

NEW YORK Academe

VOLUME 48 NUMBER 2 · WINTER 2024 -25· THE NEW YORK STATE CONFERENCE · AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS



From the President's Desk

by Mary Rose Kubal

I hope everyone had a restful holiday season and is ready to tackle the challenges 2025 is sure to bring—especially to higher education. I took advantage of my “down time” over the holidays to read the

Project 2025 chapter on education as well as the less well-known but likely more influential America First Policy Institute's (AFPI) “America First Agenda” pillar IV regarding K-12 education. I'll hit the highlights for you in this column in case you decided to use your downtime for more enjoyable pursuits.

How is the Trump administration policy agenda likely to affect higher education in New York? The short answer is we don't know yet. There are some items in the Project 2025 document that point to some possible changes. Linda McMahon, President Trump's pick for Education Secretary and co-chair of his transition team, is the board chair for the AFPI. Higher education is notably absent from the AFPI's transition agenda, but the institute has been pushing a couple of higher education agendas consistent with the Project 2025 recommendations: removing degree requirements for many public sector jobs and pushing state legislatures to ban diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) instruction in state-funded colleges and universities.

With a solid Democratic majority in the New York State government, we are unlikely to see DEI initiatives banned in state schools. If the Trump administration ends up offloading Department of Education programs to other agencies and severely cutting back on federal subsidies for student borrowers, it gives up many potential carrots and sticks to influence the curriculum of our institutions. But it also takes away important resources from our students and research.

The most direct and immediate actions the Trump administration can take related to higher education

continued on page 9

NYSC AAUP Spring 2025 Meeting and Conference to take place in Rochester April 4-5

The Spring 2025 AAUP spring meeting will take place April 4-5 in Rochester. The Business Meeting will be held on Friday, April 4, while the Conference will take place on Saturday, April 5.

The theme of this year's conference is **THE CRISIS IN SHARED GOVERNANCE: If Everyone Isn't At The Table, Then No One Should Be At The Table.**

Our Spring 2025 events are being co-hosted by several AAUP Chapters in the Rochester area, including the University of Rochester, Nazareth University, and Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT).

Kimberley Reiser, the NYSC AAUP Committee on College and University Governance Chair, will moderate the

continued on page 2

CORRECTION

In the New York State Conference Leadership in the last Issue of New York Academe, our state Conference Vice President's name was spelled incorrectly. Our Vice President is **Leah Akins** of Dutchess Community College.

Winter 2024-25 Academic Issue:

President's Report.....	page 1
NYSC AAUP Spring 2025 Meeting/Conference...	page 1
Correction.....	page 1
Outstanding Achievement and Service Awards.....	page 2
UUP President on Downstate Advisory Board.....	page 3
AAUP Condemns Faculty Arrests at NYU.....	page 4
AAUP President: Higher Education Organize.....	page 4
Executive Director's Reports.....	page 6
AAUP to Kick-off Organize Every Campus.....	page 8
Veena Dubal Appointed AAUP General Counsel.....	page 8

NYSC AAUP Website: <https://nyscaaup.org>

 <https://www.facebook.com/NYSAAUPC1>

YouTube: **NYSC AAUP – YouTube**

NYSC AAUP Outstanding Achievement and Service Awards

The NYSC of the AAUP has created several awards to recognize the outstanding efforts of an individual (or chapter) in NYS whose work has advanced academic freedom or shared governance; promoted the economic security of academics; helped the higher education community organize; ensured higher education's contribution to the higher good; and/or served the NYS Conference in an enhanced capacity. These awards are made only when the contribution is deemed to be truly outstanding, and as such may not be awarded yearly. When awarded, awards will be presented at the NYSC AAUP Spring Meeting and Conference.

NYSC AAUP Awards

- Irwin Yellowitz Award for Service to AAUP Members in NYS

- Pat Cihon Award for Service to the NYS Conference

- Francis "Frank" Higman Award for Service to AAUP Collective Bargaining Chapters in NYS

Nomination Process:

A nomination from an AAUP chapter or faculty senate or union ordinarily begins the process, however individuals may also submit nominations.

