

CONTINGENT FACULTY EMPLOYMENT IN SOCIOLOGY

An Interim Report by the ASA Taskforce on Contingent Faculty Employment August 2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The American Sociological Association Task Force on Contingent Faculty was appointed to address a fundamental change taking place in working conditions for faculty, in career prospects for graduate students, and in the character and governance of colleges and universities. This initial report is intended to stimulate discussion and feedback, leading to a final report by July 2018.

Contingent faculty, both part-time and full-time non-tenure track, have increased dramatically.¹ By 2011 a majority of faculty were employed part-time. Contingent faculty are least common at Ph.D. granting institutions and most common at community colleges. At for-profit institutions of higher education there are virtually no tenure-system faculty, and part-time faculty constitute perhaps 90 percent of the total.²

For faculty teaching part-time, the median pay per course in fall 2010 averaged \$2,700 per course; less at two-year colleges, more at four-year doctoral or research universities. Faculty receive little if any wage premium based on credentials or experience, and in one study over 80% of respondents reported teaching part-time for more than three years (and over half reported doing so for more than six years). Faculty teaching part-time have little job security and receive few benefits. They typically do not have private offices and often are denied access to other resources on which faculty have traditionally needed in order to teach effectively.

Tenure system and contingent faculty have common interests at times, but have also experienced significant tensions.

Research to date has produced a range of findings about the effects of contingent faculty on the education students experience and on student outcomes.

¹ Categories of faculty can be complex. See Appendix I for our working definitions of these categories.

² "Background on Contingent Employment in Academic Sociology," Memo from John Curtis to Council of the American Sociological Association, October 30, 2015.

Contingent faculty often report feeling invisible to tenure-system faculty. Their low pay and poor working conditions, along with disrespect, make many financially precarious financially and chronically stressed emotionally and physically.

The taskforce recommends a series of policies to address this situation, aiming to improve pay, benefits, and job security as well as working conditions. We also recommend that faculty teaching in contingent positions be included in university and departmental governance, as well as in intellectual and social events. We also suggest that the ASA create new awards designed to recognize the work of contingent faculty, reserve seats on Council and other committees for them, post relevant information on the website, and create a regular column on contingent employment in *Footnotes*.

These recommendations are summarized as follows:

1. Departments and universities should include contingent faculty in governance;
2. Departments and universities should include contingent faculty in intellectual and social events;
3. The ASA should create new awards designed to recognize the work of contingent faculty;
4. The ASA should include contingent faculty in governance, possibly including designated seats on Council and committees.
5. The ASA should address contingent employment in Footnotes.

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INTRODUCTION

The character of faculty employment has changed. Neoliberalism came late to higher education, but it has come. Faculty employment is no longer a stable middle-class career.

Louis Esparza introduced a resolution to the ASA Business Meeting in August 2015 proposing that the ASA should take action in support of contingent faculty. The motion carried and ASA Council formed a Task Force in November of that year. Then-President Ruth Milkman recommended Task Force appointees to ASA Council, who approved the list in February 2016.³

The charge to this Task Force is to “explore the dynamics and implications of the recent growth of contingent employment among sociologists in the context of the broader structural transformations now underway in U.S. universities and in comparison to other disciplines.” The Task Force is in the process of examining and documenting employment trends; conditions of employment; the position of contingent faculty in the university; careers; and the consequences of growing contingent employment for higher education, in order to make recommendations to ASA Council.⁴

ASA Council gave the Task Force until August 2019 to complete its work. Upon assembling the initial data, we felt that an interim report was vital. We issue this interim report to stimulate debate and to request feedback. We will revise and expand this report in response to feedback over the coming year. The final report will make recommendations to ASA Council, and ASA will make efforts to publicize it widely.

The twelve members of the task force bring diverse experiences to Task Force discussions. Six of our twelve members were or are currently employed as non-tenure-track faculty. Three prepare doctoral students to enter the academic labor force. One is a department chair at a community college and one is a dean at a four-year university. (See Appendix B for an annotated list of Task Force members.) Six task force members are women and six are men. Three members come from ethnic or racial minority groups.

Contingent academic employment within higher education is subject to an enormous range of conditions. The ASA meetings draw attendees from PhD granting institutions and selective four-year colleges. Yet, community colleges educate most American undergraduates, and contingent faculty teach the majority of community college courses. In doctorate-granting institutions,

³ See Task Force appointees in Appendix B.

⁴ <http://www.asanet.org/about-asa/committees-and-task-forces/task-force-contingent-faculty>

contingent faculty teach a smaller proportion of the total course load. Contingent faculty are more likely to be full-time at doctorate-granting institutions, but not tenure-track.

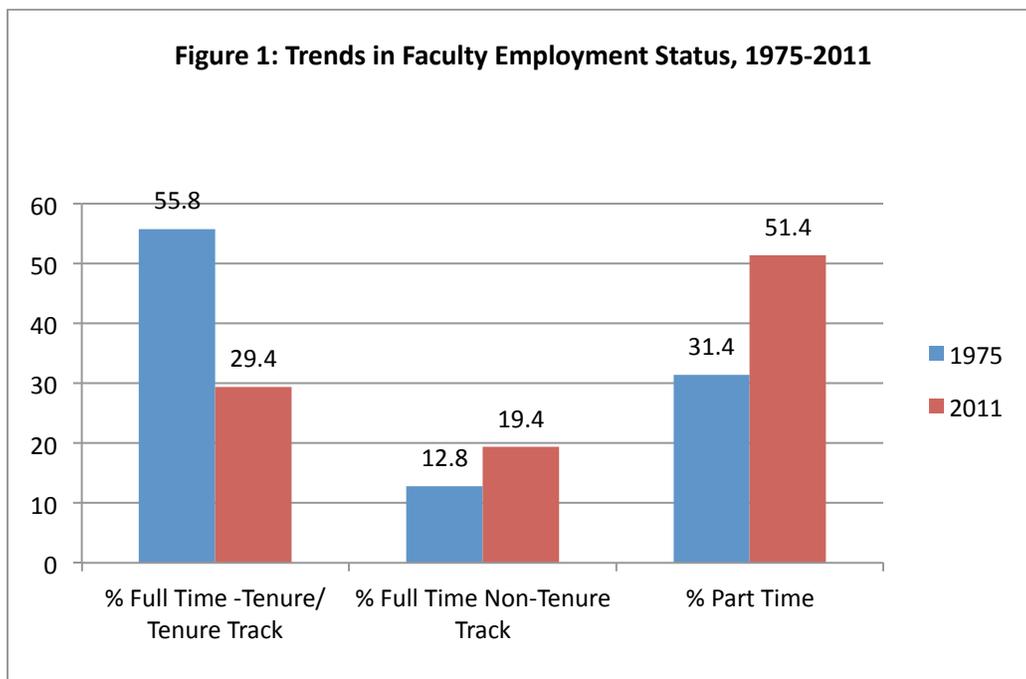
The gap between full-time tenure-track faculty and full-time non-tenure-track faculty is wide. Pay, job security, and inclusion in governance are all inferior for non-tenure track faculty. This gap is even wider between full-time non-tenure track faculty and part-time faculty.

