



# American Association of University Professors

*Academic Freedom for a Free Society*

1/27/2025

Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Fragala and Harbick, and members of the committee:

For the record my name is Victor Reyes, and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon State Conference of the American Association of University Professors.

Prior to taking the position as Executive Director, I was an English as a Second Language instructor for 17 years. For 11 of those years, I taught international students at Oregon State University, so I have direct experience of the challenging working conditions at Oregon's public universities and a deep commitment to the quality of student learning conditions.

I'd like to take some time to introduce our organization and our core values before I turn it over to two of our members to share some of the challenges facing unionized academic workers: Keaton Miller from United Academics of the University of Oregon and Elizabeth McMurtry from Portland State University AAUP.

AAUP Oregon was founded over a decade ago. We have five collective bargaining chapters:

- **Oregon Tech AAUP**, representing full-time faculty at the Oregon Institute of Technology;
- **PSU AAUP**, representing full-time faculty and academic professionals at Portland State University;
- **Graduate Employees Union of PSU**, representing graduate employees at PSU;
- **United Academics of the University of Oregon**, representing full and part-time faculty at the UofO; and
- **United Academics of Oregon State University**, representing full and part-time faculty at OSU;

In addition to our collective bargaining chapters, AAUP Oregon has four advocacy chapters at private institutions across the state: **Lewis and Clark AAUP**, **Linfield College AAUP**, **Pacific University AAUP**, and **Willamette University AAUP**. As advocacy chapters, these members organize their colleagues to advocate for better student learning conditions and faculty working conditions, but do not have collective bargaining rights.

In the last year, all of our collective bargaining chapters have been in contract negotiations, and we have seen more invocation of mediation than ever before. While UAOSU is still at the table after more than a year of active bargaining, and Oregon Tech AAUP has just begun their negotiations, three of our chapters have required or are currently in mediation. You can read more about the issues at OSU and PSU specifically in the attached reports that AAUP Oregon and AFT-Oregon helped draft with our members:

- [Constant Crisis and Cuts at PSU Endanger Student Success](#) (10/31/2024)
- [Prosperity Widely Shared?: A Report on the Academic Workforce at OSU](#) (1/21/2025)

Since our founding in 1915, the AAUP has held that for a free and educated society to thrive, faculty must have the following freedoms and responsibilities:

- Freedom to conduct and publish research free from the fear of suppression due to partisan politics or business interests;
- Freedom to teach controversial topics within their expertise without fear of censorship or reprisal; and
- Freedom of public expression when they are speaking as individuals rather than representatives of the institution;

These freedoms come with a responsibility to adhere to scholarly standards and to respect the rights and freedoms of others within the academic community, including students. The AAUP's principles of academic freedom and shared governance have been adopted by the majority of American universities, though both have been weakened in the last 40 years and are being targeted by the Trump administration.

It is our hope that Oregon's legislature will stand with our students and our academic workforce to create the working and learning conditions that will attract and retain excellent faculty and students. Oregon's universities are engines of economic development that fuel the economies of our communities, our state, and our nation.

But the promise of our higher education system can't be fully realized under the current conditions in our state. In the short term, university administrators must strategically utilize their healthy reserves to invest in their academic workforce. Our chapters have performed independent financial analysis which finds that the administrative narrative about their finances does not always comport with reality. You can read this independent analysis of the finances of PSU, OSU, and UO below:

- [OSU Financial Analysis performed by AAUP National](#)
- [PSU Financial Analysis performed by AAUP National](#)
- [UO Financial Analysis performed by UAUO](#)

The inconsistent narrative about institutional finances shows a clear need for greater transparency, which is why we call on the legislature to support [HB 3213](#) so that the university community and Oregon's taxpayers are better able to understand how money is raised and distributed by public university foundations.

However, using reserves is not a viable long-term strategy for our public universities. For the long-term health of our institutions, we must see greater state investment in student learning conditions and faculty working conditions. After all, [Oregon is 44th in the nation in per FTE funding at four-year public institutions](#). To thrive in the long-term, we also call on the legislature to support increases to the Public University Support Fund.

Thank you for your commitment to Oregon's students, staff, and faculty. I will now hand it over to our members to further discuss issues at the UO and PSU.

Victor Reyes  
Executive Director, AAUP Oregon