

Foreword

By Rachel Hendrickson

Rachel Hendrickson serves as the NEA higher education coordinator. Hendrickson holds a Ph.D. in English and a M.S. in industrial relations, both earned at the University of Rhode Island. She served on the board of the Industrial Relations Research Association.

Hendrickson is the author of "Significant Labor and Employment Law Issues in Higher Education During the Past Decade and What to Look for Now: A Union Perspective," published in the *Journal of Law and Education* (July, 2000).

America was still reeling from the events of September 11 when last year's *NEA Almanac* went to press. Uncertain of safety, unsure of direction, Americans turned inward and looked for assurance that our way of life remained secure and right. Many Americans saw enemies among the world's citizens—those who were not "us." Our government paid too much attention to "security" and not enough to "homeland." And our already tense colleges felt the weight of this attention: campuses, for instance, were asked to become arms of the INS.

Some internal constituencies also succumbed to fear: administrators and trustees abrogated academic freedom by looking askance at statements they should protect. These boards and administrators forgot—or never understood—a fundamental tenet of American higher education: our colleges thrive on questioning and on dissent without fear of reprisal. We examine all sides of an issue, we debate and analyze at a deliberate but sure pace.

Our campuses are conducting these deliberations as the *NEA 2003 Almanac* goes to press and as the country moves closer to war. Many campuses are witnessing renewed activism. This activism may be less noisy, ubiquitous, and colorful than the anti-war movement of a generation ago, but it reflects the same sentiment. We already are engaged in a war, protesters argue, and have been for decades—a war on ignorance and poverty. Shooting wars, protestors argue, divert us from this other war, now starved for resources.

We can win this war on ignorance and poverty. How? Through education. But, as states face disastrous budgets, legislators and government officials look for "easy" cuts—and these officials often view higher education as a budget-balancer. Our campuses face difficult choices in resource allocation at a time when Americans should invest more in education.

But adequate funding places the responsibility back on us: to turn from the mercenary and from "me-ism" toward contributing to our local, national, and world communities. Renewed activism must defend academic

freedom and combat intolerance and social isolation. We must embrace the diversity of opinion that opens minds and fosters a society where all may flourish. We should promote integrity so that our graduates advance social responsibility and ethical behavior in our corporations and in our political and religious

institutions. And our colleges must cultivate civic engagement among our students—our future leaders—so that an invigorated polity will stand for combating ignorance, promoting democracy, and lifting the world's citizens out of poverty.