

AAUP Contingent Faculty Index 2006

AAUP

American Association of University Professors

Academic Freedom for a Free Society

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AAUP Statements and Reports on Contingent Faculty

For nearly four decades, the AAUP has been actively confronting the issues surrounding the growing use of contingent faculty appointments in higher education. Association policy statements and reports issued during that time are listed here:

Report of the Special Committee on Academic Personnel Ineligible for Tenure (1969)
Part-Time Faculty Series: A series of articles published in 1978 and 1979 with funding support from the Ford Foundation, on the working conditions and compensation of part-time faculty.

The Status of Part-Time Faculty (1980)

On Full-Time Non-Tenure-Track Appointments (1986)

The Status of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty (1993)

Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession (2003) includes the following statements:

“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. This report examines the costs to academic freedom incurred by the current trend toward overreliance on part- and full-time non-tenure-track faculty.”

“Consistent with the Association's earlier statements, this report and its recommendations proceed from the premise that faculty in higher education must have academic freedom protected by academic due process. It emphasizes the importance of preserving for all faculty the integrity of the profession, founded on the interaction of research, teaching, and service....”

From *AAUP Policy Documents and Reports* (Tenth Edition, 2006), p. 98.

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Consequences: An Increasingly Contingent Faculty

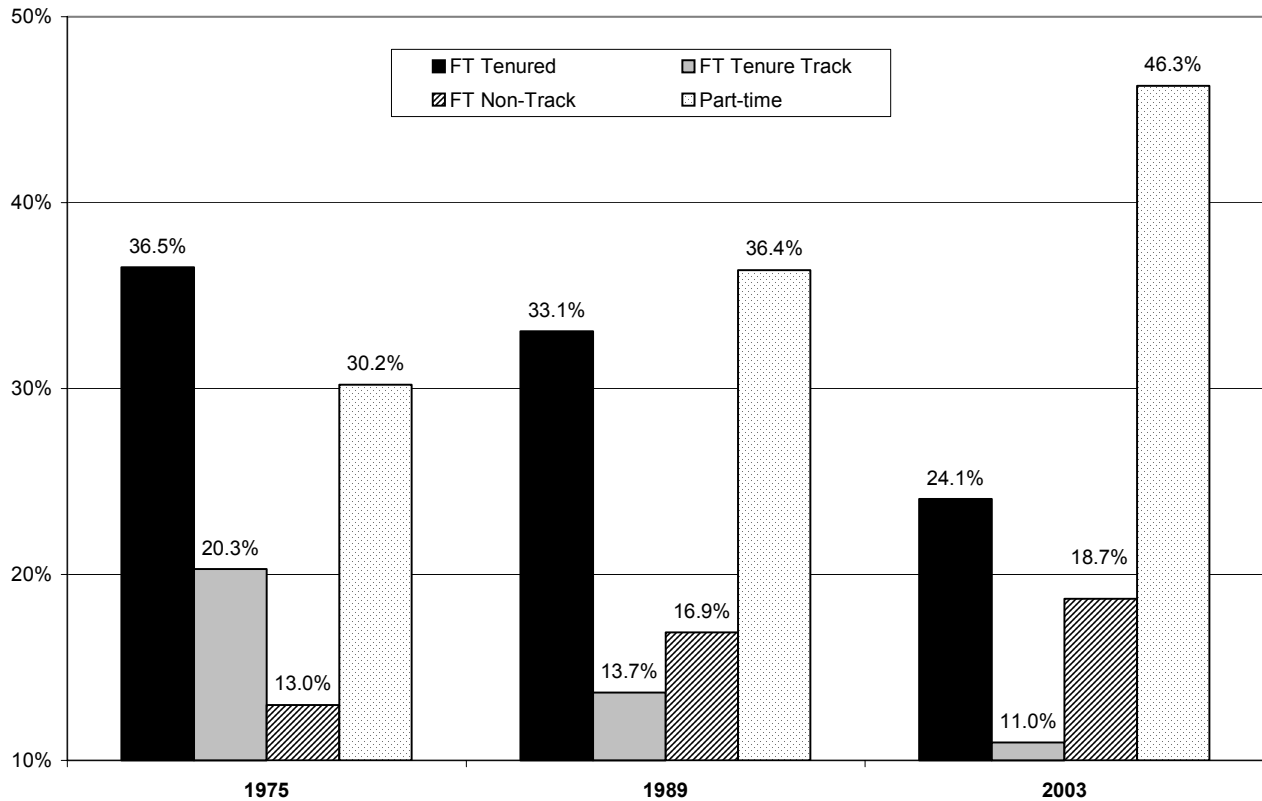
John W. Curtis and Monica F. Jacobe

For some time, observers of higher education have noted a dramatic shift in the employment of college and university faculty in the United States. Where formerly most faculty were employed full time and held appointments that either provided the academic freedom and economic security of tenure or would lead to consideration for that status, the most rapid growth in recent years has been in two categories of contingent faculty appointments: part-time positions generally limited to a single course for a single academic term, and full-time fixed-term positions, most often for one to three years of employment that do not lead to consideration for tenure. In this same period, the use of graduate

student instructors has further decreased the number of students being taught by traditional tenure-line faculty,¹ although national data on actual teaching loads are not available. Taken together, these changes in the nature of faculty employment and faculty work have created a predominantly contingent faculty across the academy. In fall 2003, according to data tabulated by the US Department of Education, individuals employed in these two faculty categories accounted for 65 percent of all faculty at degree-granting colleges and universities in the United States (see figure 1 below).

