Message From The President
“Duck Soup”
Thomas Bontly, UConn-AAUP President

Groucho Marx once said that he refused to join any organization that would have him for a member. Self-deprecating jokes aside, there’s one organization Groucho eagerly joined, and that was the union. He was a leading member of the Screen Actors Guild, joined shortly after it was founded in 1933.

Since you are taking time out of your busy day to read the UConn-AAUP newsletter, odds are you think you’re a union member. After all, you receive regular communications from the chapter, which represents you in collective bargaining; you have a union fee deducted from your paycheck; and you know that you can turn to the UConn-AAUP for help with a wide variety of work-related issues. That makes you a member, right?

Sadly, no. To become a member, you must perform one brief ritual: you have to sign up. Fortunately, signing up is easy (“duck soup”, so to speak), there is no additional cost, and in case you’re unsure whether you’re already a member, there’s no harm in signing up again. I try to sign up at least once per week, just for fun.

Currently, something like 60% of the bargaining unit are UConn-AAUP members, including 72% of full-timers and 29% of part-time faculty. Those numbers aren’t bad, especially considering that the chapter has not made a serious attempt to build membership since the organizing drives of the 1970s.

Still, for several reasons, our membership rate should be a lot higher. For one thing, membership has tangible benefits, such as a free subscription to the AAUP’s bimonthly magazine, Academe, and a 20% discount on subscriptions to the Chronicle of Higher Education. For another, joining UConn-AAUP gives you a voice in the chapter democratic decision-making. You can vote in chapter elections, serve as a representative, or run for a seat on the Executive Committee. And there’s still no cost to join.

But the most important reason to join AAUP is the familiar point that we faculty members are stronger when we work together to advance our shared concerns: better pay and benefits, of course, but deeper values such as academic freedom, shared governance, due process, high quality public education, and academic excellence.

If you care about such things, which I expect you do, I encourage you to become a member of AAUP. (Did I mention that there’s no additional cost?). And if you are already an AAUP member, I hope that you will join me in reaching out to colleagues who might not be, to find out what issues matter to them and talk about how AAUP can make a difference.
A Change in Bargaining Strategy Demands A Stronger Union

Michael Bailey, UConn-AAUP Executive Director

It is more important now than ever to become an active member of UConn-AAUP.

In 2015, the UConn Administration decided to use outside legal counsel to negotiate the extension of the collective bargaining agreement for faculty, researchers, and coaches. Prior to this, members of the Office of Faculty and Staff Labor Relations negotiated directly with representatives of the union. This decision, made in 2015, would change the employer/employee relationship concerning the terms and conditions of employment.

There are two main types of bargaining strategies that parties can utilize to achieve their negotiation goals. They are the integrative and distributive processes. The integrated approach is associated with interest-based bargaining, where both parties seek to find mutually beneficial solutions to workplace issues. The parties are considered joint problem solvers and seek to reach agreements that are considered “win-win” for both sides. As a result, a cooperative relationship is developed.

In distributive bargaining, which is most commonly used, parties view bargaining as a competition and seek to find solutions closer to their position, which benefits their members more. It usually calls for a concession from one party in order for them to achieve a gain - the “gives and gets” scenario that leads to a “win-lose” outcome. In this approach, an adversarial relationship between the parties develops.

Although previous negotiations were not strictly defined as interest-based bargaining, the decision to hire outside legal counsel for the most recent negotiations clearly crossed the line to distributive bargaining. This style was exemplified during the negotiations. Repeated comments of “gives and gets;” scheduling negotiating sessions for short periods of time once or twice a month; and stalling in returning counter-proposals all led to adversarial behavior.

The most recent decision to retain the same attorney to negotiate the Graduate Assistants contract reinforces the bargaining strategy this Administration would like to continue. This strategy is also present in the enforcement of the new terms of the agreement. An example of this is the Administration's interpretation and application of the Provost Fund which has led UConn-AAUP to file for arbitration. It is now more important than ever to become an active member of the AAUP. The UConn Administration needs to see that the members of the bargaining unit actively support their union in this new strategy taken by the Administration.

