Founding and early decades (1916-1949)

At the beginning of the 1967-68 academic year, one of Whitman College’s most esteemed faculty members, Thomas D. Howells (1938-77), invited his colleagues to join the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). Noting that the AAUP is the “largest and most influential professional association of college and university teachers and researchers,” Howells wrote:

The work of the Whitman Chapter has given a local emphasis to the principles which the Association supports: academic freedom and tenure; acceptable practices in appointments, reappointments, evaluation, and promotion; the improvement of the economic status of the profession; faculty participation in college government; and the assurance of an effective role for the faculty in the determination and pursuit of institutional objectives. At Whitman the Chapter has had an important role in obtaining the tenure system; the procedures used in appointments, reappointments, and promotions; the organization of the faculty; the sabbatical program; tuition grants for children of faculty members; summer study and research grants; allowances for travel; and other programs for the benefit of the profession.

On behalf of his fellow chapter officers, Robert Blumenthal and G. Thomas Edwards, Howells closed his letter by emphasizing that “Whitman has a long and sturdy tradition of academic freedom,” and to “this tradition the Chapter gives its constant support.”

What Howells did not say in this letter was that the AAUP chapter at Whitman was one of the earliest to be formed in the nation. One year after its founding in 1915, guided by its first president, John Dewey, the AAUP initiated a campaign to attract new members. The chair of the committee formed for this purpose, Professor Frederick Padelford at the University of Washington, sent to Professor Louis Anderson at Whitman a letter inviting him to submit his own name as well as that of other colleagues for consideration as members. That letter, dated October 26, 1916, predicted that over time the AAUP “will profoundly influence the cause of
higher education.” As evidence of work already accomplished by the fledgling organization, Padelford cited its recent report regarding “the troubles at Utah.” Authored by Dewey, Edwin Seligman, Arthur Lovejoy, Roscoe Pound, and others, this report was prepared following an inquiry into the 1915 dismissal of faculty members at the University of Utah who, in one case, had been charged by its president with speaking disrespectfully about the chair of the board of regents and, in another, with speaking in “a depreciatory manner” about the administration. The AAUP’s detailed inquiry into this matter anticipated and exemplified its subsequent efforts to affirm the institution of tenure and, in doing so, to safeguard faculty from arbitrary dismissal based on grounds unrelated to professional competence.

Acting on Padelford’s invitation, on December 12, 1916, Professor Anderson convened a group of Whitman College faculty members who agreed to submit their names for election as AAUP members and, if approved, to consider formation of a “unit” of the association. Among the 347 nominees listed in the final 1916 issue of the AAUP’s national publication, in addition to Anderson (Greek), other Whitman faculty included Walter Bratton (Mathematics), Howard Brode (Biology), William Lyman (History), and Edward Ruby (Latin). Their election was formally announced in the January 1917 issue of the AAUP Bulletin in addition to new members from major universities, including Harvard, Yale, Johns Hopkins, Cornell, Princeton, Columbia, Chicago, Berkeley, and Wisconsin, as well as other renowned liberal arts colleges, including Amherst, Haverford, Colorado, Bryn Mawr, Lafeyette, Oberlin, Mount Holyoke, Reed, Swarthmore, Union, and Wesleyan.

No official record of a campus chapter appears until 1922 when the May issue of the Bulletin announced the election of officers on several campuses, including, at Whitman, Anderson as president and Brode as secretary. This issue, which includes news from other chapters, indicates the ongoing salience of issues concerning tenure and academic freedom. For example, the Clark University chapter reported on the controversy that erupted when its president, after approving a campus talk by noted economist, Scott Nearing, dismissed those in attendance on the ground that Clark “undergraduates were too immature to be allowed to listen” to his radical views. Similarly, the Dartmouth chapter reported on recent “attacks on the teaching of evolution now being made by members of the Fundamentalist movement” and, in response, its decision “to put itself on record as unalterably opposed to any action by ecclesiastical or other
authority, whether duly constituted or not, which shall hinder the search for truth or restrict the freedom of teaching.”

This issue of the Bulletin also indicates that important but less charged issues of academic policy were considered by AAUP chapters around the United States. For example, the group at Harvard announced the university’s adoption of a policy requiring all seniors except those concentrating in mathematics and the natural sciences to pass comprehensive examinations in their major fields of study (a policy that Whitman College was the first in the nation to adopt for all seniors in 1914). The chapter at what was then called the Massachusetts State University reported on the state legislature’s creation of a commission “to report upon the opportunities and provision for technical and higher education within the Commonwealth.” And the University of Minnesota chapter reported on several cost-cutting measures under consideration, including the possible elimination of recently created academic departments.

