

THE POST-KATRINA NEW ORLEANS INVESTIGATIONS

With the two censures removed by the 2011 Annual Meeting, Committee A is pleased to close the files of its Special Committee on Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans Universities.

The chair of Committee A authorized the establishment of the special committee in March 2006 when it became evident that several of the city's universities, upon reopening after the hurricane, were considering a variety of actions that had adverse ramifications for academic freedom and tenure. The special committee, consisting initially of nine members and assisted by a grant from the AAUP's Academic Freedom Fund, first convened in Washington in May to decide on assignments and a schedule for its work. In July the general secretary authorized investigations, with special committee members as investigators, at five of the universities. August witnessed site visits in New Orleans by committee members. They were there a few at a time, for two weeks interviewing faculty members, and the full special committee was there at the end of the month for a meeting with administrative officers and attorneys from the three public universities and for planning its report, now that a massive amount of accumulated documentation had been supplemented by the results of nearly a hundred interviews that occurred.

The special committee's 67-page report was published in the May-June 2007 issue of *Academe*, in time for Committee A to bring the five cases before the AAUP's 2007 annual meeting. In the case of the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, progress toward resolving deficiencies had been sufficient for Committee A not to make a recommendation to the annual meeting but to state that it would continue to monitor developments and report back to the annual meeting in 2008. At Committee A's recommendation, the 2007 annual meeting did impose censure in the four other cases. By 2008, all remaining AAUP concerns regarding furloughed LSU Health Sciences professors had been resolved and adequate revised policies on financial exigency had been adopted, and censure thus was not recommended. Also by 2008, outstanding cases of furloughed professors at Southern University at New Orleans had been resolved by

offers of reinstatement and adequate financial exigency policies had been restored, enabling the 2008 annual meeting to remove the censure that had been imposed the year before. Next, in 2009, the adoption at Tulane University of two previously lacking procedural safeguards in its policy on financial exigency and the administration's acceptance of AAUP recommendations in two pending cases led to the removal of the institution from the AAUP's censure list.

The 2011 University of New Orleans and Loyola University New Orleans censure removals thus bring the cases investigated by the special committee to closure, four years after the committee submitted its report and within a half dozen years since Hurricane Katrina struck.

Committee A believes the speed, comprehensiveness, and outcome of this total engagement to be unprecedented in the Association's history. It stands as testimony to the importance of the Association's role - including the constructive role of censure - in securing institutional recognition of academic freedom, tenure, and sound principles of shared governance.