Growing Your Membership: Why It’s Important, Especially Now

Jamie Owen Daniel, Ph.D. National AAUP Field Service Representative

Long-established unions, in higher education as well as in many other workplaces, often find themselves facing the problem of increasing percentages of bargaining unit members who are not actually members of the union.

Why is it important to actively build up membership? And, to encourage active membership?

A faculty’s collective union voice is only effective when it includes as broad and representative a range of individual faculty voices as possible. When your bargaining team is at the table, the administration knows how many voices are backing up the team at the table. And how many are not. These days, when administrations are pushing in bargaining for unprecedented take-backs, when faculty senates have been reduced to merely advisory bodies, and when administrative bloat and corporate priorities have all too often resulted in pushing the needs of faculty and students to the back burner, it is all the more essential that the union voice be a loud and muscular one.

Our end goal is the recruitment of current feepayers to union membership and the building up of membership in all our chapters, but also includes the development of more horizontal and proactive structures within our CB chapters. We want union membership to be both understood and practiced as a commitment to active engagement on campus. Now is the time to organize for stronger and more effective faculty voice!
**Political Organizing**  
Chris Henderson, Internal Organizer

A quick peruse of the comment sections of any Connecticut news platform demonstrates a distain for public employees, university faculty, and the value of higher education at UConn. The narrative of the underworked, overpaid faculty member with summers off is not only factually incorrect, it’s dangerous to academic freedom, civil society, and a free and informed citizenry. University faculty educate our future citizens, conduct vital and meaningful research, and serve the institution and community-at large. Without university faculty we risk devolving into a world as Thomas Hobbes described: where our lives are… “nasty, brutish, and short”. The value of higher education and of university faculty cannot go unnoticied or undefended. We must work to change this faulty narrative through the latent power of story-telling and re-education.

As your union, we must do all that we can to help tell your stories of research success, teaching innovations, and service to the greater community. In the next few months, we may solicit you to tell us your story in what we are calling “Our Stories: UConn Faculty Profiles.” In the simple questionnaire we will ask you about your work and what you would want the public and the legislature to know about what you do.

With this information, we will post your story on our social media accounts during the 2018 legislative session and 2018 elections. We will use targeted digital ads that will link to your stories so that as many Connecticut residents as possible see beyond the headlines and comments to know that UConn and UConn faculty are the drivers of intellectual, economic, and social engine of the state.

If you would like to fill out a faculty profile, contact Chris Henderson at chenderson@uconnaau.org

**The Power of Asking Questions to Build A Stronger Chapter**  
Chris Henderson, Internal Organizer

The union is not a distant third party that acts as an insurance policy against arbitrary decision making nor is it simply an agent for service that negotiates a contract every few years; the union is a community of scholars engaged in building a robust educational institution for a better tomorrow. The union is faculty, researchers, and athletic staff communicating with one another with the aim to improve their own work lives but also the work lives of their colleagues. You, in fact, are the union.

Relationship building is at the core of building membership for a stronger union. We build relationships with our colleagues through one on one personal contacts. We should meet with our colleagues to ask “What are the issues you face in your everyday work?”, “What are the barriers to optimal levels of teaching, research, and service?”, “What can the union do to eliminate those barriers?”, “Can I count on you to join me in union to improve our bargaining power?” From that information, we can collectively learn how to bargain for better outcomes, how to address issues facing the community, and how to better represent the interests of the bargaining unit.

As we prepare for the many challenges ahead on campus, in the state, and around our country, it is up to all of us to ask those questions of our colleagues so we can, as a union, best handle the issues before us.

I would encourage all members of the Chapter to have these types of conversations with at least 10 of their colleagues, but begin with a simple question… “Are you an active member of UConn-AAUP?” and if they answer in the negative, encourage them to sign-up and be a part of this organization to make their voice heard. If we can have more intentional conversations, more voices, while increasing membership in the unit, we can ensure we have the support to protect academic freedom, shared governance, and the economic security of our members for many years ahead.