At Whitman, chapter minutes indicate the fairly regular conduct of monthly meetings, especially following the addition of nine new members in 1925 (including Chester Maxey who, as president of the College from 1948 to 1959, would play an unintended but key role in prompting the chapter’s growth during his term). Typically held in faculty members’ homes and including a social hour, these meetings were most often devoted to discussion of general questions pertaining to higher education in the United States and their implications for Whitman. To cite a few, topics included the value of the lecture as a pedagogical method, intercollegiate athletics, extra-curricular activities, and the admission and retention of students. That at least some of these discussions served as tentative steps toward what would eventually come to be known as “shared governance,” in which faculty oversee the structure of the academic program and play a central role in shaping other elements of college policy that affect that program, is suggested by the chapter’s consideration of the relationship between faculty and the board of trustees, the financial standing of the college, and recommendations advanced by then President Penrose concerning the curriculum and the conduct of student examinations.

Occasionally, though, the Whitman chapter would weigh in on national controversies. For example, throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the AAUP was repeatedly asked to conduct inquiries into alleged violations of academic freedom and due process in sanctioning faculty members. One of the more controversial investigations occurred in 1929 following dismissal of one University of Missouri faculty member and the suspension of a second without pay for their
role in distribution of a student-initiated survey that posed questions about divorce, birth control, and infidelity in relation to “the traditional system of marriage in this country.” The AAUP committee formed to review this matter concluded that the disciplinary actions taken by the university violated the principles of freedom of teaching and research as well as the security of tenure, and it argued that prospective faculty members would be well-advised to decline offers of appointment at Missouri. Anticipating what in time would become the AAUP’s censure list, one member of that committee, Louis Thurstone, proposed that Missouri be “stricken from the colleges acceptable to the American Association of University Professors.” Soon after, a second faculty member, R.W. Gerard, proposed that the AAUP establish an academic freedom fund in order to cover on a temporary basis the salaries of faculty members whose dismissals, following an appropriate inquiry, were found unjustified.

Although sympathetic in principle, following extended discussion, the AAUP’s executive council rejected the proposals advanced by Thurstone and Gerard, but concluded that chapters should be invited to comment on them. On March 18, 1930, the Whitman College AAUP chapter met to do so. That meeting’s minutes summarize this discussion as follows:

The members of the chapter were unanimous in their feeling that both of these proposals were unwise. They felt that the Association should stand for permanency of tenure for well qualified men. It cannot defend every man regardless of his fitness for the position. The members feel that the dignified and thorough investigation of the cases, together, with the publication of the results, is as much as we can do at the present time, and that such work will accomplish very much along the line of improving conditions of tenure in the universities and colleges.

In offering this response, the Whitman chapter effectively affirmed tenure as the most effective mechanism for protecting academic freedom, but echoed the executive committee’s concern that recourse to something akin to formal censure might endanger the AAUP’s public stature. Just five years later, however, the AAUP published a document titled Institutions Removed from the Eligible List, and, in 1938, it explained that this list would be issued each year for the “sole purpose of informing Association members, the profession at large, and the public that unsatisfactory conditions of academic freedom have been found to prevail at these institutions.”

“The Tenure War” (1949-1952)
Aside from occasional communications received from the national office, evidence of work performed by the Whitman AAUP chapter during the 1930s and 1940s is scant. That would change dramatically, however, when what several faculty members came to dub “The Tenure War” erupted at the College. This event, which concerns what is arguably the single most significant accomplishment of the Whitman College AAUP chapter, is briefly chronicled by its one-time secretary, G. Thomas Edwards, in the second volume of his history of the College (see especially pp. 286-301). The account offered here draws on Edwards’ account, but is supplemented by additional review of archival materials. The present section provides an account of the chapter’s pivotal role in shaping Whitman College’s first formal tenure policy, and the section that follows discusses the chapter’s work over the course of the following quarter century in pressing for adoption of faculty review and dismissal procedures that are consistent with AAUP guidelines.

Toward the end of the 1940s, faculty at many colleges and universities grew increasingly restless under what Edwards describes as “paternalistic” rule by presidents and the boards that appointed them. One key issue concerned tenure policies, which, when absent or in some cases customary but uncodified, enabled governing authorities to exercise more or less unfettered discretion in dismissing faculty members without any avenue for peer review or appeal. This issue came to a head at Whitman when, without consulting or notifying the faculty, the governing board adopted a tenure policy in March of 1949 and, at its meeting on May 28, 1950, incorporated that policy into the College constitution and bylaws. At the beginning of the 1950-51 academic year, at the first faculty meeting, President Chester Maxey stated that copies of the revised documents were available, but provided no indication that they included a formal tenure policy. The existence of that policy, as well as its implications for the conditions of faculty employment, only became apparent when, in October, Maxey sent letters to assistant and associate professors, including those who had been at the College for many years, indicating when their current appointments would end according to its terms.

