ASC Chair Speaks at MOAAUP Meeting  
by Keith Hardeman and Barrie Talbott

Donna Potts (Kansas State University), Chair of the Association of State Conferences of AAUP, addressed the annual meeting of Missouri Conference of AAUP, held at Missouri Southern State University in Joplin on March 19. At an anxious time for MSSU faculty (and the great Joplin tornado came later, on May 22), Dr. Potts spoke passionately on the three pillars of the AAUP: academic freedom, shared governance, and tenure.

Potts pointed out that shared governance has different meanings to different people. The governance structure can certainly not be considered to be a power pyramid, with the board and president ruling from the top, she asserted. She also warned that attempts to make all stakeholders – faculty, administration, and board members – “equal partners” in all institutional matters is also not quite what the AAUP represents as shared governance.

Instead, boards and administrators should delegate decisions to faculty, particularly where academic matters or other areas of faculty expertise are concerned: “Faculty judgment has to be central.”

A native of Joplin, Potts expressed alarm that MSSU President Bruce Speck has fostered such a tense adversarial relationship between professors and administration. The MSSU faculty voted no-confidence in their president on 2 November 2009, but the Board of Governors barely took notice and there have been continued problems and little improvement in relations since then. Dr. Potts advised that faculty everywhere must educate governing boards and legislators on what professors do; the best approach is to meet one-on-one with these officials, especially legislators. As part of this process, faculty members also need to help the public understand the value of both teaching and research in higher education. Too often, she said, colleges and universities stress athletics over academics, causing the public to lose sight of the institutional mission.

What now? Our running agenda ...  
by David K. Robinson

When I was recently elected president of Missouri Conference, I made the remark that I had been “very well prepared” for the job. I have had the best AAUP teachers that anyone could hope to have, including some who have retired or passed on. It is a great comfort that I still have my most recent predecessors, Keith Hardeman and John Harms, at the ready; we three have worked together a long time. Like everyone, I often feel overwhelmed by the seriousness of our work, and I know that we are never fully prepared for the next task. So, as I take this office, I want to think about plans.

Keith Hardeman passes the gavel to the new president of MOAAUP, David Robinson

What should we do as a Conference? I want to ask each of you that question. I know that we want to remain organized and strong enough to respond to the challenges that come up, those that we expect (e.g. budgets in the legislature) and many that are totally unexpected (e.g. Breitbart). What are the best ways to be ready?

It might also be a good idea to think about themes and projects. I like to talk about them, even if they are long-term or are blocked by harsh reality. Can we establish more chapters in our state? How can we lobby more effectively? Should we explore what collective bargaining might bring us? Can you suggest more projects?

Let me know what you think about our challenges and prospects. I am all ears. Contact me directly, or any other officer listed on the last page of this newsletter.

More on Missouri Conference: www.moaaup.org
It was my privilege this past June 9-12 to attend the 97th Annual Conference of AAUP in Washington, D.C., as a delegate from the Missouri Conference of the AAUP and in the company of David Robinson, president of the Missouri Conference of AAUP, and John Knapp, president of my Missouri Southern State University AAUP chapter.

I was especially proud to represent my institution and state conference because both received special recognition during the convention. In the banquet keynote address, Judy Ancel (University of Missouri-Kansas City) and Don Giljum (University of Missouri-St. Louis) discussed their experiences during the spring of 2011, when the right-wing activism of Andrew Breitbart attacked them in the media and in the classroom for teaching a university course on the American labor movement (see related article, this issue). Their accounts of the vindication of their teaching, resulting from their uncompromising defense of their right to practice the principles of academic freedom, were both sobering and inspiring. And during the Assembly of State Conferences (ASC) meeting, the MSSU chapter, of which I am a proud member, was presented with the Konheim Award Travel Grant, for outstanding efforts toward fostering academic freedom and shared governance at our institution (see related article, this issue).

