

FORUM

NEWSLETTER FOR ISSUES ABOUT PART-TIME AND CONTINGENT FACULTY

14.1 FALL 2010

CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION

INSIDE

- From the Editor: The Need for Research in “Contingency Studies”** A1
Brad Hammer
- The State of Contingency: A Report from the CCCC Committee on Part-time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor** A3
Irvin Peckham and Brad Hammer
- A Hot Mess or a Cool Opportunity? Revising the Aspiration Agenda via New Collective Effort** A7
Sue Doe
- Re(en)visioning the September 2009 Issue of *CCC*** A13
Pearl Pang

From the Editor: The Need for Research in “Contingency Studies”

Brad Hammer

At the 61st annual meeting of CCCC in Louisville, I discussed issues related to compositionists who teach off the tenure track. In two of the meetings I argued for a need to codify, through a national accreditation process, the basic material and intellectual conditions under which compositionists can be employed. In both of these meetings I encountered real collegiality and an articulated need to address those concerns. Much of the data that I reported to these committees came from our colleagues' responses to the Contingent Faculty Questionnaire on the *Forum* website. For those who have already participated in the survey, your voices have proved instrumental in raising awareness of the exploitation in labor that exists today. If you have yet to participate in the survey, please login anonymously at <http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB229JDBVGW6B>.

I noted in Louisville how many contingent faculty still attend conferences but how few sessions there are on research-based studies that explore the causal links between contingency and variables like teacher burnout, student satisfaction, declines in disciplinarity, and non-disciplinary “service” teaching. While thousands of compositionists teach off the tenure stream, few CCCC presentations actually dealt directly with issues related to the uses and abuses of contingent labor.

A1

About *Forum*

Forum is published twice a year by the Conference on College Composition and Communication. As editor, I welcome your news items, book reviews, editorials, and/or articles related to non-tenure-track faculty in college English or composition courses. Submissions for the fall issue should be received no later than May 1; for the spring issue, the deadline is September 1. Note: Submissions will not be returned.

Submit your work electronically via email or an email attachment. Address your work to bhammer@unc.edu and put the words “*Forum* article” somewhere in your subject line. Submissions should include the following information:

- your name
- your title(s)
- your institution(s)
- home address and phone number; institutional address(es) and phone number(s)
- if applicable, venue(s) where submission was published or presented previously

For additional guidelines or information about *Forum*, contact Brad Hammer, *Forum* editor, bhammer@unc.edu, or phone 919-621-1000.

It is the policy of NCTE in its journals and other publications to provide a forum for the open discussion of ideas concerning the content and the teaching of English and the language arts. Publicity accorded to any particular point of view does not imply endorsement by the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, or the membership at large, except in announcements of policy, where such endorsement is clearly specified. Similarly, opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or the Conference on College Composition and Communication.

© 2010 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Printed in the United States of America. ISSN 1522-7502

Our contingent colleagues now comprise the vast predominance of faculty employed to teach first-year composition. The economic contexts for causation are clear. What is less transparent is what can be/ is being done. Irvin Peckham, Chair of the CCCC Committee on Part-Time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor, reports below on the historical struggles of contingent composition instructors and how our professional organizations have worked/failed to reverse employment trends over the past 25 years. He further addresses the current role of CCCC in dealing with writing programs that most egregiously exploit instructors. It is my hope that understanding this historical struggle, in deeper context, will have a two-fold result to

1. help writing instructors within local institutions understand what type of help is actually at hand from our national organizations;
2. serve as an invitation to contingent faculty to produce robust research (for future presentation at CCCC/NCTE) into the root causes, pedagogical implications, and disciplinary costs of contingency.

Also in this issue, Pearl Pang, an English language compositionist in Korea, extends the implications of instructor “vulnerability” and asks why more complex questions “are not being raised about us” and “our main work—teaching.” Finally, in her essay, Sue Doe furthers the implications of Pang’s analysis by suggesting that many instructors of first-year writing are “at-will employees who

can be dismissed and replaced with relative ease.” Without a strong push toward research (by those contingent faculty most disenfranchised within the academy), the causal links between labor practices and pedagogy will be ongoingly voiced by the needs and values of those steeped in administration and “service” and outside the core values of compositionist literature.