The ensuing controversy revolved around several overlapping issues. The first concerned the question of whether certain long-standing faculty members, absent a formal written policy, enjoyed tenure as a result of commitments made by Maxey’s predecessors. The second concerned the question of whether the policy was consistent with the principles enumerated in the AAUP’s historic 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure. The third
concerned the question of whether a policy inconsistent with those principles would harm the overall mission of the College. On each of these questions, beginning with a November 1, 1950 meeting attended by three-quarters of the faculty, the AAUP chapter at Whitman College led the challenge.

On the first issue, the chapter expressed its vigorous objection to retroactive application of the new policy to long-serving assistant and associate professors. For example, like many others, the president of the Whitman chapter, Thomas Howells, received a letter from Maxey indicating that his appointment would “expire at the end of the academic year 1952-53.” On Howell’s understanding, he had been granted “indefinite tenure” in 1943 by Maxey’s immediate predecessor, Winslow Anderson, following completion of a five-year appointment as an instructor and promotion to the rank of assistant professor. In support of this reading of established practice, other faculty members cited passages in letters of appointment and re-appointment that appeared to presuppose Whitman’s commitment to tenure following successful completion of a one to three-year probationary period. Still more evidence was provided by the legendary Stephen Penrose who served as Whitman’s president from 1894 to 1934 and who, in his history of the College, had written: “After a year of trial the new member of the faculty was made to feel that his tenure of office was secure, and that he belonged to the College for as long as he continued to render it faithful service.” On these grounds, the chapter argued that the new policy departed from long-standing custom, and its application deprived many faculty of the employment status they had good reason to believe had been guaranteed to them.

With respect to the policy’s conformity to the AAUP’s 1940 Statement, when Howells explained the unfolding situation to the national office, he was informed that President Anderson had assured its executive director that Whitman’s practices with respect to tenure were congruent with its principles. That, however, was clearly not so. Defining tenure as an indispensable guarantor of academic freedom, the AAUP statement affirmed that “after the expiration of a probationary period” [which, according to the document, should not exceed seven years] “teachers or investigators should have permanent or continuous tenure, and their service should be terminated only for adequate cause, except in the case of retirement for age, or under extraordinary circumstances because of financial exigencies.” This provision was adopted in order to ensure that all faculty members regardless of rank, following a demonstration of their qualifications during a finite period, would enjoy the freedoms and due process protections that
are essential to the unfettered pursuit and advancement of knowledge, whether in their capacity as teachers, scholars, or members of the larger public. The policy adopted by Whitman’s governing board, however, only established the possibility of tenure for those at the rank of professor. Following initial one-year appointments, by way of contrast, those at the rank of assistant professor would be considered for re-appointment for two academic years, and at the associate rank for three years, but in neither case with an assurance of tenure. On an exceptional basis, the policy authorized the Board of Trustees to grant tenure to faculty members at these ranks, but exclusively at its discretion.

On the question of the policy’s impact on the College more generally, in a letter to President Maxey, the chapter argued that its implementation would aggravate “the serious deterioration that has already occurred in the morale of the Faculty.” This demoralization in turn would impair “that strong sense of identification with the permanent interest of the College long characteristic of the Whitman faculty.” Moreover, by replacing a policy of “indefinite tenure” with one of “indefinite probation,” the policy “puts in hazard the professional investment of time and cumulative skill which characterizes the productive scholar.” The net result, the chapter anticipated, would be to undermine the reputation of the College and, in doing so, render it difficult to recruit and retain the best possible instructors. The chapter’s letter closed by requesting that the policy be reconsidered and that the faculty be afforded an opportunity to participate in its reformulation.

On November 30, 1950, the Faculty Council echoed the chapter’s position in a letter to the Board of Trustees. Quoting from the 1940 AAUP Statement, as endorsed by the American Association of Colleges (re-named the American Association of Colleges and Universities in 1995) as well as many other organizations, this communication explained the rationale for tenure as follows: “Tenure is a mean to certain ends, specifically: 1) freedom of teaching and research and of extramural activities, and 2) a sufficient degree of economic security to make the profession attractive to men and women of ability. Freedom and economic security, hence, tenure, are indispensable to the success of an institution in fulfilling its obligations to its students and to society.” Under the terms of the new policy, however, faculty members at the assistant and associate ranks “might remain at the College for an unlimited number of years on annual, biennial, or triennial appointments.” To make clear the scope of the Whitman policy, the Council noted that at the time only a quarter of the faculty held the rank of professor, and that therefore,
absent promotion, the remaining 75% would be relegated to permanent status as “temporary” employees of the College. Reiterating the chapter’s complaint that the faculty was neither consulted nor informed during this policy’s formulation, the Council proposed a revision whose language was adopted more or less verbatim from the AAUP’s 1940 *Statement*, and, specifically, the provision stating that “beginning with appointment to the rank of full-time instructor or a higher rank, the probationary period should not exceed seven years,” and that all faculty members by the end of that period should either be dismissed or granted tenure.

