

# FORUM

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

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CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION

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### **From the Editor: Good Practices Installment #1**

To kick off an emphasis on good employment practices in the institutions we represent, I've decided to focus on my institution, Syracuse University. Syracuse is a private research university with an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 16,000. Its non-tenure-track faculty, which currently number 39 part-time instructors and one part-time assistant professor, have no union or collective bargaining unit, though unionizing was pursued unsuccessfully in the early 1980s by the Association for Part-time Instructors. At Syracuse, the categories of part-time employment are "Regular Part-time" and "Senior Part-time." The criteria for regular part-time status include minimum load—at least 50% each semester—as part of a year-long load, and eligibility for contract renewal. Senior part-time status depends upon a combination of merit and seniority.

The good practices achieved thus far have resulted from negotiations between the Writing Instructors Professional Association (formerly the Association of Part-time Instructors), Writing Program directors, various deans of the College of Arts and Sciences, and other University administrators over the past fourteen years. As you review the list below, please note that many of these good practices and benefits apply only to the SU Writing Program—not to other departments on campus which employ non-tenure-track faculty.

- office space (with phones for senior instructors; access to phones in lounge/mailroom, computer lab, and main office for all instructors); access to computers and photocopiers; photocopying allocations equal to those of full-time faculty for undergraduate teaching;
- a merit tier system that allows non-tenure-track faculty to achieve pay increases commensurate with teaching excellence and experience; senior non-tenure-track faculty exit the merit tier and submit yearly updates of CVs instead of undergoing reviews;

A1

## About *Forum*

*Forum* is published twice a year by the Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Special Interest Group 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 [rverner@a-znet.com](mailto:rverner@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 or at (315) 443-1213.

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- good per-section salaries ("good" compared to other institutions in the vicinity, that is; there's still plenty room for improvement!)—New Hire: \$2400, Tier One: \$2650, Tier Two: \$3000, Tier Three: \$3350, Tier Four: \$3700; this tier system was created to create the possibility of a career path, with opportunities for promotion and pay increases related to performance and experience;
- for instructors with a Ph.D. in composition/rhetoric, opportunity to apply for status as part-time assistant professor, with an accompanying increase in salary;
- health (full coverage) and pro-rated retirement benefits;
- travel support to conferences at which the instructor is a presenter; because travel support comes from a tight Writing Program budget, competition for funds has restricted support to one conference per year, and that support is seldom full;
- access to grant money to support special projects; instructors are eligible to apply for campus instructional grants, in competition with tenure-track faculty and graduate students;
- a system of review, initially designed and implemented by full-time faculty administrators and non-tenure-track faculty, serving as a basis for rehiring and merit recognition; peer review is now conducted BY non-tenure-track faculty FOR non-tenure-track faculty;
- a high degree of job security based on renewable and multiple year contracts without time limit restrictions (five-year-up-and-out rules are not operative); in fact, several instructors have been teaching at Syracuse for nearly twenty years;

- leadership opportunities for non-tenure-track faculty compensated through release sections from teaching: conducting weekly teaching groups for instructors and TAs, participating in administering the Writing Program, working in the Writing Consultant Space (Writing Center); some instructors use these leadership opportunities as a stepping stone to administrative positions within the university or at other institutions;
- remitted tuition for one course per semester provided the instructor carries a three-section load;
- dependent tuition for children attending Syracuse (after working the equivalent of three full-time years);
- occasional opportunities to take on additional teaching sections and/or special projects paid in addition to one's appointment (e.g., editing in-house publications); the central administration discourages this practice, however, based on the notion that part-time faculty will accrue enough full-time teaching service for a *de facto* tenure;
- opportunity to indicate preferences for teaching assignments and schedule; preferences are honored as much as possible;
- class sizes limited to 20 students;
- opportunity to teach courses in a computer lab or computer classroom;
- opportunity to teach upper-division writing electives typically reserved for full-time faculty in many departments (forthcoming with the new writing curriculum); non-tenure track faculty have consistently been invited to participate in curriculum development for the undergraduate program;
- compensated service on departmental committees (forthcoming under Becky Howard's direction);
- opportunity to serve on the Faculty Senate of the University.