This report provides detailed and local information on a topic that has been discussed pri-

Figure 1.
Trends in Faculty Status, 1975-2003
All degree-granting institutions, national totals



Source: US Department of Education, IPEDS Fall Staff Survey

marily at the abstract level: the growing use of contingent faculty in colleges and universities. It begins with an overview of the changing employment situation of faculty during the last three decades, followed by a description of the work situation of various categories of contingent faculty, and concludes with a section that describes why the continued growth of faculty appointments in this category is a problem. The text is supplemented with aggregate tables showing the breakdown of faculty appointment types at institutions of various types, and this overview article is followed by a detailed appendix listing contingent faculty numbers at over 2,600 colleges and universities across the United States.

The Growth in Contingent Faculty Appointments

Figure 1 shows the overall growth of contingent faculty appointments between 1975 and 2003, a period in which these appointments became the majority of all faculty positions at degree-granting colleges and universities.

During this period, full-time tenured positions declined from 37 percent of all faculty positions to only 24 percent. This occurred during a time of overall growth in faculty numbers, but one in which contingent appointments grew much more rapidly than tenure-line positions. In fact, the actual number of full-time tenured faculty positions declined by more than 2,000 between 1995 and 2003. Perhaps even more strikingly, the proportion of full-time tenure-track positions declined from 20 percent to 11 percent during this period. As Schuster and Finkelstein have documented, the majority of new hires for full-time faculty from 1993 through 2005 were off the tenure track—a phenomenon they label a “seismic shift.”² This has significant implications for the future, since the tenured faculty of the coming decade would emerge from these tenure-track positions. It appears that the relative decline in tenure-line positions will continue for the foreseeable future, unless colleges and universities make a commitment to hiring signifi-

cant numbers of new tenure-track faculty.

Corresponding to the decline of tenured and tenure-track appointments has been an increase in the proportion of contingent appointments, both full-time non-tenure-track and part-time positions. During the period covered by figure 1, full-time non-tenure-track appointments increased from 13 percent to 19 percent of all faculty. Part-time positions grew from 30 percent to 46 percent. Thus, these two categories of contingent positions combined represent two-thirds of all faculty employed in 2003.

The Nature of Contingent Faculty Appointments

Contingent faculty as discussed here include several categories of university teachers and researchers: part-time faculty; full-time term faculty outside tenure lines; graduate student employees; and post-doctoral fellows. The central problem of contingent academics is not the people who fill these positions, as they are most often able teachers and scholars forced into these positions by the structure of academic employment. The problem lies in the nature of contingent work, its lack of support structures and the constraints on academic freedom for faculty in these positions. This section of the report explores the challenges and problems unique to each category of contingent faculty. While individuals in these positions share the common problem of employment on a contingent basis, they face very different work conditions, employment contracts, and places in the academic hierarchy.

Full-time non-tenure-track faculty appointments

Full-time faculty are increasingly hired into fixed-term appointments that do not lead to consideration for tenure at the college or university where they are employed, even when other faculty at the same institution do hold tenure. Many of these positions were originally intended to last one to three years without being renewed; today they are being renewed with increasing fre-

quency, keeping the same faculty members employed on a contingent basis for an extended period of time without providing them any of the protections of tenure or the comprehensive peer evaluation of a tenure review.

In the past, it was likely the case that many of the faculty appointments in this category were “visiting” faculty positions, providing an opportunity for full-time, tenure-line faculty during a sabbatical year. These more established faculty members would be able to interact with new colleagues or spend focused time on a project while in a visiting appointment. In other cases, the “visiting” faculty member might be a junior scholar filling the position of a more senior individual absent on leave. This arrangement would provide the visiting faculty member with an opportunity to gain valuable experience on the path to obtaining a tenure-track position of his or her own.

This trade-off of experiences toward the common goal of tenured faculty status is falling by the wayside. Such “visiting” appointments are still in use today, but in the aggregate, the number of fixed-term, full-time appointments has clearly moved beyond the realm of “temporary” flexibility to become an established feature of the faculty employment situation. It is now common for recent doctoral graduates to move through a series of one- or two-year “visiting” appointments, with no real prospect of obtaining a tenure-track position at any of the institutions they “visit.” In some fields, this is almost a *de facto* prerequisite to obtaining a tenure-track position. In some disciplines, most notably in foreign languages, an entire segment of the instructional faculty are employed on renewable contracts that do not lead to consideration for tenure, do not provide adequate job protection in case of program changes, and do not support

the development of scholarly careers.

In terms of pay and physical working conditions, full-time non-tenure-track faculty may well be on a par with their tenure-line colleagues. They are likely to have an office and access to campus facilities and services. However, because of the contingent nature of their employment, they face many constraints on their academic freedom. With no employment guarantee beyond a limited term and facing a reappointment decision as

soon as the second semester—where a reappointment is a possibility at all—the non-tenure-track faculty member is in a vulnerable position. Although the initial hire may have involved a faculty

committee, successive reappointments may well be at the discretion of a single administrator—producing the kind of hesitancy regarding controversy or offense in teaching and research that limits academic freedom.