This already tense situation was aggravated when Maxey, at a faculty meeting on December 15, 1950, announced that the drafting of college age men following outbreak of the Korean War was expected to cause a significant contraction of the student body and hence a decline in tuition revenue. He then indicated that the Board of Trustees was unwilling to incur a deficit and that, if necessary, the College would close at the end of the 1950-51 academic year until there was once again a sufficient “demand for educational services of the type provided by Whitman.” Accordingly, Maxey gave all faculty members six months’ notice of “contingent dismissal” so that they could begin to seek alternative employment. Finally, he indicated that in all likelihood it would not be until July or August that they would know whether they would be retained for the 1951-52 academic year.

At its final meeting in 1950, the Board acknowledged receipt of the Faculty Council’s letter and agreed to place this question on its agenda to be considered “as time permits.” When no response was forthcoming, at its January 31, 1951 meeting, Howells proposed that the Faculty Council, of which he was then a member, adopt seven resolutions. Those resolutions included statements of objection to Maxey’s placement of all faculty on notice of contingent dismissal; his refusal to initiate planning for the College’s anticipated financial crisis; the failure of the Board to consult with the faculty in formulating the tenure policy; and its apparent unwillingness to meet with the faculty or its representatives to discuss revision of that policy. Although Howells ultimately withdrew these resolutions, on the following day, the Whitman faculty unanimously adopted a motion affirming its view that the policy was “unsatisfactory” and requesting the Board’s adoption of the revision proposed by the Council.

At about the same time, the Faculty Council sought from the Association of American Colleges information about the number of institutions that had adopted policies congruent with the principles articulated in the AAUP’s 1940 *Statement*. In response, it learned that only 30 of
300 member institutions, including Whitman, had adopted policies that differed significantly from those principles. Fortified by this information, on December 6, 1951, by a vote of 34 to 4, with one abstention, the faculty voted in favor of a policy that would grant tenure to all members who had already completed seven years of service, and, for new appointments, tenure review during the sixth year of service. President Maxey brought this revision to the Board on February 23, 1952, and, at that meeting, it revised the tenure policy incorporated within the College’s governing documents as follows:

Persons holding the rank of associate professor, and assistant professor, and instructor may be given indefinite tenure by special vote of the Board of Trustees at any time, but any such who have not been given indefinite tenure prior to the end of their sixth year of service shall at that time be notified in writing whether they will be given indefinite tenure at the end of their seventh year of service; and in the event that indefinite tenure be not given, such persons shall not be continued in the service of the College beyond the end of their seventh year of service.

Leaving aside a 1962 modification that clarified the eligibility of those denied tenure to employment during their seventh year at the College, in its essentials, it is this policy that remains in place today.

The aftermath of “The Tenure War”

No doubt, as Howells indicated in private correspondence, approval of the revised tenure policy represented “a notable victory for the faculty.” That victory, however, effectively generated new questions that would vex the College for decades to come. These questions included: 1) the nature of the provisions that would trigger dismissal or suspension proceedings against faculty members as well as the due process protections afforded to those subject to these sanctions; 2) the criteria to be employed in evaluating faculty under review for contract renewal, tenure, and/or promotion; and 3) the question of who is to take part in the conduct of these reviews as well as the relative authority of the several participants. A detailed account of the way the College has addressed each of these issues is beyond the scope of this history. Here, it suffices to note that, during the quarter century following the College’s adoption and revision of a formal tenure policy, the Whitman AAUP chapter played a key role in shaping its response to each of these questions.
As incorporated into the College’s constitution and bylaws in 1950, the tenure policy authorized the suspension or dismissal of faculty members, regardless of status, on the basis of:

1) “conviction of an infamous crime;”
2) “misconduct reflecting seriously upon the College or upon the character or reputation of the person involved;” or
3) “being a member, associate, or supporter of any organization which gives allegiance to a foreign power or strives to undermine or overthrow the Government of the United States by other than constitutional means.”

(In 1962, rendering these criteria still more problematic, the faculty proposed and the Board endorsed a fourth cause for suspension or dismissal: “Mental or physical disability or unfitness to perform the duties for which he was appointed.”)