Finally, I again invite all stakeholders within composition studies (faculty, students, WPAs, etc.) to log onto the *Forum* website (<http://www.ncte.org/cccc/forum>) and click on “contingent faculty questionnaire,” to help us clearly define the reaches and implications of the ongoing reliance on contingent labor.

The State of Contingency: A Report from the CCCC Committee on Part-Time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor

Irvin Peckham and Brad Hammer

For the past year, *Forum* has been collecting the stories of non-tenure-track writing teachers from across the U.S. and even a few from faculty abroad. Within the Contingent Faculty Questionnaire (participate at <http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB229JDBV6B>), we’ve read the many frustrations that our colleagues voice over low wages, terminal contracts, and exploitive contexts. Readers of *Forum* have consistently echoed these concerns and asked what, if anything, is being accomplished by NCTE or CCCC on their behalf.

CCCC has a long history of focused efforts to reverse exploitive labor practices in college writing programs. Nevertheless, two things are clear:

1. There exist few, if any, real mechanisms for non-tenure-track writing teachers to benefit from past recommendations made by CCCC.
2. The number of contingent faculty is growing in spite of recommendations to reverse this trend.

From our survey and comments from our readers, we clearly see that non-tenure-track writing teachers consider themselves divorced from the institutions in which they teach. In spite of attempts by our professional organizations, we clearly have failed to construct viable procedures for change. Our calls for change rarely go beyond recommending self-policing mechanisms that yield few rewards.

This report, compiled by the CCCC Committee on Part-Time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor, is an effort to inform the thousands of non-tenure-track writing teachers of the ongoing project to end irresponsible labor practices. Our readers have articulated clearly that they want to know what we have learned from past efforts

and the current charge(s) of the committee to reverse these practices. We describe the history and current charge of this project below.

The Early Years (1986): Defining Contingency and Its Relevant Implications

The CCCC Committee on Part-Time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor had its origin in the Wyoming Resolution¹ that emerged from the 1986 conference in Laramie. The resolution articulated the overflowing anger that non-tenure-track writing teachers felt as a consequence of their working conditions. These instructors were resisting their alignment into a secondary or tertiary status within English departments. For an interpretive history of the Wyoming Resolution, read James McDonald and Eileen Schell's upcoming piece, "The Spirit and Influence of the Wyoming Resolution: Looking Back to Look Forward" that will appear in the March 2011 issue of *College English*.

The Wyoming Resolution was transformed into the divisive *CCCC Statement on Principles and Standards* in 1989.² This position statement seemed to leave the non-tenure-track writing teachers behind, arguing for the professionalization of writing instruction by largely limiting teaching to graduate students and tenured or tenure-track professors.

The Committee on Professional Standards, charged to carry out the provisions of the Wyoming Resolution, disbanded in the early 1990s. The subsequent conversation over exploitive labor conditions continued in publications, in conversations, and on the WPA listserv, engendering an us-against-them rhetoric, aligning writing program administrators as bosses and teachers as laborers, a re-alignment that subverted opportunities for significant change.

Although WPAs, English department chairs, and non-tenure-track writing teachers have a shared interest in creating sustainable working conditions and promoting teaching excellence, colleges benefit from the exploitation of cheap labor. The consequence has been a pitting of exploited social groups against one another, disabling their ability to unite in opposition to the system of exploitation. The "boss compositionists" rhetoric recently dominating our discussions has arguably constructed an unproductive binary between writing faculty and department-level administrators. Although we should not ignore how the professoriate benefits from the surplus labor of full- and part-time instructors, the opposition between professors and instructors serves the larger economic goals of the entire institution. At the upper administrative level, little is done to secure reasonable working conditions for non-tenure-track writing teachers, whose labor is interpreted as "service," playing second fiddle to the research and publications on which college and university prestige rests.

During the 2003 business meeting of CCCC, the membership pushed once again for change when it passed the “Resolution on Professional Standards for Instruction.” The most salient feature of the resolution was a requirement that all writing teachers receive salaries and benefits equivalent to tenured and tenure-track professors. This feature of the resolution had multiple implications, not the least of which concerned the value of a PhD and the de facto social hierarchy within English departments. While many departments agreed in principle, the upper administrations within universities, who would have to make the budget decisions that would support this central goal, have ignored the resolution.