Submission Process for Nominating Letters and Supporting Materials

1. Nominations should be submitted in the form of a letter and be accompanied by biographical material **and** supporting letters of endorsement from colleagues, chapter members, State Conference leadership, etc.

2. Be sure to include a description of the **specific ways** in which the candidate has demonstrated their exemplary achievement and/or service to members and/or chapters in NYS and/or the NYS Conference as referenced by the name of the award. Please be as detailed as possible.

3. Also, you are asked to include references to **specific examples** of the candidate's strong commitment to academic freedom or shared governance; promoting the economic security of academics; helping the higher education community organize; or ensuring higher education's contribution to the higher good.

Submission Process:

Nominations in the form of letters and supporting materials should be **sent as one complete packet** to Sally Dear-Healey, Executive Director, NYSC AAUP at sdearhealeyaaup@gmail.com **no later than Wednesday, January 31, 2025.**

HAVE QUESTIONS? NEED ADDITIONAL INFO?
Contact: sdearhealeyaaup@gmail.com.

NYSC AAUP Spring 2025 Meeting and Conference

continued from page 1

Saturday morning program. The speakers will be Roxanne Shirazzi, the Dissertation Research Librarian and an Assistant Professor at the CUNY Graduate School, and Dr. Pippa Holloway, the Chair of the Department of History at the University of Richmond. Both are members of AAUP National's Committee on College and University Governance.

Shirazzi will discuss Stopping the Grift: The Special Powers of Librarians and Academic Professionals in Shared Governance, while Holloway's talk will be on The Role of Committee T in AAUP's Structure Post Biden*

The afternoon program will be organized around member-generated topics, issues, and questions through the creation of mastermind working groups.

Master-Mind groups are peer-to-peer mentoring groups used to help members solve their problems with input and advice from other group members. The concept was coined in 1925 by author Napoleon Hill in his book The Law of Success. Cooperation through the use of mastermind groups

was one of the "laws of success" that Hill drew upon from studying highly successful businessmen. There are two types of mastermind groups: one is focused on an individual's success, and the other is focused on the success of everyone in the group. Our afternoon program will offer opportunities for creating both types of support.

These groups, moderated by our morning speakers, members of the NYSC AAUP Committee on Shared Governance, and others, will focus on creating and maintaining real shared governance. Our goal is to facilitate learning and problem-solving by providing members with the 'nuts and bolts' of shared governance, stories, experiences, ideas, advice, skills, tools, rules, etc., as well as opportunities for grass-root action and resolution they can take back to their chapters and institutions. Attendees may spend all their time at one table or move from table to table throughout the afternoon.

Questions/More Information: sdearhealeyaaup@gmail.com.

UUP President Named to Downstate Advisory Board

UUP President Fred Kowal is one of eight members appointed to a state-created advisory panel that will make recommendations on the future of SUNY Downstate University Hospital.

Hochul announced the appointments on November 25, nearly seven months after announcing the panel's formation. A ninth member has yet to be appointed; that prospective member is still undergoing a background check, according to a story in Politico.

Kowal is the sole union representative on the panel; UUP represents the largest group of unionized hospital employees at Downstate.

"SUNY Downstate Hospital and SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University faculty and staff not only provide medical services that maintain the health and well-being of Brooklyn residents but also train the next generation of health care professionals who will expand the health care workforce," Kowal said. "I am eager to work with the community and leaders in health care and education to develop the best path forward to strengthen the institution, maximize the impact of up to \$750 million in state capital funding, and ensure SUNY Downstate's long-term security and stability consistent with the advisory board's mandate."

In addition to Kowal, the other members are:

■ Hochul appointments: Citizens Budget Commission President Andrew Rein; Dr. Lesly Kernisant, formerly of the Brooklyn Plaza Medical Center; and Pastor Louis Hilton Straker Jr.