Perhaps unsettling to contemporary ears, in its November 30, 1950 letter, the Faculty Council assured the Board that these “admirable” criteria for dismissal and suspension “seem to offer sufficient protection to the College against undesirable results of indefinite tenure, once attained.” In part, the absence of articulated concern about these criteria may be indicative of the fact that, according to Edwards, “as early as 1947, Whitman faculty members had been required by state law to swear that they would support the federal and state constitutions and the flag, and show reverence for law and order and undivided allegiance to the government of the United States.” To its credit, following a 1964 U.S. Supreme Court decision striking down loyalty oaths for state employees, the Whitman AAUP chapter proposed that the College eliminate the requirement that Whitman faculty do the same as a condition of employment. Moreover, two years later, the College adopted due process protections in dismissal and suspension cases modeled in large part after guidelines set forth in the AAUP’s 1958 *Statement on Procedural Standards in Faculty Dismissal Proceedings*. That said, it would be nearly half a century before the formal causes for suspension and dismissal, as initially stipulated in the 1950 policy and amended in 1962, were replaced by causes restricted to conduct, to quote the current Faculty Code, that is “related, directly and substantially, to the fitness of faculty members in their professional capacities.”

Far greater attention was paid during this period to the question of what role faculty should play in the process of conducting evaluations for contract renewal, tenure, and/or promotion. At the 1952 meeting during which the tenure policy was amended, Maxey also proposed and secured Board approval of a set of criteria to be employed in evaluating candidates, and these criteria were communicated to the faculty one year later. In addition to assessments of
teaching, “scholarly attainments,” and “service to the College in other capacities than teaching,” Maxey indicated, these evaluations would consider whether faculty members have been “cooperative and constructive in relation with faculty colleagues and officers of administration,” whether there are concerns about the “moral character” of candidates, and echoing one of the grounds for dismissal, whether there are any doubts about their “loyalty to the government of the United States of America” or to “Whitman College and the principles of education for which it stands.”

In this communication, Maxey stated that recommendations for or against granting tenure in specific cases were to be advanced to the Board on the basis of evaluations conducted by the president and the dean of the faculty. Granted, Maxey and his immediate successors customarily convened “selection committees” that included senior faculty members in a consultative capacity, but no formal mechanisms for peer review were in place at this time. (The absence of these mechanisms, Edwards suggests, may partly explain why, during the eleven years of Maxey’s presidency, by his own reckoning, thirty-two faculty members resigned and another thirty-five were terminated.)

The earliest archival record of the AAUP chapter’s response to this problematic situation appears in 1962 when its members debated a resolution for possible presentation to the entire faculty. Anticipating the structure in place today, an initial draft of that resolution called for creation of a committee on evaluation and tenure. The three faculty members on this body would be elected by the faculty and serve for three-year terms, with the dean of the faculty serving in a non-voting ex officio capacity. This committee’s charge would be to gather “by all available means information bearing upon the effectiveness of members of the teaching faculty and the desirability of their being retained in service, promoted, and given tenure,” and, following review of that information, to “transmit to the President of the College conclusions and recommendations.” For reasons that are not clear from the archival record, the proposal eventually adopted by the chapter did not advance this recommendation, but, more modestly, called for contract renewal, tenure, and promotion reviews to be conducted by the president, the dean of the faculty, the chairs of the academic divisions, the “senior professor” (presumably of the department in which the candidate was located), and any other persons invited by the president to participate. At its November 1962 meeting, President Lou Perry announced to the faculty adoption of an evaluation process that was essentially congruent with this proposal.
It would be several decades, however, before faculty would become the primary participants in evaluation of their peers. An important step in this direction occurred in 1976 when Howells, now serving not as president of the AAUP chapter but as elected chair of the faculty, urged his colleagues to consider creation of annual ad hoc tenure committees. The membership of these committees, Howells proposed, “would consist only of full-time members of the teaching faculty,” but absent any member of a candidate’s own department. In their deliberations, he continued, “departmental members, the Dean, and the Division Chairmen would act as witnesses,” but would not participate directly in formulation of recommendations to the president. At about the same time, the current president of the chapter, Ray Norsworthy, announced to the faculty that it had formed a committee to study “the criteria and procedures by which decisions are made with respect to appointment, promotion, tenure and dismissals,” with an eye toward advancing recommendations that “conform to AAUP principles.”

These efforts bore fruit later in that same year when Robert Skotheim, one year into his presidency, and Kenyon Knopf, dean of the faculty, announced adoption of new criteria and procedures, as crafted by an ad hoc Committee on Faculty Evaluation and Development. This detailed document, which in most respects anticipates the policy in place today, effectively jettisoned the problematic criteria proposed by Maxey and adopted by the Board in 1952. In their stead, the new policy stated that faculty undergoing evaluation would be assessed in terms of three “essential” criteria: “1) good teaching, 2) an active professional life of high quality so that good teaching will continue throughout one’s career, and 3) responsible academic advising.”

With regard to the review process itself, this policy made provision for the creation of separate evaluation committees for consideration of contract renewal, tenure, and promotion cases, respectively. With some variation in composition, these committees included the appropriate division chair, the tenured members of the departments, and at least four other tenured members of the faculty. “At their discretion,” the policy also stated, the president and the dean of the faculty “shall sit with the committee as non-voting members.” Only in the following decade was the current Faculty Personnel Committee, composed exclusively of faculty members elected to review all contract renewal, tenure, and promotion cases in any given year, with the dean serving as an ex officio member, finally created. Under this system, the principle of peer review was at last realized insofar as, although not formally codified, it is now generally understood that recommendations generated by the Personnel Committee will be endorsed by
administrators and governing boards unless there are compelling reasons to do otherwise and those reasons are communicated to the Committee.

