



A Union of Professionals

AFT Higher Education

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Fighting for the Profession

A History of AFT Higher Education



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COVER PHOTOS

Faculty at San Francisco State College, who had formed local 1352, strike for autonomy carrying signs that read “Education, not regimentation.” (From AFT Archives, photo undated)

U.S. Representative Tammy Baldwin (left) joins Joan Grosse, Vice President of the Madison Area Technical College Part-time Teachers’ Union, AFT Local 6100, Labor Day, September, 2002 in Madison, WI. (From AFT Local 6100)

Ellen Schuler Mauk (left), President of AFT Local 3038, Faculty Association of Suffolk Community College, leads interviews of political candidates in 1997. (Photo by Bruce Gilbert)

Members of AFT Local 2190, United University Professions of the State University of New York, take to the streets for solidarity in Spring, 2002. (UUP photo)

AFT's Early Years: Making Our Mark

Higher education faculty were among the first to sign on when the American Federation of Teachers formed in 1916. Professors at Howard University in Washington, D.C., formed the first AFT higher education local in 1918, followed by faculty groups at colleges and universities in New York, Illinois and California.



Moorland-Spincarn Research Center, Howard University

Mary Church Terrell, writer and international women's and civil rights activist, was a charter member of AFT's first higher education local, founded in 1918 at Howard University.

Their vision – to professionalize and democratize relations between academic employees and higher education administration – was prophetic and formative. AFT's founding slogan, "Education for Democracy, Democracy in Education," continues to be a marching cry for AFT leaders.

The American Federation of Teachers grew from several bands of Chicago school teachers who, electrified by the socially progressive movements of the time, sought to launch one of their own. The young organization took two radical steps: it merged male and female teacher groups into one entity, and it sought a

charter from the American Federation of Labor.

These early actions quickly defined the AFT as a progressive union that would eventually lead the movement for collective bargaining in higher education. Other turning points shaped AFT's leadership in the fight for democracy in education:

- After World War II, AFT played a historic role in the passage of the G.I. Bill. Under the bill, as first presented to Congress in 1944, men over 25 did not qualify for all benefits. AFT's legislative director, Selma Borchartd, helped to mobilize organized labor to re-write and push for passage of the boldly inclusive G.I. Bill that changed the landscape of higher education and the American middle class forever.

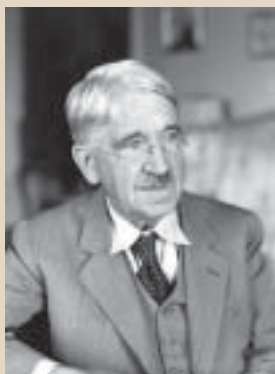
- AFT persisted in calling for equal pay and opportunity for African-American teachers and



American Federation of Labor charter granted to the AFT in 1916.

Early Members and Guiding Lights

John Dewey, then a professor at Columbia University, held AFT membership card Number One. In 1916, he said, “We should have a body of self-respecting teachers and educators who will...



John Dewey, educator, philosopher and early AFT higher education activist.

conceive of themselves as citizens and as servants of the public, and not merely as hired employees of a certain body of men.” Dewey added, “It is because I hope to see the teaching body occupy that position of social leadership which it ought to occupy, and which to our shame it must be said we have not occupied in the

past, that I welcome every movement of this sort.”

Early charter members included Albert Einstein and African-American statesman Ralph Bunche.

Later there were political titans – Vice President Hubert Humphrey and Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield, as well as presidential advisor John Kenneth Galbraith. Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr represented AFT on an early

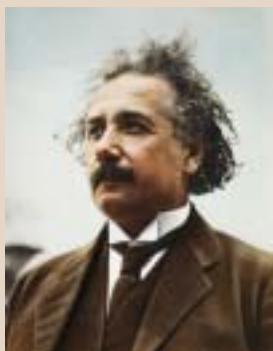


Hubert Humphrey, an AFT member, taught political science in the 1940s before he was elected U.S. Senator from Minnesota and Vice President to Lyndon B. Johnson.

academic freedom panel of the American Civil Liberties Union. Cultural figures include composer Roger Sessions and U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins.



