

AAUP PRESIDENT

TODD WOLFSON



VOTE THE SLATE: UNITED FACULTY FOR THE COMMON GOOD

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TODD WOLFSON

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Our colleges and universities are under attack.

Right-wing forces are organizing to take control of our campuses, hollowing out democracy and telling us what we can research, teach and learn. This onslaught is exacerbated by long term federal and state divestment from higher education across the last sixty years. We have watched tuition skyrocket as students and colleges accumulate trillions in debt, while, a growing army of higher ed bureaucrats take over our universities and run them like corporations. The impacts of this assault include the weakening and abolition of tenure, academic freedom and shared governance; the shuttering of colleges and programs across the country; and an over-reliance on contingent contracts that devalue both our adjunct faculty and our staff. Fifty years ago, higher education was one of the most respected sectors in the country. We now have a target on our back.

In this context, it is incumbent on us to counter the likes of Ron DeSantis and higher edu consultants like the rpk Group, the firm that developed the plan to eviscerate West Virginia University. To date, however, we have not seen a unified response. We must work across dozens of parent unions to build a strong coalition of workers on our campuses and a national voice and campaign that details how higher ed is the bedrock of democracy, and the engine of social mobility, innovation and progress.

If elected, this will be the focus of my time at the AAUP. With the leaders of AAUP across this country I want to develop a strategy to fight back. Building on the important organizing we have seen in the sector over the last few years—from new organizing and labor militancy to national days of action and student organizing—I want AAUP to lead the charge in forging a national vision for the future of higher ed, and to build a campaign to bring that vision to life. To do this we need to attend to our partnership with AFT, and then work to establish partnerships with other higher ed unions as well as our students and our communities.

Before we can build with others we need to attend to ourselves. We need an organization and staff that understand the problems our chapters face and can offer real material support. We need to fight to build alignment across AAUP and then across the broader sector. And, we have to understand how the affiliation agreement has impacted AAUP, from the national organization to state conferences and local chapters. We must work with AFT to make sure that this critical agreement helps us take a bold step forward.

As a scholar, community organizer and leader of Rutgers AAUP-AFT, I have built organizations from the ground up, managed staff and forged coalitions and campaigns that win.

With these experiences, I believe I am best suited to lead the organization through this pivotal moment and I ask for your vote for me and the United Faculty for the Common Good slate.

UNITED FACULTY FOR THE COMMON GOOD

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

I'm running for President of AAUP with the United Faculty for the Common Good.

I'm an anthropologist and an associate professor in Media Studies. Since 2017, I've held various leadership roles in Rutgers AAUP-AFT. In our 2018 contract campaign, I helped build our department rep infrastructure, the backbone of the union. As president during the pandemic, I reignited the Coalition of Rutgers Unions (CRU), which represents 20,000+ workers across three campuses including staff, FT & PT faculty, grads and health-care workers. When management pushed austerity, laying off low-wage workers—disproportionately women and people of color—CRU fought back and won job protections for staff and adjuncts, forced management to re-turn stolen raises and established a funded PhD COVID extension program.

Following that, I worked with union leaders to establish Higher Ed Labor United (HELU). HELU's goal is to work with AAUP and others to unite workers wall-to-wall and coast-to-coast. I was elected the first interim chair of HELU, which held its founding convention this May, with 50+ unions. Most recently, I helped lead Rutgers 2023 strike of 9000 workers across three unions. We won control over work; contractual rights around academic freedom; job security for faculty, postdocs and grad workers; raises between 14-44% over four years; and a \$600,000 annual fund to support housing for students and community.

I've published/edited numerous books and articles focused on social movements, technology, and labor. Prior to my work as a union leader, I was a community organizer in Philadelphia and helped build numerous organizations including Movement Alliance Project. In 2016, I was part of a successful campaign to win local control over Philadelphia public schools, which had been taken over by the state. These experiences—organizing and winning where I live and work—have prepared me to lead AAUP.

Candidate page:

<https://www.unitedfacultyforthecommongood.org/todd-wolfson>

For more information



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