I appreciate the input of my colleagues, Eileen Schell, Carol Lipson, Beth Wagner, and Debi Saldo, in composing this list. Now it's your turn! I invite you to send me similar good practices lists regarding your institutions and/or comments on what I've presented here. I also welcome detailed materials such as sample employment policies or sections of department handbooks focused on non-tenure-track faculty. In order to help others establish better working conditions at their institutions, I'm especially interested in publishing "change narratives"—stories about how good practices were achieved where you work. Let's use *Forum* to publicize our working conditions and to prompt action on our campuses to improve our lot as non-tenure-track faculty.

—Roberta Kirby-Werner  
Syracuse University  
September 2000

### **Perseverance Pays!**

Carolyn Keefe

*[Editor's Note: I'm pleased to publish in this issue what I hope will be the first of many letters from Forum readers.]*

I'm writing to publicize something that has just happened here at Lindsey Wilson College (a small, private, four-year liberal arts college in south central Kentucky). We have had a wonderful adjunct working for us in English for the past year—wonderful not only because she does a great job in the classroom, but also because she expresses an interest in department affairs (e.g., by attending department meetings [which, by the way, thanks to yours truly she was invited to do]). Naturally we hired her for the upcoming academic year. In late summer, however, she told us she'd been asked to apply for a full-time instructorship at one of the universities here Kentucky and indicated that if she was offered the position, she really couldn't afford not to take it. When our academic dean was informed of the possibility of losing her, his response was immediate: he said he would counter the other offer—which would mean a substantial increase in pay, plus benefits. The adjunct was indeed offered the other position, and, in turn, received Lindsey Wilson's counter-offer. I was convinced she would decide to go with other institution because it was larger and had more name recognition and prestige. To my surprise and delight, however, she elected to stay at Lindsey Wilson. The reason: The college in general and members of the English Department in particular had made her feel welcome, as if she belonged.

Isn't it a great story? We're thrilled!

*Carolyn Keefe is co-coordinator of English at Lindsey Wilson College. She has been an advocate for non-tenure-track faculty since the mid-nineties, when she was a graduate student at Bowling Green State University in Ohio.*

### **CCCC Speakers in Minneapolis: A Message from Our Chair**

Deborah B. Normand

Improving our communication, increasing our visibility, and making connections—those are the goals we set at the Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Special Interest Group (SIG) at the 1997 CCCC in Phoenix, Arizona. Since that time, we have made much progress.

This year's SIG was the best attended since we revitalized the group at the 1996 Milwaukee CCCC as a way to review the progress that non-tenure-track faculty have made since the Wyoming Resolution. Since that first reconstituted SIG meeting, par-

ticipation has increased to over 55 participants in Minneapolis. An agenda that included Steering Committee highlights and other related business and the desire to include as many speakers as possible necessitated a two- to three-minute limit for each scheduled speaker.

Increasing visibility was the focus of this year's Non-Tenure-Track Faculty SIG. Speakers representing colleges and universities from across the nation offered practical suggestions for protecting and supporting non-tenure-track faculty and their work while reporting on the successes at their colleges and universities. Their reports reminded us that we need to be proactive in instituting policies that guarantee fair and equitable working conditions for all faculty, non-tenured and tenured alike. Among the practical suggestions we heard were the following:

- request that university officials investigate the number of part-timers employed (a means of getting institutions to recognize their employment policies);
- work for conversion of part-time adjunct positions to full-time lectureships;
- recognize that conversions of positions from part-time to full-time can introduce problems for some of the faculty involved;
- increase participation in faculty governance;
- lobby for release time for service;
- share our skills with our departments through professional development opportunities;
- continue to present a professional image when we serve on departmental and university committees and when we present at local, state, and national conventions;
- request access to secretarial support, office space, telephones, and computers for all faculty;
- urge administrators to include non-tenure-track faculty in merit pay increases and to recognize service to the department, college, and university as a criterion for those merit raises;
- strengthen connections with former students and others who are in positions to influence university policy regarding non-tenure-track faculty.

One speaker asked us to remember that not all non-tenure-track faculty can afford to attend CCCC. Therefore, we must continue to extend the spirit of the SIG to our home institutions, continually searching for ways to ensure sound institutional practices that recognize and reward our professionalism. By offering all faculty members equitable working conditions, we foster a supportive community that will help all faculty become better teachers and thus improve writing instruction for our students.