Ralph J. Bunche, AFT charter member from Howard University, undersecretary of the United Nations and Nobel Prize laureate.



Albert Einstein, 1938 AFT charter member at Princeton University, who said, “I find it important, indeed urgently necessary, for intellectual workers to get together both to protect their own economic status and also, generally speaking, to secure their influence in the political field.”

students. In 1954, it filed an *amicus* brief in support of the plaintiffs in Brown v. Board of Education before the Supreme Court. This was followed in 1957 by AFT’s expulsion of 7,000 of its own members when some AFT locals refused to integrate.

The twin pursuits of fairness for teachers and high-quality education chafed against traditional and political assumptions: that white-collar professionals did not need unions, that faculty could get what they needed through collegiality and shared governance, and that educators, as public employees, should not strike.

In the turbulence of the late 1960s and early 1970s, AFT leaders on campuses around the country would successfully challenge all of these assumptions.

Leading the Fight for Collective Bargaining

Between 1958 to 1965 – in just seven years – total enrollment in American institutions of higher education rose from 3.25 million to more than 5.5 million, a leap of 71 percent. Growth in junior and community colleges was even more dramatic as students flocked in unprecedented numbers to public institutions. “Rapid growth was a trigger for us,” says professor of political science William Scheurman,

president of AFT Local 2190, United University Professions/AFT of the State University of New York. “SUNY faculty had the feeling that they could accomplish anything. They said, ‘Look, we’re professionals and we should be able to take our destiny in our hands.’ They knew to turn to the AFT.”

Along with growth in enrollment in both higher education and K-12 came a great increase in activism by educators. Teachers and college faculty members were ready to make the connection between the quality of the education they provided and the quality of their own lives. Without a doubt, the transformative event that sent shock waves around the country was the successful fight of New York City AFT Local 2, United Federation of Teachers (UFT) in 1962 to strike and win collective bargaining rights.



Members of United University Professions/AFT, part of New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) in an early march on the state capital in Albany, New York.

UUP Archives

One charismatic strike leader, a junior high school math teacher named Albert Shanker, became the nation's foremost spokesperson for the rights of teachers to organize and bargain.

Shanker would soon become the president of AFT's Local 2.

In higher education, the first effects of the UFT strike were close to home. The **United Federation of College Teachers (UFCT)**, an AFT faculty local, began organizing on area campuses in New York City with a focus on the City University of New York (CUNY) system. AFT's activism led to passage by the New York Legislature of a law in 1967 granting the public employees the right to choose a collective bargaining agent. Faculty at the Fashion Institute of

Technology (FIT) turned to the AFT for help and quickly won New York's first AFT college contract.

AFT's connection to organized labor in the fashion industry helped in this early breakthrough, says UFCT leader Israel Kugler. "We got the help of an International Ladies Garment Workers' Union official with ties to the Fashion Institute who was able to prevail upon the FIT administration to bargain in good faith." The result was, Kugler recalls, "one of the best contracts in higher education ever seen to this day."

That contract and successor agreements drew in part-time faculty and classified staff as local members. "By 1970, we were wall to wall," says Lou Stollar, psychology professor and president of **United College Employees of FIT, Local 3457**. "That was groundbreaking."

An Early Push For Self-Governance

"The first FIT contract not only gave us a foot in the door but also opened the door wide so that we were now in the business of negotiating a broad range of rights for our employees," says Lou Stollar, president of **United College Employees of FIT, Local 3457**. "I'm not just talking about conventional salaries and working conditions, but also governance rights, and the right of faculty members in a department to select their colleagues and give promotions to their colleagues."



