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# Report of the 2024 Conference and Biennial Meeting

The 2024 AAUP Conference and Biennial Meeting took place in Arlington, Virginia, from June 13 to 16.

This year's conference program featured an opening plenary, "Decolonizing Higher Education: Lessons from April 17 and Beyond," led by Bill V. Mullen of Purdue University and Bethany Letiecq of George Mason University. Mullen and Letiecq spoke about the links between decolonization, "scholasticide,"



▲ Bethany Letiecq and Bill V. Mullen

and the April 17 National Day of Action for Higher Education, putting the Day of Action into the broader context of global and national threats to higher education. Highlighting the event's organizational

approach—"disrupt, dissent, divest"—Mullen and Letiecq focused on the need for solidarity and intersectional justice in the fight against far-right attempts to control higher education.

Other conference programming included a session led jointly by staff from the AAUP and the American Association of Colleges and Universities, which examined the results of a national study on academic freedom, freedom of expression, self-censorship, and political viewpoints; presentations on the upcoming twelfth edition of the AAUP's *Policy Documents and Reports*, effective media strategies for chapters, and the use of AAUP data on faculty compensation; discussions of benefits and political-action opportunities available to AAUP members as a result of our affiliation with the AFT; discussion of a white paper on threats to academic freedom and institutional

autonomy produced by the AAUP's Center for the Defense of Academic Freedom; an in-depth review of the AAUP's report on the assault on higher education in Florida; discussion sessions for advocacy and collective bargaining chapters; an update on the AAUP's racial equity initiative; and an expo featuring AAUP and AFT programs and publications.

The Friday luncheon keynote speaker was Patricia Okker, former president of New College of Florida. After being fired in a politically motivated hostile takeover of the college, Okker began building a coalition to support academic freedom and providing one-on-one coaching to higher education leaders. She outlined three key aspects to "championing academic freedom" in her address: communicating positive outcomes of academic freedom grounded in student experiences, sharing the student-centered definition of academic freedom with the general public, and building new alliances among educators and across party lines. Okker stressed how the current national focus on academic freedom provides the ideal conditions for propelling a nationwide grassroots campaign and asserted that faculty "must engage directly with the communities they serve."



▲ Patricia Okker

The awards and recognition luncheon on Saturday celebrated four AAUP award recipients (see below). The luncheon speaker was Taifha Natalee Alexander, the inaugural director of CRT Forward, a project of the Critical Race



▲ Taifha Natalee Alexander

Studies Program in the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Law. Alexander discussed how right-wing activists have used misinformation to weaponize critical race theory and pursue policies that seek to outlaw the study of systemic racism.

### Biennial Association Meeting

Delegates to the 2024 Biennial Meeting approved proposed amendments to the AAUP Constitution. The amendments modify sections of the Constitution that govern the payment of release time or compensation to AAUP officers and Council members for their participation in Association affairs. There are two main changes: First, under the amendment to Article IV, Section 5, Council members can now receive release time or compensation at an equivalent rate, up to a limit of one course per semester, for extraordinary participation in Association matters. Previously, only officers could receive compensation, and Council members were prohibited from receiving any compensation or release time. Second, under the amendment to Article III, Section 7, an officer, whether serving on a part- or full-time faculty appointment, can be paid compensation directly by the AAUP at a rate equivalent to the release-time rate. With the exception of certain compensation for officers who are part-time faculty members, an officer previously could receive compensation only through release time from the officer's institution and could not receive payment directly, even if the institution declined to grant release time. Finally, the amendment to Article IV, Section 2, provides the Council with the authority to approve any release time or equivalent compensation for officers and Council members.

One proposal was submitted for consideration by the delegates: "Divest Pension Funds from Fossil Fuels and Reinvest in Renewable Energy." The proposal called for the AAUP to divest from all fossil fuel investments and to urge pension boards, college and university committees and administrators managing the retirement funds of its members, and the boards of Vanguard, Fidelity, TIAA, and the AAUP Foundation to enact a moratorium on new direct investments in fossil fuels, to develop and execute a plan to divest fully, and to reinvest funds in renewable energy projects.

