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Candidate Biography

Education: Whitman College, B.A.,
Politics, 1999. University of Minnesota,
M.A., Political Science, 2007; Ph.D., 2010.

Appointments: Wesleyan University, Post-
doctoral Fellow, Center for the Humanities,
2010-11.

During my second year at graduate school I received my first education in organized labor while volunteering as a student organizer during the AFSCME strike at the University of Minnesota. The following year a group of students who met on the picket lines launched a graduate unionization drive. While our campaign eventually proved unsuccessful, many lessons were learned. In the process I became involved in graduate student governance and witnessed first hand the University's embrace of a corporate restructuring regime known as Strategic Positioning. These experiences led me to appreciate the necessity for strong, institutional opposition to the marketization of higher education and recognize the need for an organized resistance to the debasement of academic freedom and the assault on wages and working conditions within higher education.

Over the past three years I combined this practical experience with an intellectual study of the transformation of higher education. I helped organize a series of conferences—"Rethinking the University" (2008), "Reworking the University" (2009) and "Beneath the University, the Commons" (2010)—at the University of Minnesota. These conferences brought together a large group of people similarly thinking about, and participating in, struggles over higher

education. In the process we helped create a network of scholars from across the US, Canada and Europe working on these issues.

My research examines the asymmetrical transformations of higher education in the U.S. and South Africa and the effect these inequalities have on the production of knowledge about globalization. I have also published an article on organizing at the University of Minnesota: "Creating Commons: Divided Governance, Participatory Management, and Struggles Against the Enclosure of the University" *Polygraph* (2009).

Candidate Statement

In order to confront the privatization and marketization of higher education, it is necessary for the AAUP reach out to graduate students and contingent faculty. Over the past decades the growth in the adjunct workforce has largely outpaced the number of tenured and tenure-track jobs. As such, it is now more necessary than ever for the AAUP to focus on the new reality that higher education is dependent upon a highly precarious academic workforce. I have experienced this precarity first hand. While finishing my dissertation I drove an hour and a half one-way to teach two classes for a little more than \$6,000 a semester. This highly stratified regime of academic labor creates a permanent under-class within higher education in which some scholars are positioned to conduct research while the vast majority is relegated to an underpaid drudgery. The AAUP has, and should continue to, organize in ways that challenge this gross inequality.

Furthermore, the current economic pressures have forced many recent graduates to leave the academy all together. Institutions like the AAUP should think seriously about how

to build infrastructure and institutions to support and incorporate unemployed or under-employed academics, especially those who desire to remain connected with the academy despite being economically forced out.

Today academic unions are more important than ever before. Graduate students face cuts in wages and benefits while forced to pay raising tuition and fees. Faculty are increasingly pitted against each other for funding while their “output” is measured by market-based metrics. Without the ability to shape the conditions under which we labor, the market forces guiding administrative decisions will continue to imperil the academy. I believe that the AAUP is in a strong position to actively support the creation of graduate, faculty, staff and student unions. Furthermore, the AAUP can grow its own membership by being active and vocal supporters of unionization.

The AAUP is an institution capable of helping strengthen and unite already existing resistances to the enclosure of the academic commons.

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