■ Senate appointment: Dr. Enitza George, chair of SUNY Downstate's Department of Family and Community Health.

■ Assembly appointment: Dr. Donald Moore, a former attending physician at New York Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist Hospital.

■ SUNY appointment: SUNY Chancellor John King

■ State Department of Health appointment: State Health Commissioner James McDonald.

The advisory board will recommend how the state should use up to \$750 million in capital funds for Downstate. The

panel is expected to hold three public hearings before compiling a report and submitting it to the Legislature by April 1, 2025.

Long effort to stave off closure

The governor's decision to name an advisory board followed a surprise announcement in January by SUNY Chancellor John King Jr. that Downstate University Hospital would be repurposed—with a planned reduction of its services so severe that UUP considered the move as an attempt by SUNY to close the hospital. Downstate has been threatened with closure or severe downsizing twice before in the last 20 years, and UUP has played a lead role in saving it both times.

UUP quickly launched a campaign to protect the hospital from closure. That campaign involved marches, news

conferences, and rallies—including a massive rally in February that filled the block in front of the hospital's main entrance on Clarkson Avenue. Numerous national labor and social justice leaders spoke at that rally.

Kowal also sharply criticized SUNY Chancellor King in a November 1 press release for failing to submit a budget plan for Downstate. The release of \$100 million in operating funds for the hospital depended on the development of that budget plan.

The Downstate UUP Chapter, led by Redetha

Abrahams-Nichols, has held weekly marches around the hospital—with guest speakers and members holding signs—to remind the state to fulfill its promise of an advisory board.

UUP has also worked closely with state lawmakers who fear the effects that a closure of Downstate would have on the impoverished neighborhood surrounding the hospital, including Sen. Zellnor Myrie, whose district includes the hospital campus.

Kings County Hospital Center, across the street from the Downstate campus, is unable to absorb the overflow in its emergency department if Downstate closes, Myrie and other lawmakers have said. Other hospitals in Brooklyn are too far away for Downstate patients to easily travel to them.



AAUP Condemns Faculty Arrests Amidst Protest Crackdown at NYU

According to news reports, at least two NYU faculty members have been arrested while supporting students in peaceful pro-Palestine protests on campus and at least three have been issued “persona non grata” status without due process, without any stated reason, and reportedly without adequate notification. “This crackdown on NYU faculty is part of a distressing pattern of repression of pro-Palestinian speech on college campuses,” said AAUP President Todd Wolfson. “The AAUP condemns this practice and we will fight to defend academic freedom and the right of faculty, students, and staff to peacefully assemble on campuses across the country.”

Declaring faculty members as persona non grata appears tantamount to a summary suspension. This status, which is akin to banishment from campus, deactivates faculty ID cards and makes them unable to enter any NYU buildings—including those that contain their offices, laboratories, and classrooms—and essentially deprives faculty members of their right to perform their primary responsibilities as teachers and researchers.

The AAUP has long considered denying faculty members the right to carry out their key duties as a major sanction, second only to dismissal in severity. An administration should take such a step only after demonstrating adequate cause in an adjudicative hearing of record before an elected faculty body. No such hearing has taken place.

These actions by NYU administrators are part of a pattern



of college and university administrations responding to protests by imposing harsh and broadly chilling restrictions and sanctions. As the AAUP warned at the start of the fall semester, such severe limits on speech and assembly discourage or shut down expressive activity of faculty, students, and other members of the campus community and undermine the academic freedom and freedom of speech and expression that are fundamental to higher education.

The AAUP’s opposition to punishing academics for their expressions as citizens rather than scholars dates back to the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, which asserts that when they speak or write as citizens, faculty should be free from institutional censorship or discipline.

AAUP President: Higher Education Must Organize

AAUP President Todd Wolfson issued the following statement on November 7, 2024:

For the past 110 years, the American Association of University Professors has defended the principles of academic freedom and shared governance in order to ensure higher education’s contribution to the public good. While the results of this presidential election are disappointing, we remain steadfast in our commitment to our principles and ensuring that future generations of Americans are afforded the opportunity that higher education provides.

