FORUM

NEWSLETTER OF THE NON-TENURE-TRACK FACULTY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

3.2 SPRING 2000 CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION

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From the Editor

As I edit my fifth issue of *Forum,* I am impressed with its intertextuality, namely, the way several items published here respond to articles appearing in earlier issues of the newsletter. Since the beginning of my editorship, one of my goals has been to provoke lively exchange on the issues of greatest concern to non-tenure-track faculty, so I am especially pleased when past and current writers debate such things as who is responsible for effecting positive change in our working conditions and how best to respond to our marginal status in the profession. With this goal in mind, I now reiterate an announcement placed in the inaugural issue (Winter 1998) of *Forum*. I welcome readers to submit short pieces (750 words or less) to appear in a Letters section, the purpose of which is to respond directly to articles already published in *Forum* or elsewhere which address non-tenure-track faculty concerns. These shorter texts will complement longer articles I will continue to publish. The more voices and perspectives I can represent here, the better.

With the CCCC convention in Minneapolis I'd like to spotlight important sessions relevant to non-tenure-track faculty. The meeting of the Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Special Interest Group will take place on Friday, April 14, 2000, from 6:00–7:00 P.M. The Building Coalitions Special Interest Group, cancelled last year due to a major scheduling mix-up, will meet on Thursday, April 13, from 6:45–7:45 P.M. Be sure to check your annual programs for other sessions related to non-tenure-track faculty as well and to support the presenters with your attendance.

Finally, I am happy to announce that the Press Kit on non-tenure-track issues, produced by the Task Force on Working Conditions of Part-time/Adjunct Faculty, is now complete (http://www.ncte.org/cccc/adjunct/). Eileen Schell, Karen Thompson, and the other task force members offer special thanks to Todd Taylor for designing this

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Web site and uploading the volumes of information they collected. We urge all CCCC members to check out the site and put the information and advice compiled there to good use. Reports of how readers have used the site would be welcome content for *Forum*.

—Roberta Kirby-Werner
Syracuse University
April 2000

About *Forum*
Forum is published twice a year by the Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Special Interest Group (NTT SIG) of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. As editor, I welcome you to submit 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 April 15; for the winter issue, the deadline is August 15. Note: Submissions will not be returned.

You may submit your work electronically, via e-mail or an e-mail attachment, or through U.S. mail. For e-mail submissions, address your work to rwerner@a-znet.com and put the words "Forum article" somewhere in your subject line. If you choose U.S. mail, please send two hard copies as well as a diskette copy of your submission(s) to

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For both e-mail and U.S. mail submissions, include the following information in a cover note:

- 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 Roberta Kirby-Werner at one of the addresses provided above or at (315) 443-1213.

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Taking Responsibility: Gender, Part-Time Labor, and the Pedagogy of Welfare Students in the Two-Year College

Sandra Baringer

The welfare-to-work agenda is providing some welfare recipients with enhanced opportunities to obtain some level of higher education. Most of these welfare-to-work programs, however, want their clients to complete some sort of training program in a short time frame ranging from a few weeks to a maximum of two years. Opportunities to pursue a four-year degree while still receiving assistance are rare. Thus, we must consider how we can best serve their needs in first-year composition courses.

Most, though not all, members of this constituency are single mothers. This circumstance provides both opportunities and limitations in the classroom for those of us who are female part-time faculty.

In my community college English department, women comprise 45 percent of the full-time faculty and 67 percent of the part-time faculty, numbering 22 and 55, respectively.

There has been academic discussion in recent years about the significance of this disparity. It has become a commonplace within the composition discipline to remark upon the feminization of composition studies as "women's work" (Holbrook); at least two books have been published on this issue within the past three years (Enos; Schell). This circumstance has led some to call for a realignment of the power structure to valorize nurturing qualities in the academy (Gunner; Grego and Thompson; Tuell). Simultaneously, "the maternal caregiver paradigm [is] used again and again—to rationalize policies like outsourcing and the hiring of more and more marginalized—and inexpensive—part-timers" (Trainor and Godley 178, 179).[1]

It is indeed unfortunate that so noted a feminist as Sandra Gilbert, in comparing adjunct labor in the composition field to a feel-good stint in the Peace Corps (Nelson 21), has failed to understand the significance of this model vis-à-vis pay equity for women—particularly at a time when community colleges are being called upon to implement the welfare-to-work agenda.[2] What we are modeling to our female students is the ghettoization of women in the part-time workforce, with women doing equivalent work for a pay differential comparable, at best, to the well-known national norm of seventy-one cents on the dollar.

