

Rachel Roiblatt, Social Work,
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Candidate Biography

Education: Yale College, B.A. History summa cum laude, 1976. Yale University, M.A. History, 1976. Marshall Scholar, Cambridge University and the London School of Economics, 1980. University of Minnesota, Ph.D., Social Work, 2007.

Appointments: Instructor, University of Minnesota, 2001-8; University of Nebraska at Omaha, Assistant Professor, 2008-present.

Before returning to graduate education as a mid-career nontraditional student, I spent most of my adult life as an advocate for social and economic justice in various government and non-profit settings. For example, I worked as a legislative assistant on Capitol Hill with an emphasis on social security reform, ERA (anyone remember that?), and--yes, single-payer health care reform. I also worked in two state legislatures, first New Mexico and then Minnesota, as an energy policy researcher. As Legislative Director of the Public Interest Research Group at the University of Minnesota, I worked closely with unions in crafting and carrying to passage a number of pro-environment, pro-labor policies. Together with the Minnesota Nurses' Association and the local firefighters' union, we passed the first state-level law that gave employees the "right to know" about toxic exposure in their workplaces.

Soon after matriculating in my Ph.D. program, I became embroiled in the pitched battle to unionize graduate assistants at the University of Minnesota.

That experience reinforced my commitment to educating young people about the benefits of union membership and the necessity of collective bargaining to buttress their position as exploited workers in a capitalist society in decline.

Candidate Statement

I joined the AAUP immediately upon arrival at UNO and was elected to represent pre-tenured faculty members during my first year. It has been extremely eye-opening to live in a "right to work" state where unions are constantly under assault. It is a very tough sell to convince colleagues that they should pay union dues when, as my own School of Social Work Director bluntly stated at the time of my hire, "the union will represent you whether you pay your dues or not." Learning how to address those talking points as well as the general anti-union propaganda that has been instilled into many younger faculty members has been my task these past two years. I intend to continue to develop my union advocacy skills in pursuit of economic justice for all university workers, most particularly pre-tenure, contingent, and graduate student instructors at the bottom of the food chain.

The alarming corporatization of the university, which often pits teacher and student as adversaries in a zero-sum game, is one of the most pressing threats to academic freedom in this era. I look forward to lending my voice and my energies as an advocate for intellectual honesty and fair play in service to AAUP via the Council. During my admittedly brief time as a member of the professoriate, the AAUP has already

given me a great deal. We have a powerful message to deliver to those in power and an equal message of hope for those working in the trenches to teach our next generations.

I promise to work assiduously to help with AAUP's efforts to organize new chapters, as well as lending support to extant chapters experiencing attrition, and to advocate for improved salary and working conditions for our most exploited members. These are daunting tasks, but I believe that the leadership we have now and the solidarity of our membership as a whole make them achievable. I would be honored to serve on the Council and humbly ask for your vote.