

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

Memorandum

Date: July 9, 2003
To: AAUP Government Relations Network
From: Mark F. Smith, Director of Government Relations
Re: Upcoming Colloquy in Chronicle of Higher Education

This Friday, July 11, 2003, the Chronicle of Higher Education will host a live, online discussion with Steve Gunderson, a former congressman and now a consultant, about how colleges should respond to the White House's plans with regard to higher education, at 1 p.m., U.S. Eastern time. The discussion is based on the Chronicle's reporting on rumors out of the White House concerning presidential campaign plans to attack higher education. This is the Chronicle's introduction to the subject:

Policy advisers in the Bush administration are considering having the president, as part of his re-election bid, issue a stinging critique of higher education early next year. As part of that effort, the president would accuse colleges and universities of closing the doors of higher education to students from low- and middle-income families, by making it unaffordable. The president would also reprimand colleges for allowing too many students -- especially low-income and minority students -- to drop out and to remain without the skills and knowledge they need. In addition, he would question the quality of education most college students receive. College leaders and lobbyists worry that the Bush administration intends to ratchet up government's oversight of colleges and take steps that could undermine the institutions' autonomy. Should such concerns be raised as an issue in the president's re-election campaign? Are college officials' fears reasonable or overblown?

The full article can be found at [<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v49/i44/44a01801.htm>] for subscribers. The live online discussion is available to non-subscribers as well at [<http://chronicle.com/colloquy/>] The live online discussion with Gunderson will be held Friday afternoon, but an online discussion has already begun on the subject at:

<http://forums.chronicle.com/colloquy/read.php?f=1&i=2156&t=2156>

AAUP encourages its members to join the debate. We would stress three main points.

- ◆ Raising important issues is what political campaigns should be about. However, the issues should be raised in a responsible manner.
- ◆ Low-income students are being priced out of college and university education by the lack of federal and state funding. Federal student aid programs are not keeping up with the cost of inflation, and state

support for higher education faces cutbacks in the wake of overall state budget crises. A higher proportion of the cost of education is therefore being pushed on to students and their families.

- ◆ Increasing regulatory and centralized accountability measures for institutions of higher education will challenge states' autonomy and divert even more scarce resources into non-educational functions.

During the last reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, Congress established The National Commission on the Cost of Higher Education, which issued a report Straight Talk About College Costs and Prices in January 1998. The central finding of this report was that American higher education remains an extraordinary value. In addition, the report recommended a five point action agenda:

- ◆ strengthening institutional cost control;
- ◆ improving market information and public accountability;
- ◆ deregulating higher education;
- ◆ rethinking accreditation; and
- ◆ enhancing and simplifying Federal student aid.

At that time, the AAUP praised the report. The Commission found no easy scapegoats, no skeletons in the closet, and no fat cats to explain recent increases in college tuition. But the Commission did find real answers. It found that the withdrawal of public funds has resulted in the cost of education being shifted more to students and families. It found that many colleges, public and private, had been working hard to make college more affordable, and that, overall college costs had leveled off in the three years prior to the report.

The Chronicles portrait of the White Houses purported plans suggests that it will be moving in diametrically opposed directions to the Commission recommendations. The Administration is attempting to impose nationalized standards and mandated outcomes on higher education, along the lines of the already passed nationwide requirements in the No Child Left Behind legislation controlling elementary and secondary education. While it could be argued that the administration is simplifying Federal student aid by discouraging the direct loan program and removing quality control rules for student aid eligibility, the budget proposals it has submitted clearly is not enhancing those programs. At the same time the administration is touting accountability, it is weakening institutional controls by imposing new regulations on institutions.

In addition to general points about cost of college, the article points out that these subjects will be addressed by the Congress during the upcoming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

AAUP has created a Higher Education Act webpage where the Associations positions can be accessed. <http://www.aaup.org/govrel/hea/index.htm>. These include a pamphlet The Higher Education Act: A Faculty Perspective on Reauthorization[<http://www.aaup.org/govrel/hea/HEAFinal.pdf>] which amplifies the core group of themes, access, quality, diversity, and openness, which will guide our work on

the reauthorization process. In addition, AAUP joined other higher education associations in signing a letter to Congress making Recommendations for Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.[<http://www.acenet.edu/washington/HEAReauthorization.2003.pdf>]

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