



Wesleyan University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors  
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## WESLEYAN AAUP LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN FOR FULLY STAFFED UNIVERSITY WITH ACADEMIC FREEDOM FOR ALL FACULTY

The Wesleyan University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors is launching its [One Faculty! campaign](#). The campaign proposes a path to continuous tenure for all current contingent faculty, advocates for fully staffing all academic units, and calls for winding down the hiring of contingent faculty. Wesleyan AAUP's comprehensive campaign is the boldest undertaking of its kind at a private university and a galvanizing moment for the organization and regroupment of university faculty across the country.

The campaign comes at a challenging juncture for higher education: we are seeing legislative attacks on academic freedom and tenure across the United States, from North Dakota to Iowa to Texas to Mississippi to Georgia to Florida. These attacks threaten to accelerate and intensify the long erosion of tenure protections for professors. The dangers higher education faces are not only external or political, they are also internal: economic, administrative, and governmental. When universities rely more and more on hiring contingent faculty to reduce their expenditures on the “academic core” and the expertise of teachers and scholars is sidelined by the intrusion of corporate interests, teaching and learning conditions at colleges and universities are compromised. When institutions of higher learning treat large portions of their teaching staff as expendable, they no longer serve the common good – they undermine it.

Wesleyan University is no exception to this troubling trend. The number of Wesleyan's teaching staff has grown alongside the rise of the university's wealth, as measured in the size of its endowment (which has increased by over 1 billion dollars since the financial crisis of 2007-8). But, there has been a steep decline in the university's tenure density, which currently stands at 62%. Almost 40% of Wesleyan faculty are contingent employees with higher teaching loads, lower pay, and little job security. The conditions of their employment are uneven and arbitrary, subject to budgetary expediency and administrative fiat. The precarious employment conditions of non-tenure line faculty do not fulfill the long-term educational needs of the units in which they are employed. In addition, contingent faculty are excluded from most functions of faculty governance, effectively constituting a disenfranchised second tier of faculty employment. This has negative reverberations across the whole university: student learning conditions suffer when their teachers don't enjoy academic freedom, and faculty governance becomes dysfunctional when it must be shouldered by a shrinking proportion of tenure-line faculty empowered to tend to essential administrative and governance tasks.

Since its inception in 1915, the AAUP has promoted the principle that for a professor to exercise their full freedom of scholarship, teaching, and extramural speech, they must be given security of employment. Tenured professors may be dismissed only “for adequate cause” and are entitled to a judicial hearing before an elected faculty body prior to dismissal. Contingent faculty enjoy no such due process rights; they may be dismissed at will and are denied academic freedom. For this reason, the AAUP defines tenure as the actualization of academic freedom. History has shown that the AAUP’s grounding of academic freedom in tenure is the only effective guarantee to maintain high standards in the quality of teaching and research. Universities that diminish tenure also degrade the quality of the education they offer.

The canonical “1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom,” jointly issued by the AAUP and the Association of American Colleges and enshrined in the Wesleyan By-Laws of the Faculty, stipulates that after a probationary period of seven years, “teachers or investigators should have permanent or continuous tenure, and their service should be terminated only for adequate cause.” In denying an increasing proportion of its faculty a path to tenure, Wesleyan has been violating a principle it first formally embraced in 1943, when it codified its practices for reappointment and promotion into a unified set of By-Laws of the Academic Council: “in framing these principles and regulations the Academic Council have given careful consideration to the principles adopted by the American Association of University Professors, and have endeavored so far as is consistent with the best interests of the University to act in general accord with them.”

The Wesleyan AAUP chapter is calling on the whole university – its faculty, students, trustees, and staff – to honor the principles codified in its institutional history, its legislation, and its professed values and to join forces in envisioning and creating a path to tenure protections for all current contingent faculty. A procedural mechanism for creating such a path is laid out in the chapter’s proposal, which includes specific suggestions for immediate steps that should be taken to make Wesleyan an equitable workplace for all faculty. These immediate steps, which include standardized contracts, full benefits, and equal teaching loads, constitute an interim proposal towards building an equitable and sustainable university staffed only by faculty granted the full rights and responsibilities of tenure.

To decisively scale back the need for hiring visitors and other short-term faculty, it is imperative that all units of the university are *fully* staffed. A unit that is fully staffed can absorb staffing fluctuations caused by the normal cycle of academic life (the ebbs and flows of leaves and administrative reassignments) without having to hire short-term replacements. The goal of keeping all units of the university fully staffed can only be achieved if hiring tenure-track faculty becomes the norm; only genuinely short-term positions such as post-doctoral fellowships should be exempted from this norm.

Coming during a time of heightened crisis for higher education, the AAUP’s proposal is intended to provide a positive, constructive vision based on honed and tested principles of academic freedom and shared governance – principles to which Wesleyan has long subscribed *de jure*. The chapter is looking forward to working with all constituencies of the university to explore how to best translate these principles into practice. To begin this complex but overdue process, the chapter invites all faculty to an open forum on the proposal to be held on March 2, from 11:50 to 1:10 on Zoom, and, again, from 4:30 to 6:00 in Shanklin 107.

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