from 2019–20, when the average pay was $3,556.

■ From fall 2019 through fall 2022, median presidential salaries increased 9.6 percent in nominal terms, compared with a 7.1 percent increase in average salaries for full-time faculty members during the same period.

■ The number of faculty members employed on contingent appointments decreased by over 57,000 (6.9 percent) from fall 2019 to fall 2020, and contingent faculty employment had recovered by only about 25 percent in fall 2021.

■ The number of graduate student employees plummeted during the COVID-19 pandemic, decreasing by 13,551 (3.7 percent) from fall 2019 to fall 2020, but recovered by 90 percent in fall 2021.

This is the sixty-fourth Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession published since the AAUP established the Faculty Compensation Survey program in 1958. Results of the survey are published in April for the current academic year, with a full Annual Report published online in June and printed in August in the AAUP’s annual Bulletin. Final datasets, including corrected appendices and datasets, were released in July.

Diversity in the student body and in the faculty ranks enables an institution to fulfill its core academic mission most effectively and contribute to the common good. For too long, structures of systemic racism built into our colleges and universities have denied historically underrepresented populations equal opportunities and delayed progress toward an equitable society.

In a deeply disappointing decision by the Supreme Court, race-conscious affirmative action practices, which had been successful in beginning to address some of these long-standing inequities for Black and Latino students, have been gutted. Legacy-based affirmative action—the practice of considering an applicant’s family ties to the institution as a positive factor in admissions—still stands. Legacy admission practices have been shown to primarily benefit applicants who are affluent and white. By limiting racial and economic diversity on college campuses, legacy admissions, particularly in highly selective schools, effectively restrict racial and economic diversity in workplaces and in economic and political power structures.

The AAUP is committed to fighting systemic racism and pursuing racial justice and equity in higher education. We applaud colleges and universities that are ending legacy admission preferences and call upon all institutions to review and revise admission policies in order to ensure equitable access to a college education for all.

In a 6–3 decision in Biden v. Nebraska, the US Supreme Court struck down the Biden administration’s student-loan-relief plan, proposed in 2022, to erase up to ten thousand dollars of student-loan debt for millions of individuals, and up to twenty thousand dollars for those with family incomes low enough to make them eligible for Pell Grants. The court’s Republican majority held that in authorizing the debt-relief program, the secretary of education exceeded his authority under the Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students (HEROES) Act, a law passed by Congress in 2003. The majority concluded that the partial loan-forgiveness plan was too large and expansive to be considered a “waiver” or “modification” of the existing statutory provisions related to student loan programs.

In striking down the plan, the court majority ignored the broad statutory authority that Congress explicitly granted the secretary of education under the HEROES Act and substituted its own policy judgment for that of elected officials. The HEROES Act expressly gives the secretary broad authority to respond to national emergencies—like the COVID-19 pandemic—including the power to “waive or modify any statutory or regulatory provision” applicable to student-loan programs. After concluding that lower-income borrowers would be at heightened risk of delinquency and default if the across-the-board pause put in place at the beginning of the pandemic were lifted, the secretary decided to exercise this authority and deployed the HEROES Act to safeguard borrowers by extending the pause and offering expanded relief.

The AAUP joined the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) in filing an amicus brief in support of the Biden administration’s efforts to grant much-needed relief to individuals holding student loan debt, given the immense economic hardships created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The brief noted in particular the severe financial impact that COVID-19 has had on US teachers and nurses, as well as student borrowers in general. The brief also argued that canceling student debt best serves the purposes of the HEROES Act because of the long-lasting nature of the pandemic’s harms and because permanent relief will best facilitate the recovery of the public service sector.
Higher Ed Community Must Protect Equity in Education

The US Supreme Court’s decision in Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard and Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina is a significant blow to long-standing efforts of universities to ensure that students of all races have equal access to higher education. Despite this setback, the AAUP continues its fight for a more just and equitable society—one in which all students have a full and fair opportunity to receive a quality education and to contribute to the academic life of America’s colleges and universities.

On June 29, 2023, the Republican-appointed majority on the US Supreme Court issued a 6–3 decision holding that the race-conscious admissions policies used by Harvard University and the University of North Carolina violate the Fourteenth Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Although the court recognized that the educational benefits that flow from achieving a diverse student body are “commendable goals,” it found that Harvard and UNC failed to meet their burden of demonstrating that their admissions programs achieve compelling interests through narrowly tailored means. The majority also noted, however, that “nothing in this opinion should be construed as prohibiting universities from considering an applicant’s discussion of how race affected his or her life, be it through discrimination, inspiration, or otherwise.”