It is not my intention to make recommendations for legislative and administrative reform. The AAUP, the MLA, and other groups have called for these reforms, and those in power know what they should do, whether or not they intend to do it. Rather, I wish to discuss what those of us who are women teaching composition as part-time employees should be doing in the community college classroom vis-à-vis the welfare-to-work agenda. We are in the unenviable position of attempting to empower students to take charge of their own lives when we ourselves are operating from a position of oppression.

Teresa Purvis asserts that the "disillusioned and embittered" among us need to "take responsibility for their lives and life choices" (A5). If we have been remiss in doing so (and I do not necessarily think that we have), how can we claim any authority to assist our students in taking responsibility for their lives and life choices? More specifically, how do we reinforce in our welfare-recipient students—and to all our students—the notion that better education will lead to better lives? And what should be our focus in a composition classroom?

As to our lives and life choices, it serves no purpose to conceal from our students the fact that our working conditions are different from those of our full-time colleagues. In

[1]The work of many of these scholars on the gender issue in composition instruction is discussed, and cited, in the recent *CCC* article by Trainor and Godley.

[2]In all fairness, one might expect that Gilbert has reconsidered this remark in recent years.

most cases, we do not have offices where they can consult with us, so they know we are part-time and may already perceive us as second-tier faculty. But such working conditions are a starting point where we can make connections with our students. There are many part-time employees in the usual two-year college classroom; the exploitation of this labor pool and the particular vulnerability of mothers to this exploitation is something that operates across the economy, and these matters are of interest to students attempting to improve their status in the workforce. Such issues are particularly important to welfare recipients who cannot afford to remain unaware of these issues as they assess their options for employment.

Open discussions can be fostered in a composition classroom to address the employment market and educational options in a forum where welfare recipients can gain a valuable perspective, not just from the instructor, but from other students.

These were the optimistic thoughts on my mind following the passage of the welfare reform legislation in 1996 and its implementation in the program which, in California, goes by the name CalWORKS. Actually, there had already been a number of local pilot programs in place across the country before the 1996 legislation that were designed to propel welfare recipients into the workforce, and to some extent the local product is an extension of such pilot programs. At some point welfare recipients started to receive a coded notation on the class rosters, similar to that for veterans and students currently in military service, because absence from class was to be reported and would affect their benefit status. When I looked for these notations and saw them only occasionally—one or two per class at most—I started wondering why I did not have more CalWORKS students in my classes.

As of fall semester of 1998, statewide statistics showed that only 140,000 of the 1.4 million California community college students were enrolled in CalWORKS—in other words, 10 percent of the student population. Interestingly enough, the overwhelming majority of these—about 71 percent—enrolled on their own initiative and not by way of referral from a county welfare office.

But another compelling explanation for the low number of CalWORKS students in my English classes became apparent when I obtained the materials describing the programs available to CalWORKS students at Palomar College. These programs are designed to be completed in one, two, or three semesters. Almost half of the CalWORKS programs at Palomar (18 out of 46) are designed for one semester, as advertised on a flyer entitled "Get a Quick Start into an Entry-Level Job." Such programs include electronic assembly and computer repair, office information systems and receptionist skills, graphics communications and Web publishing, welding, fashion merchandising, bookkeeping, food service and child nutrition, and screen printing. As some of us know, with the career formerly known as "writer" having been repack-

aged as "content provider" in cyberspace, literacy skills do not seem to be a requirement for Web publishing. And accordingly, the "Graphics Communications Internet Publisher Certificate of Achievement" comprises twelve credit units in graphics communications—none in English. In fact, the only one of these "quick start" certificates of achievement that requires any sort of English course is the thirteen-unit "Call Center Representative" curriculum which includes a course in Business English, taught by the Business Education department.

