

Cecilia Konchar Farr, English and Women's Studies, St. Catherine University

Candidate Biography

I left my first academic job at Brigham Young University in 1994 in a blaze of public debate and news coverage. A feminist critic, I believe that activism and education are intimately related and that good teaching is, in bell hooks' words, "teaching to transgress" (yes, that was the problem). An active AAUP member, National Council member for the past three years, co-president of my local chapter and past president of the Minnesota State Executive Council, I see myself as union bred. In fact, for years I have been pathetically resisting the label "middle class" in deference to my upbringing in a working-class Mormon and Catholic family in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

My B.A. is from Slippery Rock State College and my Ph.D. from Michigan State University (1990). The commitment to the public good that permeates the land grant rhetoric at these schools has been foundational to my understanding of what it means to be a professor. As I continue to negotiate the links between education and social justice, St. Catherine University, with its long tradition of community work, has been an ideal home base. I teach and write about modernism, American literature, feminist theory, reception theory, and contemporary U.S. culture at St. Kate's and in an annual consortial study abroad J-term course. Lately I have been interested in what the novel does for everyday readers. My study of Oprah's Book Club, *Reading Oprah: How Oprah's Book Club Changed the Way America Reads*, was published by SUNY in 2004 and a collection, *The Oprah Affect: Critical Essays on Oprah's Book Club*, which I co-edited, was published in 2009. I now live in St. Paul where I am an

aspiring tri-athlete, a gardener, rollerblader and mother of two.

Candidate Statement

Though I was raised in Western Pennsylvania, union country, in a family of millworkers, waitresses and truck drivers, I, like many professors, didn't join AAUP until the need for the organization abruptly became relevant to my particular situation. As a national council member over the past three years, my goal has been to advance AAUP's efforts to demonstrate the organization's relevance to college and university faculty—even before our situations demand it.

My strongest interest lies in shared governance, in the need for faculty to reclaim responsibility for the integrity of our institutions and our profession. As the percentage of full-time faculty falls, those who are left have less time to do the work that links us to larger institutional concerns—curriculum planning and review, peer evaluation, policy-making. And not by accident do we become more like corporate cogs, attentive only to our courses and our scholarship. As this occurs, we move further from the ideal we aim for—communities of scholars fully engaged in the governance of our institutions. To demand more full-time faculty and better working situations for graduate students and contingent faculty we need to be at the table, shouldering our share of governance, even if that means attending another interminable committee meeting. The investment in the future of our profession, in how we work with one another on an alternate model from hierarchical business structures, is worth even that!

The links among shared governance, academic freedom and tenure have never

been more important, or more threatened.
The AAUP helps all of us stay informed.
The future of AAUP is in demonstrating its
relevance *before* we're needed, in weaving
awareness of these issues into the daily
patterns of faculty lives.