

Welcome address  
Annual USAP and  
**First Annual AAUP**  
Conference

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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**



This is a virtual conference with  
international guests  
from both North and South America

We would like to welcome you all and  
acknowledge and pay respect to the  
traditional owners of the land  
on which the Australian universities  
are built

Clearly, what we are going to discuss today is of great relevance for the increasing number of indigenous students as well non-indigenous students in Australia who deserve exactly the same quality learning experience

many of us have enjoyed and vividly remember especially now that it has been lost from so many universities that have been turned into money-making enterprises run by managers who ignore academic principles

That causes fundamental problems because  
students and their teachers are the core of  
every university

And they have been and always will be, for  
logical reasons alone

So, we have to help politicians to see beyond  
the faces of the vice-chancellors and  
chancellors they have appointed and know  
and control so well

Politicians come and go but **universities** are here to stay because **their autonomy is of utmost importance for the livelihood of democratic societies**

These are dangerous times, not only because of COVID but because **anti-democratic** authoritarianism is on the rise worldwide, and increasingly in control of internet surveillance tools, inhumane forms of artificial intelligence and war robotics that are already being **abused**

**Good universities** where the freedom of speech of educated citizens is protected are able to **defend democracy, and that is their most important role in society:**

**Speaking up critically when things go into the wrong direction,** soberly observing the facts and following the unforced force of the better argument when providing advice **untainted by money or power** (see AAUP constitution for references)

The military is another defence force of society, but **nobody would ever dare to suggest the military should seek its own funding**

However, that is exactly what has happened to our **universities**, and the Australian ones in particular, although they **are even more important for the survival of a democratic knowledge society**

Our universities have been left with insufficient support for many years and we can now see the catastrophic consequences

However, lack of money is NOT their main problem but the fact that attention and energy have been diverted from education and scholarship into monetary goals and administrative control as a recent analysis has revealed

Let us be honest, **the professoriate is guilty, too,** because we let it happen for too long

The explanation is simple: the vast majority of us has no interest in engaging in conventional politics because we have other, much more interesting things to do, but **we have to become more willing to help our politicians (not to compete with them) or it will be too late as we are in the same boat**

Most importantly, we must develop the social intelligence to harness the professorial ego which is essential for our academic work but can be counterproductive when acting as a group, as we benefit in so many ways if we act collegially

I prefer to see *AAUP Council* as a resourceful superior intelligence, because several educated brains not only thinking of themselves can be far more productive than one, especially when working as citizens for the common good

Let's explore some of this today

But first let's listen to our colleagues from the US AAUP whose century long history has much advice to offer