This interim report has three sections: 1) the context in which contingent faculty employment has grown; 2) the current conditions for contingent faculty; and 3) recommendations for action.

THE CONTEXT OF CONTINGENCY

1. Introduction

Tenure system faculty are now a privileged minority in American higher education. Between 1975 and 2011, as Figure 1 shows, the percentage of tenure system positions fell by 25 percentage points. By 2011, 51% of all faculty positions were part-time.⁵

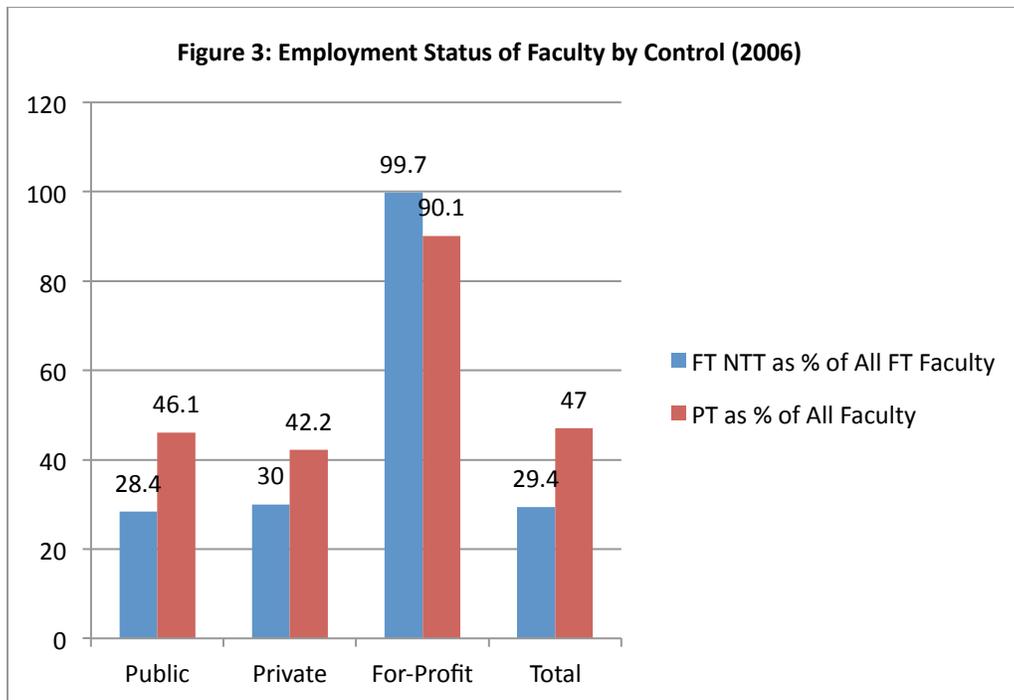
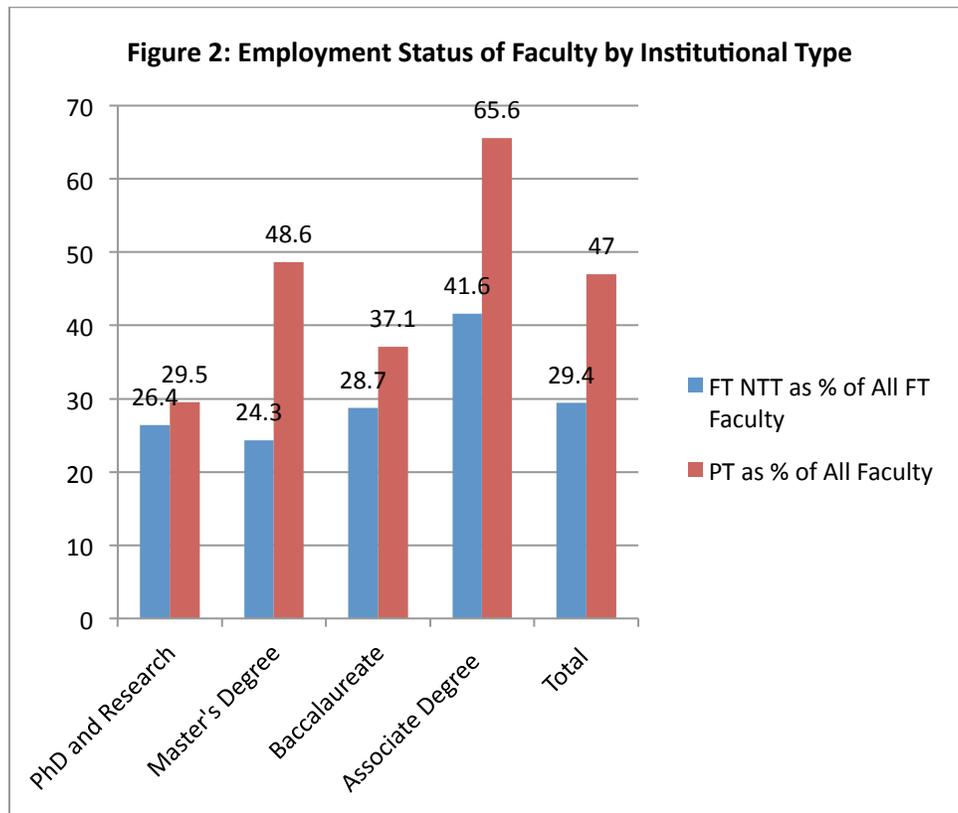