N.Y. Times/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives

Albert Shanker, president of New York City's United Federation of Teachers and future AFT president, leading a march across the Brooklyn Bridge during a UFT strike in 1975. Sandra Feldman, current AFT president, is at right.

At the same time, the UFCT worked to bring a unified collective bargaining agent to CUNY where competing groups vied to represent faculty and staff. "Again we used our strength with the labor movement," Kugler recalls. "Our people set up picket lines that everyone could observe, and soon other faculty

were saying, 'Why not join together?' " In 1969, CUNY faculty formed **AFT Local 2334, Professional Staff Congress/NYSUT**.

The increased clout of this merged local proved to be an inspiration to fragmented faculty organizations around New York state and the nation. By 1972, AFT had added two large state systems, the



PSC Archive

President Belle Zeller and Deputy Israel Kugler soon after the merger of the Legislative Congress and the United Federation of College Teachers to form the Professional Staff Congress/AFT in 1972.

State University of New York (SUNY) and the New Jersey State Colleges and Universities, to its higher education membership.

At SUNY, the new United University Professions brought together an extraordinary combination of big membership numbers, wide geographic reach and solidarity that quickly proved formidable in negotiations with the powerful SUNY administration. In its first year, UUP had 5,000 members. Today, it represents more than 28,000 faculty and professional staff.

At the same time, faculty in the Midwest were seizing their moment to organize. In 1965, the Michigan Legislature passed a



Local 1650 archive

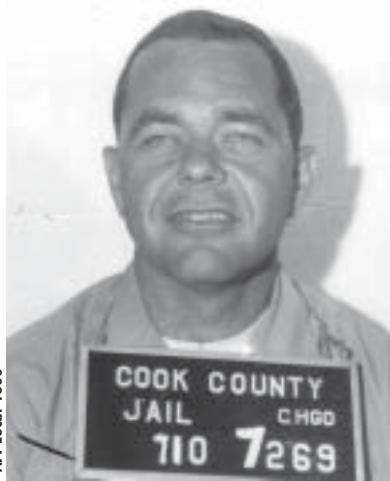
Members of AFT Local 1650 at Henry Ford Community College walk off their jobs at Michigan's largest community college. In 1966, it was the nation's first college walkout.

Public Employee Relations Act allowing public employees to engage in collective bargaining. Faculty at Henry Ford Community College quickly formed **AFT Local 1650, Henry Ford**

Community College Federation of Teachers. This local not only negotiated one of the first higher education contracts nationwide but also became the first higher education union to go on strike when administrators refused to honor that contract.

Another key struggle in AFT's push for collective bargaining was taking place at Chicago City Colleges. **AFT Local 1600, Cook County College Teachers Union** was forced to launch a succession of six strikes between 1966 and 1978 to win bargaining rights and strong contracts for its members. Union president Norman Swenson, a professor of business administration at Olive-Harvey College, went to jail twice for many weeks to win these rights. Local 1600's efforts broke ground for Chicago's other public employee unions – police, firefighters and school teachers – who had not yet tested the limits of collective bargaining law.

AFT's mobilization for collective bargaining in higher education reached westward early. California faculty sought out AFT in the late 1950s and began to build local organizations while lobbying for a bargaining law in the state legislature. By 1966, AFT had locals in state colleges and universities and 11 community colleges which were poised to act when a collective bargaining law was passed in 1975. The AFT's state organization, the **California Federation of Teachers (CFT)**, launched its own faculty group, the **Community College Council (CCC)**. It has become a national model of political, legislative and legal activism over issues such as job security, pro-rata pay and benefits for part-time faculty.



AFT Local 1600

Norman Swenson, president of the Cook County College Teachers Union/AFT, during one of his early stints in jail for striking. Swenson's unwavering commitment to the use of direct action to bring rights to workers is now honored by the AFT's Norman Swenson Higher Education Militancy Award.