As part of our commitment to making connections, we are adopting as the focus for the 2001 Non-Tenure-Track Faculty SIG a goal of the CCCC Task Force for Improving the Working Conditions of Part-Time and Adjunct Faculty (Eileen Schell and Karen Thompson, co-chairs). Speakers will publicize good practices at their colleges

or universities that can serve as models for fair working conditions at other institutions. These practices may include, but are not limited to, extended contracts, health and retirement benefits, participation in faculty governance, fair and equitable teaching evaluation practices, and professional development opportunities. David Laurence of the Modern Language Association recently e-mailed the Steering Committee of the Non-Tenure-Track Faculty SIG with news that the Executive Committee of the Association of Departments of English, an organization of departments that has functioned as a project of the MLA's Office of English Programs since 1963, is also seeking examples of institutional and departmental good practice. Thus, we will strengthen our connections to other organizations with this adopted goal.

If your institution has good practices, we want to know. Join us in Denver 2001 to be part of this dedicated group of non-tenured professionals.

*Deborah B. Normand is a non-tenure-track faculty member at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, who just received recognition for 25 years of service to the university. She has served as Assistant Director of Composition for 10 years and Director of Composition during the summer.*

### **Fear of Theory**

Margaret Price

After three years of teaching writing in a non-tenure-track job, I decided to quit and pursue a Ph.D. in composition studies. My choice was a difficult one for my family. Just applying to programs was a significant financial investment. The cost of moving almost wiped out our savings, and what I earn now as a teaching assistant is about half of what I used to make as a lecturer. My partner's and my dislocation from the families, friends, and jobs we left back home has been—as we keep saying to each other—an adjustment. (Sometimes our language has been less polite.) But the money and the relocation weren't the most frightening elements of leaving my limited but familiar role as a lecturer. I was afraid of composition theory.

Theory, which I thought of as a sort of large, dark intellectual cloud, seemed like something that real academics did and I did not. My master's is an M.F.A. in fiction writing. I'd written some critical papers during college, even a couple of seminar papers while in grad school, but I located these pieces firmly in the realm of "student writing"—they were practice work, fit for a teacher's assessment but not for publication or the attention of my academic peers. I'd never been to a conference and barely knew what one was. I taught. That was what I did. I loved it, I was good at it, and I didn't care about the rest of this academic hoo-ha.

I finally decided to apply to Ph.D. programs because I cared more about teaching writing than about any other job I'd held, and I was willing to do almost anything—

including confront theory—to keep this work. I knew I didn't want to continue as a lecturer. Losing and regaining my job twice a year was emotionally draining, as was spending each summer without health insurance. The school where I taught automatically laid off individuals in Lecturer I positions (my position) after four years, and I was approaching the cutoff point. My partner and I wanted to have children, but I was reluctant to do so with insecure job status and intermittent health insurance. Moreover, I knew that my then-current job, precarious as it felt, was an exceptionally *good* one in the world of non-tenure-track faculty: I usually worked full-time, I earned a living wage, and health insurance during the school year was included.

I had no idea what one might do in a graduate program emphasizing composition, nor did I know where any such programs were located. So one Saturday I went to the public library, looked through *Peterson's Guide to Graduate Schools* for entries that included the word "composition," and sent away for applications.

When I wrote my application essays, I included a statement, which at the time I didn't believe: that learning the theory behind practices I'd already been using for years would improve my teaching. I put this statement in because I knew the programs I was applying to would "want" to hear it. But the statement turned out to be startlingly true. I've discovered, after some time in a Ph.D. program, not only that I am capable of "doing theory" (which is how I used to think of it—rather like doing a difficult dance step), but also that a knowledge of theory *has* improved my teaching. Moreover, the learning and use of theory have shown me ways in which I can become a part of the academy. My original plan was to follow the rules for four years, get the degree, and then use the degree to gain a secure teaching job. But I have begun to discover—*concretely*—that I can do more. I can work to change the system out of which I came and which I think needs changing.