For me the conference was, from opening meeting to closing session, a learning experience of the very highest order. Let me mention three educational highpoints. First, I was encouraged to participate in a full range of activities during the AAUP Capitol Hill Day on June 9. After training sessions covering the basics of congressional lobbying, I accompanied the Virginia AAUP lobbying delegation, led by Brian Turner, chair of the AAUP Committee on Government Relations, in a morning round of visits to Virginia Representatives’ offices. Our AAUP credentials gave us remarkable access to the Capitol complex and allowed us to speak at length with congressional legislative assistants about academic issues.

After the morning’s training with the Virginia delegation, I was able during the afternoon to meet with representatives of Missouri Senator Claire McCaskill and of Representative Billy Long from the congressional district that includes my home in Joplin. Every contact I had with elected officials, and most especially with their staffs, was positive. I must also admit that riding (several times!) the (in)famous congressional mini-metro that races underneath the Capitol building from the House side of congressional office blocks to the Senate side was outrageously stimulating. And my invitation to the late afternoon AAUP Committee on Government Relations Reception held on Capitol Hill sits on my desk as I type this report. Somewhat to my own surprise, I came away from the AAUP Capitol Hill Day with a renewed respect for significant parts of the American political process.

As a second highpoint, the AAUP Conference on the State of Higher Education is held at the same site and time as the annual AAUP business meetings to which I was a delegate. The conference offered dozens of panels and hundreds of papers and presentations relating to the challenges faced by those committed to improving higher education. I was able to attend valuable presentations on shared governance, on-line education, and tenure; I gained perspective and information that will certainly help me in my role as faculty senate president this year at MSSU. And third, my participation as a voting delegate in conducting the annual business of a national organization gave me significant insight into the opportunities and challenges that such organizations as AAUP offer. The AAUP and ASC business meetings, under the leadership of Cary Nelson and Donna Potts respectively, confirmed in me a respect for the value of representative democratic principles.

I will say unreservedly that my attending the 2011 AAUP annual conference was one of the most valuable academic learning opportunities of my entire academic career. I would urge anyone with an interest in the nuts and bolts of American-style lobbying on a national level, or with an interest in the business-end of a national organization, or with an interest in promoting such fundamental AAUP concerns as academic freedom and integrity and shared government, to attend. I thank the Missouri Conference and AAUP for affording me this opportunity.
One approach toward improving faculty public relations would be to highlight student and faculty accomplishments, to counter the publicity always given to sports. Many citizens have attended college, and they know what it is like for their work to be “glossed over in favor of athletics.” Potts reminded the audience that students are also part of our public: they are voters and their parents are voters. She advised that we need to respond to students’ questions and concerns about tenure, explain what tenure is and how it is valuable. We need to make the case that we are educating students to be functioning, productive members of society; we need to explain how the academic freedom that is associated with tenure is crucial to our work.

After Potts’ presentation, open discussion followed: participants brainstormed ways to increase public and student understanding/support for the three pillars, particularly tenure. The discussion evolved into a closer examination of the problems at MSSU, including the total loss of shared governance, retaliation against outspoken faculty and AAUP members, and collusion between President Speck, the Joplin Globe, and some community organizations to turn public opinion against the faculty and the better interests of the university.

The afternoon session of the annual meeting consisted of MOAAUP officer elections, along with awards and honors. David Robinson (Truman State U.) was elected president. John Harms (Missouri State U.) assumed the vice-presidency. Barrie Talbott (Ozarks Technical Community College) is the new secretary/treasurer; Roger Pick (UMKC), Patricia Murphy (MSSU), Jim Borgwald (Lincoln U.) and John Knapp (MSSU) are all new additions to the MOAAUP Executive Council, while David Naugler (Southeast Missouri State U.) was re-elected to the Council and Keith Hardeman (Westminster College) stays on as past-president. Nancy Browning (Lincoln U.), Ben Greenspan (Washington U.), and Stuart McAninch (UMKC, not present) were all honored for their many years of outstanding MOAAUP service. A special highlight at this annual meeting was Stephen Schiavo, outgoing president of the MSSU chapter, receiving the David F. Gruber Leadership Development Award. Though Schiavo was often the man on the spot, in close contact with state and national AAUP during two stormy years for MSSU, he insisted that his chapter had always made it a group effort. (See related article, on Konheim Award.)
Missouri had the dubious honor of providing the entertainment at the main banquet of the 2011 Annual Conference of AAUP, on June 11. (See July-August issue of Academe [link to the article](http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/academe/2011/JA/anconf/Conference.htm)) The speakers Judy Ancel and Don Giljum were really great, very entertaining and uplifting. The dubious part was how they came to their recent fame: their joint course on the U.S. labor movement was the target of a video hit-job by the right-wing blogger Andrew Breitbart, who appears frequently on Fox News.