*Academic freedom, faculty compensation, and sabbaticals (1952-78)*

Beyond questions of tenure, faculty evaluation, and dismissal, the two and a half decades immediately following “The Tenure War” represented the most active in the chapter’s history. Indeed, in 1965, of 81 faculty members on the College’s payroll, 45 names were submitted to the national office as chapter members. Of particular note during this period is the chapter’s work in the areas of academic freedom, faculty compensation, and sabbatical leaves.

With respect to academic freedom, in 1964, on behalf of the Washington State Conference of the AAUP, the Whitman chapter submitted the following statement to the Faculty Council for its consideration and endorsement:

A university by its very nature cannot pay lip service to the concept of freedom of expression and then deny persons with whom it is in sharp disagreement the opportunity of giving expression to their views. In order that members of the college or university community may participate meaningfully in the affairs and problems of society at all levels, they should be allowed to hear all significant points of view. It should be remembered that a policy which extends the right of freedom of expression to some and denies it to others puts an institution in the position of endorsing the views and past records of those who are permitted to speak. Therefore, the Washington State Conference of the American Association of University Professors makes these statements:

1) Any faculty or recognized student group may invite to its campus any speaker the group would like to hear.

2) The appearance of an invited speaker on the campus does not involve an endorsement, either implicit or explicit, of his views by the institution, its faculty, its administration, or its governing board.

Later that year, the Council voted to recommend this statement to the entire faculty and, once approved by that body, to the Board of Trustees.

At its December 4, 1964 meeting, the Board endorsed these two principles, but, in doing so, it stated that its dedication to academic freedom is qualified by belief that “this freedom implies the concept of responsibility in the exercise thereof.” This linkage of academic freedom to the category of responsibility was also apparent in the Faculty Handbook at the time. In a
communication to the national office of the AAUP, in his capacity as chapter president, Howells quoted the 1964 edition as follows:

The subject of academic freedom always has been one of concern in education. The fact that its advocates universally have not been concerned with academic responsibility does not diminish the validity of the concept of academic freedom.

Academic freedom relates to the exercise of the scholar’s competence. It does not extend to all other acts and opinions of those engaged in scholarly activities. In non-scholarly areas the same civil liberties as well as moral and legal standards of the environment apply to those engaged in academic pursuits as to the general population.

With the above in mind it is important to state that Whitman College stands firmly for the free search for truth and its free exposition, believing that the common good thereby is best served. Academic freedom in its teaching, research and publication aspects is fundamental in the accomplishment of the aims of this institution. It is therefore expected that those engaged in academic activities will conduct themselves in ways that will promote the achievement of the purposes for which academic freedom exists, for in so doing they will be furthering the goals of the College and its obligations toward its students.

In his letter to the national office, Howells expressed his view that this policy is “out of date,” although, in this context, he did not indicate the reason for that judgment.

The basis for Howell’s conclusion can be inferred from a carefully-reasoned resolution he advanced for consideration by the campus chapter at its meeting on January 20, 1965. The resolution’s express purpose was to address the contention that the protections of academic freedom are contingent on its “responsible” exercise. It begins by affirming that within the context of a college or university academic freedom “is the freedom of the person engaged in academic pursuits to engage autonomously in them within the limits of his own conscience.” Granted, this entails a “decent respect” for the legitimate standards of professional academic inquiry. But, the resolution continues, such respect is not to be confused with the scholar’s “deference to the opinions of his colleagues in these pursuits.” This same distinction between respect and deference applies to all “academic affairs,” which, according to the resolution,
encompasses not just scholarship and publication of its results, but also teaching as well as “issues and concerns of educational policy and the general conduct of academic institutions.” By thus extending this distinction’s scope, the resolution makes clear that academic freedom encompasses the freedom to question and criticize institutional policy as well as decisions made by college officials at any level.

The resolution then takes up the thorny issue of what the AAUP, in its 1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure, labeled “extramural utterance and action,” i.e., speech and expressive conduct outside the academy about matters of public concern. On this matter, the resolution states: “In the realm of public affairs as distinguished from specifically academic affairs, the academic person should have the full liberty and the full responsibility of the citizen, without carrying into his activity in this realm either the special privilege of academic freedom or the special burden of academic responsibility.” In other words, within the public arena, the academic speaks as nothing more than but also nothing less than any other citizen. Indeed, the belief that faculty members, in addressing matters of public concern, are somehow specially constrained in virtue of their status as academics will not advance the common good, for this will leave the arena “of public discussion open to the less inhibited and less restrained conduct of citizens who are under no such special obligation.” Within this realm, as within the academy, “a decent respect for the opinions of others should be the ideal,” but “responsibility in this area of citizenship should not be equated with conformity to the views of either majorities or minorities.” (Here the resolution echoes the AAUP’s 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, which defends extramural utterance as an articulation of academic freedom, but encourages faculty members to “show respect for the opinions of others” and “make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.”)