Taken as a whole, faculty labor is increasingly dominated by contingent employment. Contingent faculty are the majority across all Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education. Contingent faculty are also the majority in both public and private institutions. At for-profit institutions, the concept of tenure applies to less than 0.5% of faculty.⁶ Practices vary widely within these categories, however. Contingent faculty were recently 68% of all faculty at the University of Washington, Seattle, while at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, that figure was only 21%.⁷

⁵ “Background on Contingent Employment in Academic Sociology,” Memo from John Curtis to Council of the American Sociological Association, October 30, 2015

⁶ Data compiled from John Curtis and Monica Jacobe, *AAUP Contingent Faculty Index 2006* (AAUP, 2006), Table 2

⁷ Steven Hurlburt and Michael McGarrah, *The Shifting Academic Workforce: Where are the Contingent Faculty* (TIAA Institute, 2016)



2. Budgetary Pressures

Significant reductions in public support for higher education have propelled these trends. These changes have taken place in every state, although there is considerable variation. From 1990 to 2009, US public university funding dropped 26%.⁸⁹ State spending per student remains below pre-recession levels in 46 states.¹⁰ Arizona and Illinois have cut spending per student by more than half since 2008. During this same period, tuition has increased by 1/3 across the nation. Variation is also striking in the scale of tuition increases. Arizona increased tuition by 87% while tuition edged up just 4% in Montana.

Public institutions responded to cuts in state support by increasing tuition. These institutions also hired more part-time faculty, who are paid far less than their full-time equivalents, and can be more easily hired and fired. Thus employment of part-time faculty brings down instructional costs. But it does not bring down the overall costs of education and research. Increased use of part-time faculty reduces spending on administration and maintenance at some institutions, but public four-year institutions use these savings to increase expenditures on administration and maintenance.¹¹

3. The New Administrators

Administrators have increasingly adopted a corporate managerial style. Salaries for college presidents and top executive staff have increased faster than inflation, outpacing all other campus workers. As a result the cost to run institutions of higher education has shifted from instruction to administration.¹² Most administrators have little control over state funding of the institutions they manage, and in many cases they also do not control tuition rates. Forced to “make do with less,” many administrators turn to the use of contingent faculty. This decision reflects both an emphasis on executive functions and a corporate managerial style.

At most institutions have concentrated the increase in administrative positions involves mostly low-level professional support staff. Only at private research universities have executive, administrative, and managerial positions increased. Elsewhere the ratio of faculty to low-level professional support staff declined by 40% between 1990 and 2012. Between 1990 and 2012, the

⁸ John Quintero, *The Great Cost Shift: How Higher Education Cuts Undermine the Future Middle Class* (Demos, 2012)

⁹ This is measured in real funding per FTE. FTE, or “full-time equivalent,” refers to work equal to that of one person.

¹⁰ Michael Mitchell, Michael Leachman, and Kathleen Masterson, *Funding Down, Tuition Up: State Cuts to Higher Education Threaten Quality and Affordability at Public Colleges* (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2016)

¹¹ Steven Hurlburt and Michael McGarrah, *Cost Savings or Cost Shifting? The Relationship Between Part-Time Contingent Faculty and Institutional Spending* (TIAA, 2016)

¹² Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Fall of the Faculty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)

ratio of faculty to low-level staff declined by 40%. Student services, admissions, business analytics, and human resources saw the largest staff increases.^{13, 14}

The costs of scientific research have also increased. At the University of California, administrators responded by increasing student fees. But then California state legislators met this move with further cuts in education spending. That in turn led administrators to pursue partnerships with the private sector. Private industries have often profited from these partnerships, but not benefiting the universities. Arts and Humanities departments across the system shouldered the resulting fiscal loss, generating more funds through higher teaching loads.¹⁵

Attempts to increase revenue by soliciting private donations from outside sources necessitates the employment of more professionals. But these costs often neutralize or even exceed the benefits of the donations.¹⁶

The corporate managerial style is also reflected in patterns of executive turnover. The average tenure of a provost is 5.2 years and that of a president, 8.5 years.¹⁷ But many faculty stay at an institution for decades. Short tenures incentivize administrators to pursue short-run accomplishments, which may undermine the values and strengths of the university.

For some universities, fewer high school graduates has meant increased competition for first-year students. Some administrators have responded by increasing spending on student services and athletic facilities. Universities that do not improve their services may lose students to competing institutions. This relationship between amenities and enrollment can complicate the financial risk that administrators manage.

4. Consequences for Contingent Faculty

¹³ Donna Desrochers and Rita Kirshstein, *Labor Intensive or Labor Extensive? Changing Staffing and Compensation Patterns in Higher Education*. (American Institutes for Research, 2014). For similar conclusion see Robert Hiltonsmith, “Pulling Up the Higher-Ed Ladder” (Demos, 2015)

¹⁴ While Desrochers and Kirshstein don’t find evidence of growth of executive positions, other research has found a growth in executive salaries. See Chronicle of Higher Ed data, <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Executive-Compensation-at/240453>

¹⁵ Christopher Newfield, *The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We can Fix Them* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016). See also

¹⁶ Robert Samuels, *Why Public Higher Education Should be Free* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2013).

¹⁷ J. King, G.G. Gomez, *On the Pathway to the Presidency: Characteristics of Higher Education’s Senior Leadership* (American Council on Education, Washington DC 2008).

Given these trends, what are the implications for contingent faculty? The Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW)'s 2010 survey 20,000 contingent faculty in institutions of higher education,¹⁸ found:

- The median pay per course, standardized to a three-credit course, was \$2,700 in fall 2010 and averaging \$2,235 at two-year colleges and \$3,400 at four-year doctoral or research universities. While compensation levels varied most consistently by type of institution, part-time faculty respondents reported low compensation rates per course across all institutional categories.
- Part-time faculty respondents reported little, if any, wage premium based on their credentials. Their compensation lags behind professionals in other fields with similar credentials, and few experienced any type of career ladder (i.e. higher pay after several years of work).
- Professional support for part-time faculty members' work outside the classroom and inclusion in academic decision making was minimal.
- Part-time teaching is not necessarily temporary employment, and those teaching part-time do not necessarily prefer a part-time to a full-time position. Over 80% of respondents reported teaching part-time for more than three years, and over half for more than six years.
- Over three-quarters of respondents indicated that they have sought, are now seeking, or will be seeking a full-time tenure-track position, and nearly three-quarters indicated they would "definitely" or "probably" accept a full-time tenure-track position at the institution at which they were currently teaching, if such a position were offered.
- Course loads varied significantly among respondents. Slightly more than half taught one course or two courses during the fall 2010 term; the rest taught three or more courses.

