

For Immediate Release

Contact:
Matthew Boedy
Georgia AAUP
matthew.boedy@ung.edu
706-830-8010

***Faculty in Red States Express Concerns over Political Interference.
Many Consider Leaving, Survey Finds***

An extensive survey conducted by faculty organizations in Texas, Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina has revealed that an overwhelming majority of faculty members in these states are deeply dissatisfied with the current state of higher education. The survey, which received responses from more than 4,250 individuals, highlights the impact on faculty morale and retention of political interference in university affairs and changes, or proposed changes, to tenure and academic freedom policies.

Key findings from the survey indicate that more than 65 percent [66.7] percent of respondents would not recommend their state as a desirable place to work for colleagues, while about a third [31 percent] are actively considering interviewing elsewhere in the coming year. In North Carolina, 20 percent of faculty respondents—50 out of 248 in total—have interviewed for other teaching jobs since 2021. Every state in the nation was listed at least four times in the four-state survey, though.

The survey also sheds light on the primary factors driving faculty members to seek employment elsewhere. **About 60 percent of those considering leaving cited salary [58.7] and their state's broad political climate [58.2] as the top concerns.** Academic freedom was identified by over 50 percent of respondents, while issues related to tenure and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) were mentioned by more than 40 percent. Shared governance, LGBTQ+ issues, and reproduction/abortion access were also significant factors for about 30 percent of respondents.

Faculty members expressed their concerns about the impact of changes to tenure and academic freedom on their work. One respondent highlighted the increased difficulty of teaching sensitive topics, stating, “There are certain issues that I will never touch in the classroom. But I want to emphasize that I fear the left and the right equally.” Another noted “An overall climate of fear of retaliation and mistrust is the worst I've seen in over 20 years in academia.”

Furthermore, the survey revealed the detrimental effects of political attacks and policy changes on hiring within higher education. About 50 percent of respondents noted a decrease in the number of applicants and candidates hesitant to proceed with the interview process. More than 45 percent observed a decline in the quality of applicants. Additionally, more than 40 percent of

respondents were aware of offer refusals, leading to the loss of top-notch talent within their departments. About 15 percent of respondents said there was no impact.

The survey also highlighted the dissatisfaction with the political atmosphere surrounding higher education, with about 80 percent of respondents rating it as poor or very poor. Furthermore, about 60 percent expressed disappointment in their school's administration for not adequately defending academic freedom and tenure.

About a third said they do not plan to stay in academia long term.

The survey, conducted from August 14 to September 1, utilized social media and email to distribute the questionnaire. Respondents consisted of a diverse group, with about 25 percent identifying as non-white and 49.3 percent as female. The respondents encompassed a range of experience levels, with about two-thirds holding tenured positions as associate or full professors.

These findings serve as a wake-up call for policymakers and administrators, emphasizing the urgent need to address the concerns raised by faculty members. Failure to do so may result in a significant brain drain and a decline in the quality of higher education in these states.

###

Note: This press release is based on information provided and does not include any paraphrasing or additional quotes.

State-specific results can be obtained by contacting the faculty leaders below:

Matthew Boedy
AAUP Georgia conference president
matthew.boedy@ung.edu
706-830-8010

Andrew Gothard
United Faculty of Florida president
andrew.gothard@floridaea.org
850-224-8220

Jay Smith
AAUP North Carolina conference president
jaysmith@email.unc.edu
919-619-6523

Brian Evans
AAUP Texas conference president
bevans@ece.utexas.edu
512-516-5991

Pat Heintzelman
tfa.president@texasfacultyassociation.org
409-454-3701