We are deeply concerned that the ongoing crisis in higher education of declining public funding, ballooning student debt, and attacks on academic freedom, will only be

intensified under the incoming administration. Without a thriving, inclusive higher education system that serves the public good, the majority of Americans will be excluded from meaningful participation in our democracy and this country will move backwards.

The AAUP is committed to defending our campuses and the mission of higher education through organizing our communities to face the challenges that lie ahead. Our collective power is needed now more than ever. To that end, we will do everything in our power to protect our institutions, faculty, staff, and students and stand up against those seeking to violate academic freedom and the core principle of higher education conducted for the common good.



NYSC AAUP Spring 2025 Meeting and Conference

AAUP Member Business Meeting: Friday, April 4th
Conference: Saturday, April 5th
Rochester, NY

THE CRISIS IN SHARED GOVERNANCE; If Everyone Isn't At The Table Then No One Should Be At The Table

Our Spring 2025 events are being co-hosted by several AAUP Chapters in the Rochester area, including the University of Rochester, Nazareth University, and Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT).

Morning Program:

Moderator: Kimberley Reiser,
Chair, NYSC AAUP Committee on College and University Governance

Speakers:



Stopping the Grift: The Special Powers of Librarians and Academic Professionals in Shared Governance

Roxanne Shirazi

Dissertation Research Librarian & Assistant Professor -
CUNY Graduate Center



The Role of Committee T in AAUP's Structure Post Biden*

Dr. Pippa Holloway

Chair, Department of History,
University of Richmond (VA)

***Note:** "Committee T" is AAUP National's Committee on College and University Governance

Executive Director's Report



by Sally Dear-Healey,
Executive Director, NYSC AAUP

It was my last class of the fall semester. I walked off the snowy, dark, relatively empty SUNY Cortland campus deep in thought. I had just come from my classroom, where I looked around and ceremoniously turned off the light for what would be the last time. In addition to holding myself against the

cold, I was struggling with the awareness that this would likely be the last time I ever taught a class at a college or university. That prospect made me sad. Really, really sad.



While there were any number of directions I could go, I was intentionally choosing the one that led me away from something I loved and had dedicated years of my life to. It's why I and my family made sacrifices so I could attend graduate school, a forty-something newly divorced woman

with three daughters, getting my Ph.D. in my early fifties. It's why I ended up with horrendous student loans which I'll never be able to pay back because I was unable to find a full-time tenure track position. It's why I taught at two different schools for three years, spending nine hours a week commuting. It's why I have spent more hours of my life on class prep, teaching, student emails, and grading than I have taking care of myself, or spending quality time with my family and friends, let alone doing other things I enjoy doing. I remember when I was teaching full-time as a Visiting Assistant Professor at Cortland (this was the position I left and the last place I taught since starting up again in the spring of 2024). I was working an average of 50 hours a week and commuting almost an hour each way. While I loved my work, and I had fallen hook, line, and sinker into the fray of it all, it wasn't until I left that I realized how 'tightly wound' I had been for I realized in retrospect had been a very long time. Even my son noted, "You are a lot calmer and happier now," which in many ways I was.

Bringing the conversation back around to teaching, in my Women's, Feminism, and Gender Studies class this semester we discussed the world of work, both paid and unpaid. As part of a class activity, I showed them a breakdown of what a typical Adjunct Instructor earns at SUNY Cortland and the type and scope of work that job entails. What better time to educate them about what the world of higher education really looks like, especially since many of the students at Cortland were there to become teachers, Cortland being known as an excellent teaching school. That said, let me review the cold hard facts as I presented them to my students:

