



American Association of University Professors

New York State AAUP Conference

September 28, 2021

William Fritz, President of the College of Staten Island
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William S. Thompson, President of the Board of Trustees, City University of New York
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Martin Burke, Chair, University Faculty Senate, City University of New York
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Jane Marcus-Delgado, Chair, College of Staten Island Faculty Senate
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Dear President Fritz, Board Chair Thompson, and Faculty Senate Chairs Burke and Marcus-Delgado,

The Executive Committee of the New York State Conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) is aware of the current struggle between the President of the College of Staten Island (CSI) and the faculty. We support the Resolution on the Nature of Shared Governance put forward by the University Faculty Senate that upholds the basic tenants of shared governance and demands that the administration at CSI follow its established governance processes.

As the state-wide body representing and promoting the principles and practices of shared governance of the AAUP, it is our duty to inform all relevant parties of the following:

The Governance Plan of Colleges and Universities delineates the responsibilities of faculty and administration and, as such, should be written by both parties. It is not acceptable practice for the President of a college to write this document without significant faculty input and approval.

The proposed governance plan systematically eliminates several standing committees such as college-wide budget, bylaws, and institutional planning with the stated intent to replace these when deemed necessary with ad hoc committees selected by the president. This is counter to recommendations of the AAUP to ensure faculty involvement at all times in such activities with properly elected faculty representatives. In particular, the 1966 *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities* states:

“Agencies for faculty participation in the government of the college or university should be established at each level where faculty responsibility is present. An agency should exist for the presentation of the views of the whole faculty. The structure and procedures for faculty participation should be designed, approved, and established by joint action of the components of the institution. Faculty representatives should be selected by the faculty according to procedures determined by the faculty.” (1)

The avoidance of existing committees comprised of elected members such as the By Laws Committee and the College Council, and the utilization of makeshift committees over the summer months with no reporting of their activity, runs counter to recent recommendations of the AAUP: “When faculty members opt to participate in a makeshift governance process, they should do so under the same conditions that govern their participation in the standing governance structure: they should be elected by the faculty rather than appointed by the administration, and they should be free to discuss the body’s work with their colleagues and report regularly to them.” (2)

The president has stated publicly that he may not respect the results of a college-wide referendum if it is unfavorable to him and may proceed against the existing governance plan to forward his proposed plan to CUNY’s Board of Trustees, even if it is not supported by the vote. His stated rationale is that while he will consider the results of the vote, he has to weigh other issues such as “best practices in higher education” and that his job is to make decisions based on his own experience “as to what is best for campus.” (3) This position runs counter to 50 years of college governance within CUNY and over 100 years of AAUP policies of college governance.

We urge President Fritz to respect the results of the September 27-October 1 referendum. No matter the outcome of the vote, any changes ultimately made to the current college governance structure should follow the principles set out in the 1966 *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*.

Sincerely,



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President, New York State Conference of the AAUP



Kimberley Reiser, Ph.D.
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(1) AAUP, ACE, AGB 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities:

<https://www.aaup.org/report/statement-government-colleges-and-universities>

(2) AAUP 2021 Special Report: COVID-19 and Academic Governance <https://www.aaup.org/special-report-covid-19-and-academic-governance> (page 37)

(3) See for example: “Governance Discussion with President William J. Fritz,” September 23, 2021:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5GZcYN9FJM>