

**Biographical information:**

I am a Professor of Economics at Western Connecticut State University. As a sports economist, I have published articles on the 2003 first-round expansion of the National Basketball Association and co-authored a book chapter on the diversity of Asian Americans from the perspective of social workers. My main project is a book under contract with Palgrave Macmillan that historicizes the dominance of the U.S. women's national soccer team and locates women's soccer within broader economic questions concerning race, class, and gender.

I became chapter president in one of the most trying times during the Covid-19 pandemic. Right away I went to work to ensure faculty rights were protected. Along with other CSU-AAUP leaders, we led the fight for choice of modality and use of Zoom and held labor actions on each of the four CSUs, including the first at WCSU during my time there.

In January 2022, WCSU management declared a budget crisis after losing \$24 million in reserves. Blaming faculty for declining enrollments, management sought to eliminate programs and faculty positions—including mine. I led faculty and students in saving the Social Sciences Department as management tried to get rid of programs in Anthropology, Economics, and Sociology.

My work and activism led me to connect with other leaders in higher ed. I got involved in HELU from the very beginning, having witnessed firsthand corporatization of higher education that has resulted in increasing use of contingent faculty, administrative bloat, and rising student debt. Our students are increasingly working-class White, Black, and brown. They are paying more for less. This has to stop, and the best way to do it is to unite with other unions across the country: wall to wall, coast to coast.

**Statement:**

My name is Rotua Lumbantobing. I am running for AAUP Vice President because this union is uniquely positioned to stop and reverse the death by a thousand cuts both higher education and the labor movement have suffered for decades.

For far too long, self-serving individuals and corporations have starved social goods while lining their own pockets. For far too long, hostile policymakers and their ultra-wealthy sponsors have weakened unions with disastrous results for the vast majority of people. For far too long, management has made a cruel mockery of principles we hold dear, such as shared governance and academic freedom. And for far too long, the engines of economic and social mobility – our colleges and universities – have balanced the books on the backs of an increasingly contingent and otherwise vulnerable workforce.

It doesn't have to be this way. The gig economy has prompted the labor movement in other sectors to adopt new strategies and tactics, and thereby build the organizational capacity necessary to produce wins for their members. Similarly, our union needs to change because higher education has changed. The old way of doing things will simply exacerbate the declension we have experienced in our working conditions and our students' learning conditions. AAUP therefore needs to become a democratic, transparent, and participatory union that emphasizes rank-and-file organizing, leadership, activism, and coalition building.

Our colleges and universities obviously do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, we are part of a large, diverse ecosystem in which racialized austerity has become the norm. We need look no further than our own students for evidence of this. When our students suffer from inadequate housing, food insecurity, environmental inequalities, or a host of other injustices, we all suffer.

That is why AAUP must embrace a more transformative kind of unionism. Aligning our interests with those of our students and communities, and then building our organization from the bottom up, is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic one. It is only through social justice unionism that we can build the collective power to fight back and win the institutions that we, our students, and our communities deserve.