

Such a clearinghouse has the potential to make labor research and advocacy in higher education, but perhaps especially advocacy by and for contingent faculty, just a bit more easily and better informed. When we can more efficiently find models of both successes and failures in contingency studies, we are better equipped to design and implement changes in our local contexts.

Steve Fox and Mick Powers have this in mind in their essay below, "Half a Loaf? Hard Lessons When Promoting Adjunct Faculty." They explain that in sharing the account of their own local efforts, "This case study may encourage and guide faculty at other institutions to develop a comparable process allowing contingent faculty an opportunity for professional advancement." *Forum* has long been a platform for sharing instructive models and analyses like that of Fox and Powers, but we shouldn't be content with a single journal, tucked into the issues of larger sister publications, and the occasional special issue of other academic periodicals. Ideally, *Forum* would combine its voice with the voices of many others in the clearinghouse called for in the Indianapolis Resolution.

I'm pleased to report that the Center for the Study of Academic Labor (CSAL) at Colorado State University is making moves to become one of those much-needed spaces. I invited Sue Doe, one of the directors of the center, to describe its mission and potential in this issue. The CSAL is positioned to become a valuable resource, and I encourage you to visit it online.

In the spirit of the articles in this issue of *Forum*, I also encourage you to document the policies, practices, and local research intersecting labor and contingency that exist in your own institutions and to consider how you might best share them with the larger field. Contributing to *Forum* is a good place to begin!

## Works Cited

- Fels, Dawn, et al. "Toward an Investigation into the Working Conditions of Non-Tenure Line, Contingent Writing Center Workers." *FORUM: Issues about Part-Time and Contingent Faculty*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2016, pp. A10–A16.
- "Indianapolis Resolution." Compositionist.net, 30 May 2015, <http://www.compositionist.net/indianapolis-resolution.html>.

---

### Half a Loaf? Hard Lessons When Promoting Adjunct Faculty

Steve Fox and Mick Powers

In discussions of working conditions for non-tenure-track adjunct faculty in university and college writing programs—most recently, the "CCCC Statement on Work-

ing Conditions for Non-Tenure-Track Writing Faculty”—the goal of equity leads to calls for comparable pay and benefits, hiring practices, access to professional development, class sizes and assignments, and work space and resources. Sometimes there are calls for pathways to better positions: for example, part-time faculty should be given opportunities to apply for full-time positions, or full-time non-tenure-track faculty should be offered pathways to tenure-line positions. What seems less common is specific advocacy for some sort of promotion process for part-time, non-tenure-track faculty. The New Faculty Majority lists professional advancement as one of its seven goals: “Equity in Professional Advancement: Progressive Salary Steps and Equal Access to Professional Development Opportuni-

At many institutions, part-time faculty work for years without recognition of their experience and excellence. A fifteen-year veteran may be paid the same per-course rate as a newly hired adjunct.

ties for All Faculty.” The “CCCC Statement” does briefly mention promotion in its first core principle: “Departments, programs, and faculty must work to ensure equity for NTT writing faculty by attending to issues associated with employment: compensation; job security; benefits; access to resources; access to shared governance; and opportunities for professional advancement.” In similar fashion, the *MLA Professional Employment Practices for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members* recommends that “All faculty members should have access to advancement opportunities

that allow for a progressive career path” (Committee). In fact, at many institutions, part-time faculty work for years without recognition of their experience and excellence. A fifteen-year veteran may be paid the same per-course rate as a newly hired adjunct. Excellence in teaching is seldom recognized through a review process that leads to recognition, much less promotion.

Whenever broad principles like those cited above are discussed among university faculty, people often respond by saying, “At my institution,” followed by accounts of local contexts, histories, and constraints. To think globally and act locally is a cliché precisely because it is an obvious statement of how the world works. The authors of this article think it might be instructive to share an account of how we participated in an effort to apply principles of faculty equity at our university. As we worked with other faculty and administrators to implement a promotion policy for part-time faculty, we learned yet again that every effort to improve the working conditions of contingent faculty ultimately highlights the ways those faculty positions remain inadequately supported and out of alignment with the conditions of tenure-

line faculty. This case study may encourage and guide faculty at other institutions to develop a comparable process allowing contingent faculty an opportunity for professional advancement. It will also remind us all that systemic inequity cannot be papered over and must be addressed by systemic change, not temporary amelioration.

