

Liz Wright, NCHE candidate statement (at-large position)

Since I arrived at University of Minnesota Duluth, I have been an active participant in my local, state, and national unions. As a member of NEA, I have particularly focused on making the national union take more action for the situation with contingent faculty (i.e., adjunct, part-time, visiting, term, etc.). This situation brings enormous work insecurity and poor pay to many of our members with advanced degrees, and many of these members have huge student loans because of their extensive education. Additionally, the numbers and percentages of contingent faculty continue to grow—impacting higher education and its students in very negative ways. In the past few years, I have initiated and helped the NEA RA successfully pass two NBIs that have brought about much NEA initiative in this area. I have also worked with others on their NBIs regarding higher education to force the NEA to pay more attention to those of us in colleges and universities. As a result of the passing of these NBIs, I have had the opportunity to collaborate with NEA staff to take concrete action addressing these issues. However, this is still MUCH more work to be done.

I have focused on the contingent faculty issue because it goes to the basic mission of the NEA: to address workplace conditions and pay for its members—and to ensure that its members can best serve students. Because of the precarity of contingent faculty, this issue also involves concerns about diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as academic freedom—all of which are foci of my advocacy, teaching, and research.

Since January 13th of this year, the situation for higher education has become much more complex and treacherous for higher education (and all public education), and I am proud that the NEA has been standing up for all its members. I, too, will continue to stand up for the right for free speech for our students and ourselves.

I am excited to work with NCHE because of its influence on the NEA, and influence that can only help it and us better advocate for the unique needs of higher education. As a member of NCHE, I believe it can do a better job reaching out to its members and potential members, and with this probable connection with more NEA members, can understand and address more of the issues impacting higher education.

I also believe my past and continued advocacy for all faculty illustrates that I am a good choice for this at-large position. I first started this work many years ago as a member of the faculty union at SUNY Albany, and I will continue my advocacy as long as I am able. Being an at-large representative for NCHE will help me make more impact with this advocacy.