As of the fall 2024 semester, adjuncts at SUNY Cortland make \$3,500.00 for a 15-week semester. The compensation was \$3,000.00 for the spring (2024) semester and I was told upon my hire that it would be \$4,000.00 in the fall, which, as you can see, didn't happen. Here is the humbling breakdown of what one adjunct's life looks like: $\$3,500.00/15 \text{ weeks} = \287.69 (actual check amount) every two weeks or $\$143.85/\text{week}$. Now consider the scope of the work. I spent an estimated 5 hours per week on research and lecture preparation for my weekly 2.5-hour class, 7.5 hours grading weekly papers (32 papers 15 min./paper.), 3 hours/week creating and grading chapter quizzes, 3 hours writing and responding to admin and student emails, making copies, posting grades, and taking care of other required administrative tasks and duties, including attending required training. This all adds up to 21 hours a week, which calculates out to $\$6.85/\text{hour}$. Now add in the 1.5 hours of round-trip travel time, the cost of gas, the \$25.00 a year parking fee, and unpaid office hours, and you get a very clear picture of why I simply cannot justify going back.

In the end, it all feels like such a waste (I have 20+ years

continued on page 7

Executive Director's Report

continued from page 6

of teaching materials, books, lecture notes, power points, research material, etc.). While not perfect, I'm a really good teacher, and I truly believe I have something valuable to offer my students and the institution I work for. Some of you might ask, couldn't I "just" do less prep, require fewer assignments, spend less time reading and making comments, etc.? My answer is an unequivocal no, not and still be the kind of teacher I want and expect myself to be (and even if I cut my time in half, I still would only be making \$13.70/hour). So, what needs to change? The contract! And the only way that is going to happen is through the direct, sustained, calculated, and efficient efforts of faculty and professional staff. In other words, grass-root actions. Individually and collectively, we need to step up and forward to get our voices heard, our needs known, and our requests/demands met. "This is the way."

In all honesty, in addition to all the good parts, higher ed has always had its triggers and challenges. In our own "training" as graduate students, our experience can be likened to that of an overworked, underpaid, emotionally, intellectually, and physically exhausted hospital resident. The work is all new and demanding, the workload is daunting, and new 'cases' (aka students) are brought to us all the time, each presenting their own needs and 'treatment plans.' At the same time, oversight by and expectations of the administration can feel oppressive and are often outright unreasonable. A minor case in point. As an adjunct, I was "required" to take a series of trainings in the BIZLibrary. These online videos ranged from 4 – 68 minutes in length. Since I didn't get paid for any of my time outside of the classroom, I did not get paid for watching these videos, yet my employment status was at risk if I didn't.

Today, while some may still be enjoying what is left of 'living the good life' in the academy, there is both a current and emerging generation of faculty who are faced with an entirely different reality. They, too, are being left with difficult decisions: stay and either fight the good fight, give up and/or give in or walk away. If you plan to stay, you are not alone. And there are things you need to know, one of which is the value and power of true shared governance, as opposed to an autocracy or dictatorship. You also need to know how to write effective contracts and how to effectively bargain or 'mediate' the things you need to do the work you were hired to do fairly and equitably. True shared governance in higher education refers to the joint responsibility of faculty, administrations, and governing boards to govern colleges and universities.

Note that faculty come first, for without the faculty, there would be no college or university, and there certainly wouldn't be any students.

Here's my point. Faculty and professional staff need better working conditions, better pay, better benefits, and better intellectual, physical, and emotional space and support. We need colleagues and administrators who see the value in their own and each other's work and who can come to the table to find resolution and the tenacity and grace to see it through. We need to come back to the table as colleagues, not adversaries.

So that you can learn how to create effective shared governance on your campus and in turn create a healthier campus environment where the different yet inter-connected constituencies can best work together, we invite you to attend the spring 2025 NYSC AAUP Business Meeting (Friday, April 4) and Conference (Saturday, April 5th in Rochester, NY). The theme of Saturday's conference is **Shared Governance; If Everyone Isn't At The Table Then No One Should Be At The Table**. The emphasis here is that if the conversation involves us, then we should be involved in the conversation! That said, we will be reaching out to you shortly to get your input on what topics and issues you are most interested in, so we make sure we get them covered! Mark your calendars now. Reservations will open in January. Be sure to watch out for news and updates on our website: <http://nyscaaup.org>.