In addition to constraints on academic freedom, non-tenure-track faculty are limited in their career progression while holding such appointments. The teaching loads associated with these positions are generally larger than those given to tenure-line faculty, leaving less time for the fixed-term faculty member to pursue scholarship or even keep up with developments in the discipline. Many of these positions are designated as “teaching only,” and therefore carry explicit limitations on the potential for support to pursue research or attend scholarly conferences, a real handicap for faculty seeking another academic job for the following year. These positions, like all contingent academic roles, are structured primarily to meet the needs of a department for instructional personnel, rather than the career objectives of junior faculty.

It should be noted that a growing proportion of non-tenure-track faculty positions are designated as “research only” appointments. Because

The problem lies in the nature of contingent work, its lack of support structures and the constraints on academic freedom for faculty in these positions.

the employment conditions of such positions are the same as primarily teaching contingent positions, they also create constraints on academic freedom—which is a precondition for effective research just as it is for effective instruction.

Part-time faculty appointments

The term “part-time faculty appointment” will be used here to describe positions that provide less than full-time employment for a given academic term. The most common form of such appointments are assignments for an individual course section for a specific term. While in some cases the part-time faculty member’s teaching load at an institution for the term may well exceed that of full-time faculty teaching in the same department, they are generally paid for specific teaching units and receive no assurance that their employment will continue beyond the term.

Part-time faculty are rarely provided with the institutional support they need to be effective teachers and scholars. They often lack offices, campus telephones, network computer access, campus e-mail or individual faculty Web sites. In some cases they do not even have library access. Part-time faculty rarely have effective access to audio-visual equipment used in instruction; or if they do, they are not provided with sufficient training to incorporate it effectively into their teaching. They are paid for the specific classes they teach and are often on campus only for those scheduled class meetings, rushing off to teach the next course at another campus or to another job entirely. Since part-time faculty frequently teach the classes more established faculty prefer not to teach—e.g. early morning, evening, or increasingly online sections—they may not be on campus during regular business hours at all. This makes it difficult for students

to contact them outside of class, unless the faculty members themselves provide personal telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and/or Web sites—for which the institution does not provide support.

The part-time faculty hiring process often makes it nearly impossible to prepare adequately for teaching. Part-time faculty are generally considered last when developing course schedules for an academic term, since they are viewed primarily as “filling in the gaps” created through insufficient employment of full-time faculty. Thus, part-time faculty are often not assigned to

That part-time faculty do not participate in governance—not even in basic discussions about curriculum—clearly represents a substantial limitation on their functioning as faculty.

specific courses or course sections until shortly before the beginning of the academic term. With a matter of weeks—or even days—to prepare, part-time faculty

are not able to plan adequately for topics to be treated, methods to be used, or the specific needs of students in their courses. They are often forced to use textbooks they have not chosen and to follow a course syllabus they did not create. In extreme cases, part-time faculty are assigned to teach a course after the term has already begun, thereby losing the valuable first sessions to establish an instructional environment of their choosing. Just as often, part-time faculty are assigned a course well in advance, only to have the section cancelled at the last minute due to low enrollment or to have their assignment revoked in favor of a full-time faculty member who needs another course to fulfill an existing contract. On such short notice, they are then unable to secure another teaching assignment for that term. These cases are, indeed, extreme in their impact, both on the part-time faculty member involved and on the learning experience of students—yet they are by no means rare in today’s colleges and universities.

It should be noted that some part-time fac-

ulty members are actually hired repeatedly, year after year, to teach the same courses at the same institution. In those cases, the preparation for the course is not new. Yet the conditions of short notice and uncertainty described above still apply, for there is no guarantee that even these “established” part-time faculty will be assigned to teach particular courses in a given term. Since they also likely have little or no control over textbooks or syllabus, they too suffer from inadequate time for preparation and a lack of institutional support. Cases where part-time faculty can design their own courses are made even more difficult by the short notice of appointment, leaving little time to evaluate, choose, and order texts, much less design a course around them.

Part-time faculty are not involved in broader curriculum planning and often have only very limited interaction with their faculty colleagues—whether fellow part-timers or full-time tenure-line faculty. This means that part-time faculty teach in isolation; they are not aware of how the courses they teach fit into the overall instructional objectives of their department or the institution as a whole. Some departments and institutions do try to provide limited orientation sessions for their part-time faculty members. However, since part-time faculty are by definition involved with significant other employment or life activities, it is difficult to bring them to campus during regular weekday hours. Bringing together part-time and full-time faculty is a scheduling challenge not easily overcome. And even when successful, these efforts are generally only minimal and hardly form the basis for continuing professional support and development of part-time faculty.

Part-time faculty also find themselves generally excluded from participation in broader departmental or institutional governance. They do not have a say in hiring or promotion decisions regarding faculty colleagues, they do not participate in decision-making on academic issues, and they are not represented in institutional decision-making bodies. The few institutions that include part-time faculty in governance—most

often unionized campuses—represent the exception. That part-time faculty do not participate in governance—not even in basic discussions about curriculum—clearly represents a substantial limitation on their functioning as faculty. However, given that part-time faculty do not have real academic freedom, as will be discussed in the following paragraph, there remains a question of whether they could participate effectively in governance even if given that opportunity.

