

A Brief History of the Pitt AAUP Chapter

A fuller account of the founding and early decades of the Pitt chapter of the AAUP awaits further research. But it is clear from Robert C. Albert's history, *Pitt: The Story of the University of Pittsburgh, 1787-1987*, that there was already a large and active chapter in the 1930s.

In 1935 in response to a notorious academic freedom case involving the dismissal of history professor Ralph Turner by Chancellor John Bowman, the national AAUP placed Pitt on its list of censured institutions. It remained there until it adopted academic freedom and tenure practices acceptable to the AAUP, and was removed from the list in 1947. (Albert, pp. 146-56, 193)

Pitt's response was quite different at its next famous academic freedom case. In 1961 Robert Colodny, professor of history and the history and philosophy of science, was attacked as a "subversive" by the Pittsburgh Press and a state legislator. This time Pitt's chancellor, Edward Litchfield, backed the faculty member and eloquently defended the principles of academic freedom. And as Albert notes on page 293, "The AAUP chapters at Pitt, Carnegie Tech, Chatham, Mount Mercy, and Duquesne passed resolutions supporting Colodny and Litchfield."

When some of the chapter's current members arrived at Pitt in the late 1960s, the chapter was annually publicizing salary data from the AAUP's journal *Academe* and quietly giving advice to individuals on tenure and academic freedom issues, but otherwise kept a low profile.

The low profile changed in the early 1970s, when faculties all over the country began unionizing. Collective bargaining was seen as a means not only of achieving economic goals but also of protecting academic freedom and securing a larger role in academic governance. Members of the local chapter, like members of the AAUP generally, were divided over the issue, though in 1973 the national AAUP adopted a *Statement on Collective Bargaining* which recognized formal bargaining as a "major additional way of realizing [the Association's] goals in higher education" (*AAUP Redbook* 10th ed., p. 257).

When Pitt faculty members formed a local of the American Federation of Teachers and initiated the process leading to a collective bargaining election, Pitt's AAUP chapter decided to compete to become the Pitt faculty's bargaining agent. When the AFT garnered the largest number of pro-union votes in the collective bargaining agent election held in 1976, it (the AFT) offered to join with the AAUP for the run-off election against "no agent." But the divided Pitt AAUP chapter declined, and unionization went down to defeat at Pitt.

A few years later, however, efforts to merge the Pitt AAUP chapter and the AFT local succeeded, and the dually-affiliated United Faculty (UF) was formed in 1982. The chapter's history for most of the next three decades is that of the UF, and the UF's primary effort was to prepare for and win another collective bargaining election.

For a fuller description and analysis of the struggle for faculty unionization at Pitt, see the 1998 article *Organizing Faculty* at http://www.pittaaup.org/about_our_chapter.htm by UF presidents Mark Ginsburg and Philip Wion. To make a long, complex story short, the UF failed to gain a

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majority in the collective bargaining election held in 1991, and suspended yet another organizing effort in 1996. Shortly thereafter, the UF discontinued its affiliation with the AFT and became once again simply Pitt's AAUP chapter. However, it kept the United Faculty name until 2011, when the membership decided to clarify the chapter's identity by calling it "Pitt AAUP".

The high visibility of the United Faculty's unionization effort tended to obscure the fact that the organization continued all the traditional AAUP activities, such as aiding individuals on tenure and academic freedom issues, issuing annual salary reports, and advocating for stronger, more transparent collegial governance.

Moreover, not only before and after but also during the unionization campaign, officers and members of the chapter have been among Pitt's most active and effective leaders of university governance. Over the past four decades at least four chapter members have served as president of the University Senate. Many have served on Senate Council, Faculty Assembly, and the University Planning and Budgeting Committee, and in the Senates at the regional campuses.

Chapter members have also chaired or served on many Senate committees, most notably Budget Policies, Tenure and Academic Freedom, Benefits and Welfare, and Anti-Discriminatory Policies. They have played important roles in developing the Planning and Budgeting System, the salary increase policy, and many other Senate initiatives. Some have even served as deans and departmental chairs.

At least three Pitt AAUP chapter members have served as president of the AAUP's Pennsylvania Conference, and others have served as delegates to AAUP annual meetings and as members of national AAUP committees.

As it enters its tenth decade, in times of increasing pressures and attacks on higher education, the Pitt chapter of the AAUP is ready to continue its long and honorable tradition of service to the University and its faculty, to the profession, and to the society to which they make such important contributions.