As a result of the 2003 resolution, the CCCC Committee on Academic Quality was formed in 2005. This committee, perhaps for the same reasons that have bedeviled the issue of exploitive labor practices since the Wyoming Resolution, has had difficulty gaining traction, resulting in no appreciable improvement in the working conditions of non-tenure-track writing teachers. Consequently, the CCCC Executive Committee has recently constituted the current Committee on Part-Time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor, which had its first face-to-face meeting at the CCCC convention in Louisville, March 2010. The remainder of this report will summarize the discussion in that meeting with proposed projects that may move forward the charge of the Wyoming Conference Resolution.

The Latest Conversation: Louisville 2010

Although the Committee on Part-Time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor has several charges, our central focus is to improve the working conditions of non-tenure-track writing teachers and promote strategies that will help local institutions discontinue their reliance on part-time writing teachers.

In its previous incarnation (2007–2009), this committee completed an extensive survey of labor practices. One of our projects will be to make this survey accessible to WPAs and other individuals looking to conduct an analysis of the data in a searchable and updatable form. Glen Blalock and Irvin Peckham will work on this project with the ultimate goal of housing the data at NCTE with Web-based links from MLA, CCCC, and CompPile websites, once the necessary permissions are obtained. Additionally, our committee is now working to coordinate our project with both the MLA and NCTE committees addressing labor issues.

At our first meeting in Louisville, we discussed strategies to investigate the practicality of an accreditation process for writing programs. Much of our discussion centered on uncovering/naming which national accreditation organization(s) (perhaps NCATE) to align ourselves with in order to effect change within local institutions. We need now to highlight the contexts of this debate and its areas of contention.

1. Any accreditation process should not wholly align itself with prior attempts to force improved labor practices through punitive measures but rather set fair standards for the employment and retention of writing faculty. Put simply, the accreditation process should work to aid and empower programs rather than discredit them.
2. Any accreditation process must be co-developed with the larger joint goals of CCCC, NCTE, and MLA. A good deal of our discussion focused on bridging connections with each of these stakeholders. Our conversation further underscored the need to work with entities outside CCCC, NCTE, and MLA, due to their inability to assert compliance.

We discussed ways of coordinating with accreditation institutions to pursue ways of encouraging good labor practices by rewarding schools that rely on full-time teachers with full benefits. Although working conditions of writing teachers might not meet an ideal, we need to seek out local sites that provide the best conditions.

We will further propose the funding of three research projects to the CCCC Executive Committee:

1. Research the administrative hierarchy within which writing programs are embedded. This study should seek to discover the pressure points to which deans and provosts might respond when accreditation officials make arguments for improved working conditions for writing teachers.
2. With the goal of arguing more forcefully for the funding of full-time positions, research the causal links between the quality of writing instruction and the reliance on part-time labor.
3. Research student attitudes toward writing instruction when students are taught in situations that rely on part-time teachers versus situations relying on full-time faculty. This research can address the secondary implications of instructor abuse (lack of office space, heavy teaching loads, etc.) as factors in student satisfaction. If this kind of research is pursued with large enough populations *and* if research shows that full-time teaching conditions result in greater gains in attitude and achievement, we can imagine these results serving as powerful arguments to improve the working conditions of part-time teachers.

In this report, and through our recent discussions, the CCCC Committee on Part-Time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor has relied on language that situates the debate over labor practices within a larger discussion concerning teaching excellence and student satisfaction. It is possible that previous discussions occurring outside this framework may have undermined progress on the issue. We also note that assuming such a framework does not necessitate adversarial positions between instructors

and administrators who both share the larger goals of teaching excellence. Rather than employ the rhetoric of “boss versus compositionists,” we are suggesting that all stakeholders might find through our research ways of working together for the purpose of improved writing instruction. Further, it is our charge to report more regularly on our committee’s efforts and ongoing discussions within the pages of *Forum* in order to disseminate our findings and further incorporate contingent faculty into the processes that seek to redress exploitive labor practices.

Notes

1. See *College English*, March 1987 (49): 274–80.
2. To understand the divisive nature of the statement, read <http://www.jstor.org/pss/357777>, <http://www.jstor.org/pss/358075>, <http://www.inventio.us/ccc/1989/10/cccc-executive-committee-state.html>, or <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/postsecondarywriting>.

