

New York Conference, AAUP
Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure
Report
October 17, 2008

Prepared by Irwin Yellowitz, Chairman

We have had one inquiry since my last report in April. Thus the longstanding pattern of very few inquiries continues.

In April, I had suggested four steps to help increase the visibility of NY Committee A. Three have been carried out: a regular article in New York Academe, continuation of the annual survey on academic freedom, and a more substantial presence for NY Committee A on the Conference's website. I encourage the Conference's leadership to promote the fourth item -- a focus on academic freedom at one of our upcoming semi-annual meetings through the choice of keynote speakers. I also welcome other suggestions on how to increase the visibility of NY Committee A.

The survey of the state of academic freedom at AAUP chapters in New York continued for a second year. Below I report my conclusions based on the two years of returns.

Survey of Academic Freedom in New York State, 2006-07 and 2007-08

For the 2007-08 year, there were 11 responses: Colgate, Hamilton, Marymount Manhattan, Medaille, Molloy, New York Institute of Technology, New York University, Niagara, Rochester Institute of Technology, St. Lawrence, Utica

For the 2006-07 year, there were 17 responses: Adelphi, Daemon, D'Youville, Hamilton, Hilbert, Hobart and William Smith, Hofstra, Marist, Marymount Manhattan, Medaille, Pace Westchester, Russell Sage, St. Lawrence, St. Rose, Syracuse, UUP, Wells

The New York Conference has approximately 50 chapters. Unfortunately, the questionnaire was not changed for dates, so it still read 2006-2007. Some respondents commented on this, and simply assumed it was for 2007-2008. Others may have been puzzled that they were being asked about two years ago, and may not have responded. This may help explain the poorer response. In addition, there were only four chapters that responded to both surveys. They are Hamilton, Medaille (John Schedel), Marymount Manhattan and St. Lawrence. I cannot explain this result.

Question 1: Have there been academic freedom issues at your campus during the 2007-08 academic year, and, if so, what did they involve?

2007-08: 4 yes specific + 2 yes general = 6 of 11; 2006-07: 9 Yes of 17

Thus the proportion of issues to responses was about the same. However, many chapters may not respond if they have no issues. The question is whether some chapters that did have issues still did not respond? The issues reported were removal of a tenured faculty member; two cases of denial of tenure; the criteria for salary increases and their connection to academic freedom; and the application of the principles of academic freedom in an overseas campus. John Schedel indicated the “usual” issues.

Question 2: Was your chapter involved, and, if so, how?

2007-08: 3 of 6; 2006-07: 4 of 9

Again the proportion is roughly similar between the two years. In 2007-08, three of the six cases involved the local chapter, and in the three others the chapter was not involved for good reasons: the faculty member requested it not to be; the chapter was moribund; the issue became a general one for National Committee A. The good news is that the local chapters are ready to act. For NY Committee A, it is significant that only one of the local chapters notified us of the case. In the other two cases, neither the chapter nor the faculty member involved did so.

Question 3: How were the issues resolved?

2007-08: Favorable- 0, unfavorable- 2, ongoing- 4; 2006-07: favorable- 3, unfavorable- 3, ongoing-3

There is no pattern here, and probably none should be expected. The samples are very small, and issues often do not fit into the time period of an academic year, as indicated by the large number of ongoing issues.

Question 4: Did any faculty member contact national Committee A in Washington, D.C. about these issues, and, if so, with what results?

2007-08: Yes 3, No 3; 2006-07: Yes 3, No 6.

In the three instances for 2007-2008 in which national Committee A was consulted, NY Committee A was not informed. As in the past, there is no coordination between national and NY committees A. I propose once again that we confer with the staff of national committee A, a meeting that also should include the Conference President and our members of the National Council. The purpose would be to try to coordinate the work of national and NY committees A so as to make both committees more effective.

The other members of NY Committee A are Martin Fried (Syracuse Law), Jane Koretz (RPI), Lionel Lewis (SUNY Buffalo) and John Thomas (Skidmore). We are assisted in our work by Executive Director Tom Policano.