

**AAUP Response to Continuing Administration Assault
on School of Biological Sciences (SBS)
UMKC Senate Meeting - 8/13/2002**

The attack on SBS mirrors a broader attack in the state of Missouri on faculty governance, academic freedom, and a democratic system of education. The following passages from the *Redbook* (AAUP *Policy Documents and Reports*, Ninth Edition, 2001), make clear that the Administration of UMKC continues to be in violation of AAUP principles in its dealings with SBS.

I. Primary Faculty Responsibility in the Choosing of Administrators

The administration has arrogated to itself the appointment of Frank Horton as interim dean, over the express objections of the faculty. Dr. Horton was hired as an outside consultant, not as a University employee, thus allowing him to bypass University bylaws, rules, and regulations in his dealings with the faculty.

The AAUP, on the contrary, expects that:

"faculty members will have a significant role in the selection of academic administrators, including the president, academic deans, department heads, and chairs." (p. 228)

"academic administrators, such as the dean of a college ... are by the nature of their duties more directly dependent upon faculty support.... the composition of the search committee should reflect the **primacy of faculty interest**, and the faculty component of the committee should be chosen by the faculty of the unit or by a representative body of the faculty. The person chosen for an administrative position should be selected from among the names submitted by the search committee... **sound academic practice dictates that the President** [*in this case, the Provost and the Chancellor*] **not choose a person over the reasoned opposition of the faculty.**" (p. 229, emphasis added)

II. Central Faculty Responsibilities in Changes in the Institutional structure

The administration has proposed the dissolution of SBS, either by liquidating the school entirely, or dispersing its faculty to other units. In either case, SBS will cease to exist. Among the options presented to the faculty of SBS by the Provost in his ultimatum of May 24, 2002 were "creation of a new research entity," with SBS faculty receiving "appointments in one of the basic sciences or a health sciences school;" integration of SBS "into existing health sciences schools;" creation of "a new school of Natural or Basic Sciences, to be comprised of four or five basic science departments at UMKC;" or turning the "current school of Biological Sciences " into "an independent research institute, not affiliated formally with UMKC." The administration has refused to allow the faculty of SBS to participate in these deliberations. On this subject the Redbook is very clear:

"The faculty should play a fundamental role in any decision which would change the basic character and purpose of the institution, including transformation of the institution, affiliation of part of the existing operation with another institution, or merger, with the resulting abandonment or curtailment of duplicate programs. Before any decisions on curtailment become final, those whose work stands to be adversely affected should have full opportunity to be heard. (p.236, emphasis added)

Elsewhere the *Redbook* states: "There should be early, careful and **meaningful faculty involvement** in decisions relating to the reduction of instructional and research programs.... Given a decision to reduce the overall academic program, it should then become **the primary responsibility of the faculty** to determine where within the program reductions should be made.... Among the various considerations, difficult and often

competing, that have to be taken into consideration in deciding upon particular reductions, the retention of a viable academic program should necessarily come first." (p. 230)

III. Primary Faculty Role in Budget Decisions

Since May 24 the entire operating budget (not just hiring and travel funds) of the School has been frozen; individual faculty members were required to apply to the Provost directly for day to day purchases such as supplies or gases for their laboratories; many funds are still inaccessible.

There was no faculty participation in the decision to pay an interim dean a monthly salary of \$22,000. In stark contrast, unit budgets for faculty functions (instruction, research, travel, etc.) are being cut, and the faculty is facing a de facto pay cut (no raises for the 2002-3 school year and increases in insurance premiums beginning in January). These measures pointedly illustrate the lack of meaningful participation by faculty in budget decisions at UMKC. The Redbook states:

"Budgetary decisions directly affecting those areas for which ... the faculty has primary responsibility ... should be made in concert with the faculty." (p.233, emphasis added)

IV. Primary Faculty Responsibility for Teaching and Research

Undocumented and specious claims by the Administration that the faculty of SBS are poor teachers and have been uncooperative and unproductive in the conduct of their research are being used as pretexts to liquidate the School. AAUP guidelines state:

"a sound system of institutional governance is a necessary condition for the protection of faculty rights, and thereby the most productive exercise of essential faculty freedoms. Correspondingly, the protection of the academic freedom of faculty members in addressing issues of institutional governance is **a prerequisite for the practice of governance unhampered by fear of retribution.**" (p.224, emphasis added)

"since the faculty has primary responsibility for the teaching and research done in the institution,... **the administration should 'concur with the faculty judgment except in rare instances and for compelling reasons which should be stated in detail'.**" (p. 225, emphasis added)

In "decisions about the institution's long-range objectives ... the decision-making process must include the faculty, and ... its voice on these matters must be accorded great respect." (p. 225)

Insisting that "the faculty's voice should be authoritative across the entire range of decision-making that bears, whether directly or indirectly, on its responsibilities," the Redbook states: "**scholars in a discipline are acquainted with the discipline from within; their views ... are therefore more likely to produce better teaching and research in the discipline than are the views of trustees or administrators.**" (p. 225, emphasis added)

V. Dignified treatment of the faculty

The administration has treated SBS faculty with disrespect and arrogance. The Redbook states:

"it is in the public interest that the office of faculty member should be 'one both of dignity and of independence'." (p. 226)

It is the faculty--not trustees or administrators--who have ... the expertise to form judgments of faculty competence or incompetence." (p.226, emphasis added)

VI. Recommendations of the UMKC Chapter AAUP

To remedy the situation in SBS and as a first step toward reestablishing AAUP principles on this campus, the UMKC-AAUP urges the immediate implementation of the following actions, which are in accordance with both AAUP guidelines and the rules and regulations of the University. The administration must:

1. Abandon all plans to dissolve, restructure, or disperse the School of Biological Sciences, its programs and its faculty. SBS faculty should determine the future direction of the School.
2. Solicit from the faculty of SBS a list of internal candidates and select an interim dean from this list. An academic unit should be led by persons with expertise in that unit's disciplinary field.
3. Reopen the search for a Dean. A search committee made up of SBS faculty must be the principal judges of the competence and appropriateness of any candidates. Faculty must have a primary voice in choosing their own leadership.
4. Commit to meaningful participation in budget decisions by faculty at the unit level and the Faculty Senate at the Campus and University level.
5. Unfreeze the operating funds not only of SBS but of the rest of the Campus, so that the faculty can get back to their primary function of teaching and research unhindered.