



Wesleyan University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors
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AAUP CHAPTER RE-ESTABLISHED AT WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY. CALLS FOR FACULTY UNITY, SHARED GOVERNANCE, AND OPEN AND TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATIONS WITH PRESIDENT AND TRUSTEES

The Wesleyan University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) invites all faculty, librarians, and staff to join its official relaunch event on September 1 at 4:00pm at Russell House, 327-303 High St, Middletown, CT 06457. Joined by Irene Mulvey, the President of the national AAUP, the chapter will celebrate its return to campus. Members of the executive committee will introduce the AAUP’s campaigns for “One Faculty” and “Shared Governance.”

Responding to widely shared faculty concerns about an erosion of shared governance, insecure and inconsistent working conditions for non-tenure track faculty, sub-inflationary pay raises, and a growing divide of the faculty into separate categories with diverging levels of employment protections, the chapter passed its bylaws in December 2021 and was officially recognized at the Biennial Meeting of the AAUP in June 2022. After a hiatus of almost three decades, this marks the return to campus of the country’s preeminent organization of university and college teachers and scholars, representing over 75,000 members. Universally accepted AAUP standards of due process and academic freedom are at the heart of faculty legislation; they inform the Wesleyan Faculty Handbook and the university’s tenure and promotion policies.

The Wesleyan AAUP chapter represents the interests of all non-administrative faculty across rank and category, including professors of the practice, visiting faculty, adjunct faculty, professional librarians, graduate students. Every Wesleyan employee, active or retired, who joins the AAUP is by default a member of the chapter. Administrators who join the AAUP are “associate members;” they support the mission of the AAUP with their dues but have no voting rights in the chapter.

The members of the executive committee are Matthew Garrett, Associate Professor of English and American Studies (co-president); Lori Gruen, Professor of Philosophy, Science in Society, and Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (member at large); Melanie Khamis, Associate Professor of Economics and Latin American Studies (member at large); Ulrich Plass, Professor of Letters and German Studies (treasurer); Christopher Rasmussen, Associate Professor of Mathematics (co-president); Lily Saint, Associate Professor of English (member at large); Margot Weiss, Associate Professor of American Studies and Anthropology (secretary).

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The histories of Wesleyan and the national AAUP are intertwined. The dismissal of a Wesleyan economics professor was a galvanizing event for the founding of the AAUP in 1915 and its core principle that there can be no academic freedom without faculty tenure. In his role as president of the American Association of Colleges, Wesleyan president McConaughy worked closely with the AAUP to shape the authoritative “1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure.” From 1952-54, during the peak of the HUAC inquisitions, Wesleyan English professor Fred B. Millet served as president of the national AAUP. Under the leadership of Philosophy professor Victor Gourevitch, Wesleyan’s AAUP chapter was reactivated in 1974, during a time when the university was facing financial duress brought about by a shrinking endowment and a rate of inflation above 11%; the faculty-student ratio was increasing while faculty salaries and benefits were shrinking. Wesleyan’s president Colin Campbell welcomed the AAUP “as the group with which we will regularly discuss compensation and conditions of employment.” For the next twenty years, the AAUP became the faculty’s *de facto* collective bargaining representative, and notable Wesleyan faculty like Richard Slotkin, Richard Vann, and Henry Abelove all served as Chapter leaders.

Today, this second reactivation of Wesleyan’s chapter comes at a volatile moment for higher education in the United States: Outside political attacks on academic freedom and the decline of tenure density are being met by a new academic labor movement, from graduate students to contingent to tenured faculty. Responding to these nation-wide trends, Wesleyan University’s advocacy chapter is campaigning to establish full contractual rights and benefits for all faculty, establish minimum pay for contingent faculty, expand the grid of tenure-track appointments, hire and retain faculty of color, close the gender pay gap, strengthen faculty responsibility for all areas of the curriculum, and secure Wesleyan’s distinctive teacher-scholar model.

Authoritative AAUP guidance attributes “primary responsibility” for the university’s educational mission to the faculty, including for subject matter and methods of instruction, evaluation of scholarship, and for determining faculty status, hirings, reappointments, and promotions. Moreover, “the faculty should actively participate in the policies and procedures governing faculty salary increases.” Only on the basis of realizing these fundamental principles of equal rights and benefits for all faculty and shared governance will Wesleyan be able to provide its students the inspiring and exacting liberal arts education they demand and deserve.

In the spirit of cooperation and goodwill, the AAUP chapter invites the president, the provost, and the board of trustees to establish open channels of communication and discussion. We look forward to working with all colleagues, students, and workers on campus and beyond, to ensure that Wesleyan is not only one of the premier liberal arts colleges in the country, but also a fair, transparent, and inclusive place of employment.

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