Susan Mullaly

Placards from the 1967 March for Education in Sacramento, CA

AFT Higher Education: Today and the Future

Since the early trail-blazing years, AFT has continuously expanded its organizing efforts to the extent that we now represent more than 125,000 higher education faculty and professional staff – more than any other union. Even more important, AFT Higher Education has shown a remarkable ability to shift focus continually at all levels—national, state and local—to meet the evolving challenges facing our members.

Confronting the Academic Personnel Crisis

Look, for example, at the changing nature of the academic personnel structure. Traditionally, higher education has been organized around a strong corps of full-time tenured faculty. But today, full-time tenure-track lines are going unfilled while managers replace them with a growing number of part-time/adjunct faculty, full-time nontenure-track faculty and graduate employees. Too often, members of this new work force—often called “contingent faculty”—are paid exploitative salaries, receive few or no benefits, enjoy little or no job security, and do not receive the professional supports they need and deserve.



Russ Curtis

California Federation of Teachers members push for increased funding at the state capital in Sacramento in 2000.

How is AFT responding? AFT and its affiliates are working state by state, campus by campus to rebuild the tenured ranks. Simultaneously, we are undertaking an unprecedented effort to organize

contingent faculty, improve their wages, hours and working conditions, and accord them professional support.

As a result, AFT now represents more part-time/adjunct faculty than all other unions combined, as well as more than 15,000 graduate employees. Here is a sample of the practical gains we've achieved.

■ **AFT's affiliates work to stem the erosion of the full-time faculty corps.** At the local level, the **Minnesota Community College Faculty Association/AFT/NEA, Local 7171** negotiated a provision which ensures that 70 percent of system

faculty will be full-time faculty with continuing appointments. At the state level, the **California Federation of Teachers Community College Council** worked to pass legislation stating that “at least 75 percent of the hours of credit in the California Community Colleges, as a system, should be taught by full-time instructors.”

■ **AFT part-time/adjunct faculty have won significant gains in compensation.** Working with other labor and higher education groups,



Ellen M. Banner

Washington Federation of Teachers demand equal pay for part-time/adjunct faculty at the state capital in Olympia, WA.

both the **Washington Federation of Teachers** and the **California Federation of Teachers** launched persuasive public and legislative campaigns that enabled them to secure significant increases in state funding earmarked for part-time adjunct faculty salaries. The WFT won a total of \$17.5 million and the CFT an astonishing \$57 million.

■ **AFT part-time/adjunct faculty have won dramatic improvements in job security and advancement opportunities.** AFT published its groundbreaking *Standards of Good Practice in the Employment of Part-time/Adjunct Faculty* in 2002 to improve salary and benefits, job security and professional support for this growing segment of the higher education work force. Building from AFT’s blueprint, unions like **AFT Local 2026, Faculty Federation of the Community College of Philadelphia** have secured:

- a system for accumulating seniority units;
- a seniority system for reappointment and hiring; and
- a requirement that when a full-time hiring committee recommends two candidates for each full-time position, at least one of the candidates must be a qualified member from the part-time/visiting lecturer unit.

■ **AFT graduate employees have won compensated opportunities for training and mentorship as they enter the**



An AFT advertisement promoting its publication, *Standards of Good Practice in the Employment of Part-time/Adjunct Faculty*.



GEO/AFT photo

Members of the Graduate Employees Organization/AFT at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor rally for a contract.

teaching profession. The **AFT Local 3550, Graduate Employees Organization/AFT** at the University of Michigan has secured provisions in its contract to ensure that graduate employees receive paid pedagogical training at the departmental level to help them prepare for the classroom. They also have extended this right to international students who are required to receive English as a Second Language training.

■ **AFT has closed ranks to help a rising group of faculty on the full-time nontenure-track.**

At the University of Vermont where more than a third of local members are nontenured full-timers, **United Academics AAUP/AFT, Local 3203** stood tough through its first round of bargaining and won these faculty members an option for multi-year contracts.

