



Message From CSU-AAUP President O'Neill:

Vijay Nair, longtime activist in CSU-AAUP, Chief Negotiator for several contracts, CSU-AAUP President, Western Chapter President, and a host of other positions, passed away after a long illness on April 9, 2019 (to read his obituary, follow this link: https://memorials.honanfh.com/vijay-nair/3801457/obituary.php). In 2012, Vijay received the Marilyn Sternberg Award from AAUP, for outstanding service and commitment to the AAUP, its principles and its members in collective bargaining. When he won this award, colleagues remarked that Vijay was "an extraordinary activist" and "a staunch defender of the contractual rights and academic freedom of the faculty." Vijay's wife, Pat Poli, asked me to speak at his memorial service, and I will share my remarks here:

"My name is Patty O'Neill, and I'm here, first, because Vijay was my friend, and second as President of the Connecticut State University American Association of University Professors, which represents more than 3,000 university professors in the state of Connecticut. Vijay served honorably as President of this organization for 6 years before his retirement and was a leader for years in CSU-AAUP. Many of you knew Vijay as a family member, neighbor, or friend. I first knew him as a colleague, and then we became friends. That happened to a lot of us. When word went out that he had passed, folks reached out to me with their thoughts and observations about Vijay and I'd like to share some of them with you. There is a common theme: he was a warrior, in his quiet, polite way. A warrior.

From Elena Tapia, past president of CSU-AAUP: "Vijay was a renaissance man, limitless in his capacities for development. He would enjoy reading one of the major Sanskrit epics, the Mahabharata, as well as snow blowing the driveway. He was a connoisseur of good food although not a very good eater. He took most everything very seriously yet had a sly, dry, and quick sense of humor. He would joke that his English was getting a lot better, when, in fact, he spoke and wrote the language far better than any of us here. Vijay was a problem solver and worked long hours to study an issue and to create elegant and just solutions. He cared deeply about our union, its principles, and about all of the people in it. In losing Vijay, we have lost not only a great warrior but also a great soul."

From Jenny Innes, former colleague in Haas Library, where Vijay worked: "I'm forever indebted to Vijay for his fine mentorship of all the WCSU librarians and his dedication to our success in the promotion and tenure process and in our careers as a whole. The library faculty at WCSU and the teaching faculty across the CSUs carry on and continue to be the beneficiaries of his legacy. Although born in India, he was a quintessential American in his dedication to the values of the Constitution, Bill of Rights, shared governance, academic freedom and freedom of speech. He defended these values and made sure we remembered their importance in our work."

He was a warrior.

And now my own observations. I first met Vijay when I became a Council Member of CSU-AAUP. Vijay and I would routinely ride together to Council meetings. He, of course, ALWAYS DROVE. He would talk over what he was planning on saying to Council, and what courses of action he was considering. Those conversations frequently went like this: "Patty, here is what I'm considering" and then he would spell out 3 possibilities for action, the 9 possible consequences to those 3 actions, and then the 81+ consequences to the consequences, and so on (because he insisted on being prepared), and then look at me and say "What do you think?" and I would freeze, because I was still trying to figure out the first 3. He was the most thoughtful person I've known. The approximately 3,000+ faculty members working at a Connecticut State University owe him a debt for his willingness to battle on our behalf. He was generous with his insights and wisdom, whether it was his encyclopedic knowledge of our contract, its history, the negotiations, Bollywood movies, or the best places to eat not just in Newtown, but in Connecticut and frankly pretty much anywhere. He will be missed."



Above, from left the late CSU-AAUP President Vijay Nair and current CSU-AAUP President Patty O'Neill at the first FAC Conference on Shared Governance in 2015.

CSU-AAUP In Action At The Legislature:

A host of legislation that stands to benefit quality public higher education has been heard in the Higher Education committee this session. CSU-AAUP leaders have been there to lend support for key initiatives, including bills that would help students in crisis, protect academic freedom, and prevent the CSCU system office from closing or merging higher education institutions. Other bills that we are supporting include paid family medical leave and a \$15 an hour minimum wage. In addition to testifying at Higher Education Committee hearings for a number of bills, CSU-AAUP members and students also testified at the March 7 Higher Education Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee public hearing. Together, they advocated for adequate funding for quality public higher education and gave legislators a glimpse into the real world of students and faculty at the CSUs. To read testimony from CSU-AAUP members and our students at the Appropriations Committee hearing, click here.

For a run down on the legislation that CSU-AAUP is following, please click here.

