

Guide to Writing Op-Eds and LTEs



Created by CSU-AAUP staff



Welcome

This document is a guide for CSU-AAUP faculty members who wish to support the union through writing opinion pieces or letters to the editor.

Each year, CSU-AAUP advocates for various issues whether they be legislative bills, budget funding or other items related to the CSU-AAUP or larger higher education community. Opinion pieces can help spread awareness of these issues and garner support for them.

Opinion pieces and letters to the editor are some of the most read items in local newspapers, and important figures like legislators and Board of Regents members pay attention to them.

This is a simple guide to help members learn what editors look for in op-eds or letters.

**In Solidarity,
Madeline St. Amour
Communications Director, CSU-AAUP**



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- Letters to the Editor (LTEs)
- Op-eds
- Quick tips
- Examples



Why is it important to write op-eds and LTEs?

Writing op-eds or LTEs for local publications is a sure-fire way to **get your voice heard** by your fellow residents and local leaders.

Writing these pieces on issues that CSU-AAUP supports or opposes can help **sway public opinion** and move us forward in fights with those in power.

This is also an **alternative way** to "speak" with the Board of Regents, as members only receive a small space at its meeting each month to do so.

The Process

Please reach out to the Director of Communications if you would like to submit an op-ed or LTE as a union member or union official. They will help you revise and submit your piece to the appropriate news outlet.

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Director of Communications

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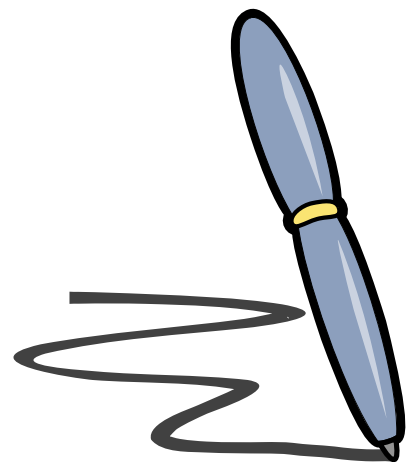


Letters to the Editor (LTEs)

- Usually 250 words or less.
- Written in reaction to an article, column or op-ed. Can also be in reaction to a newsworthy event.
- Turnaround time must be fast - to respond to an article or other item, you must send in an LTE within two days.
- More likely to be published.

Op-eds

- Should be 500-1000 words.
- Will be published later, so they must be newsworthy for a few weeks.
- [Op-ed guide with examples](#)



General Tips

- **Keep it local.** Both LTEs and op-eds must have local hooks if you're pitching to a local news outlet. You must focus on how the issues impact the community that reads the outlet.
- **Identify** yourself, your town, your job and your position with the union.
- **Choose one point** to make and make it. Don't clutter your writing with several arguments.
- **Start with the point** you're trying to make. This is the lede, and it should tell readers what the point of the article is.
- **Close with a call to action.** Ask the reader to do something about the issue.
- **Do not assume** the readers will know higher ed lingo or other specific terms.
- If a shorter, simpler word and a longer, more intellectual word could both work in a sentence – **use the simpler word.** Also keep sentences and paragraphs shorter.
- **Make it PERSONAL.** Include an anecdote that brings the issue to life and helps readers see your point of view.
- The editor will likely call you to confirm that you wrote the piece.

Examples of LTEs

1. Public institutions of higher education are not businesses. Our public colleges and universities are some of the most important natural resources in our state. While the report from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems is concerning, Western Connecticut State University should not impose a financial model of austerity to make up for leadership's mistakes. Instead, it should organize funds to best serve its central purpose: educating and inspiring the future citizens, leaders and workers of Connecticut. This means investing in the faculty and staff who interact with students every day, not cutting positions and piling more work onto their laps. This means keeping tuition low and affordable so our students can use their education to raise their social status, without the burden of debt. This means including faculty and staff in future decision-making processes to ensure the university is doing what is best for its academic integrity and its students. Furthermore, the state should be held accountable for not fully funding the system, pushing the burden of cost onto students.

2. A recent report from a higher education nonprofit claims that Western Connecticut State University is in severe financial distress due to overspending. But the report, produced by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, has several flaws. First, it compares WCSU to universities that it doesn't have much in common with aside from size. Second, it ignores the public university's mission, which is not to produce revenue but to provide an affordable education for students. Third, it ignored the relatively high cost of living in Fairfield County compared to other areas in the country. And lastly, it put no responsibility on the state, which benefits from the educated citizens that WCSU produces. There are surely ways to improve WCSU's financial status, but those shouldn't include imposing austerity measures that harm students. The faculty and staff work with students every day and thus have a direct impact on their lives. They should not pay the price for leadership's poor choices.

Examples of Op-Eds

- The best \$180 I ever spent: My union fees
- Anti-union groups spread misinformation to advance their agenda, weaken teachers' rights
- Why nurses are desperate for change