Due to the nature of their employment situation, part-time faculty do not have academic freedom. They are hired to teach specific courses in a specific term, with no guarantee of further hires. Part-time faculty hiring is generally handled by a single administrator, without substantial review by departmental faculty. This contrasts with the hiring process for full-time faculty, even on a term contract, which generally involves an advertised search and a faculty committee working through an extended process that includes several layers of review. Although many administrators are doubtless conscientious in trying to find qualified part-time faculty to staff numerous unassigned course sections each term, it is equally certain that some instructors are hired simply because they are known to the hiring official and available, rather than because they are the most qualified individuals for the job.

This hiring procedure means that part-time faculty are beholden to individual administrators for their jobs. Part-time faculty generally do not have access to academic due process mechanisms in cases of dismissal or non-renewal of their appointments. An administrator who dislikes a particular part-time faculty member can choose not to rehire that person, and generally is not required to give any reason for that action. The hiring administrator usually has little other than student evaluations (in the case of a renewal) and superficial subjective impressions on which to base the appointment decision, which gives undue weight to both. Under these conditions, part-time faculty members are likely to avoid any actions that might offend either administrators or stu-

dents. They feel constrained to avoid controversial subjects or challenging assignments in their teaching, which are the fundamental roots of their lack of academic freedom.

Graduate student employees

In their roles as instructors, graduate students may very well fall within the category of “contingent faculty.” However, the categorization is not always unambiguous, and the available data reflect this ambiguity. (It should be noted that we are not here concerned with graduate students who accept part-time teaching positions at another institution during the time of their studies. In that case, they would be appropriately classified as part-time faculty at the other institution. The discussion in this section relates to graduate students who participate in instruction as a component of their degree program.)

Traditionally, graduate students served as “teaching assistants” or “research assistants” as part of their own learning process. In this role, they were considered apprentices, working with a full-time faculty member both to provide assistance and to learn more about the instructional or research process. This mentoring relationship does still exist in graduate student/faculty relationships, and in this setting graduate students are functioning primarily as *students*.

Ambiguity arises, however, when graduate students are expected, as part of their degree program, to carry out more autonomous instruction or when the amount of their assigned work begins to interfere with their own studies. In terms of instruction, it is apparent that graduate students in some disciplines and at some institutions are expected—even required—to serve as autonomous instructors in lower-division courses. Some graduate students are expected to teach two sections per semester, which would constitute a full-time teaching load for many tenure-line faculty at the doctoral universities where these students are both enrolled and teaching. Given such expectations, graduate students are more properly viewed as *employees*.

When working as researchers, the line between student and employee is even less clear. The distinction in this case is drawn not on the basis of autonomy, since both the student research assistant and the staff research technician are working under the direction of a more senior faculty investigator, but rather on the basis of work time. Even here, however, the student/employee boundary is unclear. Students may spend long hours working out a research problem as a legitimate part of their learning process. However, when a graduate student spends a substantial number of hours on a research project directed by a faculty member that is not directly related to the student’s own research subject, he or she clearly falls into the *employee* category.

As instructors and as researchers, graduate students’ positions are contingent because their career progression depends to a large extent on the goodwill of the tenure-line faculty around them: department chairs or program directors as instructional managers and faculty investigators as research managers. They too lack basic and necessary academic freedom because they lack power within the hierarchy and ultimately continue their work only at the discretion of their universities.

The data available for this report do not provide enough information to determine the actual workloads of graduate students. However, these data are drawn from a survey which specifically enumerates graduate students counted as *employees* by their institutions, rather than all enrolled graduate students. The data listed in the appendices include counts of graduate student employees and one percentage calculation that includes them. The determination of how best to categorize graduate student employees on a particular campus remains a matter for discussion among faculty and graduate students at the local level.

Postdoctoral fellows

This final category is a gray area within the academic workforce, and one for which this report does not provide data. Postdoctoral fellows

A Note on the Data

The data used in this report for tables 1 and 2 and the appendices come from the US Department of Education IPEDS, specifically the Fall 2005 Employees by Assigned Position data file (as of 8/22/06). This source provides comprehensive data from virtually all degree-granting colleges and universities, and allows for breakdowns of full-time and part-time faculty and graduate student employees into both instructional and primarily research categories.

IPEDS data are publicly available, although the data used in this report are not easily accessible at this level of detail. One purpose of publishing these data is to serve an expository function. These data are used as the basis for policy-making at the institutional, state, and federal levels. Yet because they are not generally accessible to faculty, students, and others, they have not been readily available for useful discussions at the local level among all interested parties. If you feel that data published here are inaccurate, please report those concerns to your institutional IPEDS coordinator and the AAUP Research Office (aaupfcs@aaup.org).

The institutional classification used in this report is the 2005 Basic classification from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. It can be found at (<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications/>). The Carnegie data file, dated 10/13/06, was merged with the IPEDS file to produce a dataset limited as follows:

Institutions classified by Carnegie as “special focus,” tribal colleges, and unclassified institutions were not included in the analysis.

