

# President's Message

**Michael Harkins**

**President, Illinois AAUP**

In the spring, the Illinois Conference of the AAUP joined with the Collective Bargaining Congress (CBC) for a joint conference in Chicago. What started months earlier was realized in April, 2011. This joint meeting was a first for both groups. Increased attendance, collaboration, earnest discussion, and mutual support radiated from the sessions. As the conference concluded, both groups were positive about the outcome and the role each group plays in higher education. We realized that working together can benefit the faculty we serve. Higher education today faces challenges from tight budgets, layoffs, rising insurance costs, cutbacks, and program elimination. The ability to collaborate can produce positive results. We all need to do more to ensure the future of higher education and our disciplines. Our students deserve nothing less. As faculty, we can achieve this through active participation in AAUP.

Over the past six months, the Illinois Conference has moved forward in creating new chapters in Illinois, promoting shared governance, defending academic freedom and assisting faculty through our Committee A. Our officers and board members have attended national and regional meetings to represent higher education faculty and our State Conference. In addition, a number of our members now serve on National committees through election and appointment. Our website ([ilaaup.org](http://ilaaup.org)) is continually updated to reflect current issues and policies that our members need. We all work to provide timely responses to requests for assistance, speakers and position papers.

Over the summer I represented the Conference at a number of hearings at the request of National and member faculty. In September I attended the inaugural meeting of our new chapter at North Central College in Naperville. All of us in attendance had the opportunity to hear from our National president. In October we held our fall meeting at Columbia College, Chicago in recognition of their new chapter. The faculty support for the meeting was outstanding. We are here to serve and help our members. Plans are in place to continue our outreach and provide support to our chapters and their leaders. Visit our website for regular updates and opportunities to become more involved.

In the meantime, you can help the Conference and higher education by encouraging your colleagues to join AAUP. The new dues structure is fair and provides a value we can all support. If your institution does not currently have a chapter, please consider starting one. Our National website has the necessary materials to assist you and your colleagues in starting a chapter. The State Conference membership committee will work with you throughout the process of chapter development. Start-up grants and funding is available to new chapters through the State Conference.

Today, more than ever, higher education faculty need to be involved and engaged with the decisions being made that affect all of us. The past has shown us what happens when we leave it to others to decide. Involvement will never be easy, but it will be effective. By supporting the efforts of AAUP, you strengthen the future of higher education, our profession, and the students we teach.