Proposals concern the internal organization of the Association and the Association's activities; if the delegates to the Biennial Meeting vote to adopt the proposal and if the Council concurs, the action it proposes becomes the action of the AAUP. This

proposal, the text of which is available at <https://www.aaup.org/resolutions-biennial-meeting>, was adopted by delegates to the 2024 Biennial Meeting and now goes to the AAUP Council for its consideration.

### Officer and Council Election Results

New AAUP officers and Council members were elected by credentialed delegates representing chapters and state sections, who cast their votes by secret ballot. A list of the elected candidates appears below. Tallies for all candidates and additional election information are available at <https://www.aaup.org/news/new-officers-and-council-members-2024>.



▲ Todd Wolfson

#### President

Todd Wolfson, Rutgers University

#### Vice President

Rotua Lumbantobing, Western Connecticut State University

#### Secretary-Treasurer

Danielle Aubert, Wayne State University

#### At Large

Paul Davis, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College  
Chenjerai Kumanyika, New York University

### Georgina M. Smith Award

The Georgina M. Smith Award was presented to Deni Galileo, president of the University of Delaware AAUP chapter and co-chief contract negotiator for the UD-AAUP bargaining team. The award was established in 1979 to honor AAUP leader Georgina M. Smith and recognizes a person who has provided exceptional leadership in improving the status of academic women or academic collective bargaining. As a lead negotiator, Galileo helped to win a 14 percent raise over the course of his bargaining unit's contract and was praised by the selection committee for his "tireless leadership, terrific diplomatic skills, and unwavering support for the shared governance" of his institution.

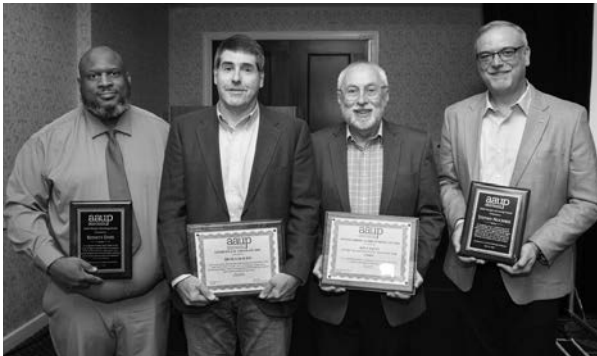
### Marilyn Sternberg Award

The Marilyn Sternberg Award was presented to two individuals this year: Kenneth Davis, president of the

Edward Waters University AAUP chapter, and Stephen Mockabee, president of the University of Cincinnati AAUP chapter. Established in 1981, the Sternberg award is given to AAUP members who demonstrate concern for human rights, courage, persistence, political foresight, imagination, and collective bargaining skills. The selection committee praised Davis for his leading role in EWU AAUP's fight to maintain collective bargaining status amid an ongoing struggle with a union-busting administration and antiunion legislation across the state of Florida. Mockabee was recognized for his key role in the fight against anti-DEI and anti-union Ohio Senate Bill 83 and House Bill 151 and for his work at the bargaining table for AAUP-UC.

### **Outstanding Achievement Award**

The Outstanding Achievement Award was established in 2016 and is granted to an AAUP member for outstanding chapter- or conference-level work that advances academic freedom or shared governance, promotes the economic security of academics, helps the higher education community organize, or ensures higher education's contribution to the common good. This year's recipient was Kent Ervin of the University of Nevada, Reno, who was recognized for his work to expose budget mismanagement at UNR and for his long career as a lobbyist and advocacy chapter leader. ■



▲ 2024 AAUP award winners Kenneth Davis, Deni Galileo, Kent Ervin, and Stephen Mockabee (left to right)