This system, in fact, makes me angry. Non-tenure-track faculty are, I think, deliberately separated from the theories (both pedagogical and otherwise) that surround and construct their teaching. I realize that this separation isn't true everywhere, and that, where it is, situations vary greatly across institutions. I don't want to simplify a complex situation. But I do feel that the life of a non-tenure-track faculty member—short on time as it tends to be, short on money, and certainly short on status—discourages the conditions in which theorizing can comfortably occur. In my own experience, the times when I have been most relieved to have met that month's bills or to have been rehired for another four months are also times when I haven't had much mental space or energy left over for thinking theoretically.

What do I mean here by "thinking theoretically"? Put simply, I mean making connections. I mean making considered generalizations. The theory I feared as a lecturer was chiefly pedagogical theory, but theoretical thinking need not stop there. Mike Evces, paraphrasing Eileen Schell's *Gypsy Academics and Mother-Teachers*, notes that "in order to be true to the values we so readily espouse in our teaching, research, and

other venues of professional discourse, we must pay serious attention to our own working conditions and to those of our colleagues" (A6). Thinking theoretically can mean traveling toward questions: "Non-tenure-track faculty comprise x percent of the teachers at this university. I wonder what would happen if we got together and started talking about changes we wish would occur in our job conditions?"

Theorizing, as I see it, is thinking critically. If you think critically, you become less isolated. You start to figure out who else out there is on your team, in terms of particular beliefs and practices. You start to figure out what the teams *are*. Knowledges take shape around you. You begin to discern causes and effects. You feel less as if unfortunate things happen (like not having health insurance) because you're just unlucky and begin to see that there is a rhyme and reason—not a very attractive one—to the conditions of your job. And if you begin to see that, you may take action to change the larger situation.

In short, to theorize is to clear a pathway toward change.

Now, this is not to say that non-tenure-track faculty are all just itching to leap into theory and would do so immediately if they only had the time. On the contrary, among this population there may be a fairly high resistance to engaging with theories, pedagogical and otherwise. I know there was strong resistance in my case. First, there was the nature of my job; hired to teach, I was evaluated as a teacher, but never asked to place my teaching practices in a larger context, to link them to the practices of other teachers, or to write down any of my ideas. In other words, I received an implicit message that my job was to teach and not to theorize. Second, I was intimidated. I didn't know the customs, the passwords, and the gestures of this club comprising "real" academics. My solution was to decide that most real academics—"theory-heads," as I called them—were posturing phonies who didn't do much actual work.

But this rejection came with a price. As bell hooks points out, those of us who take an anti-intellectual stance toward theory, declaring it elitist and worthless, "deny the power of liberatory education for critical consciousness, thereby perpetuating conditions that reinforce our collective exploitation and repression" (69). Theory doesn't have to serve elitist and exclusionary purposes. It can serve freeing and empowering ones as well.

My case is individual, and I am probably an extreme example. Until I started graduate school, I didn't know what CCCC stood for, had not heard of Linda Flower or David Bartholomae or Donald Murray, and had never picked up a scholarly composition journal. My lack of engagement was caused by my belief that theory (whatever that meant, exactly) would have little effect on my teaching. However, I suspect that most composition lecturers are more actively engaged with the discipline. The existence of *Forum* itself proves that there are at least some non-tenure-track faculty out there who are participating in the theory of our field, who are interested and involved, and who are fighting for change.



But I think there are also non-tenure-track faculty like me out there. I'm writing for the rest of us. (The rest of you? Having become something of a theoryhead myself, and having enrolled in a Ph.D. program, I'm currently experiencing an uncomfortable shift from one group of "us" to a different one.) Some non-tenure-track faculty operate relatively comfortably within academic discourse communities—for example, those characterized as "aspiring academics" (48) by Judith Gappa and David Leslie in their book *The Invisible Faculty*. Others, though, are uncomfortable with theory and uncomfortable seeing themselves as part of the academy. I want to find ways to help alleviate that discomfort. After all, if you are a non-tenure-track faculty member you *are* part of the academy. How valued you are, and how much you might value the academy—not to mention ways in which you might want to change the academy—are the real areas of contention.

The change I'm calling for must take place in many specific locations at once and can be effected in many ways. This list is meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive. That said, following are a few ideas for how we might begin:

1. Non-tenure-track faculty should be trained in a way that takes theory into account. No matter how restricted the training might be in terms of time and budget available, ideas can still be placed into the context of particular thinkers of the discipline. For example, when recommending to teachers that they have students work in small groups, some background on the goals and effects of collaborative learning could be offered. Ideally, titles of articles could be suggested, and, even more ideally, copies could be provided.