Of these eighteen quick-start programs, only the electronic assembly mini-certificate accommodates any of the catch-up courses in ESL and basic writing that one might surmise would be essential for a large portion of the population on welfare.

The general design of these programs compels an observation that many of us have long suspected is true: perhaps literacy is no longer considered a significant factor in employability. It is perhaps important to note that California community colleges, as open admission institutions, do not require a high school degree for entry. Consequently, neither a high school degree nor a GED is requisite to earning one of the vocational certificates which have become the main focus of the CalWORKS program.

Thus, if we, as English instructors, want to be involved at all in the education of welfare-to-work students, our English departments must become involved in the welfare-to-work curriculum. As English instruction is increasingly relegated to part-time faculty, however, the presence and power of English departments decreases proportionately as fewer English faculty members serve on the academic senates and committees that help formulate the directions that these programs will take.

The pressures against the inclusion of our objectives in the welfare-to-work curriculum are formidable. The Lockheed Corporation, having contracted with the government to implement welfare-to-work policy, wants CalWORKS students to complete their coursework in a year or less. The students and the educational institutions have to assert themselves constantly in order to get any longer programs approved. Adjunct English instructors will generally have less influence than any of the other players in CalWORKS curriculum development. But we can, through whatever participation we are afforded in departmental and faculty senate decisions, advocate for the importance of literacy in the welfare-to-work agenda.

By literacy, I mean more than reading comprehension, though the inability of a large percentage of the welfare population to perform basic literacy tasks like reading a bus schedule has been noted in the general media. Literacy, for those at the bottom of the scale of socioeconomic power, means the ability to articulate one's situation. This ranges from filling out a job application to writing a résumé, requesting a hearing from a welfare agency, or demanding repairs from a landlord. These

students have to deal on an ongoing basis with a cumbersome bureaucracy that is sometimes hostile to them, and they need the skills to write letters, hearing requests, and other such documents that are clear and appropriate in tone.

Why is it that the writing of résumés and letters has been consigned to business education departments? Our own profession has been complicit in this development—the writing of résumés is seen as a "merely" vocational skill, and the epistolary form is often viewed as something that preceded the novel. Insofar as the epistolary form survives in English departments in the guise of the belletristic tradition, it is far removed from the needs of students in vocational programs.

Both at the departmental level and in the classroom, we must reassess our focus on some of the principles of composition theory that have developed over the past quarter century. These techniques have often been based on the assumption that the students are being prepared and empowered to contribute to the exchange of ideas in an academic forum—i.e., the four-year student. We have to accept the reality that most of our welfare recipient students are not being offered that option, at least not at this time. Graduates of these job training programs may need the skills to occasionally write a correctly punctuated sentence or even a paragraph. With luck, they may some day graduate to a business report.

I am not suggesting that we kowtow to the reform agenda within composition and return to grammar and punctuation drills. For one thing, our classrooms hold many other students besides welfare recipients whose needs must be met as well. We must continue to educate the class as if everyone in it has the wherewithal to complete a four-year degree. But in the great debate as to whether students are entitled to their own language in the composition classroom, we must recognize that they need to learn to write in standard English. Indeed, that is what most of them want. We must address this need, even as we continue to promote self-expression through a variety of assignments, *some* of which encourage the use of nonstandard dialect.

We need an increased emphasis on argumentation skills—not because I favor the current-traditional approach over the process approach, but because this is one of the most pressing needs of the welfare recipient student. Argument is a process, too. It is a form of conversation, academic or otherwise, with a teleological purpose. Ideally, each side speaks in turn and the conversation evolves toward consensus, or at least clarification of issues. The process approach to teaching composition is fortuitously suited to teaching the techniques of self-advocacy. As English literature and composition instructors, we see our role as empowering our students to engage in conversation within a multicultural environment, to think critically, and to respond critically to other voices. But we need to help students connect with this environment, not just as a means of self-discovery, but in a way that affects their immediate environment in direct and material ways. Too many of them see what one writer has called "civic America" not, as he puts it, as having disappeared, but as being some-

thing that is irrevocably beyond their control.[3] They do not read newspapers and they do not vote because, even if we can convince them they are intelligent and articulate enough to participate, they do not think their voice can ever count for anything. They want only to stay out of the way, to not be noticed. In the welfare culture, to be noticed by the government is to be in trouble.