The data were further limited to regionally accredited institutions only. The source for this identification was the Carnegie data

file. Carnegie had obtained recent systematic accreditation information from the US Department of Education, but that data element was no longer on the IPEDS file beginning in 2005.

These limitations produced a dataset of 2,617 institutions.

The counts used in this report are for non-medical faculty and graduate student employees whose functions were categorized as primarily instruction, instruction combined with research and/or public service, and primarily research. The tabulation excludes those individuals who were reported in the “primarily public service” category. For a small number of large public universities, that category is sizeable, and those data are available from AAUP Research.

The following abbreviations are used in the appendices:

“Ten” = Tenured;

“Track” = Tenure-Track;

“Non-Track” = Non-Tenure-Track (including faculty at institutions without a tenure system);

“% Non” = Non-Tenure-Track as a percent of full-time faculty;

“Tenure Line” = Tenured and tenure-track faculty;

“Instr” = Primary function is instruction;

“Res” = Primary function is research. (See further explanation above.)

Names of institutions are as listed in the IPEDS file, abbreviated to fit in the available space. “U” is generally used for University, “Coll” for College, “Inst” for Institute and “St” for State.

Eight institutions that submitted data reported no faculty members (full-or part-time), and one institution reported no full-time and only one part-time faculty member.

become more like contingent faculty when they spend more time teaching than on their own scholarship and when a postdoctoral position becomes a common step in an academic career. In the natural sciences, postdoctoral research has long been accepted as the first step out of laboratory apprenticeship for new Ph.D.s. But these positions can also come with heavy teaching and mentoring duties that burden a new scholar during his or her first foray into directing research. An increasing number of postdoctoral fellowships are now being awarded in the humanities and social sciences, bringing new Ph.D.s to large research universities and small liberal arts colleges as half-time or full-time teachers who are also developing their research careers.

Founded in the mid-1970s, Columbia University's Society of Fellows is one of many programs at large research universities using Mellon Foundation funding to create postdoctoral fellowships in the humanities. These one-year, renewable fellowships come with appointment as a lecturer or research fellow in an appropriate department, undergraduate teaching duties, and time to do scholarly work. Fellows teach no more than one course per semester in this program but do spend time planning a community lecture series and conferences and other events that contribute both to the fellow's scholarly pursuits and the intellectual life of Columbia.

Another notable program that seeks to balance these needs is the Introduction to the Humanities (IHUM) program at Stanford University. Created in 1997, IHUM takes on postdoctoral teaching fellows to be mentored by and team-teach with senior university faculty in an interdisciplinary humanities program. The introductory and general education courses, designed for freshmen, are staffed by two senior teachers and four fellows each term. Fellows lead three discussion sections each semester, basing their work on lectures given by the senior faculty. These positions include research funding and support for professional development, although they are undoubtedly focused on teaching, and

can be renewed.

Such positions, which have also been created outside of research universities, retain a sense of balance between academic labor and support for a developing scholar. However, the popularity of these kinds of programs has given rise to other, less supportive programs. Most notably, in English departments at colleges and universities of various size, writing fellowships are being offered as postdoctoral support for teachers of composition. Despite the title, the new Ph.D.s in these positions are full-time teachers carrying course loads as heavy as 15 credits or five courses per semester. Lighter course loads are sometimes coupled with more developmental experiences, like service learning work in the surrounding community or mentoring teaching assistants. However, insofar as these positions offer only limited-term contracts, these "fellows" are employed in contingent faculty positions very much akin to the full-time non-tenure-track faculty whose situation opened this section.

The Creation of a Contingent Faculty: Ramifications for Higher Education

The preceding section examined working conditions in the various categories of contingent faculty appointments. This section takes a broader view and examines the impact of the increasing use of contingent faculty from four different perspectives: on students, on individual faculty careers, on institutions, and on higher education as a whole. As noted previously, it is the nature of contingent faculty employment that produces the limitations described here, not the contingent faculty members themselves. Individual part-time and non-tenure-track faculty often make extraordinary efforts to provide quality instruction for their students. However, they generally lack sufficient institutional support for those efforts. And as the faculty collectively grows more contingent, the quality of higher education itself is threatened.

The Impact of Contingent Faculty on Students

An overreliance on contingent faculty impacts student learning in three ways: contingent faculty lack the professional support necessary to provide their students with quality instruction; they are not in a position to develop a relationship with students as advisors and mentors; and their lack of academic freedom constrains their ability to challenge students to excel. Students expect the same professors they had as freshmen and sophomores to be available when they are applying for scholarship funding, to study abroad, or to continue their education in graduate schools. However, part- and full-time contingent faculty are less likely to be in the same place several semesters later, which leaves an increasing number of students with no faculty who know them well enough to recommend them for anything.

This dynamic, of course, assumes that these faculty interact with students individually to begin with, but the lack of office space for part-time faculty generally precludes such interaction. At many community colleges and even large research universities, office space is so scarce that part-time contingents meet with students in lounges, parking lots, and other public spaces. With no door to close for privacy, students are less likely to open up to these teachers, who most frequently encounter them in the tough first and second years of college. These faculty also find it hard to discuss matters that should be confidential, like grades, academic dishonesty accusations, or learning disabilities when students most need those talks.

