

REPORT SAYS



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inHerald-Leader staff writer Copyright 1983, Lexington Herald-Leader Morehead State University violated the academic freedom of two professors, may have harassed another professor and operates in a climate that stifles faculty dissent, according to a report that a national organization of college professors has approved for publication.

The university had "disregard for academic freedom and tenure, for academic due process and for a meaningful faculty role in academic government," the American Association of University Professors says in a report scheduled for publication in the next edition of its journal.

The report, based on events in 1979 and an investigation in 1980, included these findings:

- * The university violated the academic freedom and academic due process of then-assistant professor Franz Altschuler and then-instructor Gerry A. Hoover by not renewing their contracts when they persisted in a grievance procedure against their supervisor, Dr. Bill Booth, chairman of MSU' s art department;
- * Douglas Adams, an associate professor of art who actively supported Altschuler and Hoover, "may have suffered retaliation" for his action;
- * MSU maintains a climate "sufficient to keep any faculty committee from playing an effective role if the administration should confront a dissident faculty voice."

"From what it witnessed of the climate at Morehead State University, the (AAUP) investigating committee found remarkable not the smallness of the number of faculty members willing to talk freely but the extraordinary courage of those who did," the report says.

MSU President Morris L. Norfleet declined to comment on the report yesterday. However, in an earlier statement to the AAUP he said the university has a policy against giving reasons for not renewing contracts of non-tenured professors. Both Altschuler and Hoover were non-tenured faculty.

The dispute stems for a disagreement over an exhibition of faculty members' art work in August 1979. Booth reprimanded five members, including Altschuler and Hoover, for telling another professor how his art should be displayed.

The five filed a complaint, Booth apologized but Altschuler and Hoover subsequently were not reappointed to their jobs. Their loss of jobs gave rise to accusations that they were being fired for opposing Booth.

The confidential report has been sent to the principal figures in the dispute, telling them that the document has been approved for publication and inviting final comments. The Lexington Herald-Leader obtained a copy from a source who asked not to be identified.

Dr. Lesley Lee Francis, associate secretary of the AAUP in Washington, confirmed yesterday that the 31-page draft has been approved for publication. She said the AAUP's committee on academic freedom and tenure will decide in June whether to censure MSU.

An AAUP censure has no legal impact, but according to a faculty member who asked not to be identified, "It's a black eye in the educational community."

Dr. Francis said the final responses could cause some revisions in the report, but she said "I doubt there will be major changes."

"Our committee views it (the allegations against MSU) as a sufficiently serious violation of our standards to publish the report in our journal," she said.

The report was prepared by a two-member AAUP investigating committee. The members were its chairman, J.W. Patterson, a speech professor at the University of Kentucky, and Amy L. Vandersall, an art history professor at the University of Colorado. Patterson declined comment on the report yesterday.

The committee visited the MSU campus on Nov. 10-11, 1980.

Since then, the report was prepared and all parties have been given a chance to respond to it. Summaries of the responses have been included in the version that has been approved for publication.

The AAUP has asked for final responses by Monday.

The dispute arose when Hoover and art professor Roger Jones disagreed "over the appropriate professional standards for the mounting (of art work) when Mr. Hoover's request that Professor Jones' drawings be glazed or framed was refused by Professor Jones," the report says.

Jones withdrew from the exhibition, the report says, and Booth sent a memo reprimanding five department members -- Altschuler, Hoover, Adams, the late Gene Pyle and Joe D. Sartor.

Booth said they had violated Jones' academic freedom by not allow him to hang his paintings as he wished and had committed an "aberration of acceptable professional conduct" for which they would be held "personally accountable," according to the report. Booth said each of the five should send an apology to Jones for their "O'professionally abhorrent and ethically repugnant' denial of his freedom of artistic

expression."

The five art professors then filed a complaint with a faculty grievance committee and a series of meetings involving administrators ensued.

The 12-member grievance committee issued a unanimous report on Oct. 30 upholding the contention of the five professors that Booth had exceeded his authority and was "unduly threatening." The grievance committee recommended a written apology from Booth, which he delivered on Dec. 7.

Then, according to the report, Altschuler and Hoover were notified on Dec. 24 that their contracts were not being renewed.

Pyle resigned under protest on Feb. 4.

In its report, the AAUP says that Altschuler and Hoover were denied their right to know the reason for not being reappointed and were denied a proper grievance hearing because of a technicality.

Norfleet, in his written response to the AAUP in 1982, said the decision not to reappoint Altschuler and Hoover dated back to Feb. 13, 1979, six months before the art gallery dispute.

Booth, in his written response, accused Altschuler and Hoover of spending more time on private art work than their teaching duties, among other allegations. Booth also said Hoover failed to fulfill his duties in the art gallery.

However, the AAUP committee said that it considered the assertions by Norfleet and Booth to be "unsupported by any convincing evidence."

"The investigation committee found nothing during its visits to Morehead State that suggests any sufficient reasons for not renewing the appointments of Mr. Altschuler and Mr. Hoover that are permissible under generally accepted principles of academic freedom," the report says.

Hoover, who now works as an artist and lives outside Morehead, denied Booth's accusations yesterday. Altschuler, who now lives in Chicago, and Booth, who was out of town, could not be reached for comment.

Adams told the AAUP that he had been accused of various actions, including taking materials from the art department and not meeting with classes.

Adams declined comment on the report, but in his written response to the AAUP, Adams denied the accusations and said that his integrity as a professor had never been questioned until after the dispute occurred.

The AAUP also expressed serious concern about relations between the faculty and administration at MSU.

"The climate at Morehead State University is illustrated by some specific incidents witnessed by the investigating committee during its visit," the report says.

"The committee was told that word spread quickly about who visited the motel where interviews were conducted. One faculty member would speak to the committee only on the telephone, and another consented to come only after dark."

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