

HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Committee Chair: Lacy Barnes, State Center Federation of Teachers,
Local 1533

Committee Secretary: Elizabeth Ramsay, United Faculty of Miami Dade
College, Local 4253

10. THE FIGHT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Committee recommends concurrence as amended below:

- 1 WHEREAS, higher education, particularly through our minority-
- 2 serving institutions, our community colleges, and our public colleges
- 3 and universities, is a public good that serves as a pathway to individual
- 4 improvement, civic and democratic health, and economic growth; and
- 5 WHEREAS, the American Federation of Teachers has committed
- 6 to making higher education accessible to all students, regardless of
- 7 ability to pay; to fighting for good jobs for both the instructional and non-
- 8 instructional higher education workforces; and to ensuring the highest
- 9 standards of education and research by protecting academic freedom
- 10 and bolstering shared governance; and
- 11 WHEREAS, decades-long trends that have made college less
- 12 affordable and accessible to students while simultaneously making
- 13 careers in higher education more precarious and unsustainable have
- 14 been exacerbated and compounded by the shock of the COVID-19
- 15 pandemic to enrollments, instruction, and student and worker health
- 16 and safety; and
- 17 WHEREAS, the bedrock institutions of academic integrity—tenure,
- 18 academic freedom and shared governance—are under assault from
- 19 hostile state legislatures, partisan media, political extremists, and even
- 20 by university administrators themselves in an attempt to bend the
- 21 academy’s public mission to private will; and
- 22 WHEREAS, these same forces that erode academic integrity are
- 23 also attacking the measures taken by colleges and universities to
- 24 ensure that the public goods provided by higher education are
- 25 equitably available to and inclusive of the diversity of lived experiences
- 26 in the communities these institutions serve; and
- 27 WHEREAS, the overwhelming majority of workers who make up the
- 28 higher education instructional workforce continue to labor with little
- 29 meaningful job security or protections for academic freedom,
- 30 inequitable compensation for the work they do, and no voice in shared
- 31 governance; and
- 32 WHEREAS, professional and administrative staff who support
- 33 students, faculty and their communities are often under-recognized for
- 34 their contribution to the success of their institutions and have little to no
- 35 job security and less voice in decision-making on matters that impact
- 36 their work and communities, and are considered disposable when
- 37 adverse conditions are projected; and

HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

38 WHEREAS, there is a 50-year trend of public disinvestment in our
39 public colleges and universities, taking us from the post-World War II
40 moment of public support for universal access to our current time when
41 the burden of costs have been shifted onto students via higher tuition
42 and fees, and the higher education workforce is experiencing flat
43 income growth and decreased security; and

44 WHEREAS, the transfer of costs to students has created an
45 unstainable legacy of student debt that caused economic and
46 emotional hardships to millions of borrowers; and

47 WHEREAS, the increased tuition and fees that students are paying
48 are being misdirected to management executives, stadiums and other
49 non instructional purposes:

50 **RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers will**
51 **vigorously defend the public mission of the United States’**
52 **minority-serving institutions, community colleges, and public**
53 **colleges and universities, to ensure that its benefits are**
54 **accessible to and inclusive of the diverse communities of our**
55 **nation; and**

56 **RESOLVED, that the AFT will fight alongside faculty to protect**
57 **academic freedom and academic integrity by repelling legislative**
58 **incursions on academic freedom and supporting affiliates’ efforts**
59 **through collective bargaining and other means to reinvigorate**
60 **shared governance; extending protections, including meaningful**
61 **job security, to the majority of higher education instructors who**
62 **are not tenured nor on the tenure track; advocating for equity pay**
63 **and benefits for part-time/adjunct faculty; and keeping college**
64 **campuses safe and welcoming environments for the free**
65 **exchange of ideas; and**

66 **RESOLVED, that the AFT will fight for good, sustainable higher**
67 **education careers, be they instructional or noninstructional, by**
68 **continuing to organize the higher education workforce both inside**
69 **and outside of the collective bargaining context; by agitating for**
70 **the development and implementation of academic labor**
71 **standards in state and federal policy that provide equitable**
72 **treatment for all faculty and professional staff and incentivize**
73 **pathways to secure full-time academic employment for those who**
74 **desire it; and by engaging the union’s political power to secure**
75 **the funding necessary to fairly compensate the higher education**
76 **workforce and provide the resources so they can succeed in their**
77 **work; and working with legislators on the state and national levels**
78 **to initiate legislation that would ensure the above; and**