Many contingent faculty, however, do not get to know their students well in large, introductory courses and could not have these conversations with students even if they had space. Part-time faculty may be overburdened with long com-

muties between several schools and may even teach more courses in a term than full-time faculty members. Full-time contingents and graduate students, less likely to shuffle between schools, must balance their own futures and career interests, scholarship, and home university obligations with the needs of students, whether in a lab or a classroom. For the most part, contingent faculty simply cannot provide the type of individual encouragement and support students need as they progress through their education.

Contingent faculty members are also less familiar with the overall curriculum of the university or their department, primarily because they

are rarely involved in constructing course offerings or programs of study. As such, they cannot effectively serve students in an advisory

capacity, even in answering the most basic questions about which classes to take the following semester. In an ideal academic environment, students could receive this kind of support from all faculty members teaching every course; however, it is fair to say the situation is far less than ideal when fully 65 percent of all faculty are unable to meet student needs because of the nature of their appointments.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, contingent faculty members are less likely to challenge their students because they are often reliant on student evaluations for their continued employment. Because they lack the due process guarantees that underpin academic freedom, contingent faculty members are afraid of raising controversial issues in the classroom—even though this would stimulate their students to think through those issues and develop informed opinions of their own. Shaping those opinions is a challenge for contingent academics beyond the limits of academic freedom, however. They rarely

Contingent faculty members are less likely to challenge their students because they are often reliant on student evaluations for their continued employment.

receive the institutional support they need to make—much less keep up with—developments in scholarship or pedagogy. Overcoming these challenges in the many ways contingent academics do to remain informed teachers and scholars is admirable, but those efforts do not mitigate the injustice of being forced to do the same job with less, a primary function of the nature of contingent appointments.

Contingent Appointments and Faculty Careers
Moving from non-track positions into tenure-track jobs is a difficult shift in the academy. Anecdotal reports reflect the unfortunate truth: If one begins teaching in a non-track position, there is little chance that one's application for a tenure-track job will be taken seriously on that same campus. Schuster and Finkelstein's carefully constructed analysis concludes as follows:

The preliminary evidence suggests that *for the most part* these fixed-term, full-time appointments seem to constitute a discernibly different career track from that of traditional, tenure-eligible appointments. That is, the modal pattern discernible among current full-time faculty is one of movements *among* off-track appointments or *among* on-track appointments.³

As Schuster and Finkelstein point out, their analysis is likely an overestimate of the potential for faculty mobility, since they do not have access to data on faculty members who have left academia entirely.

The lack of mobility between contingent and tenure-track appointments is not absolute; some individuals do make the jump. And the potential for mobility is apparently strong enough to entice faculty to accept full-time contingent appointments. The 2004 staffing survey by the Modern Language Association, covering searches during the 2003-04 academic year, showed that about one-third of those hired into tenure-line positions that year came from full-time, non-track positions. That proportion was roughly equal to the proportion hired directly out

of graduate school into the tenure track⁴. However, this statistic is incomplete. The MLA results are based on a sample survey for a single year for one cluster of disciplines. This particular statistic reflects only cases where a tenure-track hire was made. And, most importantly, it does not provide information on what proportion of the individuals in full-time contingent positions were able to move into tenure-line positions. Schuster and Finkelstein suggest that this proportion is about one-third, which reinforces the MLA survey finding. But their analysis does not specify *how long* individuals typically remain in non-tenure-track positions before they move to the tenure track. In the 2005 Job Market Report from the American Historical Association, Robert Townsend expresses concern that only 60 percent of the tenure-line hires for new assistant professors in that year went to candidates who had completed their Ph.D.s in the preceding three years⁵. Again, this is a report for a single year for a single discipline, and the statistic relates only to new hires. But it does indicate that the proportion of individuals experiencing a delay of several years between their degree and a tenure-line academic position is substantial.

Neither of these examples articulates the difficult position in which part-time contingent faculty find themselves when seeking full-time tenure-line employment. The previously cited MLA survey indicates that only 8.2 percent of the individuals hired into tenure-track assistant professor positions at four-year schools came from part-time contingent positions. The proportions moving from part-time to full-time were significantly higher at two-year colleges, but these cases represented far fewer positions.⁶

The reasons for this difference between the two categories of contingent faculty in moving to the tenure track are many. While full-time contingent faculty have likely served on department committees and handled a full-time teaching load, their part-time colleagues rarely have the time or opportunity to take part in faculty service. This puts part-time faculty at a significant

disadvantage when seeking full-time employment, which generally involves a service component. Part-time contingent work is also poorly paid and rarely includes support for professional development, meaning that part-time faculty struggle to develop the kind of credentials their competitors have. Part-time faculty are viewed as teachers-for-hire and treated as such by administrators and institutions that value them in the classroom, but not outside it. As such, it is harder for them to transition out of these positions and into the tenure track.

Institutions with an Increasingly Contingent Faculty

Faculty are the core of a college or university. You can find this statement throughout the commencement and convocation speeches of college and university presidents and in their welcome messages for incoming students. Although many would argue that these statements are mere lip service, they happen to be true. It is faculty who develop the instructional and research programs that provide the fundamental reason for the existence of colleges and universities. So, what is the impact on an institution when its relationship to faculty becomes increasingly contingent?