Irvin Peckham is the director of university writing at Louisiana State University and chairs the CCCC Committee on Part-Time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor.

Brad Hammer serves on the CCCC Committee on Part-Time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor and is the director of student placement at UNC Chapel Hill.

A Hot Mess or a Cool Opportunity? Revising the Aspiration Agenda via New Collective Effort

Sue Doe

If the economic crisis and its association with subprime mortgages taught us anything, it should be that a pattern of unearned aspiration can lead to disaster. Thomas Friedman observes in his book *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*, that as a nation, we made a habit of “underpricing risk” (9), overreaching and overextending as pervasive habits of mind. In ways individual and collective, personal, corporate, and governmental, we took advantage of easy credit, borrowing at levels we couldn’t pay back if the chips were down.

Our public institutions of higher education have participated in this magical thinking. As Bob Samuels recently explained in the *Huffington Post*, many factors have combined to take us down this path, including “the state de-funding of public education, the emphasis on research over instruction, the move to high-risk investments, the development of a free market academic labor system, and the marketing of college admissions” (par. 5). The root of all this, arguably, was the withdrawal of

public support for higher education, which led universities to embrace corporate strategies for developing economic independence. This effort focused mostly on funded research and marketable forms of technology transfer. However, funded research only returns a fraction of the money it generates. The research itself must be conducted and paid for, and the processes associated with research create significant overhead. The corporate model also required a new constellation of employees—some to actually do the research, some to manage the expanded operations this new model required, some to teach. The tenure-line faculty would provide disciplinary credibility for new knowledge production within increasingly complex university systems that include commercial markets and technology transfer as well as political markets in “the new ‘cold war’ of global competitiveness” (Scott 12). In this reorganization of the academic workforce, in which one group is clearly dependent upon another, teachers became the most marginalized of the academic employees, but the research scientists were not far ahead in this horseshoe.

It should come as no surprise then to learn that “The Humanities Really Do Produce a Profit” as Robert Watson, of Samuel’s home campus, UCLA, recently titled his essay in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. UCLA’s writing program, which is being cut and its teachers fired, spends only 55 percent of the money it generates through student fees. Watson says, “the English department at UCLA earns its own salary and more” (A36). Apparently, while the test of a successful research program is whether it can sustain itself, programs in the humanities are expected to not only sustain themselves but subsidize others. Although this relationship has historically been characterized the other way around, AAUP’s Secretary General Gary Rhoades explains that tuition is actually the “cash cow” and research the “sacred bull.” Christopher Newfield has argued similarly, informing the humanities that, as a whole, they actually turn a profit despite universities’ claims to the contrary. Newfield points out that when we look at university spreadsheets, we need to understand that a university’s funds per faculty member are less important than the ratio between actual and earned revenues. In the humanities, faculty will always generate the least funds per person, “which leads to the standard view that relative poverty of condition derives from their poverty of earning power” (276). However, Newfield explains, “Were the sciences subsidizing the social sciences and humanities, one would predict larger budgets for those departments than what they earn through their teaching” (277). Instead, the actual revenues of the high teaching units are consistently *below* their earned instructional revenues, which means that instructional revenue is being siphoned off.

This fluid account management, which has been keeping universities afloat, depends on the deployment of a flex-staff of highly skilled academic workers.

These are principally teachers but also, as it turns out, contract researchers. Together, these two groups have provided the labor that contributed to the growth of disciplines and built the reputations of research programs. Among the disciplines, Rhetoric and Composition, for instance, tied its particular quest for disciplinary legitimacy to a pedagogical experiment that placed heavy reliance on those off the tenure-track—including graduate students, recent graduates, and career teachers. While the field itself has benefited from this trend, the classroom practitioners who contributed to the rise largely have not, and the human cost of such practices now becomes clear with the UCLA layoffs. Similarly, in the sciences, non-tenure-track research scientists have contributed mightily to their fields despite the absence of reciprocal loyalty.

