

## Wishful AAUP Thinking

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* calls your attention to the following report:

October 29, 2012

[AAUP Rethinks Its Guidelines on Faculty Layoffs](#)

By Peter Schmidt

Washington

*The American Association of University Professors is poised to overhaul its guidelines on faculty layoffs, by both taking a much broader view of the circumstances in which such job cuts are acceptable and requiring much more faculty involvement in decisions to eliminate academic programs and positions.*

*Current guidelines say colleges can eliminate the positions of tenured faculty members only in cases of "financial exigency." Proposed new guidelines would lower that bar but require much more faculty input on decisions about cuts.*

*A draft AAUP report proposing the changes characterizes them as a recognition that the organization's current guidelines are being ignored by some colleges as setting too high a bar in judging when layoffs of tenured faculty members are justified.*

*The AAUP's current guidelines say colleges can eliminate the positions of tenured faculty members only in cases of "financial exigency," and define "financial exigency" as an "imminent financial crisis" that threatens the survival of the college as a whole. The revised guidelines under consideration by the AAUP redefine "financial exigency" as "a severe financial crisis that threatens the academic mission of the institution as a whole."*

*The proposed change opens the door for colleges to lay off tenured faculty members in situations where the threat on the horizon is not bankruptcy but some lesser hazard, such as a decline in academic quality or in the college's ability to serve students.*

*The proposed new guidelines stress, however, that the elimination of tenured faculty positions should be regarded as a last resort, acceptable only after colleges have cut spending on administrative costs and in nonacademic areas, such as athletics programs. In an attempt to hold colleges' feet to the fire to make such decisions objectively, the draft guidelines state that the process of planning cuts in academic programs or positions should involve faculty representatives who are provided with access to extensive budget data...*

The following dialogue ensued among commenters:

The University of Southern Mississippi version of "Financial exigency": then-President

Martha Saunders bought, with taxpayer and student money, a multi-million dollar airplane for convenience and junkets while she's firing dozens of tenured faculty during the Great Recession.

Hey, she's not done yet. She's a finalist for the position of provost at the University of West Florida. Go get 'em Martha!

Dear AAUP, define "financial exigency" any way you want. You'll not stop administrators from doing what they please, when they please. And, what are you or faculty going to do about it? Request -- that's right -- request administrators "should involve faculty representatives who are provided with access to extensive budget data"?

Right.

We had to force administrators at USM to provide information about Saunders' multi-million dollar airplane and information about how it is used for admin junkets to ball games. And don't get me started on the million dollar shortfall of the Athletic Department she left when she was fired or resigned--it's a secret. After a hundred years of proud football tradition, USM is zero wins and 9 losses this season--so far. Oh, there's also nearly a million dollars Saunders funneled to idgroup, a company headed up by her friend Mona Amodeo, for public relations services at USM. Don't forget the financial debacle when she gave away computers to a select group of students...All the while firing tenured faculty.

And where was the AAUP? USM has a local AAUP. What was it doing? Cowering in fear for their jobs, too. So, go get 'em AAUP. Administrators have to listen to more reasonable definitions of "financial exigency."

Chauncey M. DePree, Jr., DBA, Professor, School of Accountancy, College of Business, University of Southern Mississippi (Edited by author 2 days ago) [Flag](#)  
5 people liked this. [Edit Reply](#)

**fsw1993** 1 day ago in reply to Marc DePree

Would a reduction in enrollment be considered as " "financial exigency"? How about reduction in state support? [Flag](#) [Like Reply](#)

**Marc DePree** 1 day ago in reply to fsw1993

Definitions, or refinements of definitions, in areas I'm familiar with have limited

usefulness. In law and accounting, definitions have not limited professionals from a wide range of interpretation--to the detriment of those who are powerless. For example, give me a set of financial transactions or events for an entity, and I'll legally give you a wide range of net incomes from losses to incomes.

There seems to me to be no alternative to "shared governance," or exercising some control in our environment--the primary goals here--other than taking control and capturing a portion of power. (I'm open to suggestions, though.) Then, we are participants in the exercise of power of organizations, like schools, not outsiders asking our "parents" to consider our views. This, of course, is not a panacea. It's an ingredient to ameliorate our human condition.

Chauncey M. DePree, Jr., DBA, Professor, School of Accountancy, College of Business, University of Southern Mississippi [Flag](#) [Edit Reply](#)

**i\_am\_nomad** 4 hours ago in reply to Marc DePree

So, Martha's moving from a presidency at a high-research activity university (USM) to being a provost at a doctoral research university (UWF)? Sounds like a step down the ladder. [Flag](#) [Like Reply](#)

**Marc DePree** 3 hours ago in reply to i\_am\_nomad

Martha Saunders wouldn't know the difference. We deposed her under oath for two days in re DePree v. Saunders et al. Miscreant administrators often face a choice of appearing incompetent or ignorant. Then-President Saunders chose to represent herself as incompetent *and* ignorant. Google my name and visit my website. We've provided her depositions. You don't have to take my word for it. Decide for yourself. [Flag](#)