It might seem that this suggestion would encourage the training institution to bias its new teachers toward its own theoretical stance. However, any teacher knows that institutions *do* have biases, and any training offered will reflect those biases. I contend that providing concrete voices to specify and explicate broad theories will tend to open, not close off, sites of contention. Providing training *without* such contextualizing, on the other hand, places arguable theories into contextless, unapproachable majesty—a strategy similar to that which Donna Haraway calls "the God trick" (qtd. in Harding 153).

2. Non-tenure-track faculty should be reminded that they are *already* using theory all the time. Upon learning of a specific teaching practice, a colleague versed in composition theory could mention that this practice has links to the ideas of Mina Shaughnessy, or Andrea Lunsford, or whomever. Most of us have had the experience of laboriously developing a classroom strategy and then discovering that it is already in wide use. Access to others' theories and opportunities to try out and build upon them will save effort—we'll re-invent the wheel less often. Such access and opportunities will also reveal the spaces in ongoing disciplinary discussions where we do have things to say, ideas to offer, that no one has presented before.

I want to make it clear that non-tenure-track faculty as well as their tenure-track colleagues can and should act as “theory mentors” of this sort. Some non-tenure-track faculty are well-versed in the literature, dominant theories, lexicon, and ongoing debates of composition. Their willingness to open conversations and create connections with those of us who feel less comfortable operating as academics is crucial. Not only would this action help build a community of faculty members who might otherwise be working in isolated circumstances, but it would also help expose an important truth about contemporary academia: there is a wide, variously populated, and dynamic borderland between the academy and the “real world.” We have been learning for the last thirty years that when non-normative (for example, non-white, non-middle-class, non-male) students become part of the academy, they may “become” academics, but they will also change the academy itself. So too with non-normative faculty.

To put this last point more bluntly, if some teachers feel that they are barely qualified for their jobs, they will be likely to attribute their failures and frustrations to that borderline-qualified status rather than to unfair institutional systems that must change.

3. Continuing after training (or in lieu of it; some non-tenure-track faculty receive no training), titles and, even better, copies of publications dealing with pedagogical theory should be offered. One caveat here is that merely suggesting titles to someone who already believes that she can’t “do” theory won’t have much effect. For example, I owned the bell hooks book for about a year before I read it. A well-meaning friend (a “real” academic, one with a Ph.D.) gave it to me, and although I liked the title (*Teaching to Transgress*), my combined resistance to theory and fear that I wouldn’t be able to understand the book kept me from even opening it for some time. However, providing a specific written piece, *within context* (for example, a conversation of the sort described in 2), can help show concretely that every teacher not only makes constant use of, but can understand and learn more about, theory.
4. As the previous points imply, greater communication is needed among non-tenure-track faculty as well as between non-tenure-track faculty and their tenured/tenure-track colleagues. Non-tenure-track faculty should be asked their opinion about the work they do. Their voices, written and spoken, should be considered valid contributions to the ongoing conversations of composition theory. I am referring here not only to the conversations that unfold at department meetings, during conferences, and in professional journals—important as these locations are—but also to those that take place in hallways, in hurried moments between student conferences, outside the elevator, or while waiting for the microwave to ding.

I see that I am skating closer and closer to the proposal, “Just make the darn academy less elitist!” And this last point is so broad that I hesitate to mention it, yet I

believe that we must say and keep saying that *trainers and colleagues of non-tenure-track faculty should treat these faculty as whole and real academics, deserving of respect and able to determine for themselves the extent to which they want to engage with the theories of the academy*. I am writing this piece in part to indicate concrete ways in which we might begin to accomplish this. I hope to help reduce the institutionalized isolation in which many non-tenure-track faculty work. Theorizing, as I argued earlier, helps clear a path toward change. Part of that change is building community.

My intention is *not* to imply that the community of non-tenure-track faculty is monolithic or has a single set of characteristics and goals, nor do I wish to announce that theory will be everyone's salvation and we should all immediately start reading *Signs* and using words like "Heideggerian." Rather, I want to point out that theory is something we all do in different ways and to different extents. And we do it all the time, without much effort. A colleague of mine quotes Janet Emig as having said, "You can't get out of bed without a theory."

