

THE TENNESSEE FAINTING GOAT

The occasional electronic newsletter of the
MTSU Chapter of the
American Association of University Professors

Learned Institutions ought to be favorite objects with every free people. They throw that light over the public mind which is the best security against crafty & dangerous encroachments on the public liberty.

James Madison

March 24, 2015

Dear Chapter Members,

In order to keep you informed about the work the chapter does, the Executive Committee approved the launch of *The Tennessee Fainting Goat*. We hope that it will be both “dulce et utile,” entertaining and useful, the latter primarily as a recruiting tool. Our chapter, though still one of the strongest in the state, currently has only 44 members. We hope to recruit 23 new members this calendar year (“Drive to 67”), and we would very much appreciate your effort to help us achieve that goal. If you know anybody who might be interested in joining, please “work” on that person or, if you prefer, pass on his or her name to the chapter president. (To find out more about the American Association of University Professors, please visit the association’s website at www.aaup.org.)

Thank you very much for participating in the officer elections for academic year 2015/16. A list of the new officers appears at the end of this newsletter. We will attempt to communicate with you more regularly than we have in the recent past, and we look forward to working with and for you.

Best wishes,

Alfred Lutz

Chapter President

Alfred.Lutz@mtsu.edu

615-898-2655

Tenure at Risk?

In addition to several T & P and reappointment cases we've been working on, we are also involved in a debate about how to use the new lecturer/instructor employment category. As you know, TBR approved this category last summer. It is designed to give some of our non-tenure-track faculty members more job security (three-year revolving contracts) and a career ladder (instructor, senior instructor, master instructor). Unfortunately, it now appears that at least one TBR institution (a community college) is thinking about using this employment category to phase out tenure. This attack on tenure also subverts other policies necessary to protect tenure, for example policies governing declarations of financial exigency.

The TBR Faculty Sub-Council, which currently includes several AAUP members, is taking a leadership role in this debate. The following is a letter, sent on February 18, to TBR Chancellor John Morgan expressing faculty concerns. As a result of this letter, sub-council representatives from the two- and four-year schools will be meeting with TBR Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs Tristan Denley on April 1 in Nashville.

Dear Chancellor Morgan, Dear Vice-Chancellor Denley, Dear Fellow Members of the Faculty Sub-Council,

Yesterday and earlier today, Professor Vivian Grooms (Faculty Council Chair, Jackson State CC) sent you a set of documents addressing the way in which the new lecturer/instructor employment category is beginning to be used at her institution. In my role as chair of this sub-council, I'd like to attempt to embed the Jackson State Faculty Council's positions as well as the views expressed in Dr. Bruce Blanding's (President, Jackson State CC) memoranda in a system-wide context. My understanding of the documents Professor Grooms shared with us and my sense of the discussions of the lecturer/instructor track at recent sub-council meetings suggest to me that we are dealing with three major issues.

The first one of these issues concerns the way in which the new lecturer/instructor employment category, which was limited to the four-year schools when we discussed it, was extended to the community colleges. If I remember correctly, our sub-council discussed this employment category and approved its introduction at the six universities at our April meeting. (At that meeting, we approved changes to the TBR policies on Faculty Promotion at Universities [5:02:02:20] and on Academic Tenure for Universities [5:02:03:60].) We did not vote on whether this career track should also be available at the community colleges. The Presidents' Council changed that, approved the extension of the lecturer/instructor track to community colleges, and, as a result, the Board approved offering this new employment category at both universities and community colleges. In the latter stages of this process, as far as I can see, the Faculty Sub-Council, without having been consulted again, was assumed to

approve this extension. This issue, in other words, is procedural. I would very much like us to discuss a process in which the Faculty Sub-Council ends up "approving" something that never came before it.