### Institutional Context

At our institution, Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), a large urban university in the Midwest with some PhD programs, especially in professional schools (such as medicine, law, engineering, nursing, etc.), each school has considerable autonomy through what is known as Responsibility-Centered Management (RCM). Variations in salaries, working loads, and budgeting are the norm, and are especially striking when it comes to part-time faculty working conditions. In some schools, part-time faculty are paid well and receive increases over time; in other schools on the same campus, including the School of Liberal Arts (SLA), where the writing program is located within the English department, part-time faculty salaries remain low, increases are infrequently given, and when given are applied equally to all part-time faculty currently employed, with no recognition of years of service or professional excellence. By

comparison, full-time non-tenure-track faculty are eligible to apply for promotion to senior lecturer, a process involving dossier preparation, external (to the department) review letters, and review by department and school committees.

In an attempt to improve the status of part-time faculty across campus, two campuswide programs have been initiated. One is an office for part-time faculty affairs, most recently located in the Center for Teaching and Learning; this office typically focuses on faculty development, offering workshops and resources. Because of RCM, this office in its various incarnations has never advocated for specific salary policies or working conditions. Several years ago, however, the provost (called Executive Vice-Chancellor, EVC) asked his associate vice-chancellor to establish a second initiative, a committee on part-time faculty matters. This committee has included full-time administrators (such as associate deans) and faculty who work with part-time faculty, as well as part-time faculty representatives. Out of this committee

Every effort to improve the working conditions of contingent faculty ultimately highlights the ways those faculty positions remain inadequately supported and out of alignment with the conditions of tenure-line faculty.

came a recommendation to the schools that they establish a promotion policy and process for part-time faculty.

The School of Liberal Arts was the first school to act on this recommendation. The school faculty assembly approved the promotion policy in April 2014, to take effect in August 2015. The first applications were due early in 2016, with promotions to be awarded that spring to take effect the following fall. Two factors were important in this school being the first to adopt such a promotion policy. One is that the SLA associate dean for faculty affairs was formerly chair of the English department; before that, he was director of the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program. In those roles he worked with many part-time faculty and with Steve, who is director of the writing program, which consistently employs at least twenty-five part-time instructors (and in the past many more). A second factor is the existence of the Associate Faculty Coalition (“associate faculty” is the campus term for part-time faculty) that was founded in SLA and continues to have its strongest leadership and membership from that school. The Associate Faculty Coalition is not a union or a “sanctioned” campus organization, but somewhere in between. Its purpose is to organize associate faculty so that they can gather information on their working conditions, represent their colleagues to campus administration, and mobilize associate faculty to act on their own behalf. The coalition has organized teach-ins, met with administrators and faculty committees, and even produced a video; however, it has struggled to get enough active involvement by the faculty it represents (see Donhardt and Layden). Still, the associate dean consulted with Mick, the president of the coalition, on the new policy.

## **Developing the Promotion Process**

During the drafting process for the promotion guidelines, the associate dean asked part-time faculty to give feedback. The guideline draft went through at least two different rounds of changes as part-time and full-time faculty met with the associate dean and worked together to share ideas about what was best for the promotion process. The associate dean’s intent—and perhaps the intent of the campus recommendation, was to make the part-time faculty promotion process comparable to that for full-time faculty, without making it onerous and intimidating. After all, the stakes in such a promotion are not nearly as high as those for full-time faculty. Being promoted to senior associate faculty does not offer anything like tenure or even a contract, and the salary raise is modest. Departments and programs are urged to give senior associate faculty first consideration in course assignments. During one of the meetings with the associate dean, Mick asked in an open exchange why the part-timers should commit to the application process for promotion, keeping

in mind the benefits mentioned here. Together some very important aspects of the promotion were discussed, the first being the modest raise of 10 percent. Many part-timers in SLA, including many from the writing program, while acknowledging that a raise is a raise, saw such a modest increase as a form of patronizing by the administration; they argue that such a modest increase does not begin to represent the value of their experience and their teaching excellence. Some wondered why they should have to go through an entire dossier process in order to get a raise they felt they deserved without having to apply at all. Both Mick and the associate dean knew this was a legitimate concern. Ultimately, Mick decided that getting any raise would be better than no raise. Being promoted to senior associate faculty does come with modest benefits, and the hope is that once part-timers have proven teaching excellence, more money may come. So what is important here is that, if part-time faculty successfully apply for and receive promotion, this would constitute documented proof by the university's own standards that these instructors teach with a noteworthy degree of excellence. The outcome of this promotion process could become strong validation for pursuit of more money and better working conditions in the future.

Another benefit to promotion is that senior associate faculty are considered for course sections first over associate faculty. Especially during lean years, as the number of sections available to part-timers decreases, this benefit may become important. Also, part-time faculty who apply for full-time teaching positions will be better positioned for those applications, having prepared a dossier for the promotion and having a promotion to put on their CV. Overall, putting together a dossier for promotion can provide a sense of accomplishment at the very least, but more importantly, prepares one for future opportunities.