The several facets of the impact of an increasing use of contingent faculty on the institution have been described throughout this report. Perhaps most fundamental is the impact on the curriculum. Contingent faculty members are generally not involved in curriculum planning. Whether part-time or full-time, they are hired to teach specific courses for a specific term, without significant consideration of the broader programs in which those courses are embedded. Thus, as the proportion of faculty working in contingent appointments increases, there are fewer long-term faculty available to oversee the development and coherence of the curriculum. In terms of research as well, contingent faculty are generally not provided with the support necessary to develop an effective program of research and scholarship. Even when contingent

faculty are hired into primarily research positions, the lack of an institutional commitment to their work translates into a constraint on their academic freedom and on potential innovation—depriving the institution of one of its main contributions to society and its students of a valuable aspect of their educational experience.

As described in the previous section, contingent faculty are also not able to provide students with the fully rounded experience that is such an important part of the educational process. Inadequate preparation time, a lack of effective access to instructional technology, limitations on interaction with students outside of class, and insufficient support for their development as scholars all constrain the ability of contingent faculty members to provide the most effective instruction. Without due process protection, contingent instructors lack the academic freedom necessary to explore and challenge their students with new perspectives. Contingent faculty members generally lack the institutional support necessary for them to function as effective advisors and mentors, let alone for them to be involved in recruitment and admissions decisions. All of these considerations limit the institution in its ability to attract, retain, and educate a student body in the context of a broader mission.

Taken together, the effects of the increasing use of contingent faculty describe the difference between an institution offering *education* and one that offers *training*. They also describe a more corporate organizational model, in which faculty are increasingly marginalized in institutional decision-making and faculty work is increasingly “unbundled” into isolated tasks. Many factors have contributed to the emergence of such an organizational structure in higher education institutions, and they are not all examined here. But the increasing use of contingent faculty, to the point where the faculty itself can be described as contingent, clearly comprises a major component of a fundamental change in the nature of higher education institutions and their role in a democratic society.

Contingent Faculty and the Future of Higher Education

The central ramification of increasing contingent faculty appointments in higher education is the diminution of the faculty voice. The nature of contingent employment prevents these teachers from helping to shape the academy as a whole and curricula at their individual institutions, and they are now the majority of faculty nationwide. The shrinking ranks of tenured and tenure-track faculty must share the weight of institutional service among fewer eligible individuals and wield a correspondingly weaker collective voice. This situation is first and foremost the result of the lack of academic freedom for contingent faculty and the justifiable fear many of these faculty members have about challenging the *status quo* and losing their already tenuous positions. However, the nature of contingent faculty work itself is also to blame. Contingent faculty members are either short-term employees tasked with heavy course loads at one or more institutions, or longer term employees who are allowed only limited participation in the academic community around them. Faculty voice and power in higher education are being diminished by contingency and may be stifled entirely if these trends continue unabated.

The impact of an overreliance on contingent faculty is not limited to faculty members themselves; the shift to contingency ultimately endangers both teaching and research. Institutions are asking teachers and researchers to commit to them, their mission, and their students without providing an institutional commitment to their faculty employees in return. Carried to its extreme, this paradigm forces all faculty into a situation where the free interplay of teaching and research is constrained, where individuals must focus on the work valued by the institution simply to remain employed. This development may seem far off to some, but contingent faculty already experience it. The nature of contingent employment is stark: an exchange of constrained teaching for minimal pay. The scholarship or

collegial participation in shared governance of these faculty members is not of concern to the institution, and if fully 65 percent of the current academic workforce is employed in this way, the other 35 percent cannot be far behind.

The informed teacher-scholar is central to the values of American higher education. Maintaining an academic workforce where faculty are valued for their contributions in and out of the classroom, and then rewarded for those contributions with the security and freedom of tenure, is fundamental to the system itself. In the end, those who benefit are not teachers and researchers ensconced in ivory towers. The beneficiaries are the students who learn from faculty who are provided with the tools to guide, challenge, and support them through their education. Without such faculty, higher education cannot remain the vital institution it has become in American society.

Notes

¹ This report will use the term “tenure-line” to include both full-time faculty with tenure and those on the tenure track.

² Jack H. Schuster and Martin J. Finkelstein, *The American Faculty: The Restructuring of Academic Work and Careers*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. Figure 7.1, pp. 194-5. The authors also added figures for 2005 during a presentation at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Anaheim, California, in November 2006.

³ Schuster and Finkelstein, p. 222. Emphasis in original.

⁴ David Laurence. “Report on the MLA’s 2004 Survey of Hiring Departments.” *ADE Bulletin*, No. 138-39, Fall 2005–Spring 2006. Available at http://www.ade.org/reports/hiring_survey2004.htm.

⁵ Robert B. Townsend, “Job Market Report 2005: Signs of Improvement?” *Perspectives*, Issue 44, Volume 1, January 2006.

⁶ Laurence.