Given the similarity of experience noted here, it may be time for cross-disciplinary alliances. The need for this move is urgent since it appears that we may be approaching, if we have not already reached, the tipping point in the defunding of public higher education. Our efforts begin by acknowledging that in the midst of making the entrepreneurial model work, our universities have developed duplicitous relationships with non-tenure-track faculty in both the teaching and research domains, building institutional reliance without institutional commitment. For all these academic workers, leverage lies principally in their ability to organize around the recognition of their collective importance, but at-will hiring has an isolating and chilling effect upon organizing efforts, privatizing opportunity, responsibility, and eventually, anguish. At the same time, even where unionization has been successful, as in California, universities have exercised their legal right to lay off faculty and even end whole programs through the justification of financial exigency.

This claim of financial exigency has now extended throughout the nation. According to the April 2, 2010, online issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, cuts are being made across the country in university after university (“Campus Cuts”). Eleven programs were cited in this issue of the *Chronicle* alone, with layoffs ranging from the dismissal of non-tenure-track faculty to the dissolution of whole academic programs. In this context, Friedman’s analogy of home mortgages as a stack of dishes sitting in the soapy water of a kitchen sink seems especially apt. Similarly, the immediate casualties of university financial exigency will continue to be those easiest to fire or those who can mount the least legal opposition—basically, anyone without tenure. Budget cuts, after all, follow the path of least resistance.

However, as Friedman’s model suggests, when the water rises, more layers become vulnerable to submersion, and we discover, as Rhoades has suggested, that “we are all contingent.” In particular, protections extended exclusively to those who are tenured ought not to be understood as protections to the goals of tenure.

Rather, while tenured faculty are only rarely being dismissed in the midst of this crisis, the lines they hold are being summarily dissolved upon retirement. This is a fiscal strategy that threatens the survival of tenure and academic freedom, yet there has been too little discussion of it in the national conversation on the collapse of public higher education. This approach can be expected to have long-term, if not permanent, effects on departments and faculty, diminishing overall tenure-line numbers and steadily increasing the workloads of those who remain. Additionally, this trend will almost certainly correlate with further increases in “at-will” faculty because of their lower long-term cost. All in all, though, it is the ecumenical nature of today’s budget cuts that is perhaps most alarming. Yet it may also be the catalyst that’s needed to jolt all categories of faculty into collective awareness of the perils of higher education’s current funding formulas. We in the humanities can wring our hands over the rising soap suds of an indifferent capitalism, or we can use our argumentative abilities to make the case for the twin necessities of instruction *and* scientific research. In particular, as compositionists, we might use our rhetorical skills to argue for a new and more intellectually honest form of higher education.

New Mutualistas—The Cool Opportunity

According to Gaye Tuchman, author of *Wannabe U*, universities have reasoned that even if they couldn’t become the top-ranked institutions they yearned to be, they could certainly benefit from the *aspiration* (10). This aspiration/desperation agenda fueled the recent shifts in higher education, giving rise to enormous reallocations in university hiring. Tenure-line faculty increased by only 17 percent between 1976 and 2005, while both non-tenure-track faculty and nonacademic professional positions increased by over 200 percent over the same period (“What Are the Priorities?” 16).

Faculty from across the disciplines, across the ranks, and even across job classifications might join forces to disrupt the “financial exigency” argument as the dominant explanation for convenience firing and rehiring in the academy. The MLA exerted some effort in this direction with its resolution of late spring 2010, which argued for tenure for all faculty and job stability for all higher education workers. Giving voice to this effort would seem to be a job rhetoricians are especially well suited for, and those in tenure lines have an essential role to play, using their institutional authority to acknowledge what the AAUP describes as both mutual vulnerability and shared possibility, or the dual “We Are All Contingent” and “Grant Them Tenure” campaigns (Rhoades; AAUP). As a model for such efforts, we might consider the example of the Mutualistas, benevolent societies formed by varied groups of Mexican immigrants at the turn of the 20th century (Takaki 184). Similar-

ly, scholars might build new alliances, working together across rank and disciplines to salvage their identities as members of a grand profession that includes teachers and artists as well as researchers and scientists.

But where to begin? The findings of Adrianna Kezar and Cecile Sam, as reported by Peter Schmidt in the *Chronicle*, suggest a way. Studying contingent instructors in a range of college locations, Kezar and Sam found that piecemeal efforts to improve working conditions don't have much of a long-term effect, while non-tenure-track participation in faculty governance and efforts to rhetorically connect instructional quality and working conditions do. Making similar connections between working conditions and the quality of research produced by research-scholars off the tenure track might also be possible. Therefore, an expanded presence of all ranks in the governance bodies of our universities would seem to be called for. As another step, an extension of grievance procedures to those off the tenure track would slow down casual terminations and help control threats to academic freedom.