What few concerns Mick had about clarity in the guidelines were directed to the associate dean, who then came up with a revised draft that was both clear and concise. After the promotion guidelines were distributed to SLA departments, these departments and programs then decided on more detailed expectations for proving excellence in teaching. The English department expectations focused on two criteria: "excellence in classroom or other assigned teaching" and "excellence in one or more areas of impact on teaching beyond the classroom." The areas of impact beyond the classroom included dissemination of scholarship of teaching and learning, campus and community connections, and professional development. The dossier consisted of a candidate statement, a teaching philosophy, a CV, and an optional appendix with supporting documentation. The review committee, appointed by the department chair, included three full-time lecturers, with plans to add a senior associate faculty member starting the second year.

## **Implementation**

Within the English department, Steve and the chair jointly planned and provided workshops to help applicants learn the appropriate style and language for the statements asked for in the dossier. These workshops proved very useful to many of the part-time faculty, making the application process anything but onerous and intimidating. A large number of these part-time instructors throughout SLA had been teaching with excellence for many years and had ample evidence ready to present to the promotion committees in their dossiers. However, part-time faculty from certain departments reported to Mick that they did not receive professional development in the form of workshops nor did they receive encouragement to apply. In some cases, part-time faculty were not even made aware of the promotion opportunity by their chair. No doubt much depends on the voice that part-time faculty have in a particular department or program and the presence of labor-minded advocates among department and program leadership. A total of twenty-two associate faculty were promoted in this first year of the program: nine in English, nine in communication studies, and one each in history, journalism, sociology, and world languages and cultures.

The first time around, the promotion process for part-time faculty was seen by most participants as largely successful. However, the contingent nature of these part-time positions remains, regardless of promotion status, especially in the current situation, where the School of Liberal Arts is in a severe budget crisis, facing a fourth year with a deficit budget. The only meaningful budget savings come from faculty (and staff) salaries and benefits. In an attempt to avoid layoffs and program elimination, the dean suspended raises (except those for promotions) and travel money. He also asked tenured faculty to teach one additional course over a two-year cycle, asking that the extra course be one that normally enrolls enough students to run and is taught by a part-time faculty member. This budget crisis has highlighted the value of the promotion, in that senior associate faculty are given priority in staffing, but also has emphasized the contingent status of all associate faculty, senior or not. First consideration for courses, one benefit from the promotion mentioned above, refers only to faculty on the same tier. Having tenured faculty take on sections usually given to part-time instructors means this benefit for senior associate faculty could be worth less in upcoming semesters because fewer sections would be offered to non-tenure-track faculty. Thus, part-time faculty, including those promoted to senior associate faculty, might not receive enough sections to meet their own personal financial expectations, especially those who are dependent upon the maximum number of teaching credits (nine for part-timers) to

make enough money to get them through each semester. In the writing program, at least, all senior associate faculty were given priority consideration and received the number of sections they requested in fall 2016 and spring and fall 2017.

As part of this budget crisis, the campus administration has taken on oversight of SLA budgetary decisions (as they have done with other schools in budget crises). Thus, the dean was caught in a difficult bind when it came to implementing the new associate faculty promotion process. Part-time faculty had been invited to submit promotion dossiers early in the year (January–February), and departments were asked to submit recommendations for these applicants to the dean's office by the end of March. Around this time, the school was being asked to submit all fiscal decisions for campus review. Several people (including Steve and the English department chair) presented an argument to the dean that these raises were comparable to the promotion raises given to full-time faculty and should be granted. April, May, and June went by with no word on what would be done. After several months, the dean finally received approval to grant these promotions and raises, and emails went out to the promoted faculty. However, in the 2016–17 academic year, the promotion process for part-time faculty was suspended due to the budgetary crisis.

The associate faculty coalition president did urge many part-time faculty to apply for promotion. However, a number of part-time faculty either did not know of the promotion or, because of their circumstances, could not or decided not to apply, with the anticipation of applying in spring 2017. Because the number of semesters of experience needed to qualify for the promotion is eighteen credits and at least four semesters at IUPUI, those who could not apply by the first year's deadline might have become eligible at the end of fall semester 2017. Now that these promotions have been put on hold until the budget crisis subsides, none of those faculty members will receive the opportunity seized by twenty-two instructors in the first year of the process.