You may think of this concern as minor, but it is having, so it seems, major repercussions at Jackson State Community College. This brings me to my second major concern. The statements by Dr. Blanding shared with us by Professor Grooms suggest that there is reason to believe that he wishes to use the lecturer/instructor employment category as a tool to undermine tenure at his institution. In other words, our sub-council now appears to have voted in support of a policy change that is radically opposed to the faculty's intention in supporting three-year rolling contracts. Needless to say, what happens at Jackson State CC may happen tomorrow at your or my institution. Given that two- and four-year institutions teach the same students, that TNPromise gives two-year institutions added responsibilities, and that a strong faculty is absolutely crucial to meet the challenges of the CCTA of 2010, it is in the interest of all faculty members in our system and beyond to oppose developments detrimental to the interests of faculty, students, and the state of Tennessee.

The third concern I have is policy-related. Like the preceding one, it affects all faculty members in our system. If Dr. Blanding's statements are to be taken at face value, he has apparently decided to set aside institutional (and system) tenure and promotion policies in order to take control over the tenure-and-promotion process at Jackson State CC. Several of the statements he makes in the documents Professor Grooms shared with us appear to me to be obvious policy violations. For example, is his statement that "with approximately 10% of the full-time faculty up for tenure this year [at Jackson State CC], and a continuing financial challenge in our state funding, there is a fair probability that some folks may not be recommended for tenure" a reasonable interpretation of TBR Policy 5:02:03:70 (Academic Tenure for Community Colleges)?

If it is the case that the above is a reasonable summary and interpretation of the matters addressed, I would like the following to be considered:

- 1) I would like TBR to state whether it approves the use of the lecturer/instructor employment category to undermine and replace tenure.
- 2) I would like TBR Legal Counsel to help us understand whether Dr. Blanding's statements concerning the tenure-and-promotion process at his institution are in alignment with TBR policies.
- 3) Given the complexity of these issues and, more importantly, their long-term negative repercussions, I would like TBR to re-open the discussion of the lecturer/instructor career track at the April meetings of the various TBR councils and sub-councils.

Since email discussions of highly complex matters are not always as productive as one would wish, I'd be happy to come to Nashville to listen and to discuss this further.

Best,

Alfred Lutz
Chair, TBR Faculty Sub-Council

Professor
English Department
Middle Tennessee State University
Murfreesboro, TN 37132

While this is clearly our major concern at the moment, intramurally, chapter members serve on the CLA T&P Committee, which is revising the CLA T&P policy, and on an ad-hoc committee to revise the MTSU T&P policies convened by Dr. Bartel.

The Tennessee Fainting Goat Quiz # 1

Who said It?

- I. “Professors together with the students *are* the university...they are those institutions themselves, and therefore have prerogative rights to and within their institutions which ushers, sextons and beadles, and janitors do not have.”
- |
- a) Ernst Kantorowicz, explaining his refusal to sign a loyalty oath at the University of California at Berkeley in the 1950s.
 - b) Arthur Lovejoy, one of the founders of AAUP, explaining the need for the organization.
 - c) George W. Bush, high-school graduation speech.
- II. “It is hard work to be excellent, since in each case it is hard work to find what is intermediate.”
- a) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.
 - b) SACSCOC’s policy document “Measuring the Excellence of Excellence.”
 - c) George W. Bush, high-school graduation speech.

III. Neoliberalism is “a philosophy in which the existence and operation of a market are valued in themselves...without any attempt to justify them in terms of their effect...and where the operation of a market or market-like structure is seen as an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide for all human action, and substituting for all previously existing ethical beliefs.”

- a) Paul Treanor, “Neoliberalism: Origins, Theory, Definition.”
- b) Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*.
- c) George W. Bush, high-school graduation speech.

Please send your answers to Alfred.Lutz@mtsu.edu by April 1. The winner will be announced in the next issue of *The Tennessee Fainting Goat*. In addition to imperishable fame, the winner will receive this fully electronic smiley face.



Chapter Officers Academic Year 2015-16

Chapter President: Alfred Lutz (English)

President-Elect: Pippa Holloway (History)

Secretary-Treasurer: Jackie Eller (Sociology)

Membership Chair: Becky King (English)

Member-At-Large: Norman Weatherby

Editor: Becky King, Alfred Lutz