The decision overturns what had been settled law for more than forty years. In its landmark 1978 ruling in Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, the Supreme Court held that the goal of achieving a diverse student body is a compelling interest that can justify college and university policies allowing for the consideration of race in admissions decisions. Twenty-five years later, in Grutter v. Bollinger, the court reaffirmed the constitutionality of race-conscious university admissions policies, emphasizing the importance of a diverse student body to achieving important educational benefits, promoting cross-racial understanding, breaking down racial stereotypes, and preparing students for participation in a diverse workforce and society. In 2013 and 2016, the court reaffirmed this holding twice more in Fisher v. University of Texas.

Today’s ruling came in response to a pair of lawsuits brought against Harvard University and the University of North Carolina by Students for Fair Admissions, an organization dedicated to overturning race-conscious admissions policies. The admissions policies at both universities conformed to Supreme Court precedents allowing an applicant’s race to be considered as part of a holistic evaluation process. In an amicus brief filed in support of Harvard and UNC, the AAUP and other groups outlined how race-conscious admissions policies can further the educational objectives of colleges and universities and discussed the importance of racially diverse student bodies.

In the aftermath of the Supreme Court’s decision, it now falls to the higher education community to protect what we value: ensuring access to higher education for all students, promoting equity in education, and fostering vibrant university campuses characterized by the freedom to learn, teach, and conduct research. The AAUP maintains its commitment to the crucial goal of ensuring that a diverse range of students have access to America’s colleges and universities. The AAUP pledges to work with faculty, college and university administrations, and social justice organizations to make this goal a reality.
Executive Director’s Report

by Sally Dear-Healey, Executive Director, NYSC AAUP

This summer I had the privilege of attending Summer Institute 2023, offered in picturesque Burlington, VT, and what a fantastic experience it was! In addition to finally seeing old friends in person, connecting with colleagues, and making new friends and connections, attendees were provided with a full array of engaging information packed workshops and trainings. The Saturday night cruise on Lake Champlain provided fair weather, amazing views, tasty food, and yet another opportunity to connect with folks who were, quite simply, of a similar mind and focus. For some that was an unexpected bonus of Summer Institute, especially given that their experience on their own campus, and perhaps even within their own department, is quite different.

I also had the pleasure of presenting at Summer Institute, along with Sarah Lanius, Labor Advisor, AAUP; Melanie Arthur, Contract Manager, United Academics, University of Alaska; and Jill Dumesnil, AAUP AFT Member, University of Alaska. The title of our workshop was Strategic Approaches to Dispute Resolution, and my part focused on the roots of interpersonal conflict and conflict resolution styles through the lens of trauma theory (SAMHSA) and polyvagal theory. My intention was to help attendees increase and improve self and interpersonal awareness and communication, as well as a wider understanding of history and environment. Accordingly, there are skills and tools everyone can use to reduce conflict and settle disputes - personal or professional - prior to and during conversations and especially negotiations. In fact, Melanie noted it is her experience that “we don’t give enough attention to some of those ‘background’ factors, and they absolutely affect all of our negotiations, especially when they start to go sideways.” As I (and Zander) like to look at it, just imagine the possibilities!

But is it enough ‘just’ to have attended - or presented - at Summer Institute? What is the point of basking in all this wisdom and support for a few days if we are going to re-assimilate to the “hive mind” (Borg style) once we return? Here I am reminded of the concept of ‘vacation mind.’ In other words, it’s easy to feel and act different, e.g., less stressed when you are on vacation, however, once you return it doesn’t take long before things quickly return to ‘normal,’ life takes over again, and the benefits that you purposefully went on vacation to get - the space and time for relaxation, a return to self, and a different and/or fresh perspective on life and everything that goes with it - quickly diminish. This is unfortunate since what we really need is to integrate those vacation-inspired benefits back into our lives and work so we can experience long-term results.

In turn, I encouraged the attendees I spoke with to identify tangible and ongoing ways they could carry the awareness, knowledge, felt sense of support, energy, and inspired motivation, as well as skills and tools they received at Summer Institute back to their colleagues, chapters, and institutions.

I also did a lot of listening and observing while I was there. In both workshops and casual conversations, one of the recurring themes was what it means to “give away your power” and how one’s felt sense of agency is impacted by the lack/loss of academic freedom and integrity. Whether the conversation was about collective bargaining, department politics, tenure review, or the assignment of classes, what I heard over and over was that as our work, our disciplines, our institutions, and especially our power as professors is being eroded, we are left clinging to whatever personal power we have left. We are stressed, anxiety levels are at an all-time high, some are depressed, and some have just given in, or given up. It became very clear over the course of the time we were at Summer Institute that it’s time we take back our voice, and in turn our power. In other words, “even if you aren’t a union, act like one!”