This point of view carries over into the classroom. Quite understandably, CalWORKS students do not want to be identified as such due to the stigmatization of the welfare recipient by certain politicians and media figures. College administrators are becoming sensitized to this issue and have responded, for instance, by placing CalWORKS counselors in offices with other programs so that students do not have to mark themselves as welfare recipients in front of other students by the simple act of going in the door. Likewise, we must be cognizant of the visibly "unmarked" status of our welfare recipient students, with awareness and sensitivity to their presence during class discussions on issues where other students might make stereotyping or offensive remarks. In particular, one must attempt to prevent the subjection of such students to diatribes by fellow students in class discussions of the welfare reform issue. This is an important issue in relation to the economy and the workforce: it should not be avoided. We should not "out" students who do not volunteer to the class the information that they are welfare recipients, but we should point out to the class that many of their colleagues at the two-year college are in this category.

At the same time, we must fight the culture of invisibility, both ours and theirs. This is an important component of taking responsibility for one's life and life choices. Some of my part-time colleagues at Santa Monica College announce their impaired status to their students with a sign on the table at the front of the classroom that reads, "This *is* my office—I teach at Santa Monica College." Not only does this accomplish its intended purpose of educating the student population about an issue in pending contract negotiations with a direct effect on the quality of their academic environment; it also provides a model of speaking out from a position of impaired power. This is what responsible citizens do in "civic America": they tell it like it is even if doing so involves a degree of risk or an admission of a status that some will see as less than respectable.

Taking responsibility is more than "agreeing to the terms and conditions of employment…without illusions," as Purvis suggests (A5). Leaving it at that implies that those who accept such employment have no right to complain about inequity. This is no more true for non-tenure-track instructors or former welfare recipients who land

[3]In his essay "The Strange Disappearance of Civic America," Robert Putnam blames the alleged disappearance primarily on television. The essay is widely read and discussed by composition students due to its inclusion in the *St. Martin's Guide to Writing*.

jobs in data entry than it is for coal miners. There will always be issues to discuss. Reasoned discussion of such issues in a public forum is facilitated by literacy. We do not teach our students literacy just to make ourselves feel good. We are not philanthropists or Peace Corps workers. We like to teach literacy because we like being literate ourselves, and we should not hesitate to admit that our educational status gives us power in society that is not always measured by pay scales, health benefits, and tenure. It should be our mission to enable two-year colleges to produce citizens with a voice—not drones for the information economy.

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Independence and Coalition Building in California: Part-Time Faculty Organize Statewide to End the Exploitation

Deborah J. Brasket

> *The very notion of equality, true equality, is a radical one. Yet, it is precisely this radical spirit which many adjunct faculty suppress, for theirs is a tenuous situation. Employed by the very institution that oppresses them, adjunct faculty lack individual power. We need a collective voice and collective action. Let not the individual bear the weight of this oppression alone, but let us overcome oppression together.*
>
> *Adjunct faculty unite!*
>
> *—Fletcher, Nye, and O'Donnell, "The Adjunct Faculty Manifesto"*

When the "The Adjunct Faculty Manifesto" was being written for the Fall 1998 *Forum,* a band of radical adjuncts in California were already uniting to do just that—to create a collective voice for collective action. In August 1998, representatives from thirty community colleges across the state gathered in a small park on the central coast to discuss a revolutionary idea—the creation of a statewide professional organization to end, once and for all, the exploitation of part-time faculty teaching in California's community colleges. From this effort, the California Part-time Faculty Association (CPFA) was born.

