

Morgan Adamson, Comparative Literature, University of Minnesota

Candidate Statement

Candidate Biography

Education: UC Santa Cruz, B.A., 2001
Ph.D. in Comparative Literature,
University of Minnesota, 2011

Since early on in my time as a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota, I have been engaged in numerous organizing activities around university issues. I have had an on-going involvement in organizing and activism around labor issues at Minnesota, both through graduate unionization drives and two service worker employee strikes. Out of the connections I made with other active graduate students, professors, and other university workers, I have been instrumental in co-organizing a series of conferences at the University of Minnesota on issues of higher education: *Rethinking the University* (2008), *Reworking the University* (2009), and *Beneath the University, the Commons* (2010). These conferences brought together an international group of labor activists, academics, students, and many others to address the ongoing crisis in higher education. In addition to these organizing activities, I have also written and published several articles on labor issues, student debt, and the crisis of higher education, including a feature in the AAUP publication *Academe*. I have also been invited to speak on university issues at national professional conferences, such as the Modern Language Association and the American Political Science Association annual meetings. I see myself as both an activist around and a critic of issues of higher education.

The transformation of systems of higher education over the past several decades has put the very idea of the university itself into crisis. In addition to the exorbitant increases in the cost of higher education and the ongoing devaluation of teaching and other forms of university labor, we have witnessed the proliferation of online learning, satellite campuses, and for-profit colleges that all challenge the traditional university model. The financial crisis has only accelerated these processes. I think it is important that institutions such as the AAUP are at the forefront of not only defending the few privileges remaining in the university, such as tenure, but also creating a vision and setting forth practices that assert a more positive conception of what the university could be. Involving graduate students and contingent faculty in the discussion of what the roll of the AAUP is and could be in shaping the future of the American university is essential. In the process of organizing the series of conferences on higher education at the University of Minnesota, I made connections with a good number of scholars and activists, both nationally and internationally, who are working on these questions in tandem with more traditional labor organizing. I have since become a member of the Edu-Factory collective, an international group that is engaged in larger discussions of higher education at the global level. I would like to draw on both my experience with local labor organizing and my engagement with larger networks of university theory and activism in my involvement with the AAUP. I am excited about the possibility of taking part the ongoing

work of the AAUP and in participating
in shaping the future of the organization.