79 **RESOLVED, that the AFT will fight to ensure that professional**
80 **and administrative staff are recognized as vital and necessary**
81 **partners in the mission to educate students, support faculty and**
82 **research, and implement programs in the greater communities**

83 staff serve, and take steps to fully embrace their needs with
84 broader advocacy; and

85 RESOLVED, that the AFT will fight for higher education to be
86 affordable and accessible to all students; cancel the student debt
87 of ~~millions-of all~~ borrowers who are suffering because of the
88 unjust way we finance higher education; and protect and expand
89 the financial, educational and social supports that ensure a
90 diverse range of students can access a college education and
91 succeed.

- Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
- Precluded by _____ Referred to _____

**11. CALLING FOR DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
STUDY OF ADJUNCT/CONTINGENT PAY AND BENEFIT
INEQUITY**

Committee recommends concurrence.

1 WHEREAS, adjunct/contingent faculty comprise 73 percent of all
2 higher education faculty (AAUP), which is the majority of U.S. higher
3 education faculty, and a critical and essential force for learning; and

4 WHEREAS, adjunct/contingent faculty possess the same teaching
5 credentials and teach alongside tenure-track faculty without the
6 benefits tenure-track faculty are given, including: job security, paid
7 livable wages, access to employer healthcare, and a robust retirement
8 plan; and

9 WHEREAS, 41 percent of adjunct/contingent faculty reported they
10 struggle with job security,¹ not knowing whether they have a teaching
11 position only days before the start of a new given term; and

12 WHEREAS, 25 percent of these faculty rely on some form of public
13 assistance, and 40 percent struggle to meet monthly household
14 needs²; and

15 WHEREAS, over two-thirds of adjunct/contingent faculty make less
16 than \$50,000 per year, and one-third make less than \$25,000 per year,
17 which is below the poverty level for a family of four; and

18 WHEREAS, less than one-half of adjunct/contingent faculty have
19 access to employer-provided healthcare during a time of a global,
20 nationwide pandemic; and

¹ 2019 AFT report “An Army of Temps”

² Ibid.

21 WHEREAS, most adjunct/contingent faculty are over the age of 50,
22 and 37 percent do not know how they will manage during retirement³;
23 and

24 WHEREAS, such widespread academic inequity must be called
25 out, and measures taken to address it; and

26 WHEREAS, once called out, the appropriate measures to address
27 this inequity, to the true fullest extent possible must be engaged:

28 **RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers directly**
29 **request the U.S. Department of Education to fully investigate, by**
30 **use of a national study, the plight of adjunct/contingent faculty**
31 **and the severe inequities of pay and overall benefits they endure**
32 **as the majority workforce as U.S. higher ed faculty, and publish**
33 **the results of said study.**

Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
 Precluded by _____ Referred to _____

12. OFFICIAL SUPPORT OF FAST FUND PROGRAMS

Committee recommends concurrence as amended below:

1 WHEREAS, FAST (Faculty and Students Together) Funds have
2 helped students succeed by providing emergency grants to help them
3 pay for rent, utilities, books, tuition, technology, medical bills, car
4 payments, food and gas so they can stay in school and graduate; and

5 WHEREAS, FAST Funds are faculty-run emergency aid programs
6 with proven results; and

7 WHEREAS, most college-run emergency-aid programs deduct the
8 value of the aid payment from the student's financial aid package; and

9 WHEREAS, establishing faculty-run emergency programs is one
10 way of involving members and retirees in ongoing union activity; and

11 WHEREAS, nearly 3 in 5 college students report experiencing basic
12 needs insecurity; and

13 WHEREAS, the cost of college today is uniformly underestimated
14 by institutions, while incomes remain stagnant, income inequality
15 persists, and social safety nets are strained; and

16 WHEREAS, the pandemic has had a detrimental impact on college
17 students; and

18 WHEREAS, costs for rent, child care, gas, food and utilities
19 continue to skyrocket throughout the country; and

³ Ibid.