It was an exhilarating idea, yet we all recognized what a tremendous task we were undertaking. We knew from personal experience how extremely difficult it is to organize part-time faculty campuswide, let alone organize them across 71 districts, 107 campuses and 800 miles! Yet we also recognized that the time would never be more ripe; the old sixties slogan "If not now, when? If not us, who?" never seemed more relevant. In the end, we really had no choice. The level of frustration had reached the point where there was no turning back and no way forward except to breach the barricade of elitism and indifference in one powerful, united front.

Our growing frustration was fed by the realization that real reform would never take place if led by well-meaning insiders. We could no longer depend upon the energies of the enlightened few within the system—sympathetic college administrators, full-time faculty members, or leaders of professional organizations dominated by tenured faculty—to effectively argue our cause or to persuade the majority to clean house. While nearly everyone recognizes how the overuse and abuse of part-time faculty is undermining the quality of higher education, there is insufficient interest from within the ranks of privilege to sustain meaningful reform. There remains and will always remain too large an economic incentive to maintain the status quo; thus, the issue of reform will die on the back burner from lack of sufficient heat.

More heat is what we needed, but we needed to apply it from without as well as from within. As professionals, we had to take the lead; we had to secure a place at the table where we would have equal status, where our voices would carry weight. We could do this only by creating an independent organization that was recognized as representing the interests of the silent majority—the 29,000 part-time instructors teaching in the California community college system. We had to take our issues directly to those who managed the system—the State Chancellor, the Board of Governors, the state legislators—as well as to those who depended upon the system—the students, parents, and community.

In a sense, we had to declare our independence—even from those who had been working so diligently on our behalf. So far, part-time faculty activists had spoken out on the issue of exploitation as isolated individuals, or as members of a department, union, or professional organization dominated and controlled by full-time tenured faculty. We had spoken out on the issue not from a platform of independent power, but from a marginalized position subordinated within a larger unit that, more often than not, supported the status quo.

We needed to establish an independent power base of our own, yet we did not want to abandon those tenured faculty members or organizations that had been working within the system on our behalf for so many years. We wanted an organization that could demand equity when it came to negotiating for change, yet we also wanted to form alliances with other groups that were advocating reform.

Our tasks, however, were not simply to improve the wages, working conditions, and professional opportunities for part-time faculty, important as these are. For embedded within the idea of *equality* lies the equally important idea of *quality*. It was imperative that our organization premise all arguments for professional equity on the need for professional excellence, for providing students with a quality education. Our mission was "to create the opportunity for all community college students to have equal access to quality education by promoting professional equity for all faculty. All students deserve full-service faculty, faculty who share equally in the re-

wards and the responsibilities of the profession, whether teaching full-time or part-time" (CPFA Mission Statement). We would accomplish this mission by educating the public—including students, faculty, administrators, and legislators—about part-time faculty issues by serving as a resource base for individuals and organizations interested in promoting professional equity; by creating strong alliances with other statewide and national faculty, academic, labor, and social organizations who share our mission; and by seeking legislative means to achieve our goals.

It was an ambitious plan we laid out that day, yet from that small group gathered in an isolated park on the Central Coast, CPFA was created. Within a week of that first meeting, we had an active Web site and listserv connecting part-time faculty across the state. Within two months we had a mission statement, a constitution, bylaws, and an elected Executive Council. Within nine months we had published the first edition of our twelve-page, tabloid-sized newspaper, which is distributed to fifty thousand faculty members, administrators, and legislators across the state. Our membership has been doubling every few months and includes several faculty unions that joined CPFA as institutional members, generating much needed seed-money to fund our growth. We are now in the process of compiling a database with contract information that will help us create a "Best and Worst Practices" list, comparing the treatment of part-time faculty at individual campuses. This list will be published in our newspaper and on our Web site, as well as released to other media.

As a result of all this activity and the steady stream of press releases we have been sending to the media, CPFA is now widely recognized across the state as a potentially powerful force that represents the twenty-nine thousand part-time faculty teaching in California's community colleges. Our representatives meet frequently with state legislators, the State Chancellor, the Board of Governors, the State Academic Senate, and the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges to discuss part-time faculty issues. We have held regional strategy meetings around the state, staged public demonstrations, organized massive letter-writing campaigns, and helped pass key legislation. We are now actively seeking a legislator to carry a bill that will eliminate the two-tiered wage system for faculty in California community colleges. In short, we have raised a united voice that will not be silenced and that will only grow stronger until our mission is accomplished and the exploitation ends.