Before I close, I want to emphasize that I truly believe our ultimate focus is the right to do our best work and serve our students and our institutions with integrity. In the divorce mediations I conduct I make it a point to remind parents that, no matter how they feel about each other, they still need to be good parents to their children. Our "children" are our students. And it's the students who lose out when good teachers and staff members are so burned out and/or angry at what they are being paid and/or how they are being treated, or not treated, that it's hard for them to do their job in that manner. As I continue to argue in Albany, "faculty mental health is student mental health." Take some time today to take care of yourself.

I hope your holidays are filled with love and joy and that the new year opens you up to amazing possibilities. You know how to reach me if you need me.

In solidarity,
Sally

The Spring 2025 NYSC AAUP Business Meeting is April 4th and Conference is April 5th.

The theme of the Conference is **Shared Governance; If Everyone Isn't At The Table Then No One Should Be At The Table**.

Reservations will open in January. For news and updates: <http://nyscaaup.org>.

AAUP to Kick-off Organize Every Campus Campaign

The AAUP is excited to be kicking off a new organizing campaign, Organize Every Campus.

With increasing attacks against the faculty's right to teach, research, and advocate for higher education as a public good, the AAUP sees the need to organize with even greater purpose.

The AAUP is starting with organizing training run by Jane McAlevey's Skills to Win program. The first cohort completed the training in November, and the next one will take place on Monday & Wednesday evenings in February. The program will help hone and develop member and leader organizing skills to stand together, fight back, and build a better future for faculty, students, and higher education.

Here's how it works:

Faculty and staff who join the training will develop the fundamental organizing skills to win campaigns. Whether you are a rank-and-file member or a chapter leader, the course is designed to be practical. We will focus on how to build high-participation chapters and campaigns using a structure-based

approach, including how to:

- Identify organic leaders who can move your base,
- Hold successful organizing conversations,
- Learn to chart your campus,
- Integrate structure tests into your campaign or organizing plan, and
- Organize on your campus to build the power to win bigger and bolder demands.

Who: Any member can sign up - we'll help connect people on their respective campuses so you can take the training as a group.

What: The six-session training will consist of an opening plenary and a variety of lectures, discussions, role plays, and presentations from different labor and community organizers. You will have time in breakout groups with faculty on your campus to work on exercises and your specific campaign.

When: February 10, 12, 17, 19, 24, and 26, 4-6 pm PT/7-9 pm ET. Registration will open soon.

Veena Dubal Appointed as AAUP General Counsel

The AAUP has appointed Veena Dubal, a professor of law at the University of California, Irvine School of Law as the Association's next general counsel for a renewable term ending in 2026.

Professor Dubal's research focuses broadly on law, technology, and precarious workers, combining legal and empirical analysis to explore issues of labor and inequality. Her work encompasses a range of topics, including the impact of digital technologies and emerging legal frameworks on workers' lives; the interplay between law, work, and identity; and the role of law and lawyers in solidarity movements.

Dubal has written numerous articles in law and social science journals as well as essays for the popular press. Her research has been cited internationally in legal decisions, including by the California Supreme Court, and her research and commentary are regularly featured in media outlets, including The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, the Los Angeles Times, NPR, and CNN. She earned a BA from Stanford University and holds JD and PhD degrees from the University of California, Berkeley, where she conducted an ethnography of the San Francisco taxi industry. The subject of her doctoral research arose from her work as a public interest attorney and Berkeley Law Foundation Fellow at the Asian Law Caucus where she founded a taxi worker

project and represented Muslim Americans in civil rights cases. Professor Dubal is the recipient of numerous awards and grants, including the Fulbright, for her scholarship and previous work as a public interest lawyer.

"Veena has led the fight to expand the rights of all workers, including workers in the gig economy," said AAUP President Todd Wolfson. "Given her track record as a powerful advocate, the AAUP is lucky to have her as part of our team in this critical moment for higher education."