### **Lessons Learned and Implications for the Future**

Some might argue that this promotion process, while mimicking that of full-time faculty, provides only a pale imitation of full-time faculty processes and status. Imagine that a university suspended all opportunity for tenure-line faculty to apply for tenure or promotion during a budget crisis, or that after promotions were granted, they were suspended. These are the realities that contingent and part-time contingent faculty face, especially at institutions that have no union contracts. Michael Bérubé and Jennifer Ruth argue for the creation of tenure-track teaching-intensive faculty lines, insisting that without the professionalism and academic

freedom provided by tenure, contingent faculty lines remain precarious and erode faculty status and the health of universities. They acknowledge that improved working conditions for contingent faculty are worth fighting for, yet insist that tenure-line faculty must also look to the long term and work for tenure for all faculty. We

**Working hard to improve conditions for ultimately untenable positions could be a distraction. We hope that seizing opportunities at hand does not keep us from supporting even more radical and much-needed changes.**

agree with their recommendations, and admit that working hard to improve conditions for ultimately untenable positions could be a distraction. We hope that seizing opportunities at hand does not keep us from supporting even more radical and much-needed changes. Bérubé himself recently took some comfort in securing a review-and-promotion system for full-time non-tenure-track faculty at his university.

With that larger picture kept in mind, then, we argue that institutions should want all faculty to become more experienced teachers and experts in their subjects, and so universi-

ties would benefit from rewarding their part-time faculty, as they do their full-time faculty, by offering them an opportunity for promotion. Unfortunately, as proven above, even when a promotion process is successfully put into place, other factors can affect implementation. Thus it would be even better if part-time faculty were to become part of the same system that governs permanent faculty and have meaningful representation in faculty governance. The underfunding of higher education in this “age of austerity” often undermines our efforts to advance our discipline, enhance faculty working conditions, and improve student learning (Welch and Scott). As Tony Scott argues, “Tenured compositionists have a responsibility to our field, our students, and the contingent teachers who do most composition work. We should not use tenure as a secure platform for entrepreneurial profitmaking—our terms of work are sustained by others: none of us works in a vacuum” (216). Ultimately, a university’s commitment to contingent, especially part-time, faculty does not rise to the level needed for consistent expectations, equal treatment, or secure employment. A promotion process for part-time, adjunct faculty can be a good practice, but it needs to be accompanied by other systemic changes that lead toward better working conditions for all faculty.

## Works Cited

- Bérubé, Michael. "Tenure-Track Responsibility and Adjunct Exploitation." *Academe*, 6 Mar. 2017, <https://academeblog.org/2017/03/06/tenure-track-responsibility-and-adjunct-exploitation/>.
- Bérubé, Michael, and Jennifer Ruth. *The Humanities, Higher Education, and Academic Freedom: Three Necessary Arguments*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession. "Professional Employment Practices for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members: Recommendations and Evaluative Questions." Modern Language Association, June 2011, [https://apps.mla.org/pdf/clip\\_stmt\\_final\\_may11.pdf](https://apps.mla.org/pdf/clip_stmt_final_may11.pdf).
- Conference on College Composition and Communication. "CCCC Statement on Working Conditions for Non-Tenure-Track Writing Faculty," Apr. 2016, <http://www.ncte.org/ccccc/resources/positions/working-conditions-ntt>.
- Donhardt, Tracy, and Sarah Layden. "Adjuncts Foster Change: Improving Adjunct Working Conditions by Forming an Associate Faculty Coalition (AFC)." *Contingency, Exploitation, and Solidarity: Labor and Action in English Composition*, edited by Seth Kahn, William B. Lalicker, and Amy Lynch-Biniek. The WAC Clearinghouse and UP of Colorado, 2017, pp. 183–97.
- New Faculty Majority. "NFM's Seven Goals." New Faculty Majority, <http://www.newfacultymajority.info/nfms-7-goals/>.
- Scott, Tony. "Animated by the Entrepreneurial Spirit: Austerity, Dispossession, and Composition's Last Living Act." Welch and Scott, pp. 205–19.
- Welch, Nancy, and Tony Scott, editors. *Composition in the Age of Austerity*. Utah State UP, 2016.

*Steve Fox is director of Writing at IUPUI, where he also directs the Hoosier Writing Project, a site of the National Writing Project. He is a member of CCCC's Labor Caucus. He has published on language diversity and collaboration between K–12 and college writing teachers.*

*Mick Powers is a senior associate faculty instructor who teaches writing classes in Indianapolis. For IUPUI, he is the associate faculty liaison for the Writing Coordinating Committee and president of the Associate Faculty Coalition.*

Reproduced with permission of copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.