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# AAUP-QU Newsletter

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*The mission of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) is to advance academic freedom and shared governance; to define fundamental professional values and standards for higher education; to promote the economic security of faculty, academic professionals, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and all those engaged in teaching and research in higher education; to help the higher education community organize to make our goals a reality; and to ensure higher education's contribution to the common good.*

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Welcome to the inaugural newsletter of Quinnipiac University/s AAUP advocacy chapter!



AAUP-QU is an advocacy chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). Our chapter was founded in summer 2020, in direct response to faculty and staff layoffs at Quinnipiac University, and was officially chartered on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Our aim in publishing a regular newsletter is to communicate with our members, along with AAUP colleagues in the region and nationally, and with the public.

## Issue 1 Focus

In our inaugural newsletter edition, we set out the current concerns that our chapter members have identified as being of particular significance to them. We would like to note our sincere appreciation of our members for their work in developing this list of current concerns.

## Current Concerns

### Curriculum and Pedagogy

We concur with the AAUP's Statement on Governance that "the faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process." The administration should "concur with the faculty judgment except in rare instances and for compelling reasons which should be stated in detail." Given that our expertise in these areas endows us with this primary responsibility, we hold that elected faculty representatives, representing a diversity of views across level, line, and school, should make up the majority of any committee, ad-hoc or otherwise, formed to decide upon substantive issues of curriculum or pedagogy, including and especially during times of crisis.

### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We hold that our university community requires a panoply of identities, experiences, and contributions for its intellectual and ethical well-being. As an institute of higher learning, Quinnipiac University has a responsibility to interrogate the systems of injustice that have privileged our institution since its inception and actively fight against these institutional and systemic inequalities. Quinnipiac University needs to materially support and amplify the voices of historically underrepresented and marginalized people across our leadership, faculty, staff, and student body. With respect to faculty in particular, our hiring and retention practices must better reflect the Strategic Plan's stated commitment to "inclusive excellence." We reject any institutional policies and practices that disproportionately and adversely impact historically underrepresented and marginalized people across our faculty, staff, and student body. We believe that faculty share responsibility in creating an environment in which a diverse student body can excel. We recognize the financial and personnel resources needed to develop and maintain curriculum that focuses on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and we call for this to be a financial priority for our university.

### Health and Safety

We hold that the university should consider no aspect of its operation or administration more important than the health and safety of its employees, students, and the communities of Hamden and North Haven. We are committed to advocating for a safe and healthy working environment for all faculty, regardless of title or position, and one where all faculty feel safe to speak up about health and safety concerns without fear of repercussions.

In relation to the current public health crisis, we maintain that no member of our community should be coerced into risking their health and the health of their families by working on campus when there is a remote/online equivalent. We believe faculty should be meaningfully consulted on decisions related to our health and safety, particularly when the consequences of those decisions extend beyond ourselves, threatening the health and safety of our families, students, and the residents of the surrounding communities. All faculty, not only those meeting certain Campus Exception criteria, should be able to decide when to return to on-campus work, and asking for pandemic exemption to in-person teaching should not be cause for job insecurity. As teachers, we care deeply about our students' learning; as members of the Quinnipiac community, we care about the health and longevity of the people in that community and the institution itself. We want to work with the administration to develop strategies that ensure both the health and well-being of our faculty, staff, students, and neighbors, and to be trusted to preserve the quality of instruction that brings students to our university.

### Layoffs

We oppose the use of layoffs to offset the university's financial deficits. We believe that the educational mission of the university and its long-term economic success necessitate the preservation and support of the faculty body. In a period of unprecedented economic and public health uncertainty, this financially short-sighted strategy imposes undue hardships on laid-off faculty. It also damages the quality of the instruction, research, and service of those who remain. Thus, the precarity introduced by layoffs undermines the institution's promise to prepare graduates for 21st-century careers and

citizenship, build inclusive excellence, drive positive change in our local and global communities, and foster lifelong connections and learning. Before any layoffs are considered, we hold that the university must meaningfully consult the faculty, who are best equipped to propose alternatives that best meet students' educational needs and consider the curricular repercussions of each strategy.

### **Quinnipiac's Financial Processes and Priorities**

We believe faculty should have meaningful input in all of Quinnipiac's financial decisions that relate to the aspects of the organization for which faculty are understood to be responsible under shared governance, such as curriculum, pedagogy, and scholarship. Further, in support of informed decision-making and mutual trust, we hold that a transparent, detailed accounting of our financial situation should be shared with the faculty regularly. Both as the teachers at the heart of the university's educational mission and as members of the university community, we are deeply invested in the institution's long-term health and sustainability.

Our own financial priorities center on student learning, knowledge production, academic freedom, and human well-being. We believe these values can only be upheld through authentic transparency, democratic decision-making processes, and job security. In the past, we have seen that the absence of faculty expertise in Quinnipiac's financial decisions results in short-term, expedient actions and undemocratic processes, which undermine the quality of teaching and scholarship. Therefore, we support the formal inclusion of faculty in the process for short- and long-range financial planning. In cases where there is perceived financial difficulty, we hold that the administration should collaborate with faculty to evaluate the extent of that financial difficulty and to develop strategies for dealing with it, including any decisions regarding termination of faculty positions, defunding of academic and arts programs on campus, and consolidation or elimination of departments and programs. Moreover, such financial difficulties should not diminish the university's core commitments to teaching and research.

### **Shared Governance**

We hold that faculty must play a meaningful, impactful, role in university decision-making. We believe that the university will be stronger when faculty, who are entrusted with the core mission of teaching and research, play a fundamental role in the development and approval of measures that impact the welfare of the university as a whole. Such decision-making urgently requires transparency and the clear and timely communication of information necessary to make informed decisions. Indeed, given that the university is composed of multiple, interdependent constituent groups, clear and substantive communication is crucial for mutual trust and in order to work together to respond effectively to our problems. The need for communication and joint decision-making is all the more pressing in challenging times. These principles accord with those laid forth in the AAUP's Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities, which the AAUP formulated together with the American Council on Education and the Association of Governing Boards. The goal of shared governance is not that faculty decide on all areas of the university; rather, shared governance requires that university constituencies have decision-making responsibility in proportion to our expertise in a given area and in accordance with our level of investment in the university and its future. When examining the current state of shared governance at Quinnipiac, we see particular problems in the areas of influence, communication, acknowledgement, and responsible practices. We are committed to advocating for governance practices that allow for appropriately shared responsibility and cooperative action among the components of our institution.