There are 2.5 times more part-time faculty than full-time contingent faculty. As this trend continues, stratification and divisions among contingent faculty deepen.¹⁹ Doctorate-granting institutions may also produce PhDs at a rate faster than available faculty positions.

¹⁸ Coalition on the Academic Workplace, *A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members* (CAW, 2012)

¹⁹ See Jean Waltman and Louise August, *Making the Best of Both Worlds: Findings from an Institution-Level Survey on Non-Tenure track Faculty*, Center for the Education of Women, University of Michigan, 2007.

Employing contingent faculty saves on instructional costs, salaries, and benefits.²⁰ Most have short-term and flexible contracts, allowing hiring and firing at will. Employment precarity may also undermine unionization. Part-time workers often fear reprisals from student, faculty, or administrator evaluations. Contingent faculty are often excluded from departmental and institutional governance.

Contingent faculty may fear that advancing their own interests would not result in improvement. Employing contingent faculty thus shifts more instructional decision-making to the administration. Increased online and distance learning have been one outcome of this concentration. An emerging divide between part-time and full-time non-tenure-track faculty may aggravate the situation.

5. Relation between Contingent Faculty and Tenure Track Faculty

An increase in contingent faculty can drive a wedge between teaching and research aims. Universities as communities of scholars may become segregated. A large and insecure labor force, contingent faculty may then turn to external allies.²¹

Some tenure-system faculty may benefit from the increased employment of contingent faculty. The use of contingent faculty is sometimes used to reduce tenure-system faculty course loads. Summer and Winter sessions are often taught by contingent faculty as well. The savings generated by contingent faculty employment also may be used to support academic journals or other academic pursuits, or to replace cuts to departmental budgets.

On the other hand, the two groups have an interest in supporting each other's struggles. The better the conditions for non-tenure-track faculty, the less incentive administrators have to employ them. Currently, as tenure-system faculty leave or retire, administrators replace them with contingent faculty. And new tenure-track lines are becoming rarer, negatively affecting graduate students. Those choosing to stay in academia will increasingly content with contingent employment; but most (if not all) would prefer tenure-system positions.

The growth of contingent faculty threatens the tenure system as a whole.

²⁰ Ibid. Tables 34, 35. 19.2% of part-time faculty respondents had access to academic employer contributions to health benefits (16% in private sector and 23.4% in public sector); 35.3% of part-time faculty respondents had access to academic employer contributions to retirement benefits (20.6 in private sector and 46.9% in public sector)

²¹ For a debate on the best union strategy for contingent faculty see Ivan Greenberg (arguing for separate unions for contingent faculty) versus Eve S. Weinbaum and Max Page (arguing that contingent faculty are better off within unions that also represent tenure-system faculty), *New Labor Forum* vol. 23, no. 1, Jan/Feb 2014, pp. 11-20.

The arguments against tenure are compelling to those who support a world where university “presidents have become CEOs” and “the administration has become management,” as described by Richard Chait, professor of higher education at Harvard University. “From the perspective of many trustees and administrators,” Chait notes, tenure “limits management’s capacity to replace marginal performers with demonstrably or potentially better performers.”²² “The tenure system is inflexible and limits administrators’ ability to improve schools and departments” according to 83% of the business executives surveyed.²³ Trustees believe that tenure creates “an unacceptably potent buffer against centralized initiatives.... Tenure weakens the relative authority of executives.”²⁴

Tenure-system and contingent faculty have common interests in defending both academic freedom and the tradition of shared governance. Including contingent faculty in shared governance could help unite them with tenure-system faculty, and provide a stopgap against deteriorating conditions for all faculty.

Recent developments at unionized public systems in Massachusetts, Illinois, and California suggest what this might involve. In these cases, full-time faculty support increased pay, job security, and inclusion for part-time faculty, with the aim of reversing the reliance on part-time instruction.

6. The Educational Experience of Undergraduates

What does the growth of contingent faculty mean for the educational experience of undergraduates? Here are some of the key findings in the literature:

- Faculty interaction with students has “long been shown to improve the quality of students’ learning and their education experiences.”²⁵ Yet, part-time employment makes faculty less available to students outside of the classroom.
- Higher rates of contingent faculty employment reduce graduation rates at four-year colleges. Students at public institutions are especially affected.²⁶
- The use of part-time faculty reduces graduation rates at community colleges.²⁷

²² R. Chait, *The Question of Tenure* (Harvard University Press, 2002).

²³ J. Immerwahr, *Taking Responsibility: Leaders’ Expectations of Higher Education* (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, San Jose CA, January 1999).

²⁴ Chait, op cit.

²⁵ Adrianna Kezar and Dan Maxey, “Faculty Matter: So Why Doesn’t everyone think so?” *Thought and Action* (Fall 2014), p.30. For similar but earlier argument, widely cited, see also Ernst Benjamin, “How Over-Reliance on Contingent Appointments Diminishes Faculty Involvement.” *Peer Review* 5(1): 5-10 (2002)

²⁶ Ronald Ehrenberg and Liang Zhang, “Do Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty Matter?” National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 10695 (2004).

- First-year students taught by contingent faculty are less likely to return the following year –except at doctoral-granting institutions, where such students are more likely to return. Jaeger & Eagan attribute this contradictory finding to doctoral institution administrators’ recognition of (a) the important role of part-time faculty, (b) the challenges part-time faculty faced, and (c) a link between support for part-time faculty and student retention.²⁸
- Contingent faculty are often subject to "just-in-time" hiring and limited pedagogical support. Contingent faculty themselves compensate for this with “extraordinary effort, personal resources and professional dedication.” Administrators could improve these conditions without much cost or loss of flexibility.²⁹
- At Florida Atlantic University, exposure to contingent faculty had no effect on the education outcomes of students.³⁰
- At Northwestern University, first-year students learned more from contingent than from tenured or tenure-track faculty.³¹

These studies suggest considerable variation in the relationship between student learning and the employment of contingent faculty.³²

²⁷ Daniel Jacoby, “Effects of Part-Time Faculty Employment on Community College Graduation Rates.” *The Journal of Higher Education* 77(6): 1083-1103 (2006).