Turning next to the question of what sort of discipline or sanction, if any, academics should be subject to in response to “extramural utterances,” the resolution draws another important distinction. Specifically, when addressing “concerns of citizenship,” if a faculty member “is subjected to undue coercion or unwarranted reprisal by non-academic authorities or agencies, it is not his academic freedom but his civil liberty which has been affected.” Here, the protections but also the constitutionally-permissible limits on the liberties affirmed in the First Amendment and relevant Supreme Court rulings obtain; and so, in this regard, the principle of
academic freedom provides faculty members no special privileges in the exercise of civil liberties. However, if a faculty member is subject to unjustified coercion or reprisal by college or university officials in response to statements made as a citizen, “then his academic freedom has been violated to the extent that his academic status has been affected by a violation of academic due process by academic authorities.” In this regard, the principle of academic freedom immunizes faculty from disciplinary action imposed by administrative officials or governing bodies in response to words spoken and deeds undertaken as citizens. Although not as fully-elaborated as it might be, the implicit claim here appears to anticipate the AAUP’s definitive interpretation of the 1940 Statement. As formulated in 1970, that interpretation declares that “a faculty member’s expression of opinion as a citizen cannot constitute grounds for dismissal unless it clearly demonstrates the faculty member’s unfitness for his or her position,” and, equally important, that respect for academic due process entails that assessments of competence should be rendered by one’s peers on the basis of appropriate professional criteria.

Archival records do not indicate the fate of this resolution. However, the College’s adherence to academic freedom, and specifically the AAUP’s understanding of this principle, was effectively affirmed in 1970 when President Donald Sheehan wrote a letter in order to correct preliminary results generated by the AAUP’s nationally-distributed Questionnaire on Faculty Participation in College and University Governance. Responses to that survey had led the Washington, D.C. office to conclude that Whitman was not fully committed to the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure. Explaining why that conclusion was mistaken, Sheehan wrote:

Whitman College has a long history of action in support of academic freedom, as well as the promulgation of statements in support of academic freedom. The College has welcomed speakers of the most varied persuasions, defended the freedom of the student newspaper, defended the freedom of Faculty to participate as they see fit in community and national affairs, has hired Faculty members during the 1950s who refused to testify before the Senate investigating committee [i.e., the subcommittee that conducted hearings on alleged Communist infiltration in the United States], et. cetera. I, myself, in the last two years have made public statements in the context of these earlier positions on such matters as freedom of the student press, and freedom of students and faculty to invite guest speakers to
the campus. The Board of Trustees has gone on record in support of academic freedom on a number of occasions over the years. Absent the work of the Whitman chapter, it is unlikely that Sheehan would have been in a position to make this claim, and it is virtually certain that the current Faculty Code would not include, as it does, the following statement: “All members of the faculty, whether on appointment with continuous tenure or not, are entitled to academic freedom as set forth in the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure and additions and amendments thereto formulated by the American Association of University Professors.”

During the decades following “The Tenure War,” a second issue on which the Whitman AAUP chapter was more or less continuously heard was that of faculty compensation. As early as 1948, the chapter affirmed that faculty salaries should be “the most important item” in the college’s budget and that most of its members at that time lived on “a marginal level of subsistence.” (This is perhaps not altogether hyperbolic given that for decades, as Edwards reports, faculty members would often supplement their Whitman salaries during the summer months by working the pea and wheat harvests). Especially in the 1960s and early 1970s, using national data collected annually by the AAUP, the chapter regularly issued comparisons of Whitman’s median salaries at different ranks with those at similar colleges. In making the case for more competitive salaries, the chapter cited not just issues of morale, which it argued had a bearing on the faculty’s commitment to the College and so the quality of its instruction, but also on its ability to compete effectively with other institutions in its efforts to “attract and retain a superior faculty.”

In addition, the chapter challenged the discretionary authority of the president who unilaterally determined starting salaries as well as increases for continuing faculty members. That such decisions were often made arbitrarily was effectively acknowledged by President Maxey who, in a 1957 letter, indicated that the basis for his salary determinations relied “almost entirely from hearsay” secured from “students, parents, faculty colleagues, alumni, townspeople, and many others.” It is within this context that one should understand the chapter’s 1965 proposal to adopt a system of “uniform raises on the basis of years of service, rank, and position within rank, regardless of department.” On this proposal, a “floor” and a “ceiling” would be established at each rank, with a “normal yearly increment” based on number of years within any given rank. Merit increases would be made possible by allowing faculty members to skip one or
more gradations within any given rank or, in case of “lack of adequate performance,” to be held at their current rate of compensation. This proposal was advanced to the Overseers-Trustees Committee on Faculty Salaries; and, for a number of years, employing AAUP data as its benchmark, a “step system” was employed at Whitman in determining initial salaries as well as annual increments.