20 WHEREAS, the American Federation of Teachers has previously
21 supported the implementation of new FAST Funds with a pilot
22 \$100,000 grant program in 2021:

23 **RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers will fully**
24 **and formally support the establishment of more FAST Funds at**
25 **higher education institutions throughout the country and that the**
26 **AFT will actively help facilitate the development and expansion of**
27 **these faculty-run emergency-aid programs.**

Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
 Precluded by _____ Referred to _____

14. NEW DEAL ON PART-TIME HEALTHCARE EQUITY PROJECT

Committee recommends concurrence.

1 WHEREAS, healthcare is a fundamental human right; and
2 WHEREAS, healthy faculty make for better student learning
3 conditions; and
4 WHEREAS, part-time contingent higher education faculty make
5 up approximately 79 percent of the temporary academic gig
6 economy; and
7 WHEREAS, many part-time higher education faculty have little
8 or no job security and suffer from lack of parity in pay, retirement,
9 healthcare benefits (including vision, mental and dental), as well as
10 other union-negotiated contract rights; and
11 WHEREAS, many states are lacking state incentive programs
12 for community college districts or higher education institutions to
13 offer health insurance for part-time faculty; and
14 WHEREAS, 25 percent of part-time, contingent or adjunct
15 faculty rely on public assistance, and the lack of healthcare and
16 health insurance is one of the major contributors to poverty and
17 homelessness in America:

18 **RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers will**
19 **start a New Deal on Part-Time Healthcare Equity Project to**
20 **support local unions across America, campaign for, and**
21 **achieve part-time faculty health insurance access and**
22 **coverage; and**

23 **RESOLVED, that the AFT will sponsor legislation to**
24 **establish tax incentives and permanent healthcare programs**
25 **for part-time faculty, their spouses and their dependents, to**

26 **defray costs of programs not funded by their employers or**
27 **states.**

- Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
 Precluded by _____ Referred to _____

13. FOR STUDENT DEBT CANCELLATION

Committee recommends concurrence as amended below:

1 WHEREAS, the student debt crisis is a teacher debt crisis; and
2 WHEREAS, nearly half of today’s educators took out student loans
3 to pay for college; and
4 WHEREAS, today’s average teacher carries about \$58,700 in
5 debt—as much as their annual salary. One in 7 teachers owes more
6 than \$105,000 in debt; and
7 WHEREAS, educators of color carry far more debt than white
8 educators. More than half of Black educators (56 percent) took out
9 student loans—with an average initial amount of \$68,300—compared
10 to 44 percent of white educators, who borrowed \$54,300 on average.
11 One in 5 of those Black educators still owes more than \$105,000. In a
12 nation committed to education as a means of racial justice, educators
13 themselves are trapped in a system of racialized debt; and
14 WHEREAS, student loan debt is an often overlooked barrier to
15 diversifying the U.S. teaching workforce; and
16 WHEREAS, student debt cancellation increases the take-home pay
17 of millions of indebted teachers, at no cost to their employing school
18 districts, because the federal government bears financial responsibility
19 for federal student loans; and
20 WHEREAS, canceling student loan debt represents an enormous
21 economic opportunity for local and state municipalities to increase
22 spending in their local communities, support individuals in gaining
23 upward social mobility, and provide a deeply needed stimulus during
24 the pandemic and recovery from the pandemic; and
25 WHEREAS, canceling student debt is a policy that has broad
26 political and public support; and
27 WHEREAS, student debt cancellation is only one step toward
28 improving public education, and must be accompanied by free higher
29 education for all, among other measures; and
30 WHEREAS, President Joe Biden has full executive authority to
31 cancel all federal student debt using his powers of executive order:

32 **RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers will call**
33 **for President Biden to sign thean executive order to cancel all**

HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

34 **federal student debt *before* the expiration of the federal student**
35 **loan payment moratorium on Aug. 31, 2022.**

- Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
 Precluded by _____ Referred to _____