

March 11, 2015

**Statement of AAUP President Rudy Fichtenbaum on the Proposal to Transform  
the University of Wisconsin System into a Public Authority**

The American Association of University Professors urges University of Wisconsin System President Ray Cross and the chancellors of the UW System institutions to stand in opposition to Governor Walker's proposal to transform the University of Wisconsin System into a public authority. These proposed changes could profoundly undermine tenure, due process, and shared governance in the university system, principles that AAUP has long seen as essential to ensuring higher education's contribution to the common good.

AAUP has long recognized that tenure is the best way to ensure the academic freedom necessary to fulfilling the mission of higher education in a democratic society. In our *1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*, we define tenure and the due process protections that it affords as "indispensable to the success of an institution in fulfilling its obligations to its students and to society." Our *1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities* emphasizes the faculty's role in the governance of the institution, specifically in such matters as "appointments, reappointments, decisions not to reappoint, promotions, the granting of tenure, and dismissal." Without such necessary procedural safeguards as tenure and due process, the faculty's ability to fully participate in governance becomes attenuated.

As the nonpartisan Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau indicates in their analysis, Governor Walker's proposal would lead to the elimination of statutory protections for tenure, due process, and shared governance, among other important workplace rights for UW faculty and staff. While Walker's proposal "recommends" that tenure, due process, and shared governance be included in board policy under the new public authority, there is no statutory guarantee that this will happen, nor, under Walker's proposal, is the UW Board of Regents granted the necessary authority to adopt the current statutory language as board policy.

These changes, rather than being motivated by fiscal necessity as the governor suggests, appear to be motivated by a desire to fully privatize the university system. As such, Governor Walker's proposal must be understood as a radical assault on one of the nation's premiere institutions of public higher education, consistent with his attack on Wisconsin's labor movement and his undermining and privatizing of such other public goods as K-12 education and state natural resources. We call on the UW System administration to oppose this radical privatization of the UW System and to stand in support of public higher education in Wisconsin.