AAUP Contingent Faculty Index 2006
 Table 1. Tenure Status of Full-Time Faculty, by Institutional Category and Control, Fall 2005

	No. Inst	Instructional Faculty			Research Faculty			All Full-Time Faculty					
		Tenured	Tenure-Track	Non-Track	% Non-Track	Tenured	Tenure-Track	Non-Track	% Non-Track	Tenured	Tenure-Track	Non-Track	% Non-Track
Doctoral and Research Universities													
Public	166	86,429	33,388	30,530	20.3	2,969	1,137	11,300	73.3	89,398	34,525	41,830	25.2
Private	107	29,882	12,125	13,376	24.2	1	5	2,888	99.8	29,883	12,130	16,264	27.9
For-Profit	7	0	0	275	100.0	0	0	0	n.a.	0	0	275	100.0
Total	280	116,311	45,513	44,181	21.4	2,970	1,142	14,188	77.5	119,281	46,655	58,369	26.0
Master's Degree Universities													
Public	262	45,183	22,827	16,754	19.8	109	48	328	67.6	45,292	22,875	17,082	20.0
Private	364	20,100	11,134	14,538	31.8	18	3	14	40.0	20,118	11,137	14,552	31.8
For-Profit	33	0	0	1,787	100.0	0	0	0	n.a.	0	0	1,787	100.0
Total	659	65,283	33,961	33,079	25.0	127	51	342	65.8	65,410	34,012	33,421	25.2
Baccalaureate Colleges													
Public	118	7,368	3,975	2,752	19.5	7	11	32	64.0	7,375	3,986	2,784	19.7
Private	484	18,132	9,524	11,258	28.9	10	0	10	50.0	18,142	9,524	11,268	28.9
For-Profit	24	11	0	608	98.2	0	0	0	n.a.	11	0	608	98.2
Total	626	25,511	13,499	14,618	27.3	17	11	42	60.0	25,528	13,510	14,660	27.3
Associate Degree Colleges													
Public	933	47,769	17,534	44,779	40.7	65	25	2	2.2	47,834	17,559	44,781	40.6
Private	73	168	106	1,337	83.0	0	0	0	n.a.	168	106	1,337	83.0
For-Profit	46	2	0	1,575	99.9	0	0	0	n.a.	2	0	1,575	99.9
Total	1,052	47,939	17,640	47,691	42.1	65	25	2	2.2	48,004	17,665	47,693	42.1
All Colleges and Universities													
Public	1,479	186,749	77,724	94,815	26.4	3,150	1,221	11,662	72.7	189,899	78,945	106,477	28.4
Private	1,028	68,282	32,889	40,509	28.6	29	8	2,912	98.7	68,311	32,897	43,421	30.0
For-Profit	110	13	0	4,245	99.7	0	0	0	n.a.	13	0	4,245	99.7
Total	2,617	255,044	110,613	139,569	27.6	3,179	1,229	14,574	76.8	258,223	111,842	154,143	29.4

Source: US Department of Education IPEDS Human Resources Survey, Employees by Assigned Position (EAP) file.
 Non-medical faculty only; does not include primarily public service faculty.

AAUP Contingent Faculty Index 2006

Table 2. Faculty Employment Status, by Institutional Category and Control, Fall 2005

	No. Inst	Full-Time Faculty				Part-Time Faculty	PT % of All Faculty	Contingent Faculty % of All
		Tenured	Tenure-Track	Non-Track	% Non-Track			
Doctoral and Research Universities								
Public	166	89,398	34,525	41,830	25.2	51,048	23.5	42.8
Private	107	29,883	12,130	16,264	27.9	34,266	37.0	54.6
For-Profit	7	0	0	275	100.0	9,269	97.1	100.0
Total	280	119,281	46,655	59,669	26.4	94,583	29.5	48.2
Master's Degree Universities								
Public	262	45,292	22,875	17,082	20.0	50,571	37.2	49.8
Private	364	20,118	11,137	14,552	31.8	49,801	52.1	67.3
For-Profit	33	0	0	1,787	100.0	23,665	93.0	100.0
Total	659	65,410	34,012	31,909	24.3	124,037	48.6	61.1
Baccalaureate Colleges								
Public	118	7,375	3,986	2,784	19.7	9,495	40.2	51.9
Private	484	18,142	9,524	11,268	28.9	19,357	33.2	52.5
For-Profit	24	11	0	608	98.2	3,405	84.6	99.7
Total	626	25,502	13,502	15,702	28.7	32,257	37.1	55.1
Associate Degree Colleges								
Public	933	47,834	17,559	44,781	40.6	209,711	65.6	79.6
Private	73	168	106	1,337	83.0	2,045	55.9	92.5
For-Profit	46	2	0	1,575	99.9	2,268	59.0	99.9
Total	1,052	48,004	17,665	46,726	41.6	214,024	65.6	79.9
All Colleges and Universities								
Public	1,479	189,899	78,945	106,477	28.4	320,825	46.1	61.4
Private	1,028	68,311	32,897	43,421	30.0	105,469	42.2	59.5
For-Profit	110	13	0	4,245	99.7	38,607	90.1	100.0
Total	2,617	258,223	111,842	154,143	29.4	464,901	47.0	62.6

Source: US Department of Education IPEDS Human Resources Survey, Employees by Assigned Position (EAP) file. Non-medical faculty only; does not include primarily public service faculty.

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