What has been accomplished in California can be re-created elsewhere. The point is that it is up to us—part-time and non-tenure-track faculty—to accept responsibility for our predicament and to take the lead in changing it. This question of whose responsibility it is to create equity for non-tenure-track faculty was raised by Theresa M. Purvis in the Fall 1999 *Forum*. She writes: "It has now become a question of what can those who are employed as non-tenure-track faculty do for themselves. If the institutions, departments, administrations, and tenure-track faculty have failed

to recognize and fulfill their own responsibilities, then it appears that non-tenure-track faculty will need to be responsible for themselves" (A4).

While her question is vital, her answer is less than satisfactory. She states that non-tenure-track faculty must "either enter…contractual employment without illusion of equity and advancement, or refuse to enter into such employment" (A4). To me, for us to do either would be an abandonment of our professional and civic responsibility. We must neither accept exploitation nor walk away from it when encountered. Instead, we must grapple with it where it stands. We must join forces to create our own independent professional organizations with our own independent power-base, and we must form strong alliances with other organizations that share our interests and goals. In this way we can act as a powerful force exerting pressure for positive change from both within and without the system.

Part-time, non-tenure-track faculty could potentially become the strongest professional force within higher education. We have the numbers, we have the will, and we have a righteous cause. The future of higher education depends upon us. When no one else will lead—we must step forward.

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Against Tenure

James Sledd

In 1986, when the question of contingent labor was raised in a paper at the Wyoming Conference, eminent compositionists responded with silence until a cry from the heart of a graduate student prompted the conversations that led to the Wyoming Resolution. The silence of the Eminent spoke loudly of the great divide between

haves and haven'ts that remains the disgrace of English studies. When the Resolution fell into the hands of committees of the Eminent, it was duly emasculated and rendered impotent.

As the century staggers to its end, faith in professional organizations has been diminished. Non-tenure-track faculty, gypsy academics, contingent laborers are more numerous than ever, and their working conditions remain abominable, despite much professional moaning and groaning and ineffectual expression of goodwill. The deepening crisis of corporatized higher education demands deep change, not superficial tinkering.

Non-tenure-track faculty: the ugly phrase itself embodies the great obstacle to such change, the institution of tenure. When the futility of pious gestures by the established has been amply demonstrated, it's time to think the unthinkable, speak the unspeakable. Tenure should be abolished.

The great claim for tenure is that it's essential to academic freedom, but tenure provides only ineffective protection against marauding regents and administrators. Real boat-rockers rarely survive the long probationary period. Most survivors (not all) have learned subservience. The minority of the really outspoken who do manage to get tenure find that administrators still have many devices to harass and intimidate them. When rash souls insistently question corporate iniquity and its administrative flunkeys, the administrators' publicity machine easily drowns them out.

The real functions of tenure at the present day are to divide faculties and deprive them of public support by their further isolation from plain folks. When the old notion of lifetime employment has become so sour a joke that the word *career* has grown archaic, working people see no reason why a minority of academics should enjoy a unique privilege; and the long struggles of part-timers and graduate students within organizations like the CCCC and the MLA have made it quite plain that the majority of the tenured can't acknowledge the cost of their comfort. Administrators easily control those whom that privilege divides.

So tenure should be abolished, along with academic rank, and a uniform salary scale should be introduced. Courses should be assigned by competence, not seniority, and valued by their utility to the common good. With the old hierarchies overthrown, all faculty should unite with staff in militant, inclusive unions to resist the corporatizers. Administrators should be the servants, not the bosses, of the real workers in higher education.

Will such good things really be done? They could be, if the sanctimonious were serious in their loud sanctimony. But nothing frightens the tenured so much as the truth about tenure. Tenure will be defended, and with it, the system of exploitation on which the academic humanities rest. Most humanists will continue to live by the old jingle, "Me and my wife, my son John and his wife, us four and no more." Mean-

while, conscientious faculty will—and should—continue their tinkering but should also recognize and speak the truth that tinkering's not enough.