²⁸ Audrey Jaeger and Kevin Eagan, “Examining Retention and Contingent Faculty Use in a State System of public Higher Education.” *Educational Policy* (25)3: 507-37.

²⁹ Steve Street, Maria Maisto, Esther Merves, and Gary Rhoades, “Who is Professor ‘Staff’: And how can this person teach so many classes?” Center for the Future of Higher Education, Policy Report #2 (2012).

³⁰ Sharron Ronco and John Cahil, “Does it Matter Who’s in the Classroom? Effect of Instructor Type on Student Retention, Achievement and Satisfaction.” Association for Institutional Research, Professional File, 100 (2006).

³¹ David Figlio, Morton Schapiro, and Kevin Soter, “Are Tenure Track Professors Better Teachers?” *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 97(4): 715-24 (2015)

³² Suzanne Mettler, *Degrees of Inequality* (New York: Basic Books).

CURRENT CONDITIONS FOR CONTINGENT FACULTY

Working conditions for contingent faculty differ dramatically from those of tenure-system faculty. Pay, benefits, job security, advancement, and inclusion in governance are all inferior. We explore these issues and some of their consequences below.

Objective conditions

Pay

Pay varies widely, and especially by institutional type. Part-time faculty earn approximately 60% less than comparable full-time faculty on an hourly basis. Median pay per 3-credit hour course in 2010 was \$2,700. At this rate, an annual workload of 8 courses pays \$21,600. Contingent faculty must often teach at more than one institution to achieve even this.³³

Benefits

Contingent faculty do not receive the same level of benefits as tenure-system faculty.³⁴ Typically contingent faculty have limited or no access to employer-provided health insurance, life insurance, retirement, or sick leave. In some institutions, part-time faculty in some settings can become eligible for benefits after a period of employment.³⁵ But at some institutions this leads to a practice of not rehiring them to avoid having to pay benefits. Benefit eligibility information may also not always be clear at some institutions.³⁶

Job security

Filling tenure-track positions typically involves a rigorous national search. In contrast, contingent faculty are often recruited informally. As a 2014 AAUP report noted:

Appointments of full-time tenure-track faculty typically follow rigorous national searches, which include a review of the candidate's scholarly record, an assessment of teaching potential, and consideration of other attributes by faculty in the department offering the appointment. Contingent faculty, by contrast, are often appointed in hurried circumstances. Department chairs select likely candidates from a local list, reviewing their curricula vitae and perhaps their past student evaluations. (p. 174)

A study at George Mason University found that only 59% of contingent faculty there were asked to submit references when they applied for a job, and only half reported participating in a formal

³³ Toutkoushian and Bellas, 2003.

³⁴ Hollenshead et al., 2007.

³⁵ We are not yet aware of national data including the impact of the Affordable Care Act.

³⁶ Gappa and Leslie, 1993.

interview.³⁷ Local, convenient, last-minute hiring is common in contingent faculty hiring. This is particularly true for part-time positions.³⁸ Administrators often are reported to fill part-time positions with people they already know.³⁹

These practices may not be in compliance with fair employment practices and affirmative action.⁴⁰ While contingent faculty positions are usually considered temporary, they often turn out not to be so. One study found that over 80% of contingent faculty reported teaching part-time for more than three years, 55% for more than six years, and 30% for 10 years or more.⁴¹ Another study found that most contingent faculty are midcareer rather than early career faculty.⁴²

Contingent faculty often remain at an institution for many years. Yet they do so with little or no job security. The most common type of non-tenure track position is part-time for one-year or less, across all institutional types.⁴³

The issuance and finalization of contingent faculty contracts further illustrates the extreme insecurity in such employment. Contracts often are not offered until just before the start of the term, and sometimes only a few days before a course begins. Even if they are offered well in advance, the contract is often contingent on enrollment. Administrators may also shift a course initially promised to a contingent faculty member to a full-time faculty member instead. In practice, part-time contracts are often not secure until the class has met.⁴⁴

Most contingent faculty will never receive tenure. 60% of part-time faculty with a PhD report that their current academic appointment is the only one they have ever held. The proportion rises to 83% for those with a masters degree.⁴⁵ Part-time faculty are often ineligible for promotion or evaluation.⁴⁶

Working conditions

Contingent faculty are rarely given resources needed to create a classroom beneficial to students.⁴⁷ Contingent faculty “are given, at best, inadequate access to sample course syllabi, curriculum guidelines, library resources, clerical support, and the like. They often have only

³⁷ Allison, Lynn, Hoverman, 2014

³⁸ Hollenshead et al., 2007, Cross and Goldenberg, 2009

³⁹ Gappa and Leslie 1993, Allison et al. 2014

⁴⁰ Kezar, Maxey, and Badke, 2013; See also Hollenshead et al. 2007 and Kezar and Sam 2010.

⁴¹ Coalition on the Academic Workplace, *A Portrait of Part-time Faculty Members* (2012)

⁴² Lundquist and Misra, 2015.

⁴³ Hurlburt and McGarrah, 2016.

⁴⁴ Curtis and Jacobe, 2006

⁴⁵ Schuster and Finkelstein, 2006.

⁴⁶ Kezar and Sam 2010.

⁴⁷ Hurlburt and McGarrah 2016; AAUP 2014, Eagan & Jaeger 2008.

limited, if any, access to personal offices, telephones, computers and associated software, and technological tools and training.”⁴⁸ Many do not receive any office space.⁴⁹ When it is offered, office space is often shared with little private time available. Contingent faculty often lack full access to computers and photocopy machines. Professional development funds are either not available or denied to contingent faculty. One study found that “most GMU contingent faculty report that they are using their own out-of-class resources, such as their own computer (77 percent), phone (73 percent), printer (64 percent), and office space (56 percent). Additionally, they must absorb the provisional and repair costs for these resources themselves.”⁵⁰

Governance

Exclusion from governance varies among contingent faculty. Departments and institutions are more likely to include full-time contingent faculty than part-time colleagues in governance, but both are far less included than tenure-system faculty.⁵¹ Where governance bodies do include contingent faculty, they often offer inferior or no voting rights.⁵²

Subjective Experiences

When universities employ faculty under such unstable conditions, it deeply impacts their everyday lives. Contingent faculty often feel invisible or disrespected, and many suffer economic and emotional stress as a result of their employment.