Non-tenure-track faculty should be encouraged, during their training and while they work, to recognize that they are *already* using theory and that they are *already* a part of the academy. Not everyone may choose to attend the CCCC, but every composition teacher should know that she or he does belong there.

### Acknowledgments

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### **The Last Good Job in America**

Cheryl Glenn

What constitutes the last good job in America resides at the center of the current job crisis, the exigence for the MLA Committee on Professional Employment. For too many (non-tenure-track faculty and graduate students alike), the last good job is that tenure-accruing position at a Research I institution that allows you to integrate your leisure interests with your work time: you get to teach six to ten hours a week, direct student research, talk with smart students and colleagues, write about subjects that interest you, and read promiscuously. Nice work if you can get it—but now we know, most folks cannot.

I would say that the problem is an overproduction of Ph.D.'s, but no system of labor can be damaged or repaired that simply. Besides, we're *not* producing too many Ph.D.'s for the number of courses that need to be covered, for the amount of university service that needs to be done, for the number of students who need us. We are needed in *tenured* numbers. If that were not the case, there would not be some 400,000 adjuncts constituting 45 percent of the country's academic workforce, a shameful figure that roughly doubles the 1970 figure (Killen 3).<sup>1</sup> With the national academy determined to continue this McJobbing<sup>2</sup> of the university (a trend that seriously threatens—and may destroy—tenure), *96 percent* of first-year writing is currently being taught by graduate student instructors, part-time instructors, and full-time non-tenure track faculty members (8).<sup>3</sup> *Over 40 percent* of all undergraduate instruction in English in four-year colleges and universities is now delivered by faculty who do not have permanent appointments (FT-1 Committee Report).

I recite these numbers so you can see how very much we are needed. In fact, the college-age population will grow slowly but steadily from 14.1 million in 1994 to 16.4 million in 2006—just in the United States alone. As we have come to realize but should *not* accept, there is currently no correlation between the number of students and the number of tenure-line positions.<sup>4</sup> Yet, in the face of declining budgets and escalating costs, the alleged overproduction of Ph.D.'s, and an embattled professoriate clinging to the privileges of the last good job in America, no one is predicting changes in the job system any time soon. Well, I'm offering some possibilities based on *our* taking some responsibility.

First of all, our responsibility: we must continue to critique the McJobbing of the university, a set of practices that privilege some of us at the systematic exploitation of others. And we can start in our own institutions by working responsibly to ensure job security, respectable salaries, and fringe benefits for the nonpermanent faculty who regularly teach for us.<sup>5</sup> Second, our possibilities: we must reimagine the Ph.D. in En-

English by expanding the cultural expectations for such a degree. We can start by envisioning alternative employment sites for our Ph.D.'s that emphasize teaching, for instance, in *secondary* schools. The Associated Press News Service recently reported that “forty percent of the U.S. public schoolteachers will retire or otherwise leave the profession, by the 2003–2004 school year.... Half the teachers in the year 2005 will be hired [before then]” (1).<sup>6</sup> We must also look seriously and respectfully at the broad spectrum of postsecondary institutions that value teaching over research. After all, in the United States over 90 percent of English programs and most likely between one-half and two-thirds of the total number of *professorial rank appointments* are now located outside doctorate-granting research institutions.<sup>7</sup> These are good, full-time jobs with benefits.

So, given these percentages, the message seems clear. The *primary* goal of graduate education should *not* be to replicate the graduate research faculty, although that should remain one goal. Another goal should be to prepare effective teachers, and a third goal is to prepare students to leave the academy altogether. We can better prepare more of our students for a wider variety of good jobs.

