

The Academic Senate
for
California Community Colleges

**WHY THE ACADEMIC SENATE HAS ADOPTED
THE AAUP ETHICS STATEMENT**

April 1988

EDUCATIONAL POLICIES COMMITTEE

1987-88

Carmen Maldonado Decker, Chair
Cypress College

Karen Sue Grosz, President
Academic Senate for California Community
Colleges

Michael Anker
Contra Costa College

Erna Noble
Chaffey College

Sue Britton
Cypress College

Susan Petit
College of San Mateo

Lynda Corbin
San Diego Mesa College

Robert Turley
San Bernardino Valley College

Randal Lawson
Santa Monica College

Maryamber Villa
Los Angeles Valley College

April, 1988

WHY THE ACADEMIC SENATE HAS ADOPTED THE AAUP ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethics in teaching is much discussed, but unfortunately both faculty and the general public often seem more concerned with what is unethical than with ethics as a code of moral values. The 1987 "Statement on Professional Ethics" of the American Association of University Professors is an exception to this concern with unethical conduct, for it sets forth five ethical obligations of faculty: as members of a discipline, as teachers, as colleagues, as members of institutions, and as members of a community. **The Educational Policies Committee has adopted this statement with only minor editorial changes, for the reasons which follow.** (The edited statement can be found at the end of the paper.)

I. The AAUP statement begins with the faculty's duty to their disciplines. That obligation is not greater than the others--in fact, each of the five areas covered is broader than the last. But for most of us, it was through our academic disciplines that we first became truly involved in education. Our disciplines reflect not only our major intellectual interests but a commitment to disinterested inquiry, to truth, and to thought. We show this commitment mainly through our knowledgeable and enthusiastic teaching or through our work as counselors, librarians, and nurses.

But we cannot remain knowledgeable--and probably we cannot remain enthusiastic--without also performing activities which keep us current, and so we have an obligation to read the recent literature, attend conferences, belong to professional organizations, take courses, and engage in other staff development activities. We may even be able to carry out original research in our fields or otherwise to practice our disciplines. We must take advantage of sabbaticals, leaves, exchange programs, and other staff development activities, and we must also seek to create such opportunities.

II. The AAUP next discusses the faculty member's obligation to teach. In the community colleges, we have a special obligation not only to teach our subject matters but also to instill a respect for truth and intellectual inquiry. We often must also raise our students' intellectual ambitions and combat defeatism on the part of students who feel that they cannot succeed because of their race, social status, or previous educational experience.

Treating students ethically means not only avoiding favoritism or exploitation, but also giving students the education that they deserve. We must not compromise course standards, and we must provide, individually and collectively, the means for success. Individually, we must offer enough out-of-class time to students, and we often must insist that they take advantage of it; collectively, we must provide adequate testing, counseling, placement, learning resources, and job and transfer information. We do our students no favor if we let them pass without the skills and knowledge they need, and we hurt them equally if we do not provide them with adequate support services.

III. Community college faculty's obligations to their colleagues are important, too, as the recent Master Plan Commission recommendations emphasize. We have not always had full responsibilities in hiring and firing, meaningful evaluation, and retention and promotion, but that situation is changing. Interestingly, we have often fulfilled the obligation to our colleagues in a way the AAUP does not mention, by sharing information, offering disinterested advice, and team teaching. A part of our ethics is helping each other get through difficult times and sharing our successes.

Our obligations to our colleagues also include, according to the AAUP statement, a duty to participate in governance. For us, that generally means serving on committees which recommend policies and make decisions relating to students, courses, and professional leaves. Under new Title 5 regulations, or under the provisions of legislation now being considered in Sacramento, those duties will surely be expanded.

IV. After considering the obligation to colleagues, the AAUP discusses the obligation to the institution. The AAUP statement stresses the fact that faculty may serve an institution by criticizing it, even though they are legally obliged to follow the institution's rules. When we recommend changes, we should be trying to improve the institution; if we merely accept poor conditions because we are afraid to criticize, we are failing in our duty as faculty members.

This same obligation to our institution requires that we give it an adequate amount of time. We must meet classes, keep office hours, and serve on committees. Our institutions have the reciprocal obligations not to overload our classes, and to create full-time positions so that faculty are paid in proportion to the work required.

V. The last obligation discussed in the AAUP statement is to the community. In carrying it out, we should not scant our professional duties or abuse our connection with an institution of higher learning, but we must be as diligent in serving our community as any of its members. We offer special services to the community through speakers' bureaus and other college-sponsored activities; we vote and encourage our students to do so; we participate in political activities; we obey the laws or perhaps participate in open civil disobedience against them; we work for and contribute to fund-raising drives; we serve in secular and religious institutions which reflect our beliefs.

An ethics statement should spur us to be our best. In adopting the ethics statement of the American Association of University Professors, we not only have aligned ourselves more fully with our colleagues at senior institutions but also have accepted and endorsed a policy that is a source of pride and inspiration.

1987 AAUP STATEMENT ON PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

I. Community college faculty members, guided by a deep conviction of the worth and dignity of the advancement of knowledge, recognize the special responsibilities placed upon them. Their primary responsibility to their subjects is to seek and to state the truth as they see it.

To this end faculty members devote their energies to developing and improving their scholarly competence. They accept the obligation to exercise critical self-discipline and judgment in using, extending, and transmitting knowledge. They practice intellectual honesty. Although faculty members may follow subsidiary interests, these interests must never seriously hamper or compromise their freedom of inquiry.

II. As teachers, faculty members encourage the free pursuit of learning in their students. They hold before them the best scholarly standards of their discipline. Faculty members demonstrate respect for the student as an individual, and adhere to their proper role as intellectual guides and counselors. Faculty members make every able effort to foster honest academic conduct and to assure that evaluation of students reflects their true merit. They respect the confidential nature of the relationship between faculty member and student. They avoid any exploitation of students for private advantage and acknowledge significant assistance from them. They protect the academic freedom of students.

III. As colleagues, faculty members have obligations that derive from common membership in the community of scholars. Faculty members do not discriminate against or harass colleagues. They respect and defend the free inquiry of associates. In the exchange of criticism and ideas faculty members show due respect for the opinions of others. Faculty members acknowledge their academic debts and strive to be objective in their professional judgment of colleagues. Faculty members accept their share of faculty responsibilities for the governance of their institution.

IV. As members of an academic institution, faculty members seek above all to be effective teachers and scholars. Although faculty members observe the stated regulations of their institutions, provided the regulations do not contravene academic freedom, they maintain their right to criticize and seek revision. Faculty members give due regard to their paramount responsibilities within their institution in determining the amount and character of work done outside it. When considering the interruption or termination of their service, faculty members recognize the effect of their decisions upon the program of the institution and give due notice of their intentions.

V. As members of their community, faculty members have the rights and obligations of all citizens. Faculty members measure the urgency of these obligations in the light of their responsibilities to their subject areas, to their students, to their profession, and to their institutions. When they speak or act as private persons they avoid creating the impression that they speak or act for their colleges or universities. As citizens engaged in a profession that depends upon freedom for its health and integrity, faculty members have a particular obligation to promote conditions of free inquiry and to further public understanding of academic freedom.