

From: *Faculty Forum* Web Log

[AAUP in Colorado...and at DU?](#)

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On December 2, a snowy Saturday, I attended the Colorado Conference of the American Association of University Professors ([CO-AAUP](#)). A small but [spirited](#) bunch of AAUP members from CU-Boulder, CSU, UNC, Mesa State, Colorado School of Mines, Front Range Community College, Arapahoe Community College, and Regis University assembled on the Regis campus. I attended the conference in order to learn about the concerns of faculty at other institutions in the state. In no particular order the top three concerns include (1) the erosion of shared governance on campus as evidenced by, for example, administrative gutting of faculty handbooks and non-consultation about the makeup of search and curriculum committees; (2) the increasing use of adjunct faculty who now provide, for example, 65% of the curriculum at CSU (for the national context see [here](#)); and (3) faculty disengagement from campus affairs as a consequence of not only eroding shared governance but also administrative heavy-handedness in dealing with outspoken faculty (think Ward Churchill). Faculty from the community colleges, in particular, report that colleagues are “keeping their heads down”, and that an overwhelming sense of powerlessness and apathy characterizes the campus climate.

The most interesting discussion during the “Chapter Reports” phase of the meeting was provoked by news from CU-Boulder. Chapter president Markie LeCompte spoke about her group’s statement supporting Professor Churchill (a link to that statement is provided in my “Churchill Redux” post, below), as well as the less widely publicized case of Adrienne Anderson. [Anderson’s story](#) centers on her dismissal for cause from the CU Environmental Studies program after 11 years of service even though the Faculty Affairs Committee of the Boulder Faculty Assembly determined that administrators bungled due process and violated Anderson’s academic freedom, and the Committee on Privilege and Tenure recommended her reinstatement. The Colorado AAUP Conference produced a resolution that the national AAUP conduct a [Committee A](#) investigation into the matter, and it passed unanimously. This in turn sparked discussion about the activity of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) in the state of Colorado. ACTA has been particularly active since 9/11 attacking the professoriate for its alleged left-wing bias (for its various reports go [here](#)). ACTA views Colorado as test case for asserting greater government control over higher education and implementing a more corporate model of university governance.

The conference’s keynote address was delivered by Jan Gullickson, sociologist and former president of Front Range Community College. Gullickson sought to explain why faculty were “hunkered down” in Colorado and clarify the wider national forces that have created the current climate of apathy and powerlessness. Hers was also a pep talk for how faculty can bootstrap their way back into the game via some serious self-reflection and use of resources provided by the AAUP.

The AAUP members from these campuses are an interesting and dedicated bunch. The proceedings offered much more inspiration than was provided by the meeting of statewide Faculty Senate/Assembly/Council presidents that I attended at Colorado College in fall 2005. The information exchange with other presidents was useful enough that we promised to regularly reconvene, but contact has lapsed. My effort earlier this year to renew the relationship using the Churchill story and its implications for academic freedom as an entry point went nowhere, further evidence, perhaps, for the widespread existence of a faculty siege mentality. A few faculty rank-and-filers from here-and-there have written directly to me saying that although they are deeply worried about developments on their campus they think it best to lay low for the time being...

My first reaction to the generally depressing governance news from other campuses was relief at how good we have it here at DU. But then I remembered several local, unit-level governance issues that have come to my attention in just a few short months as Senate president. These issues, taken together, raise some serious questions about our collective commitment to procedural integrity and transparency, collegiality, and due process for aggrieved parties. It seems that you can never be too vigilant about this stuff, even at places where things seem to be working well. Thus, I'm thinking that it might be good to revive the AAUP chapter at DU, assuming that a critical mass of current and would-be AAUP members exists on our campus. An AAUP chapter at DU could benefit the work of our Faculty Senate by providing a broader, more interdisciplinary perspective on issues that affect faculty and a direct link to the policy resources offered by the national [AAUP](#). Minimally, an active chapter would allow us to offer moral support for colleagues on other campuses and perhaps some useful examples of how we work with administrators to sustain shared governance on our own campus. I'll be exploring the possibilities for such a revival of the AAUP at DU in the weeks and months ahead.