

SCRIPT FOR NEW FACULTY ORIENTATION-2021



Who We Are and What We Do:

Southeastern Oklahoma State University Chapter
of the American Association of University Professors

Karl Frinkle, President
Matt Sparacio, Vice-President

Slide 1 – Karl: Thank Teresa for the time and introduce ourselves – Karl-Prez/Mathematics, Matt – Vice-Prez/Historian



- to advance academic freedom and shared governance
- to define fundamental professional values and standards for higher education
- to promote the economic security of faculty, and all those engaged in teaching and research in higher education
- to ensure higher education's contribution to the common good

Slide 2 -- Karl

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) is a professional association that was founded in 1915 and has had a profound influence on our profession. The AAUP's mission is to:

- advance academic freedom and shared governance
- define fundamental professional values and standards for higher education
- promote the economic security of faculty, academic professionals, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and all those engaged in teaching and research in higher education
- ensure higher education's contribution to the common good.



Southeastern's Chapter of the AAUP



Slide 3 – Matt

Southeastern's chapter was founded in January of 2012. We are an advocacy chapter – we advocate for the professoriate in general, and for our faculty in particular. We are not a union, but we do organize, and engage in collective action. We know that when faculty speak and act with one voice, we demonstrate a large-scale commitment to the issues around which we organize: protecting tenure, ensuring academic freedom and promoting shared governance.

aaup Take the initiative to address issues facing Southeastern



Oklahoma budget shortfall hammers higher education

Oklahoma last in nation in funding for higher education

by Kathryn McNutt · Published: June 16, 2017 5:00 AM CDT · Updated: June 16, 2017 5:00 AM CDT

Slide 4 -- Karl

So how do we do that -- what does our chapter do?

We take the initiative to address issues facing Southeastern.

For example, in 2016, state budget cuts to higher education totaled [\\$157 million](#) and Oklahoma held the embarrassing distinction of being ranked [50th](#) in the nation in state tax support for higher education. At our university, those cuts translated to more than \$3 million dollars – cuts that came mid-year.

Our chapter responded in several ways:



Slide 5 - Karl

We wrote letters to elected officials (the old-fashioned kind with paper and stamps) telling our stories again and again to as many state legislators as we could.



Slide 6 – Karl

We established our own YouTube channel, produced 1 to 2-minute videos that we e-mailed to 158 legislators. In those videos we told them who we are, what we teach, and why funding higher education matters.



Slide 7 – Karl

Then ten faculty members visited the state capitol. We made appointments and met with then-lieutenant governor Todd Lamb, representative Dustin Roberts and four more state senators. In these meetings, we told our stories – our Southeastern story - of what the devastating loss of funds would do to our work, the students we teach, and our concern about the fate of our fellow non-tenured colleagues. We wondered out loud about what the lack of support for higher education meant to the future of the children of our state.



Slide 8 – Matt

Just weeks after that trip to the state capitol, the budget for higher education was cut nearly 17%. Discouraging? Yes. Paralyzing? No. It is said that hope is a verb with its shirtsleeves rolled up. Our chapter already had its shirtsleeves rolled up, and we were committed to keep working.

Next, two chapter members made appointments with U.S. senators (Inhofe and Lankford) and Congressman Tom Cole – traveled to Washington, D.C. - and met with them to discuss the proposed 13.5% budget cut to the Department of Education, and the specific effects those cuts would have on Southeastern. Our message was that given the state's cuts to higher education in 2016 (which was 17%) and another 6% in 2017, any additional federal cuts would have devastating effects on the students we are committed to serve.

Those chapter members went back again the next year, and met with legislative aides for Senators Lankford and Inhofe, and with Congressman Markwayne Mullin. Once again, federal funding for Higher Education was discussed, and - once again – the discussion specifically included Southeastern Oklahoma State University. We shamelessly bragged on our outstanding faculty and the work we do at our small, regional university that serves rural southeastern Oklahoma. We explained that 85% of our students depend on Pell Grants for their education, and that over 50% of our students are first-generation. Our Chapter's goal is to put a face on the professorite, and the work we do here at Southeastern.



Slide 9 – Karl

Our chapter pays attention to our Regents: both the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) who govern all 25 public colleges and universities, and the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO), who govern the 6 public regional universities. We attend OSRHE and RUSO meetings. When a new RUSO regent was appointed by the governor, we invited [Regent Amy Ford](#) to meet with our chapter.

While we considered that meeting to be a good first step to connect with RUSO, what we really wanted was a meeting **to address** RUSO. We contacted RUSO’s Executive Director to schedule a meeting, and it seemed that our request – for faculty to meet with RUSO – was an unusual one. We were offered time with the RUSO’s “System Advancement Committee,” which includes as a member our very own Regent, Amy Ford. What we found was a group of Regents who seemed sincerely interested in our informal comments. We had a *conversation*. We even made the RUSO minutes!

aaup ...and RUSO pays attention to us...