But what would motivate tenure-line faculty to join such an effort? Raising the workplace conditions of those off the tenure track enhances the visibility and the valuing of academic work more generally. Better positions for those off the tenure track make it possible to protect disciplinary integrity by rewarding and protecting the best talent. Arguing for better compensation for those off the tenure track reduces the likelihood of tenure lines being cut and then outsourced to the low bidder.

The next step, making the case to the public for a significant reinvestment in higher education, will require a galvanizing notion, such as the idea that education and research are twin economic engines requiring investment in a qualified, academic workforce. The public must be shown that losses to educational quality have grave consequences. Additionally, taxpayers must learn that education is a slow-growth investment. Indeed, growth should be measured in the long-term earning power of our graduates and the reduced likelihood of their becoming unemployed. Citizens should be reminded that with greater employment options, young people become contributors rather than drains on public resources.

In a similar vein, the relevance of research might be explained more fully to the public as well. When generated by public institutions, research generally focuses on the applied and the useful, enhancing the quality of life for people throughout the region and beyond. As compositionists, we would need to develop a firm grasp of the economics of higher education in order to make these points in a convincing way, just as Richard Miller told us back in 2004 in the midst of our last fiscal crisis. Explaining the value of educational investment and the benefit our states derive from public higher education would seem to be a role composition scholar-citizens are well qualified to perform, a kairotic moment if there ever was one. The question now is whether we will have the will and the courage to step up to the task.

Works Cited

- AAUP (American Association of University Professors). "Conversion of Appointments to the Tenure Track (2009)." *AAUP*. Web. 8 Apr. 2010. <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/comm/rep/conversion.htm>.
- "Campus Cuts." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 2 Apr. 2010. Web. 4 Apr. 2010.
- Friedman, Thomas L. *Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution—and How It Can Renew America*. New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008, 2009. Print.
- Miller, Richard. "Our Future Donors." *College English* 66.4 (Mar. 2004): 365–79. Web.
- MLA (Modern Language Association). "Resolution for Ratification Vote." *MLA*. April 2010. Web. 15 Apr. 2010.
- Newfield, Christopher. "Ending the Budget Wars: Funding the Humanities during a Crisis in Higher Education." *Profession* 2009. 270–84. Print.
- Rhoades, Gary. "We Are All Contingent." Video of speech at Colorado State University. *Contingent Caucus's Blog*. Wordpress.com. Web.
- Samuels, Bob. "How America's Universities Became Hedge Funds." *The Huffington Post Online*. 28 Jan. 2010. Web. 3 Apr. 2010.
- Schmidt, Peter. "When Adjuncts Push for Better Status, Better Pay Follows, Study Suggests." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 1 Nov. 2009. Web. 26 July 2010.
- Scott, Peter. "The Changing Role of the University in the Production of New Knowledge." *Tertiary Education and Management* 3.1 (1997): 5–14. Web.
- Takaki, Ronald. *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1993. Print.
- Tuchman, Gaye. *Wannabe U: Inside the Corporate University*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009. Print.
- Watson, Robert N. "The Humanities Really Do Produce a Profit." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 26 Mar. 2010, A36–37. Print.
- "What Are the Priorities? The Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession, 2007–2008." *Academe* 94.2 (Mar.–Apr. 2008). 9–18. Print.

Sue Doe, an assistant professor of English (rhetoric and composition) at Colorado State University, studies academic labor issues, particularly as they relate to rhetorical concerns. A 25-year veteran of the contingent faculty ranks prior to 2007, she will coedit (alongside Mike Palmquist) a special issue of College English on contingent faculty, due to be released in March 2011.

Re(en)visioning the September 2009 Issue of *CCC*

Pearl Pang

Even as Brad Hammer traces the movement to support and legitimize contingent faculty over the past 15 years in his *Forum* inaugural letter, articles arguing for changes to improve the economic and institutional role of contingent faculty continue to make the news. A 2010 search in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* brings up 432 results; a similar search in the *New York Times* brings up 1,719 results for just this past year. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), in its unflagging support of contingent faculty, constantly publishes statements and recommendations based on research. With all this publishing activity, the effects of contingency on our institutions, students, and faculty are no longer news. Yet all of this research, all these articles and mandates, falls on deaf ears. Nothing is done. So the more I read, the more I feel hopeless and powerless. So much so that much of the agency I might have felt as a teacher is slowly eroding, to the point that it affects how I feel even in the classroom, even while I'm teaching.