This course, Labor Politics and Society, was transmitted and recorded on video, and posted on Blackboard, so that it could be offered simultaneously at University of Missouri-Kansas City (where Ancel teaches and directs the Institute of Labor Studies) and University of Missouri-St. Louis (where Giljum teaches). A student enrolled in the course (perhaps aspiring to the reputation of James O'Keefe, whose videos pestered ACORN to death) helped Breitbart to cut and splice some 16 hours of classroom give-and-take, role-playing, etc. Both of the professors and several students were thus transformed into violent labor anarchists—in the six-minute version of the course that Breitbart posted on his blog. In the initial flurry after the posting, there were reports that Giljum had resigned from teaching, and conservative media were calling for Ancel to do the same.

These professors and their colleagues swung into action, involving AAUP from the local UMKC chapter all the way up to the top levels in DC. University of Missouri administrators were urged to do their duty: to their great credit they investigated the matter quickly and announced that no one had resigned and no curricular changes were to be made as a result of this unauthorized use (indeed misuse) of course materials. University officials were also understandably concerned that internal course materials had been disseminated publicly without permission. [Link to the article](http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/newsroom/2011PRs/Ancel.htm)

Addressing the AAUP banquet, Ancel and Giljum recounted some of their experiences, often employing hilarious black humor. They emphasized what they had learned in their previous work in the labor movement, that AAUP and all faculty groups must be consistently and strongly organized, ready to react and to counter such attacks, including unthinkable ones. They appreciated that their colleagues and AAUP had backed them and that the final result had been pretty good (though not as embarrassing for Breitbart as one might hope). However, Ancel and Giljum warned us that the next attack could be worse, more effective, more harmful to academic freedom and to our democracy. When they finished on this note, the banquet attendees all rose spontaneously in ovation, taking their challenge to heart: we must keep vigilant!
MSSU Chapter Wins Konheim Award Travel Grant to 2011 National Conference

by David K. Robinson

I reproduce below a substantial portion of my nominating letter, dated 30 April 2011:

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In recognition of the dedicated and indomitable spirit of its members in the face of adversity, and as President of the Missouri Conference, I hereby nominate the AAUP Chapter of Missouri Southern State University (Joplin) for the Konheim Award Travel Grant, which the chapter can use to send at least two delegates to the AAUP national meeting in June.

... I have never seen a chapter arise from almost nothing and become as strong and effective as the one at Missouri Southern has done. In great stress locally, they sought strength and direction in the resources of AAUP, and then quickly turned around to serve selflessly and broadly in the best spirit of our organization. In November 2008, there were only five dues-paying AAUP members at MSSU; in February 2011, that number had risen to at least fifteen, though their influence has been far greater than what that number would indicate.

Sometime in late September, 2009, the officers of Missouri Conference were contacted by staff members of the AAUP national office, who had noticed articles in the Joplin Globe indicating administrative irregularities at MSSU. Contacts there soon confirmed that there was indeed trouble and that AAUP attention was needed. MSSU President Bruce Speck, in his second year in the position, was making erratic and often insulting statements, and faculty needed the assurance of academic freedom as they tried to recover some shared governance to address the needs of their institution, as budget cuts began to affect us all in Missouri. In March 2009, Speck had notified the Faculty Senate, in writing, that his administration would refuse to report to them. After a summer marked by administrative resignations and more chaos, President Speck asserted that he would report to no one but the Board of Governors.