■ **Professional staff, the fastest growing group in higher education, have gained job security and a greater voice through AFT.** AFT locals such as the 25-year-old **University of Connecticut Professional Employees/AFT, Local 3695** have bargained aggressively to gain long-term job security and protection against layoffs for professional staff. This effort was crucial in 2003 when the governor of Connecticut looked to state employees for his first cuts during the ongoing state budget crisis. Other AFT affiliates, such as the **Council of New Jersey State College Locals (CNJSCL)**, have worked to better integrate professionals. “We contractually cemented the role that professional staff plays in academic governance,” says CNJSCL president Nick Yovnelo. Staff have seats on local executive councils and are guaranteed a place at the table during collective bargaining.



United Academics

Members of United Academics AAUP/AFT at the University of Vermont flood the hall outside the President’s office in a pre-Christmas push for their first contract in 2002.

Curbing Attacks on Professional Rights

Under the mantra of running higher education “more like a business,” a new breed of public officials, trustees and administrators is intent on diminishing the traditional authority of faculty and professional staff to make judgments about governance, curriculum, teaching, hiring and promotion. AFT is fighting around the country to answer these challenges.

■ Fighting Back with

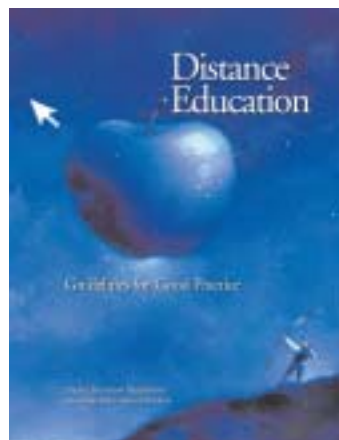
Information The national AFT is continually producing advisories and publications offering concrete guidance to local unions on negotiating and advocating for strong shared governance, tenure and academic freedom, as well as protecting the intellectual property rights of faculty. A wealth of other AFT resources is available on our Web site, www.aft.org/higher_ed.

■ Protecting Shared Governance

AFT has worked tirelessly to protect shared governance and the faculty’s institutional voice, particularly in matters of teaching and research. In the late 1990s new members of the State University of New York Board of Trustees attempted to impose their own core curriculum on every campus in the system. The response of **Local 2190, United University Professions/AFT/AAUP**, was bold. “We got together with our colleagues in the faculty senate and censured the trustees,” says UUP president William Scheuerman. “This had never happened anywhere in the nation.” The censure caught the attention of the new governor, George Pataki, and the SUNY Board backed off.

■ Setting Standards for Distance Education

Distance education can be a wonderful educational tool, but too often it is being promoted as a means to “deliver” a standardized,



AFT's *Distance Education: Guidelines for Good Practice* set standards to ensure that education, not economics, is at the center of distance education.



UUP Archive

UUP President William Scheuerman addresses a rally at SUNY/Cortland in 1997. Scheuerman also leads AFT's Higher Education Program and Policy Council.

byte-sized, mass-produced college curriculum, with short shrift given to same-time, same-place interchange between teachers and students. Since 1996, AFT has taken the lead in keeping our members up to date on the latest developments in distance education, as well as advocating for high-quality distance education and curbs on fraud and abuse. AFT's *Distance Education: Guidelines for Good Practice* serves as a roadmap for collective bargaining and legislative activity in this arena. For example, **AFT Local 1895, the University of Massachusetts Faculty Federation**, has taken the lead in applying these policies at the bargaining table, winning provisions that:

- ensure no reduction in faculty positions due to distance education;
- maintain faculty control over the distance education curriculum; and
- provide faculty with the necessary training and support for teaching distance education.

■ Defending the

Academy with Scholarship AFT has launched an academic journal to explore the intellectual underpinnings of academic rights and values. Through scholarship and research, authors will challenge the so-called “market model” of education that defines higher education primarily in job-related terms and sees universities as businesses which require a small leadership corps directing an army of voiceless employees.