The defense of rank and tenure is the defense of education in gross injustice.

James Sledd is Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Texas at Austin.

When Professionalization and Exploitation Collide

Anne Cassebaum

We often hear the phrase "professionalization of composition," although most of us who teach composition smile wryly. Our profession which has so much to be proud of is, too often, in denial about its dirty secret—its reliance upon and exploitation of adjunct faculty.

Professionalization of composition doesn't have to be an oxymoron; our achievements over the last fifty years are impressive. We share, in fact, a common problem with the feminist movement: advances thrive alongside exploitation. Women in prominent positions are celebrated, while the number of women and children in poverty has increased since the 1960s. Feminists can hardly be satisfied. In a similar way, the field of composition now features successful individuals, new departments of writing, writing directors, high-profile writing across the curriculum programs—yet more than half of composition courses are taught by adjunct faculty, too many without ongoing positions, contracts, fair pay, benefits, offices, or even choice of textbooks. We can hardly be satisfied.

Statistics outline the dirty secret. Adjuncts and TAs teaching in higher education now outnumber full-time faculty by a margin of twenty-three thousand ("Part-time"). Figures specific to composition are hard to come by, but the Modern Language Association indicates that in two-year colleges, 38 percent of English faculty were adjuncts in 1972, and more than 64 percent fill adjunct positions today. For four-year institutions, the percentage of adjuncts moved from 20 percent in 1972 to more than 30 percent today (Huber). With these numbers, the adjunct labor issue has to matter to all who care about the teaching of composition…and feminist ethics; Margie Burns, Karen Thompson and Chris Maitland all argue effectively that the overuse and misuse of part-time faculty has served to marginalize women. NCES statistics show that while full-time jobs are divided 50–50 between men and women, 67 percent of part-timers in the humanities are women.

A Damaged Profession

There is more to the damage from our dirty secret than unjust working conditions for adjunct faculty. This abuse turns the worthy goals of our discipline into pretensions and hypocrisies:

We talk about empowerment through writing, yet we are unable and unwilling to confront clear injustice within our own profession and even our own departments.

We write about democracy in the classroom, yet we condone or accept rankings of faculty that leave colleagues languishing in two- or three-tiered systems.

We say we care about composition, but we let the education of our students suffer. As Judith Gappa and David Leslie find, "bifurcating faculty into classes hurts quality…emphatically *not* because part-timers are less qualified or less capable than full-timers of teaching well, [but because] institutional practices… deny part-time faculty the basic conditions under which good teaching can take place" (230).

We speak of critical thinking, yet the logic of our own professional lives seems foolish when we examine it. We value education but exploit and discount educators.

Many of us take pride in how our courses draw student attention to social injustice and argue that values are strengthened through writing and literature, but what values are reflected in the organization of our own department?

We write of the benefits of collaborative work, of sharing group responsibility, of cooperation, yet we may practice apartheid and block productive collegiality.

We preach sensitivity to language and then use language in ways that are false: "adjunct" is a curious word to describe those core people—the majority—who teach most writing courses for long periods of time. Chris Maitland finds that a quarter have worked at the same institution for eight years or more (8–9).

What is fine in our principles and our rhetoric isn't reflected in our own professional lives. This truth undercuts our teaching and our discipline.

We celebrate professional scholarship, the developments that come from work in theory and research in the field, but with at least half of our teachers in adjunct positions, we have limited the future of that scholarship by not providing the time, funding, and basic security that research and scholarship depend on.

And perhaps this exploitation—the denial of our invisible faculty—warps even our theory and pedagogy as we twist our thinking to deny the reality of professional inequities. We make a big issue of professionals versus practitioners, although, as Andrew Young notes, teaching writing represents 60 percent of what English departments do (17). We must acknowledge that the abuse of adjuncts is a moral issue for our discipline. It resounds for all who care about education, the teaching of writing, and fairness.

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