Invisibility and Disrespect

Contingent faculty often report feeling invisible. Many, especially part-time faculty, are not invited to attend social events, meetings, or colloquia. Their work is rarely if ever acknowledged in department newsletters or bulletin boards. Many contingent faculty may feel as if they exist as invisible members of their departments. Full-time faculty may not know or recognize them at all.

Contingent faculty do become visible when the institution seeks something from them. One study found that 60% of contingent faculty were asked to contribute to campus fundraising campaigns. Departments also solicited information on their scholarly achievements for inclusion in reports about faculty productivity.⁵³

Contingent faculty are often paid low wages, as noted above. But some of their work goes entirely uncompensated. With some exceptions, departments do not compensate part-time faculty

⁴⁸ Street et al. 2012, p.1

⁴⁹ Street et al. 2012

⁵⁰ Allison, Marisa, Randy Lynn, and Victoria Hoverman. 2014. *Indispensable But Invisible--A Report on the Working Climate of Non-Tenure Track Faculty at George Mason University*. October 2014.

⁵¹ Hollenshead et al., 2007

⁵² Kezar and Sam, 2010a

⁵³ Allison et al. (., 2014).

for service work, which some undertake in the hopes of improving job security.⁵⁴ University contracts often specify that only work conducted within appointed class hours will be compensated, ignoring such tasks as developing a syllabus, course preparation, advising, or grading.^{55 56}

Economic Stress

Low pay and job insecurity can wreak havoc in the personal lives of faculty. Contingent faculty often accept more courses than they should teach. They do this not only to pay their bills but also as insurance against the risk that one or more courses may be canceled. Contingent faculty sometimes work in other part-time jobs outside of academia, even selling their blood to raise money.⁵⁷ This level of stress also severely limits their ability to keep up with others in the field.

What might seem like minor setbacks to those with decent jobs can become an acute crisis for contingent faculty. An SEIU report provides the following illustrative examples:

Transportation—“I had a major crisis last fall when I had an accident. . . . [M]y car was already 7 or 8 years old, so the insurance company wasn’t exactly going to give me a lot Shopping for a new car was traumatic because I hadn’t realized how much prices had gone up. . . . I was torn between getting a cheap used car [which meant] unexpected bills . . . or shell[ing] out the money for a new car . . . I could count on” (13);

Groceries—“We had to be careful about buying meat, we ate a lot of mac and cheese, and we ate a lot of ramen noodles; kind of like college kids do” (12);

Housing—“Last semester I was supposed to teach four classes and I ended up teaching three, which meant half my biweekly paycheck after taxes was \$660—just over what I pay in rent” (10).⁵⁸

Emotional Stress

Low pay, no benefits, job insecurity, and disrespect also contribute to chronic stress, especially for part-time faculty who have no other options available to them and depend

⁵⁴ Gappa and Leslie (1993) See also Allison et al. 2014 for accounts of uncompensated work done by part-time faculty.

⁵⁵ Street et al. 2012

⁵⁶ George Van Arsdale describes this type of contract in detail. 1978, *American Sociologist*, “De-Professionalizing a Part-Time Teaching Faculty.”

⁵⁷ Democratic House Staff, Committee on Education and the Work Force. 2014

⁵⁸ SEIU n.d.

on these jobs for a livelihood.⁵⁹ Contingent faculty are at especially high risk for anxiety, depression, and stress.⁶⁰ They also often experience self-blame and a sense of lost possibilities. The relative deprivation that contingent faculty experience can be significant; they may compare themselves to others with similar education who receive more respect and more pay.⁶¹

Another source of stress for contingent faculty is having courses offered to them with little lead time.⁶² In this situation a way faculty member must prepare a full course in a matter of days or even hours. This may lead to errors and further job dissatisfaction. The resulting lower self-esteem may also affect the atmosphere of the classroom.

Last minute hiring also means that contingent faculty may not be familiar with institutional policies and resources. Book orders may not be in place and institutional accounts may not be set up. The faculty member may not be able to answer basic questions in the classroom. (e.g., is Hanukkah an excused absence? Can I take my final exam during study days? How do I get a note-taker for this course?).

Lack of adequate office space exacerbates the stress. Contingent faculty cannot count on a quiet space in which to grade or prepare. Thus, universities force many part-time faculty to maintain an office in their homes. Contingent faculty that drive between campuses may even keep an office in the car.

Low pay and no benefits also creates pressure on contingent faculty members' personal lives as consumers, tenants, home owners, or roommates, family members, friends, and citizens. The emotional stress tied to contingency may also impact faculty health – a problem further compounded in the absence of health insurance coverage.

⁵⁹ Curtis et al. 2016

⁶⁰ Reevy and Deason

⁶¹ Feldma and Turnley 2004

⁶² Street et al. 2012. See also The Just-In-Time Professor 2015.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Orienting principles

Sociologists do not control the structural forces that have created these conditions. Our aim here is not to assign blame to deans, department chairs, or tenure-system faculty. But our recommendation is to promote the greatest feasible equity for contingent faculty. It will rarely be possible to achieve full equality. In many circumstances it may not be clear how we operationalize equality. But the broad goal should remain.

Compensation and Benefits

Pay should be proportional to work done. If a contingent faculty member does one-quarter as much as a full-time tenure-system faculty member, the contingent faculty member should receive one-quarter as much pay as the full-time tenure-system faculty member. Contingent faculty should also receive benefits such as health insurance and retirement. Likewise contingent faculty should be eligible for the same annual merit pay and cost of living increases as tenure-line faculty members.

There are at least two challenges in determining pay parity for contingent faculty. First, what are the responsibilities associated with the job? If faculty jobs only involved teaching, the calculation of pay parity would be simple. But expectations for tenure-track faculty involve far more than just teaching. Despite rhetoric specifying that contingent faculty ought only to teach, that is rarely true. This is clear to any student asking for a letter of recommendation, or seeking career guidance from a contingent faculty member. In any given instance there may be uncertainty – and negotiation – about what proportion of a tenure-track faculty member’s pay is based on teaching courses, what proportion depends on scholarship (reputation) and service, and how all this compares to a contingent faculty member with the same teaching load (who may also do more than teach). Comparisons will depend on the nature of the institution and its mission. Although some may contest the comparisons, the principle of pay parity is clear. Second, if contingent faculty pay is to be equal, equal to whom? To an average faculty member, the lowest paid tenure-track faculty member, or what?

