Tracy Neumann  
Wayne State University AAUP-AFT Local 6075  
Candidate for Region 3 Council member

Bio

I am an associate professor of history at Wayne State University and a member of AAUP-AFT Local 6075. I received my doctorate from New York University, where I learned about the essential role unions play in higher education during my grad union’s six-month strike. I have been an active member of my local since I arrived at Wayne State in 2011, and since 2013 I have served as a representative on our union council. I have also served as a board or committee member for the Urban History Association, the Global Urban History Project, and the National Council on Public History, and I previously coordinated the North American Labor History Conference.

As an urban historian, I research the politics of urban development. My first book, Remaking the Rust Belt: The Postindustrial Transformation of North America (University of Pennsylvania, 2016), explored how public-private partnerships fostered an increasing inequality among urban residents and uneven development within metropolitan areas. Universities were (and are) key actors in these partnerships, often harming the neighborhoods in which they were located rather than serving as engines of social mobility. My experiences as a rank-and-file union activist and my research on the neoliberalization of American institutions have motivated me to run for AAUP National Council, because I believe AAUP can take a leading role in protecting higher ed workers, students, and communities.

Candidate Statement

I am running for the Region 3 Council seat on the Faculty United for the Common Good slate. The candidates of the Faculty United for the Common Good slate share a belief that higher education is in a crisis that stretches back at least fifty years, beginning with the racialized and gendered divestment from our postsecondary institutions. This crisis has led to mounting student debt, commodified education, a devalued contingent workforce, and attacks on tenure and academic freedom at colleges and universities, which far too often exploit the communities where they reside. As the administrative class grows, both faculty governance and the educational mission suffer. This long crisis in higher education has been accelerated by the pandemic, where over 650,000 workers in the sector lost their jobs.

The sheer magnitude of the crisis across higher education demands a new approach in order to build the power necessary for the collective transformation of the sector. To that end, we believe that AAUP and all higher ed workers must focus on a broad vision of wall-to-wall organizing in and beyond our campuses. For us this means tearing down the barriers that divide us to build advocacy chapters, coalitions, and collective bargaining units across job categories: from professional staff and grad workers to dining staff, adjunct faculty, and tenure track faculty. It means confronting contingency at our institutions and demanding that all higher ed work be treated with dignity. It means aligning ourselves with students to cancel student debt, while winning free public higher education in two and four year institutions. It means recognizing that our campuses have no borders and we must organize for and with the communities to which we belong. It means recognizing and making reparations for the present-day and historic harms that academia has wrought on communities of color: labor exploitation, land displacement, and scientific experimentation. And this recognition demands that our institutions go beyond declarations and reports to undertake reparations in our broader communities. Another university is possible.