



American Association of University Professors

## New York State AAUP Conference

The New York State Conference of the AAUP supports AAUP-Utica and the Utica University Faculty Senate in their opposition to the blatant disregard of the Utica University administration and Board of Trustees for the established processes of shared governance on their campus. The administration and the board have bypassed clearly established curricular processes in the union's collective bargaining agreement, the Faculty Senate Bylaws, and established Curriculum Committee procedures, announcing on January 18, 2023 the proposed elimination of 15 majors and significant and mandatory modifications of eight others.

In a January 26 statement the Utica University Board of Trustees publicly rejected "any assertion or insinuation that the process for reviewing academic majors was hastily borne out of crisis not transparent, or outside the Board's purview." A two week "comment period" prior to the board's scheduled vote on the proposed elimination of these majors does not substitute for the institutionally mandated faculty review processes.

The fact that the few faculty members on the task force which produced the recommendations were forced to sign confidentiality agreements undermines any claims of transparency and proper standards of faculty representation, as outlined in the AAUP's 2013 statement on Confidentiality and Faculty Representation in Academic Governance.

We strongly disagree with the Utica University Board's claim in its January 26 statement that the faculty's primary responsibility for the curriculum differs "from degree credentials and educational offerings." The AAUP's 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities jointly issued with the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities (AGB) clearly states that "[t]he faculty sets the requirements for the degrees offered in course, determines when the requirements have been met, and authorizes the president and board to grant the degrees thus achieved."

The 1966 statement makes clear that in the areas for which faculty has primary responsibility "the power of review or final decision lodged in the governing board or delegated by it to the president should be exercised adversely only in exceptional circumstances." Given that the Utica University Board of Trustees claims that the current circumstances are not exceptional (not "hastily borne out of crisis not transparent, or outside the Board's purview"), we condemn the board's failure to observe long-established processes of curricular review at Utica University that clearly establish a role for faculty organizations.

It is notable that the AGB recently reaffirmed its commitment to the principles of shared governance and division of responsibilities set out in the 1966 document in its 2017 Statement on Shared Governance.

We support AAUP-Utica's president Leonore Fleming's January 18, 2023 public statement that the impact on the Utica University community, particularly its students, will extend far beyond the programs

being considered for elimination. Students from all majors benefit from offerings in Philosophy, Chemistry, Spanish and International Studies—to name a few of the programs targeted for elimination—and from the mentoring and dedicated service of the faculty in these programs and departments.