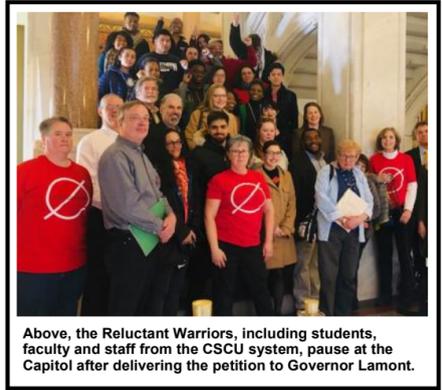
Pushing back on consolidation:

On March 1, CSU-AAUP Council voted to endorse a petition against the so called Students First plan and ongoing consolidation efforts of the Board of Regents. Created by a group calling themselves the Reluctant Warriors that includes Connecticut State University and Community College students, faculty, staff, and past presidents, the petition quickly garnered more than 1,300 signatures. Soon after CSU-AAUP's endorsement, the group held a press conference at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford to announce their opposition to consolidation and present the petition to Governor Lamont's office. Click here to see news coverage of the event.

The petition was also endorsed by each Senate at the four CSUs. The Reluctant Warriors continue to advocate at the Capitol for renewed legislative oversight of public higher education in Connecticut.

Legislative Forum on Consolidation:

The day the Reluctant Warriors delivered their petition to Governor Lamont, the Higher Education Committee announced they would hold an invitational forum to look at issues around consolidation. On March 26, 2019, CSU-AAUP member Matt Warshauer, appeared on a panel before the Higher Education committee, along with Dr. Richard Judd, President Emeritus of CCSU, Lois Aime, Director, Educational Technology at Norwalk Community College, and Diane E. Williams, President Emerita of Quinebaug Valley Community College. The Board of Regents also came before the committee, taking more than two hours to deliver testimony and answer questions. The BOR panel included President Mark Ojakian and 10 of his staffers, including Malloy's former Office of Policy and Management Secretary Ben Barnes who is now the chief financial officer at the BOR. Pointed questions were asked by legislators, including why more women have not been put forward as candidates for top university administrative positions and how much money this consolidation would potentially save. To watch a full recording of the hearing, click here.



Above, the Reluctant Warriors, including students, faculty and staff from the CSCU system, pause at the Capitol after delivering the petition to Governor Lamont.

CSU-AAUP Standing Up For Students:

Recent news of tuition increases at the CSUs and the record-setting \$1.5 TRILLION owed in student debt across this country, made SCSU-AAUP's March 27 event with Pulitzer prize winner James Steele incredibly timely. To push back against the paralyzing student debt burden, CSU-AAUP sponsored Steele to meet with students and faculty to talk about the risks of student debt that is leading to rising inequality. His presentation "Who's Getting Rich Off Your Student Debt" highlighted how policy changes have directly affected the debt burden of students across the country.

To read more about James Steele's work, click here.

On the heels of another tuition increase for the CSUs and following James Steele's appearance at SCSU, CSU-AAUP held a press conference March 29, at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. Demanding greater affordability and accessibility to quality public higher education, students from the four CSUs, faculty, staff, and other union members, called on lawmakers to move forward legislation that would make public higher education affordable and accessible to all students.



Above, Rep. Gregg Haddad is surrounded by CSU students as he speaks at the March 29 press conference. CSU-AAUP Vice President and CCSU-AAUP Chapter President Louise Williams, standing behind Rep. Haddad, was the event's emcee.

Lawmakers who appeared at the press conference included Rep. Gregg Haddad, chair of the Higher Education Committee, Sen. Cathy Osten, chair of the Appropriations Committee, Rep. Robin Porter, Chair of the Labor Committee, and Rep. Gary Turco, Vice Chair of Higher Education Committee.

Click here to see news coverage of the press conference. Click here for CSU-AAUP's Flickr page to see photos from the press conference.

Save The Date:

There's a lot going on with CSU-AAUP! If you wish to attend any of the following annual meetings or conferences, please email Erin Clark at clarke@ccsu.edu. Erin can streamline registration and travel where appropriate.

May 10: Connecticut State Conference AAUP Annual Meeting and dinner will be held at the Graduate Club in New Haven starting at 4:30 p.m. with a social hour and dinner at 5:30 p.m. Special Guests include State Senator Mae Flexer, CCSU Professor Stephen Adair, and Norwalk Community College Professor Lois Amié. There is no cost for CSU-AAUP members to attend. To register, please email CSU-AAUP Operations Director Erin Clark at clarke@ccsu.edu.

May 20: DUE Justice Coalition Rally for a Moral Budget. Please join fellow CSU-AAUP members, along with other union and community allies from the DUE Justice Coalition at a rally starting at 4 p.m. at the Legislative Office Building. Together, we will call for a state budget that invests in public goods like higher education so that our students are not burdened with debt and we can #ThriveTogetherCT. To RSVP for the rally, click here.

June 12-16: AAUP 2019 Annual Conference on the State of Higher Education. This conference includes peer-to-peer sessions, plenary speakers, and the annual business meetings of the AAUP, the Assembly of State Conferences, and the AAUP Collective Bargaining Congress.

July 25-28: The 2019 AAUP/AAUP-CBC Summer Institute will be held at the Roosevelt University in Chicago. This annual conference features presenters experienced in policy, strategy, organizing, and leadership. Hands-on workshops offers presenters the opportunity to build skills and gain tools needed for a more powerful voice on your campus.