As you may already know, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation is currently “working to change the economic status of the Humanities within the academia by providing strong career opportunities out of it” (Showalter 3). Robert Weisbuch writes that “on the day when the year’s most gifted graduate...decides to forego an assistant professorship at Stanford for a beginning position with the *Washington Post* or the Ford Foundation..., the status of the Humanities is revolutionized” (qtd. in Showalter 3). And, as former MLA President Elaine Showalter tries to convince us, “the more career options we have, the more power we will have” (3). In other words, what we’ve convinced ourselves to be the *last* good job in America may be *one of many* good jobs.<sup>8</sup>

## Notes

1. Michael Bérubé says the figure is 45 percent (89); Killen says 40 percent. In 1993, the United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, reported that adjuncts constituted 43 percent of the academic workforce.
2. McJobbing: a managerial decision to employ part-time workers who often enjoy neither job security nor fringe benefits.
3. A proponent for abolishing tenure altogether, James Sledd calls adjuncts and graduate students the “real teachers” in higher education.
4. It has long been the case. Only during the last thirty years has the last good job in America been replicated. The number of Ph.D.'s earned in English escalated from 333 (awarded in 1958) to 1,365 (awarded in 1972), an increase of 310 percent (qtd. in the MLA *Final Report* 18), a time during which, writes George Levine, “almost all my colleagues, no matter how

dumb they were, got at least three job offers" (qtd. in Bérubé 96). (I would hazard a guess that all these colleagues—dumb or smart—were white males and that 90 percent of them were Christians, given the 10 percent quota for Jews.)

Before then, as now, there were few tenure-accruing positions, and they were accorded to those boys in the club. Stanley Aronowitz tells us that "well into the 1960s the number of public Marxists, open gays, blacks, and women with secure mainstream academic jobs could be counted on ten fingers" (97). He's quick to remind us that Lionel Trilling was a year-to-year lecturer at Columbia for a decade, Irving Howe had a heck of a time landing a job, and Margaret Mead remains the most distinguished permanent adjunct in the history of Columbia University. So instead of getting sentimental and calling out the injustices of the late twentieth century, we've got to face the one true fact: the last good jobs in America were a blip on the screen.

The implications for in-process, recent, or underemployed Ph.D.'s are many. In response to their anger, worries, or distrust, they've been advised (by Elaine Showalter, Cary Nelson, the MLA Committee on Professional Employment, and various *Chronicle of Higher Education* pundits) to take more responsibility for their own situation, an argument that puts the onus on the students themselves as though if they'd only work hard enough or cleverly enough as individuals, they'd snag a good job. This argument doesn't address the responsibilities of the academic system at large, which always/already delimits the available choices and opportunities for these individual students. Graduate students are advised to avoid the Ph.D. in the first place, to accept non-tenure-accruing teaching positions provisionally (and to "go on the market" again next year), and to prepare for and search out employment outside of academia. I argue that these graduate students *are* taking responsibility for their individual selves: they come to us with amazing GRE scores, rich work experiences outside the academy, drive, and potential. When they go out on the job market, they regularly have a number of conference presentations, departmental service, one or two published articles, and another "in circulation." It's taken for granted that the candidate's dissertation is a protobook. (In fact, these students demonstrate at every turn the kind of preprofessionalism that John Guillory argues "seriously deforms the experience of graduate school" (7). He may be right.) Many of them are doing really impressive work—but none of this guarantees them a "good" job.

5. The Pennsylvania State University-University Park English Department has already moved in the right direction: for our non-tenure track faculty, we provide good salaries, full benefits, varying teaching assignments, courses down in exchange for extra duties, phones, offices, renewable three-year contracts, voting rights, and opportunities for promotion to senior lecturer.

6. I hesitate to mention that not too long ago, the MLA had comforted itself with the thought that projected retirements would enliven the tenure-track job market for new Ph.D.'s. The retirements happened just as predicted, but over 25% of those lines were simply "lost."

7. I am grateful to Professor Jane Harper of Tarrant County Junior College for helping me understand this point when, during our work on the MLA Committee for Professional Employment, she spoke of the rich and fulfilling teaching positions available at liberal arts colleges of varying selectivity, comprehensive universities of different sizes, technical and community colleges, and other special colleges.

8. We cannot indulge our professional narcissism any longer. We must work to reshape the labor practices within which we all work, particularly those in which many are overworked and invisible. And we must work to prepare all of our Ph.D.'s for good jobs, remembering that the majority of them will either leave the academy altogether or teach at "the majority of 'hiring' institutions...all of which have missions, values, cultures, and conceptions of faculty roles and responsibilities far different from those of doctorate-granting research universities" (Gaff and Lambert 38). If we hold to our responsibilities to reshape the job system and to prepare our students more realistically, they will all be enjoying secure and fulfilling *good jobs*.

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