For benefits, the case is more straightforward. Contingent faculty should be eligible for health insurance, parental leave, family leave, disability benefits, etc. on the same terms as tenure-system faculty. In some cases it may be reasonable to pro rate benefits, however.

Job security and advancement

“Just in time” scheduling is oppressive. It is so whether applied to retail or restaurant workers or contingent faculty. Administrators should recruit faculty and schedule courses well in advance. Administrators should make every effort to accommodate faculty scheduling requests and also be

to offer contingent faculty their preferred classes, if possible. Administrators should strive to offer contingent faculty on long-term contracts course continuity in both courses taught and scheduling.

Contingent faculty also should be provided as much job security as is reasonably possible – annual contracts rather than one-semester contracts, two or three years rather than a single year, and stronger protections when possible. Some union contracts provide models of best practices, for example, that a part-time faculty member who has taught five or more courses over the past three semesters is entitled to preferential hiring, and must be offered courses s/he is competent to teach before those courses are offered to other contingent faculty (assuming there is no issue of unsatisfactory performance). In some institutions, for full-time non-tenure-track faculty, there is a presumption of continuing employment unless the institution faces financial exigency, there is just cause for dismissing the faculty member, or a tenure-track faculty member is being hired to teach the courses previously taught by the non-tenure-track faculty member.

Contingent faculty should be evaluated on the same basis as tenure-system faculty, with the evaluation corresponding to their duties. That is, if contingent faculty are hired to teach, and are not expected to do research, they should be evaluated on their teaching (and, if appropriate, service). Teaching, for *all* faculty, should be assessed on the basis of a range of information, not simply on student evaluations.

Contingent faculty should also be able to advance in pay, rank, and recognition. For example, at the University of Massachusetts Amherst full-time non-tenure-track faculty are “lecturers” for the first six years, then are eligible to be promoted to “senior lecturers” after being reviewed by a panel of non-tenure-track faculty; the promotion brings a significant pay raise. (After a further six years, full-time non-tenure-track faculty are eligible for a further promotion and pay raise; the system parallels promotion to associate and full professor.)

Working conditions and climate

All faculty, contingent as well as tenure-system, should be provided the material conditions needed for effective teaching. That includes office space where materials can safely be kept, and where students can meet with instructors to discuss sensitive issues in a private setting. Faculty should have access to photocopying, to computers and the internet, office supplies, and so on. Contingent faculty should be eligible for department and university funds to attend conferences or engage in other professional development, and they should be eligible for sabbaticals or professional-development paid leaves.

Contingent faculty should be included in email and other written communications to tenure-track faculty, especially but not only in regard to teaching issues. They should be invited to attend department meetings involving matters affecting them, should be consulted about topics for

those meetings, and should receive minutes. Contingent faculty accomplishments should be recognized and celebrated in the same way that is done for tenure-system faculty. They should also be eligible for department and campus-wide awards for teaching, service, scholarship, longevity, or community service.

Inclusion means not only involvement in official governing bodies – from the department meeting to the faculty senate – but also in social and intellectual activities. It is not enough to announce that everyone is welcome. As sociologists, if we were studying a group that claimed to welcome all equally, but we observed that in practice members of one group or another (women, people of color) were absent, we would attempt to determine the beliefs and practices that created this outcome. If non-tenure system faculty are missing from our events, similarly, it is vital to determine the reasons why. Inclusion should be fundamental to our language, to our social practices, and to our networks. It is unacceptable to refer to “the faculty and adjuncts” (as if adjunct faculty are not faculty), to ignore people in the halls, or to consult tenure-system faculty about department issues and fail to solicit the opinions of non-tenure-system faculty.

Governance

Faculty working in contingent positions should be eligible to participate in governance decisions at all levels: departmental, college, and university or system wide. They should be eligible to serve in Faculty Senates or equivalent bodies *and* should be supported and elected so that contingent faculty perspectives are represented. They should participate in departmental decisions about such matters as undergraduate advising, the introduction of new courses, and requirements for the major.

Academic freedom

Perhaps the most important defense of tenure is that it provides, if not a guarantee, at least the strongest protection available for academic freedom. As the AAUP notes:

Because faculty tenure is the only secure protection for academic freedom in teaching, research, and service, the declining percentage of tenured faculty means that academic freedom is increasingly at risk. Academic freedom is a fundamental characteristic of higher education, necessary to preserve an independent forum for free inquiry and expression, and essential to the mission of higher education to serve the common good.⁶³

⁶³ AAUP. 2016. “Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession.” Accessed 11/26/2016 at [AAUP.https://www.aaup.org/report/contingent-appointments-and-academic-profession](https://www.aaup.org/report/contingent-appointments-and-academic-profession).

The increasing proportion of contingent faculty raises concerns that the “fear of dismissal for unpopular utterances” will dampen free inquiry in the classroom (by both faculty members and their students).⁶⁴ Smith argues that “There is no academic freedom without job security.”⁶⁵ This is particularly salient in regard to contingent faculty, who “are at risk for non-reappointment on the basis of a single complaint from a student or anyone else.”⁶⁶

One way to strengthen academic freedom is to increase the proportion of faculty who have tenure. Another is to defend the academic freedom of contingent faculty as fiercely as that of any other colleagues, even if they lack formal tenure protections.

American Sociological Association

The ASA is currently dominated by tenure-system faculty at research universities, with substantial involvement as well by graduate students and faculty in selective liberal arts colleges. The ASA does much less to engage community college faculty, or faculty in contingent employment. Here we suggest a variety of policy changes aimed at increasing engagement in ASA by and on behalf of contingent faculty. The ASA should consider:

- Creating awards (for teaching, scholarship, and/or service) specifically for faculty employed in contingent positions
- Reserving seats on Council or ASA committees for faculty employed in contingent positions
- Including an “contingent faculty employment report” column in *Footnotes*
- Increasing the capacity of contingent faculty who are ASA members to connect with one another, whether through a list-serve, sessions at ASA Annual Meetings, or via a mechanism to connect those who wish to share a hotel room at the Annual Meetings
- Providing resources, information, and links in a section of the ASA website
- Further revisions to the ASA’s dues structure to create lower rates for contingent faculty.