Slide 10 – Matt

In October of 2019, we requested – and received – permission to address the RUSO board – the full board. We were at a critical juncture – it was time to select a new president. We respectfully requested that the board allow faculty to participate *meaningfully* in the presidential search process. We wanted the board to know that at Southeastern, meaningful input from faculty into decisions affecting the direction of the university had become a practice. The Faculty Senate and the AAUP – together with the administration – built a robust system of shared governance which had a profound effect on the culture at Southeastern. At a time when adversarial relationships between administration and faculty are commonplace, we wanted the board to know that Southeastern had become an exemplar of what shared governance can do, and has done, to contribute to the health of an institution. We believed that it was no exaggeration to say that shared governance had brought about a dramatic turn-around at Southeastern. We wanted the board to know that we had a good thing, and that we wanted it to continue.



Slide 11 – Karl

We are committed to the community we serve, so our chapter engages in community outreach. Durant is a small town that takes pride in its many connections with the university, and we believe that developing alliances with civic organizations is important to the work we do in promoting education as a common good.

Our chapter hosted a [candidates' forum](#) (District 21, State House of Representatives), and invited faculty, staff, students, and the public.

We also visited the [Durant Rotary Club](#), where several chapter members discussed state appropriations to higher education and its impact on Southeastern.

We also hosted a screening of the documentary film [Starving the Beast](#), and once again invited the campus and the community.



Slide 12 - Karl

Our outreach extends to our sister institutions, where we work to support AAUP efforts in our region. We have travelled to Northeastern State University in Tallahassee to help them as they work to revitalize their chapter. We traveled to another sister institution, East Central University in Ada to share how we promote academic freedom and shared governance here at Southeastern.



Slide 13: Karl

In November of 2019 we were invited to spend the day at the University of Tulsa in support of our faculty and AAUP colleagues as they “took the temperature” of faculty sentiment at TU by conducting a vote of confidence/no confidence in their president and provost.

2014: The Future of College and University Teaching
 2015: The Centennial Year: A Historical Look at AAUP Principles
 2016: Public Perception of the Professoiate, the University and the Common Good
 2017: The University: Money, Power, and the Common Good
 2018: Values and the University: Academic Freedom & Shared Governance
 2019: Organize!



Slide 14: Matt

Our chapter has provided professional development opportunities to support faculty (members and non-members alike) by hosting annual state conference events. Our 2019 event attracted faculty from 5 states, representing 12 colleges and universities, so our approach had, indeed, become regional. For six years, the events were offered free of charge and were a first-class conference experience. It is fitting and proper to note that every year our chapter received funding from Southeastern which made our events possible - and free for all faculty.



Work during the pandemic



April 3, 2021: Letter of Request to the Faculty Senate Regarding Compensation
 January 22, 2021: Letter of Support for the Faculty Senate's Compensation Proposal
 November 8, 2020: Statement on Faculty Compensation
 November 8, 2020: Statement on Online Synchronous Learning for Spring 2021
 November 8, 2020: Request for Southeastern to Comply with University Policy on Faculty Compensation
 October 7, 2020: Support of Faculty Senate Motions
 September 29, 2020: Support of the Faculty Senate's Position on GA
 July 19, 2020: Proposal on Working Remotely
 July 14, 2020: Request for Campus COVID -19 Data
 June 19, 2020: Statement on Tuition Benefit (A Thank You Statement)
 June 19, 2020: Statement Regarding the Reinstatement of Rachel Tudor
 June 8, 2020: Technology Needs For Blended/Online/Remote Courses
 June 3, 2020: Shared Governance Recommendation for June
 June 2, 2020: Request for Sub -Committee on Teaching Information
 May 29, 2020: Fall 2020 Teaching Proposal

Slide 15: Karl

In March of 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic made it necessary for face-to-face classes to be moved online. Our chapter meetings were likewise moved online where we continued to do our work. We decided that meeting monthly during this public health crisis was no longer adequate, so we began meeting on Zoom every two weeks and established a digital platform to continue conversations between meetings. Advocating for faculty during this time meant that in addition to continuing our "regular" work related to faculty compensation and shared governance, for example, we also closely monitored the pandemic and the administration's response to it. Between May of 2020 and April of 2021, our chapter developed 15 proposals, statements, requests and recommendations that we forwarded to the appropriate committee or administrator. Despite the challenging conditions of a pandemic, our chapter remained committed to continuing our important work.



We invite you to join us!



. . .Because Academic freedom matters.



Slide 16: Karl

These slides represent many – but not all – of our involvement in issues that matter to us as faculty, and as citizens. If you care about these things too, join us. Together we can effect change. Shared governance is collective action, it is collective power. It is the collective expression of academic freedom by the faculty as a whole. In our chapter's relatively short existence, we know we have effected change. We invite you to join us as we continue to work to ensure academic freedom, protect tenure, participate in robust shared governance and to serve the common good.

Will you join us? Talk to us – we'll tell you how!