It is with this sense of vulnerability that I read again the September 2009 issue of *College Composition and Communication* (*CCC*). Embedded between its white pages about two-thirds of the way into the volume is the buff-yellow section of *Forum*, physically a part of, but rhetorically so apart from this flagship journal. On these pages, it's the same rhetoric: another call to define our contingency. We've been defined over and over again, in terms of what we lack: position, pay, agency, insurance, security, office space, office hours, etc. (Thompson). Ironically, it is in the white pages of this journal that we find questions that we should be asking. Stuart A. Selber, in his lead essay, asks:

How should subaltern groups respond to dominant power structures? Should the focus be on incremental or wholesale change? Can change be made using the discourses and structures of the powerful, or are alternatives needed? What is the nature of the relationship between accommodation and resistance?(16)

He uses "postmodern mapping and boundary interrogation" (30) to not only critique institutional practices but to powerfully influence and intervene in those practices (31). His claim that composition teachers add "intellectual value" to their campuses (32) is empowering, but I wonder why the questions he raises are not being asked about us, who are increasingly more contingent, and our main work—teaching.

Relegated to the margins, teaching is defined as “typically the contingent faculty member’s only contractual obligation” (Porter). The word “only” diminishes teaching as well as the influence of contingent faculty. The dominant rhetoric of the “naïve binary separating the textuality of research from the nontextuality of teaching” (Holberg and Taylor) foregrounds and perpetuates a narrow definition of academic influence, of knowledge production. For those who privilege research and demand the justification of the textuality of teaching in terms they find acceptable, a traditional definition of text—“a group of entities, used as signs, which are selected, arranged, and intended by an author in a certain context to convey some specific meaning to an audience” (Gracia, 4)—can be used. This is an apt, albeit simplistic, description of a syllabus or a lecture where the teacher acts as author, a role that certainly produces knowledge. Maybe the problem of questioning the textuality of teaching lies in its apparent given-ness—teaching, especially in our discipline, is driven, defined, and framed by the texts we teach as well as the texts we demand from our students, so much so that it feels redundant even to explain why teaching is textual (in the same way it would be to explain why research is textual). Advancing the textuality of teaching is to move beyond the constraints of exercised power, to explore the possibilities of diffusing, sharing, or redefining disciplinary discourse, to make visible how the dominant discourse “wrap[s] itself systematically in the language of truth, discipline, rationality, utilitarian value, and knowledge” (Said, 705).

It’s been fifteen years since Paul Kameen pointed out the problematic privileging of research over teaching, of

presum[ing] that the classroom and the figurative roles that we and our students occupy and ply out there are either pre- or post-textual constructions, or, even worse, not textual at all, is to fall into obvious contradiction with our current critical biases, a contradiction that happens at the moment to allow us to under(deter)mine “teaching” as we construct the preferred versions of “our work,” as well as to deploy unselfconsciously an array of pedagogical practices that are directly contrary to our “professed” critical positions. (“Studying Professionally,” 455)

These constructions of “the preferred versions of ‘our work’” have been covered with the veneer of inevitable truth, closing off discourse on the textuality of teaching. In *Writing/Teaching: Essays toward a Rhetoric of Pedagogy*, Kameen attempts “upsetting both the dominant hierarchy and its most immediate epistemological consequences” (ix) by showing how knowledge is produced in the classroom. In “present[ing] the ways in which [his] knowledge about these kinds of texts—[his] past, the poems—was brought to bear, and was then changed, by the activity of the teaching” (7), Kameen breaks the narrow definition of “knowledge” as work pub-

lished in disciplinary media. By “approach[ing] classroom texts and the literature from the position of someone who is developing knowledge rather than already in possession of it” (Hawk, 382), he makes explicit how teaching enables change in thinking, allowing new knowledge to emerge. Kameen opens up a way to think outside of the narrow confines of the knowledge/not knowledge, research/teaching binary, to make obvious the textuality of teaching. By casting teaching as an endeavor actively in pursuit of knowledge, Kameen redefines teaching as another way of producing knowledge, one within the confines of time and space and the relationships that human beings dwell in; teaching is different from but no less valuable or privileged than traditional definitions of textuality.