⁶⁴ AAUP. 2016. “Background Facts on Contingent Faculty.” Viewed 11/26/2016 at [AAUP](#).

⁶⁵ Stephen A. Smith. 2015. Contingent Faculty and Academic Freedom in the Twenty-First Century.” *First Amendment Studies* 49(1):27-30.

⁶⁶ Ibid Smith 2015:28

CONCLUSION

The transformation of higher education has been underway for some time, and shows no sign of relenting. The rise of contingent faculty and the decline of tenure is only one part of that process – an important part, but not the driving force. In the larger economy, too, when the generations now retiring were young, large swaths of the labor market were comprised of full-time jobs, decently paid, with health and fixed-payment pension benefits, connected to career ladders and opportunities for advancement, and a reasonable expectation of job security. Tenured faculty may have been an extreme cases in regard to job security, but they held jobs recognizably similar to the dominant understanding of salaried employment generally.

Today an increasing proportion of jobs in the wider society are precarious, with uncertain hours and future, with few or no benefits, stagnant and often low pay, involving little opportunity for internal promotion. Reflecting that shift, contingent faculty hold jobs recognizably similar to this newly dominant understanding of what employment should be.

Moreover, just as inequality is growing within the broader labor market, with a widening gap between the most privileged layers of the workforce and the lower levels, so too in academia, conditions for tenure-system faculty at research and elite institutions may well be *improving*. In recent years course loads have been reduced for many faculty teaching in doctoral programs; de facto, Research I university jobs are increasingly focused on research, even as the ranks of part-time faculty burgeon, typically with low pay, minimal or non-existent benefits, and little or no job security, and few if any opportunities for advancement.

Between those two tiers is an emerging set of full-time non-tenure-track positions; some of which offer far better pay, decent benefits, and a significant measure of job security. Occupants of such positions are treated as second-class citizens (but far better than the treatment of part-time faculty).

The most obvious driver of this transformation is financial – rooted especially in the decline of public funding of higher education. But perhaps even more important is an ideological commitment – by legislators *and* by campus trustees – to market-based employment systems.

Our position is that a university is not and should not be managed like be a business. Doing so shows not hard-headed realism but a failure to understand what gives the university its historical strength and future potential. Tenure-system faculty are a problem to top administrators and trustees precisely because tenure-system faculty have an alternative vision of the university and some power to actualize that vision.

If contingent faculty are absent from governance processes, as they are de jure at some institutions and de facto at many more, then not only are important viewpoints and perspectives excluded or under-represented, but also professionalism and faculty governance are weakened. When provosts and presidents respond to trustee and larger societal pressures to cut costs, it often involves a model of education-as-job-training. If faculty are delivering a standard curriculum determined from above, with little or no ability to explore alternatives or to respond to student interests, then a deskilled and vulnerable workforce has important advantages. This may help to explain why tenure is weakest at community colleges and virtually nonexistent at for-profit institutions.⁶⁷ A market-style model works less well if a university's goals are free speech, creativity, research, and student exploration of alternatives.

This interim report contains some specific proposals; our hope is that discussing it will generate useful critiques and suggestions for additional material.

In the coming years, ASA members have a difficult choice to make. Is the Association to become a niche organization? Or will the ASA adapt and respond to the new nature of faculty labor?

⁶⁷ R. Chait, *The Questions of Tenure* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2002); David Kirp, *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2003).

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Appendix I : Definition of American faculty categories

For the purposes of this report, we use the following language:

Contingent: An umbrella term encompassing all non-tenure-system faculty.

Tenure-system: A process progressing toward indefinite appointment meant to protect academic freedom.

Non-tenure track: Faculty ineligible for indefinite appointment.

Full-time: Steady employment for a given minimum number of hours, often coupled with paid benefits.

Part-time: Few hours, often without paid benefits.

Administrator: Responsible for operations at the university. In this report we include Department Chairs in this category. Other common ranks include Dean, Provost, and President.

APPENDIX B: List of Task Force Members (as of July 2017)

Co-Chairs

Dan Clawson, Professor of Sociology, University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Research on labor and higher education, among many topics. Member of the board, Massachusetts Teachers Association, and former president, Massachusetts Society of Professors. PhD, Stony Brook. <https://www.umass.edu/sociology/users/clawson>

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Members

Marisa Allison, PhD candidate in Sociology, George Mason University, and Director of Research, New Faculty Majority Foundation. Dissertation on the shift to contingent faculty employment as a process of the feminization of teaching in higher education. Contingent faculty member at multiple colleges and universities in the DC metro area and in the southeast. MS, Mississippi State.

Celeste Atkins, Sociology Instructor and Department Chair for Social and Behavioral Sciences, Cochise College. Part-time faculty member, Southern New Hampshire University Online. MA, Southern California.

Michael Burawoy, Professor of Sociology, University of California-Berkeley. Research on labor with recent attention to the situation of faculty members employed contingently. Co-chair, Berkeley Faculty Association. Former president, American Sociological Association and International Sociological Association. PhD, Chicago. <http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/>

Jay R. Howard, Professor of Sociology and Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Butler University. Active in ASA Teaching and Learning section and former deputy editor, *Teaching Sociology*; member, ASA Department Resources Group. Former president, North Central Sociological Association. PhD, Notre Dame. <http://legacy.butler.edu/about/directory/?a=viewprofile&u=jrhoward>

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Catherine Moran, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, University of New Hampshire. UNH Lecturers United (AAUP): executive committee, co-lead negotiator, and grievance officer. PhD, New Hampshire. <http://cola.unh.edu/faculty-member/catherine-moran>

Gillian Niebrugge-Brantley, Professorial Lecturer in Sociology, George Washington University. Current research on contingent faculty. Vice President, SEIU Local 500. Professor Emerita and former division chair, Northern Virginia Community College. PhD, Kansas.

Nicholas Pagnucco, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Delaware State University. Research on the employment of part-time faculty members. Former contingent faculty member at several universities. PhD, Albany. <https://desu.academia.edu/NicholasPagnucco>

Victor Perez, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice, University of Delaware. Currently a non-tenure track faculty member and involved in Continuing Track Caucus. PhD, Delaware. <http://sites.udel.edu/victorp/>

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