Faculty Appointment and Family Relationship

The following statement, prepared initially by the Association's Committee on Women in the Academic Profession, was approved by that committee and by Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure. The statement was adopted by the Association's Council in April 1971 and endorsed by the Fifty-seventh Annual Meeting. It was endorsed in June 1971 by the board of directors of the Association of American Colleges (now the Association of American Colleges and Universities).

In recent years, and particularly in relation to efforts to define and safeguard the rights of women in academic life, members of the profession have evidenced increasing concern over policies and practices that prohibit in blanket fashion the appointment, retention, or the holding of tenure of more than one member of the same family on the faculty of an institution of higher education or of a school or department within an institution (so-called "anti-nepotism regulations"). Such policies and practices subject faculty members to an automatic decision on a basis wholly unrelated to academic qualifications and limit them unfairly in their opportunity to practice their profession. In addition, they are contrary to the best interests of the institution, which is deprived of qualified faculty members on the basis of an inappropriate criterion, and of the community, which is denied a sufficient utilization of its resources.

The Association recognizes the propriety of institutional regulations that would set reasonable restrictions on an individual's capacity to function as judge or advocate in specific situations involving members of his or her immediate family. Faculty members should neither initiate nor participate in institutional decisions involving a direct benefit (initial appointment, retention, promotion, salary, leave of absence, etc.) to members of their immediate families.

The Association does not believe, however, that the proscription of the opportunity of members of an immediate family to serve as colleagues is a sound method of avoiding the occasional abuses resulting from nepotism. Inasmuch as they constitute a continuing abuse to a significant number of individual members of the profession and to the profession as a body, the Association urges the discontinuance of these policies and practices, and the rescinding of laws and institutional regulations that perpetuate them.