

Virginia Conference of the
American Association of
University Professors and the
Faculty Senate of Virginia

Higher Education Governance

SHARED GOVERNANCE: FUNDAMENTAL TO HIGHER ED

An established principle of university governance is that faculty members play a critical role in determining policies central to the academic mission. Members of the faculty are expected to be productive participants in the system of shared university governance. The AAUP's 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities, jointly formulated and adopted by the American Council on Education and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, recognizes the faculty's primary responsibility over the design of the curriculum, determination of the subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process.

For this reason, the FSVA and the AAUP support two bills that will improve Virginia's system of higher education to make full use of faculty expertise in these areas. **SB 893** will require the State Board for Community Colleges, local community college boards, and the boards of visitors of four-year public institutions to appoint one or more nonvoting, advisory faculty representatives elected by the faculty senate or equivalent faculty governance body at the relevant institution. The General Assembly passed legislation in 2004 to permit boards to appoint faculty members. At least five boards of visitors at four-year institutions have not chosen to appoint faculty members to the board. It is time to fully incorporate faculty in this level of governance. It is our experience that board members benefit from direct access to the expertise of non-administrative faculty, and that subsequently the faculty's role in governance is better informed and more productive.

With similar justification, **SB 892** requests the governor appoint a faculty representative to serve in a non-voting, advisory capacity to the State Council of Higher Education.

The AAUP **opposes HB 1643**, which intrudes on academic freedom by requiring public institutions of higher education to report to SCHEV steps taken to ensure political and ideological "intellectual diversity." The bill "encourages" institutions to include intellectual diversity concerns into grievance procedures, teaching and program development, student course evaluations, and in hiring, tenure, and promotion policies. The bill would create political oversight of the fundamental pedagogical decisions of the faculty in its areas of primary responsibility.