Relatedly, every time I heard someone put “just” or “only” in front of describing who they are, or what they do, I gently reminded them that what they are, or what they do is enough. I often hear this from Advocacy Chapters, e.g., “we are only an Advocacy Chapter, or from Adjuncts “I am just an Adjunct.”

Thinking about this on my long drive home, I was reminded of the incredibly profound and life-changing comment my dissertation advisor shared when I set the day for my “defense.” While I knew my topic inside and out, and at that point I wasn’t concerned about my research or writing, it was the idea of having to defend myself and my work that created all sorts of internal anxiety. During one of our later meetings, when I expressed my feelings about this, he calmly said to me, “don’t think of this as a defense, think of it as a conversation. You are the expert in your work. They are now your colleagues.”

Changing the way I thought about them, and who I was in

continued on page 6
relationship with them, changed everything.

The other thing I heard at Summer Institute was that a number of people were interested in attending “higher level” or “advanced” workshops and trainings, as many of the ones offered - while highly valuable - seemed to focus more on those who were newer to the work and the AAUP. That made me curious about the number of first-time attendees there are each year (or perhaps a range scale, such as 1-3, 2-5, etc. years with the AAUP). According to National, while they didn’t ask that specific question this year, there were 307 attendees, while prior to Covid attendance was reported to be in the low 200s, and in 2022 there were 183 attendees. Circling back to the idea of more advanced workshops, this is something several of us on the East coast have been talking about for awhile now, e.g., offering a mid-year Summer Institute type of “advanced training” event. I also spoke to some of the organizing staff for the Institute and they agreed that this idea could and should be revisited as they plan for next year’s event. If you have any thoughts about this, or suggestions for workshops/trainings, please share them with me and/or the National office.

Speaking of planning for upcoming events, I am very excited to announce that we have both a theme and a date for the NYSC AAUP fall business meeting and conference. Following our new practice of holding the fall meeting and conference virtually (and the spring meeting and conference in person), the NYSC AAUP business meeting (open only to NYS AAUP members in good standing) will be on Friday, October 27th and the conference (open to AAUP members in good standing and invited guests) will be held on Saturday, October 28th. The theme of our fall conference is The Meaning, Limits, and Defense of Academic Freedom. In addition to hearing current research on academic freedom, “lessons from Florida,” academic gag laws, and other attacks on academic freedom, you will also hear stories from the field and leave with practical suggestions, skills, and tools you can use to create an “Academic Freedom-Friendly Initiative” on your campus.

Some of our invited speakers (so far) are Joerg Tiede, Director of Research, AAUP National; Dr. Sharon D. Wright Austin, a political scientist from the University of Florida who is currently writing a book about academic freedom; Dr. Paul Ortiz, historian and President of United Faculty of Florida, University of Florida; Irwin Yellowitz, Chair of the NYSC AAUP Committee A; and Ellen Schrecker, American historian and author who is currently writing a book on authoritarian universities. We will be sure to keep you updated as details become finalized, but for now be sure to save the date and make plans to attend!

Lots of other things are in the works at the State Conference level as well as with our committees, councils, members, and chapters. For example, the NYC-Westchester Regional Council is planning a start of the year in-person mixer (Co-Chairs Ira Gerhardt and Jacob Appel) and the Long Island Regional Council (Chair, Sophie Christman) is planning a fall meeting that includes a presentation by Michael Bérubé, former President of the Modern Language Association, who co-authored It’s Not Free Speech: Race, Democracy, and the Future of Academic Freedom along with Jennifer Ruth. Stay tuned to our website and Action Network emails for updated information on these and other events and activities.

As always, please don’t hesitate to reach out if there is anything I and/or the NYSC can do to help support you as an AAUP member or as a chapter, or if you ‘just’ need someone to talk to. We also want to hear from you about what is/isn’t going on at your institution and/or with your AAUP chapter too. You can always reach me at sdearhealeyaaup@gmail.com or we can connect by phone (607) 656-9477.

Be well, stay safe, and in solidarity,

Sally
And the challenges are many and they are daunting—in some cases, existential.

When I wrote my last column in April, it looked like there would be a merger between Medaille University and Trocaire College. We now know how that ended. Yes, the bedrock of the higher education landscape is changing, and some of our institutions will not survive. Despite long histories. Despite dedicated alumni and generous donors. Despite excellent and hardworking faculty and support staff doing their best to educate students many of whom lost at least a year of learning during the pandemic and are struggling with high levels of debt and uncertain economic futures.

