

Carolyn Betensky
University of Rhode Island
Candidate for AAUP Council, District X

Biography:

After completing my PhD in Comparative Literature at Columbia University in 1997, I worked as an adjunct professor of French at Vassar College, and then as a non-tenure-track assistant professor of English and Honors at George Washington University. I had the luck to be hired finally to a tenure-track position in 2004 at the University of Rhode Island, where I am currently a tenured (full) professor of English. I've published one monograph, *Feeling for the Poor: Bourgeois Compassion, Social Action, and the Victorian Novel* (University of Virginia Press, 2010), a translation into English (with Jonathan Loesberg) of Eugene Sue's nineteenth-century French epic *The Mysteries of Paris* (Penguin, 2015), as well as articles on Victorian and contemporary literature and culture.

Since 2014, I have proudly served on the Executive Board of URI-AAUP. In addition to my work on the board, I've served on our Membership and Scholarship Committees, and have recently been appointed to the Grievance Committee. I've also edited our newsletter for four years and represented our union in two campus Dean searches.

My memories of being a contingent and limited-term faculty member have not dimmed. I've published articles on the need for tenured faculty to take vocal stands on the exploitation of contingent instructors in *Inside Higher Ed* and *Academe*. Recently I hosted a round table at the Modern Language Association conference titled "What Tenured Professors Can Do About Adjunctification." In 2017, I gave a presentation at the AAUP National Conference titled "Tenure for the Common Good," where I proposed the formation of a national association that might mobilize tenured faculty to face and fight the labor crisis crushing the hopes and livelihoods of our graduate students and contingent colleagues. This association is now taking shape (Tenure for the Common Good).

Candidate statement:

I am running to represent District X on the AAUP Council because I am fervently committed to protecting academic freedom for those of us who are still fortunate enough to have it -- and to fighting alongside those who need it but don't yet have it.

The AAUP has long challenged the conditions of exploitation under which contingent and non-tenure-track faculty work. If elected, I would seek to broaden the AAUP's stance on contingent academic labor. I would like to see (and be part of) an urgent outreach campaign, in addition to the AAUP's already-existing Equity Week, to engage tenured professors to make more energetic use of their relative job security. Tenured faculty need explicit encouragement to take vocal, creative, and potentially contentious stands on their own campuses to demand the extension of academic freedom and a decent living wage to all faculty. In my view, we cannot simply blame the glaring inequities among faculty on our campuses on the corporatization of the university. To avoid complicity with the many forces that are besieging higher education today, faculty with academic freedom -- however tenuous it may seem -- must actively fight for a sustainable future for our graduate students and contingent colleagues.