Other Defenses of Higher Education

■ **Protecting the Flow of Funding** AFT aggressively fights efforts by state legislators to reduce funding to public higher education by cutting state budgets. For example, **AFT Local 4100, University Professionals of Illinois**, formed a broad and diverse coalition including organized labor, student groups and such organizations as the League of Women Voters, Citizen Action, the Urban League and others to press the state Legislature for better funding. The coalition brought people from every corner of the state to rally at the statehouse. In response, the Legislature passed a surcharge on the state income tax that created a fund



A state-wide coalition joins members of the University Professionals of Illinois, AFT Local 4100, to rally in Springfield.

UPI photo

earmarked for higher education. The result: retention of necessary programs and a salary increase of more than 9 percent in two successive years.

■ **AFT has won improved student access to institutions of higher education.**

Through coalition building with the New York Central Labor Council, the **Professional Staff Congress/AFT/AAUP** at the City University of New York helped to pass a bill that enables immigrants awaiting documentation to pay in-state tuition, thereby making higher

education affordable for many students for whom it was not. “We joined this fight because we believe in democratic access to education,” says Barbara Bowen, president of Professional Staff Congress. To promote student access nationally, the AFT executive council passed a resolution encouraging all states to adopt such provisions.



PSC photo

Professional Staff Congress/AFT/AAUP President Barbara Bowen rallies CUNY faculty, staff and students at a demonstration in New York City.

How AFT Can Help You

AFT affiliates achieve results with the assistance of a strong network of resources and services. These include:

■ The Higher Education Contract Analysis System, an electronic collection of more than 620 contracts that locals can draw upon in negotiations.

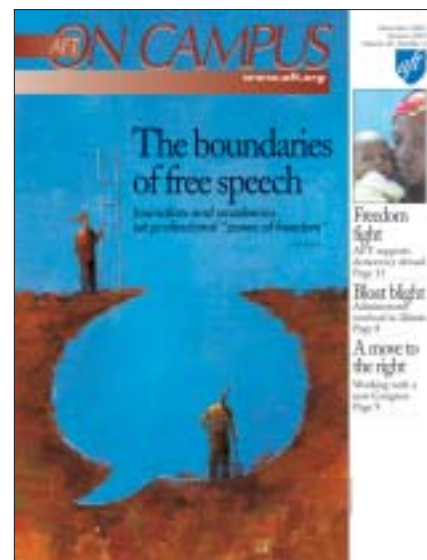
■ Personal technical assistance in building and maintaining an effective union.

■ A legislative network for state federation officials to track pending legislation and develop coordinated responses to key issues.

■ Political clout at the state and national levels coupled with assistance in raising political funds.

■ An Electronic Communications Network on higher education news, issues and AFT resources at www.aft.org/higher_ed.

■ *AFT On Campus* the union’s award-winning monthly newspaper,



AFT On Campus, the monthly newspaper distributed to members of AFT Higher Education.

featuring higher education news and trends of national note and local concern.

■ Publications, policy statements, practical guides from our higher education department.

■ The assistance of the labor movement at the national, state and local levels.

Conclusion

Today, the American Federation of Teachers is a powerful and resourceful representative for faculty interests. Its strength was hewn over decades of mobilization, research, lobbying, public persuasion and, most significantly, hard negotiations at the bargaining table.

At the heart of AFT's work is a commitment to the voices of faculty and professional staff in the academic workplace. The landscape of American academia is changing, transformed by fiscal, corporate and philosophical forces beyond the control of any single faculty member. By joining together, AFT members across the country have created the counterforce of a strong professional union – a powerful tool for faculty who fight not only for respect and a decent life, but also for a quality experience for their students and the survival of the academy itself.

Contact Us

For further information, visit the AFT Higher Education Web site: www.aft.org/higher_ed, or contact AFT Higher Education at highered@aft.org, or call us at (202) 879-4426.

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