The faculty formulated 23 complaints, and on 6 October 2009, the MSSU Faculty Senate voted 21-5 to have the entire faculty conduct a no-confidence vote on the president. On November 2, that vote went 140 to 44 against Speck. The Faculty Senate and the AAUP were united at MSSU, led at that time by Faculty Senate president Roger Chelf and AAUP chapter president Stephen Schiavo.

The vote made little difference at the time. The MSSU Board of Governors remained extremely protective of President Speck and did nothing other than to suggest that he attempt to find some grounds for reconciliation with faculty. His response was to hold “Listening Meetings” periodically, in which a diminishing number of faculty voiced their concerns, expressed dismay, and suggested compromises; but there was little or no direct evidence that the administration was listening to any advice from faculty.

Since then, the MSSU faculty have continued to react with concern to the president’s public statements that tenure is bad for the university, to budget and staffing moves that weaken their special International Mission, to the elimination of funds for faculty development and travel, to canceled sabbaticals, to frozen tenure-track positions (in times of rising enrollment), and to repeated proposals that vastly more of courses be taught online, mainly by adjuncts. A university that had been enriching a rather remote corner of Missouri seems doomed to deliberate decline.

The MSSU chapter of AAUP has been able to respond to the faculty’s discontent with its administration, but its members are always eager to find grounds for compromise, cooperation, and reconciliation. Unfortunately the atmosphere of intimidation persists, in spite of these efforts. I did not want to believe that faculty really felt so threatened, but I found out for myself that it is the truth. For a flavor of the situation, see this local report of a recent development, the termination of an award-winning journalism instructor who dared to report the news at MSSU: http://rtturner229.blogspot.com/2011/04/hanrahan-fired-speck-puts-hammer-down.html

The AAUP leaders at MSSU are busy enough in Joplin, but we have been gratified (indeed surprised) at how quickly they stepped up for state and even national service in AAUP. Of course, they realize that this broader engagement can help their cause at home; still, the level of their broader activity has been remarkable:

* Stephen Schiavo attended the ASC New Leaders Workshop in Louisville, 30 October 2010.
* Stephen Schiavo and Cliff Toliver attended the AAUP Conference on Shared Governance, 12-14 November 2010, in DC.
* The AAUP chapter of MSSU hosted the annual meeting of Missouri Conference in Joplin on 19 March 2011; the featured speaker was Donna Potts, ASC Chair. Two MSSU chapter members were elected new officers of Missouri Conference: John Knapp and Patricia Murphy. Three MSSU members were elected as Missouri Conference delegates to ASC at the annual AAUP meeting in June: John Knapp, Cliff Toliver, and Stephen Schiavo [who could not attend, as it turned out].

* At the annual meeting of Missouri Conference, 19 March 2011, Stephen Schiavo was awarded the David F. Gruber Leadership Development Award, our Conference’s highest distinction for new leaders. Two members of the MSSU chapter of AAUP stood as candidates in national AAUP elections in 2011: Stephen Schiavo for At-Large Council Member; Gerald Schlink for District 4 Council Member. Though neither was elected, they received substantial numbers of votes. http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/about/bus/11elec.htm

Although members of the MSSU chapter have already been very active nationally, this will be the first national AAUP Conference for any of them. The Konheim Award Travel Grant would support this chapter and our Missouri Conference, as we continue to help our advocacy chapters work for AAUP principles throughout our state and in the national organization.

* * * * *

The nomination was successful. When Donna Potts, ASC chair, presented the $1000 grant check to the MSSU chapter at the ASC business meeting on June 10, she noted that her own mother had survived the May 22 tornado in Joplin, a disaster that made the news around the world. A couple of years in the struggles outlined in the nomination letter above would seem to be enough, but John Knapp and Cliff Toliver literally had to leave off their work, sifting through tornado rubble for friends and neighbors, in order to come to Washington DC and represent Missouri Conference at the national meeting. There these AAUP members from Joplin were greeted with great appreciation, indeed awe.

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