The big story this week in higher education is obviously at UVA, where the Board of Visitors is apparently engaged in an experiment to see how quickly a great university can be destroyed. The Board’s actions violate the most basic conventions of university governance so drastically that the AAUP even voted to deplore them before the faculty’s emergency meeting on Sunday. The situation is so appalling that even a William & Mary alum can’t muster any schadenfreude. (Full credit to the university’s faculty and staff for their response, however.)

It goes against the spirit of ProfHacker’s strategic dynamism to focus exclusively on bad news without trying to make at least some concrete suggestions.

It’s worth remembering that the American Association of University Professors has been defending faculty governance for almost a century. The most important statement on governance remains the 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities. Had the Board read it, it might have remembered this:

*The governing board has a special obligation to ensure that the history of the college or university shall serve as a prelude and inspiration to the future.*

Or maybe this:

*In grave crises it will be expected to serve as a champion. Although the action to be taken by it will usually be on behalf of the president, the faculty, or the student body, the board should make clear that the protection it offers to an individual or a group is, in fact, a fundamental defense of the vested interests of society in the educational institution.*

The AAUP’s Committee on College and University Governance continues to develop policy on governance, and to conduct formal investigations into abrogations of this principle, investigations which can lead to formal censure. **Joining the AAUP is an important step toward improving university governance.**

In addition to supporting faculty whose governance rights have been trampled, the AAUP also provides some handy resources for improving governance practices on one’s campus. For example, here is a [handy list of questions](http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/understanding-governance-on-your-campus/40917) “designed to allow for the immediate evaluation of the state of shared government at institutions of higher education.” (Thanks to Martha Nell Smith for reminding me of this list.) The questionnaire focuses on seven areas:

- Climate for Governance
- Institutional Communication
- Board’s Role
- President’s Role
- Faculty’s Role
- Joint Decision Making
- Assessing Structural Arrangements for Governance

Assuming a slightly fuller evaluation can see the checklist of "Indicators of Sound Governance", developed by Keetjie Ramo.
Ensuring that faculty, administrators/management, and boards have a solid understanding of governance—especially in strategically dynamic times—is critical work. You can find training in governance at the AAUP’s summer institute next month in Chicago, or in October at the Shared Governance Conference and Workshops.

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