Finally, following several years of discussion, in 1961, the chapter advanced a detailed proposal to create a sabbatical leave program. The need for such a program was justified through reference to the geographical isolation of the College, which “makes the inflow of fresh ideas a very difficult objective to achieve.” In addition, the proposal cited the need of faculty members to participate in disciplinary associations and thereby keep “awake in their own field.” And, lastly, it noted the importance of encouraging Whitman faculty to undertake “creative endeavors in every field of learning,” especially those that are of such scope that they cannot be completed during the academic year or the summer. In addition to suggesting eligibility criteria, a process for reviewing leave requests, and predictions about the number of persons who would utilize this opportunity, the proposal recommended that faculty members be authorized to apply either for a full-year sabbatical at half salary or for a single-semester sabbatical at full pay. With the support of President Perry, a program largely consistent with that advanced by the chapter was approved by the Board of Trustees and first made available to the faculty during the 1962-63 academic year.

Other actions taken during this era included the adoption of resolutions or the advancement of proposals to ensure faculty participation in the selection of Whitman presidents; to establish criteria for the selection of faculty deans; to add faculty representatives to the Board of Trustees; to enable all faculty in their first year of employment to participate in TIAA-CREF; to reduce the teaching load to a maximum of twelve hours per week; to create a tuition exchange program for the children of Whitman faculty; and to require that faculty-approved student organizations remove provisions from their governing documents that denied membership on the basis of race, color, or religion. That the chapter’s influence was considerable during this period is suggested by announcement of its work for several years at regularly-scheduled faculty meetings.

In the Whitman archives, the last document indicating chapter activity during this period is a November 6, 1978 memorandum inviting all faculty members to participate in a discussion
of “affirmative action relative to women and minorities on the faculty.” Some have speculated that the chapter’s decline after this time may have been caused by its own success insofar as many of its most important goals, whether with respect to the adoption of a tenure policy, securing appropriate criteria and processes for faculty evaluation, ensuring the College’s commitment to academic freedom, and improving faculty salaries, had been realized. That noted, it was also in 1978 that one of the more emphatic testaments to the AAUP’s role in College affairs was advanced by the chair of the Board of Trustees following final resolution of a difficult faculty termination case. This controversial matter came to a close when the Washington State Supreme Court ruled that the College in its actions had conformed to the due process procedures advanced by the AAUP and formally incorporated into the Whitman Faculty Code. In a statement issued shortly after the Court announced its decision, Baker Ferguson acknowledged that, however “expensive in time and effort,” adherence to these procedures is “an inevitable concomitant of a system designed with the deliberate primary objective of affording faculty members extensive protections of due process in such exigencies.” Whitman’s endorsement of that objective, Ferguson closed, “mirrors the devotion of the College to AAUP principles.”

Reviving the Whitman chapter (2016-present)

Exactly one hundred years after the first Whitman College faculty members were nominated for membership in the American Association of University Professors, the holder of an endowed chair named in honor of Baker Ferguson convened a meeting of current AAUP members in order to discuss revival of the campus chapter. On March 10, 2016, new bylaws for the chapter were formally adopted and officers, including Andrea Dobson as president, Lynn Sharp as vice-president, and Timothy Kaufman-Osborn as secretary-treasurer, were elected.

In reconstituting the chapter, its members carry on a tradition and participate in an enterprise that has included many of Whitman most esteemed faculty since the College’s founding. A very partial list of those involved in the chapter during the twentieth century includes William Lyman, Walter Bratton, Howard Brode, Louis Anderson, Elle Ravasse, Chester Maxey, Richard Eels, G. Thomas Edwards, George Ball, David Stevens, Thomas Howells, Robert Fluno, Patrick Tyson, Walter Weingart, Ely Chertok, Art Rempel, Jack Freimann, Stanley Plummer, Robert Whitner, Fred Santler, Richard Stuart, Deborah DuNann Winter, Kate Bracher, and many others. Whatever their disciplinary or other differences, what joined these faculty
members to one another as well as to the chapter’s present members is shared adherence to the mission of the American Association of University Professors:

The mission of the American Association of University Professors is to advance academic freedom and shared governance; to define fundamental professional values and standards for higher education; to promote the economic security of faculty, academic professionals, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and all those engaged in teaching and research in higher education; to help the higher education community organize to make our goals a reality; and to ensure higher education's contribution to the common good.