"Academic freedom is central not only to higher education and scholarship, but also to our broader political, social, and economic freedoms," said Veena Dubal. "In this exigent historical moment when this critical value is under threat, I am proud to serve the AAUP, its new leadership, and my fellow university workers as general counsel."

Dubal will work closely with the AAUP's legal staff to pursue AAUP activities, which include advising on higher education legal issues; preparing amicus briefs; monitoring legal developments in higher education around the country; and keeping the Association apprised of new and emerging legal issues that may have implications in areas such as academic freedom, labor and employment law, freedom of expression, and intellectual property rights.

From the President's Desk

continued from page 1

unfortunately are cutting funds for federal financial aid, re-privatizing the student loan program, and cutting funds for research, including Title IV area studies funding and overhead for research grants. In the medium term, the elimination of degree requirements for public employment combined with declining federal financial aid could erode demand for our programs as we reach the dreaded demographic cliff.

Ironically, the incoming administration is framing loan forgiveness and subsidies as handouts to “elites” at the expense of the working class. The Project 2025 recommendations to end subsidized student loans, Parent PLUS and Grad PLUS loans, and the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program would be devastating to students from lower-income and even middle-class families. At the same time, the incoming administration wants to raise the federal debt ceiling to allow for major tax cuts for billionaires.

One wildcard in the incoming administration’s higher education agenda is the role of accrediting agencies. Trump has threatened to fire higher education accreditors and use the Department of Justice to go after the endowments of schools that persist in offering “racist” and “radical leftist” DEI curricula. According to Trump, new accreditors will oversee a shift to American- and Western-centric curricula and fire the “radical Marxist” faculty.

The president can’t “fire” accreditors as the federal government does not employ or fund them. Middle States and other regional accrediting bodies are funded by member dues and fees for accreditation visits. However, the Project 2025 document sets out a more realistic game plan for “attacking the accreditation cartel”—removing accreditors’ gatekeeping authority for Higher Education Act (HEA) Title IV status (currently required for students to receive federal financial aid), giving accrediting power to the states, or possibly even making accreditation voluntary and/or limiting accreditation standards to “compliance with federal accounting requirements.” Additionally, Project 2025 authors encourage the current accreditation monopoly to be broken up by encouraging and recognizing new accreditors.

It is unclear whether the attack on the so-called accreditation

cartel is a priority, how it would play out, and the implications for our institutions. It seems unlikely the Trump administration could dismantle the current accreditation cartel and replace it with a coherent system in the next four years. But it could realistically introduce competition and take away the gate-keeping mandates from accrediting bodies. This would likely create uncertainty, allow for-profit institutions access to (the decreasing pool of) federal financial aid, give more curricular leeway to institutions, and create headaches for higher ed administrators. How it would impact the nuts and bolts of teaching and learning at our institutions remains to be seen.

The fight between the tech billionaires and white supremacist Maga crowd over employment visas may play out in higher ed over student visas and donations from overseas. Project 2025 targets higher education institutions receiving funds from Chinese-based sources. Likely, the trend of declining enrollments from foreign students that began in the first Trump administration will continue.

One thing is certain, 2025 will be an interesting year and we continue to live in interesting times. While the implications for our students, the health of our institutions, and our working conditions are ominous, uncertainty can create opportunities if we are organized and ready to take advantage of them. For example, the breakup of the current “accreditation cartel” may not be a bad thing, given its role in legitimating the neo-liberalization of higher education. Faculty and staff in higher education institutions shouldn’t bury our heads but rather step up and play a constructive role in defining what comes next.

Our New York State Conference of the AAUP is gearing up with programs to help our chapters and members with these challenges. I am excited for our spring conference, which will focus on practical steps we can take in evaluating and reforming shared governance at our institutions. I hope to see many of you there. Please take advantage of the financial support we are offering for each of our chapters to send one of your members.

In the meantime, take care, and happy new year!

In solidarity,

Mary Rose Kubal