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ABSTRACT

At the post-secondary level, 38% of teaching is done by adjunct faculty. How did the profession become so divided? The answer goes beyond the academic profession because full-time positions are getting splintered into part-time ones all over the United States, but nevertheless academics make themselves particularly vulnerable because of their attitudes. Sample listings of writing instructor colleagues' attitudes, writing directors and department chairs' attitudes, and college administrators' attitudes illustrate how deep the divisions are in the struggle to obtain fair pay and job security for adjunct faculty. In each case there are attitudes which block change and attitudes which promote change. Hearing and anticipating these attitudes personally and in others may make it easier to bring about change. (TB)

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ADJUNCTS WITH AN ATTITUDE?: Attitudes Encountered in the Struggle for Fair Pay and Job Security for Adjunct Faculty

At the post secondary level, 38% of teaching is done by adjunct faculty. How did our profession become so divided? Why are we in such a weak labor position? The answer goes beyond our own profession as full-time positions get splintered into part-time ones all over the U.S., but the reason for our vulnerability also lies in the attitudes of our fellow educators. What follows is a listing of attitudes encountered in the struggle to obtain fair pay and job security for adjunct faculty. Hearing our own attitudes and anticipating these attitudes in others may make it easier to bring about change.

COLLEAGUES' ATTITUDES

BLOCKING CHANGE

Who are these new people?
I can't even learn their names.

Adjuncts aren't as good as other teachers; we hire them in August sometimes.

They work for so little; they can't be putting in much time.

They're lucky, they don't have to do all the committee work and extra stuff we do.

They don't even come to meetings.

We're lucky to have such good people.

They're not as loyal to the institution as we are; they're not going to be here

PROMOTING CHANGE

Adjuncts are colleagues. We are all doing the same work.

Adjunct faculty demonstrate all levels of teaching ability and commitment, just as "regular" faculty. They should be evaluated in the same way.

Many adjuncts would welcome the opportunity for more involvement in the department, but they need to be paid for this involvement.

Adjuncts are educators even if we don't treat them as such.

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in ten years.

If we consolidated part-time jobs into "regular" ones, fewer adjuncts would have jobs?

Only the fittest survive. I was able to get the kind of job I wanted, so why can't they?

I don't have time to work on adjunct issues.

If we paid adjunct faculty on a pro-rated basis, there wouldn't be enough money for our pay increases.

They're not as qualified as we are, and don't teach as well.

It's fair to pay them reduced wages because they are our graduate students.

We prefer, actually, not to hire Ph.D.'s; it seems unfair and they cost too much. We are giving our adjuncts career opportunities allowing them to teach and develop new courses.

They don't have professional development or travel money because they don't have a long commitment to the college. Some of them are even teaching at other institutions.

Many adjuncts want continuing employment.

How would I feel if my job were divided up into two part-time jobs at a quarter the pay and no health benefits?

We've all benefitted from past organizing and professional co-operation, so we need to organize with adjuncts today.

Adjunct faculty belong in our contract negotiations. This division weakens the bargaining position of our whole profession.

If that is true, adjuncts should not be teaching. Why are we letting them teach half or more of our first year writing students?

Even if they're Ph.D.'s? What "graduate student" benefits do they get?

All faculty teach a range of courses.

Unconscious: Adjuncts increase my status.

It's embarrassing how well some adjuncts teach; their courses fill up fast.

We're professionals, and they're not.

Teaching is a respected profession. We're not labor, after all.

Why don't adjuncts organize themselves.

If they're good, they'd get a real job.

Adjuncts are teaching most of our students.

Equal pay for equal work.

The pay adjuncts get comes close to minimum wage. This is a labor issue.

Adjuncts are the most vulnerable, isolated and temporary of all faculty; full-timers need to organize with adjuncts.

With 38% of post-secondary teaching done by adjuncts, the pool of "real" jobs is shrinking.

WRITING DIRECTORS AND CHAIRS

We started a teaching award for adjuncts.

We gave them certificates of appreciation and a dinner.

the

Training them isn't easy.

They can come to meetings if they want to.

We provide texts and syllabus for them and monitor closely their

Why have segregated awards?

If adjuncts are subsidizing institution with their low salaries, they deserve at least a tax deduction for a charity contribution.

We want educators who have had an education not training.

We pay adjuncts fairly to participate fully in our program.

adherence to the curriculum.

We have non-renewable three year terms because it wouldn't be fair to pay adjuncts at this rate for any longer.

We're lucky to have such good people, but if we improve their situation, I won't be able to do a national search or hire rhetoric specialists.

We just don't have enough office space for everyone.

Interviewing adjuncts takes forever.

Unspoken: It will hurt my position/career to battle with the administration over better pay for adjuncts. I get points for hiring good people cheap.

There is nothing I can do. It is a budget problem.

Do adjuncts have academic freedom if they cannot choose their own texts or be included in the committee selecting those texts?

Exploitation short or long term is unfair; why add job termination to it?

We need to convert these positions into "regular" ones. If special qualifications are needed, they are listed in the job description.

Writing conferences are important, so the faculty need office space.

I work to retain excellent teachers through fair pay.

I value writing, the teaching of writing and the teachers of writing. It's my job to be an advocate for adjuncts.

ADMINISTRATORS

We can't afford to pay them pro-rated or "real" salaries.

We need to divide up the available courses, so we don't have to pay

Adjuncts are the lowest paid faculty; why should the budget be balanced on their backs?

health benefits.

Some of them have special expertise and just want to teach one course.
Some of them just teach for a hobby and really don't need the money.

We can't offer "real" positions because we don't know how long we will need them.

We have adjuncts to meet our changing needs.

Don't call it exploitation; they're applying for these jobs.

Resources are limited, but it's exciting to see how we do divide up the budget.

We pay the going rate; some places are even worse.

If you're good, why are you interested in a position like this.

If I have to pay more, I'll try to hire somebody better.

Parents don't understand adjuncts.

It looks bad to have so many adjuncts.

I wish we could get rid of all part-timers.

Most adjuncts need health coverage.

A large percentage of adjuncts seek full time "regular" work.

If someone is teaching full time, they are paid at the regular full time rates.

Adjuncts' flexibility is important to the college; we need to reward that.

We can't ignore labor history--the long struggle against common practice.

Adjunct salaries need to be pro-rated if they are part-time.

There's an ethical issue here.

If we're good, we won't convert "real" positions to adjunct ones.

All faculty are evaluated by the same criteria.

It strengthens a college to have fairly treated and decently paid faculty.

Flex time is good--it's part-time hours with fair pay and job conditions.

They're surprisingly professional.

How can those who value
education exploit
educators?

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