Many of our institutions will survive, but those that do may look very different in a decade. Some of our programs will be discontinued—many have been already, in some cases cannibalized by the shiny new programs pushed by desperate administrations and trustees. The liberal arts are under attack—philosophy, language, physics, literature, history programs are being cut left and right. The professorate is being de-professionalized and overworked. Academic support staff are being slashed and those that remain tasked with two or three full time responsibilities.

What do we do now?

I have to admit I am not sure. Well, not exactly sure.

I know we can’t do it alone.

This is why we organize on our campuses. This is why we support those organizing on other campuses. This is why the AAUP has affiliated with the AFT. This is why our New York state conference has been working with NYSUT to help make the affiliation a strong one in this state.

The bedrock of higher education is most certainly shifting around us. It is scary. It is exhausting.

But crisis presents us with opportunity (at least this is what I have learned in all the SWOT exercises my administration likes to engage in). I am excited to work on building our NY state conference and strengthen the relationship with NYSUT this coming academic year. To work on refining and expanding our legislative advocacy in NYS. To work with our new and expanding regional councils, building networks and solidarity so that we can respond to threats on our individual campuses collectively. On my own campus to work on curriculum innovations with my wonderful colleagues.

Yet, keeping in mind that sometimes it is okay, even necessary, to check out, to slow down, to take care of ourselves. When we fight, we win—but we can’t fight if we are too physically and psychically exhausted.

In solidarity,

Mary Rose Kubal

AAUP activists come together at Summer Institute
National AAUP Elected Leaders

Irene T. Mulvey, President
Paul Davis, Vice President
Christopher Sinclair, Secretary-Treasurer
Ernesto Longa, At-Large Council Member
Nivedita Majumdar, At-Large Council Member
Glinda Rawls, At-Large Council Member

Regional Council Members

Antonio Gallo, Regional Council Member/Region 1
(Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands)

Karim Rosemblatt, Regional Council Member/Region 2
(Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgian, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia)

John McNay, Regional Council Member/Region 3
(Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Canada)

Donna Murch, Regional Council Member/Region 4
(New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands)

Davarian Baldwin, Regional Council Member/Region 5
(Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont)

Other Members, Non-Voting

Risa Lieberwitz, General Counsel
Nancy Long, Executive Director
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James Davis, Executive Council Member At-Large  jcdavis@brooklyn.cuny.edu
Nivedita Majumdar, Executive Council Member At-Large  nmajum_10038@yahoo.com

Sally Dear-Healey, Executive Director  sdearhealeyaaup@gmail.com
Jeffrey Kraus, Editor, New York Academe  jfkraus1@aol.com
Tanya Loughead, Communication Director  tanya.loughead@gmail.com

Committees and Councils

Committee A: Academic Freedom and Tenure
Irwin Yellowitz, Chair  yyellowitz@aol.com

Committee on Academic Professionals
Vasiliki (Valerie) Lagakis, Chair  Vasiliki.Lagakis@ncc.edu

Committee on College and University Governance
Kimberly Reiser, Chair  Kimberley.Reiser@ncc.edu

Committee on Chapters, Members and Dues
Katherine Cho, Chair  chokatherine7@gmail.com

Committee on the Economic Status of the Profession
Thomas X. Carroll, Chair  txcarroll98@gmail.com

Committee on Faculty Holding Contingent Appointment
Angel L. Martinez, Chair  amjournal@gmail.com

Committee on Governmental Relations
Fred Floss, Chair  flossfg@buffalostate.edu

Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Accepting Applications for Chair

Committee on Retirement
Accepting Applications for Chair

continued on page 10
Committees and Councils continued

Committee on Gender and Sexuality in the Academic Profession
Margeaux Lippman, Chair margeaux.lippman@gmail.com

CUNY Council
Cecelia McCall, Chair liann.mccall@gmail.com

Collective Bargaining Council
Adam Pack, Chair apack@utica.edu

The Long Island Council
Sophie Christman, Chair drsophiechristman@gmail.com

NYC-Westchester Council
Jacob M. Appel, Co-Chair jacobmappel@gmail.com
Ira Gerhardt, Co-Chair iragerhardt.aaup@gmail.com

Lower Central Council
Capital Area-Mid Hudson Council
Western-Midwestern Council
Rachel O’Donnell, Chair rachel.odonnell@rochester.edu

New York State Conference Leadership

The Administrative Committee (AC) consists of the President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary, all of which are elected officer positions.

The Executive Council (EC) consists of the officers of the Conference, four at-large members, the national Council members elected from the district that includes New York State, the At-Large Council members who are members of the NYS Conference, and the elected National AAUP Officers who are members of the NYS Conference. (Article III.2, Oct. 2014).

The Steering Committee (SC) consists of the EC and the chairs of standing NYS Conference committees and councils. (Article III.3, October 2014)