Sadly, the contradictions and biases Kameen illuminates have become thoroughly entrenched, finding expression in the hiring policies of even our most prestigious institutions, where more and more of the teaching is done by contingent faculty (Gravois). The unquestioning acceptance of these biases has led to a thorough division of labor and created an ever-growing set of faculty who only do teaching. The insidious effects of translating biases into policies have so “otherized” teaching that even *USA Today* reports, “When adjuncts accounted for a substantial share of instructors, full-time professors devoted significantly fewer hours to preparing for class and advising students” (Marklein). Teaching has become something for contingent faculty to do.

Asserting the textuality of teaching, defining teaching as a site of knowledge production, is one way to question and combat the received biases about the research/teaching binary as delineated by those in power. Another is to affirm the writings that emerge from the teaching side, not only from students, but from teachers as well. Yet the current *Forum*, while highlighting the inadequacy of formal documentation and exposure to “alter meaningfully the material and undemocratic conditions under which compositionists practice our trade” (Hammer, A3), still seeks to legitimize our work through use of the patterns and forms of the dominant discourse, research. Audre Lorde (in)famously declared, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” Even as I write this article, following early readers’ advice to leave behind the “anecdotal,” I wonder how much the writings here will work to persuade those in power.

The physical layout of CCC underscores emphatically the power hierarchy inherent in the current system. *Forum* is like a card table haphazardly tacked on at the end of the traditional oak dining table at a holiday meal. Provisional and marginal, it is set apart both physically and dialogically, engaged in its own separate conversation. We can perpetuate this set-up by continuing as we have before, or we can redefine this site, as one not only of protest decrying lack, but also one which con-

structs the textuality of teaching based on collegial discourse, affirming and actually giving pages to the work we all do.

Works Cited

- Goetzelsky, Gwen. "Working Boundaries: From Student Resistance to Student Agency." *College Composition and Communication* 61 (2009): 64–84. Print.
- Gracia, Jorge J. E. *A Theory of Textuality: The Logic and Epistemology*. Albany: State University of New York P, 1995. Print.
- Gravois, John. "Tracking the Invisible Faculty." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 53.17 (15 Dec. 2006): 8–9. Web. 20 Nov. 2009.
- Hammer, Brad. "From the Editor: Defining the Material and Disciplinary Limits of Contingency." *Forum* 13.1 (Fall 2009): A1–5. Print.
- Hawk, Byron. "A Rhetoric/Pedagogy of Silences: Sub-version in Paul Kameen's *Writing/Teaching*." *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture* 3.3 (2003): 377–97. Web. 15 Apr. 2010.
- Holberg, Jennifer L., and Marcy Taylor. "Editors' Introduction: The Teaching Self." *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture* 6.1 (2006): 1–6. Web. 20 Nov. 2009.
- Kameen, Paul. "Studying Professionally: Pedagogical Relationships at the Graduate Level." *College English* 57 (1995): 448–60. Web. 12 Dec. 2009.
- . *Writing/Teaching: Essays toward a Rhetorical Pedagogy*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh P, 2000.
- Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches (The Crossing Press Feminist Series)* (1984). Web. 12 Dec. 2009.
- Marklein, Mary Beth. "Colleges Use More 'Contingent Faculty.'" *USA Today* 3 Dec. 2008. Web. 20 Nov. 2009.
- Porter, Catherine. "(Re)Defining Productivity." *MLA Newsletter* 41.4 (Winter 2009): 2–3.
- Thompson, Karen. "Contingent Faculty and Student Learning: Welcome to the Strativersity." *New Directions for Higher Education* 123 (2003): 41–47. Web. 20 Nov. 2009.
- Said, Edward W. "The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions." *Critical Inquiry* 4.4 (1978): 673–714. Web. 8 Apr. 2010.
- Selber, Stuart. "Institutional Dimensions of Academic Computing." *College Composition and Communication* 61 (2009): 10–34. Web.

Pearl Pang currently teaches composition in the English Department at Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea.