

# FORUM

NEWSLETTER FOR ISSUES ABOUT PART-TIME AND CONTINGENT FACULTY

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### From the Editor: Farewell and Welcome

Evelyn Beck

This issue marks the end of my three-year term as editor. It has been a wonderful experience in which I've met many wonderful professionals and worked to create six editions that give voice to issues that affect adjunct, contingent, and part-time English faculty. Though I fear that current economic woes mean even harder times for those with the least job security, I am also hopeful, for many colleges are treating their adjunct faculty as true professionals. One such program is highlighted in this issue.

I'd like to introduce the new editor of *Forum* for the next three years: Brad Hammer. Dr. Hammer serves as the assistant director of writing at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and as an adjunct assistant professor of the practice in education at Duke University. Previously, he served as the associate director of writing at Duke and director of the program in writing and technology. In total, he comes to this editorship with 15 years of faculty experience in teaching first-year composition. Before completing his graduate work at Columbia University, he studied in both London and Jerusalem and has been the recipient of numerous teaching awards. His current book project, *The Failing Essay*, looks at the history of first-year writing and the ubiquity of the thesis-driven essay. He lives in Raleigh, N.C., with his wife Audrey and daughter Eva.

**About Forum**

*Forum* is published twice a year by 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 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 Bradley Hammer, *Forum* editor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, CB 3520-Greenlaw Hall, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3520, or phone 919-621-1000.

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**Making It through Contingency:  
A Mother-and-Daughter Narrative**

Alice L. Trupe and Mary A. Tasillo

**Alice:** From the mid-1980s through the early 1990s, I chose my career in composition teaching every four months. Each time I chose teaching over a potentially secure 40-hour-a-week office job, I reconsidered my insane life as a “roads scholar,” trying to maintain a household as the single mother of two young daughters. I would speed from college to college, teaching writing courses ranging all the way from lower-level basic writing to second-semester composition. I’d zip into the appropriate parking lot, late enough in the day to have a long hike to class. I’d rummage through the books and papers on the passenger seat to grab the right sheaf of student papers and the current-traditional or cognitivist textbook or reader plus handbook—whatever the local English Department had chosen. But, wherever I went, I taught the Trupe approach, choosing the tactic that seemed to meet my students’ current need, drawing from a repertoire of practices reflecting a range of theoretical rationales.

I’d started teaching writing at a local community college when the neighborhood grapevine brought word of a desperate division chair looking for someone—anyone—with a master’s in English. The unstaffed section of second-semester composition had already met for the first time. I was hired on a Friday, handed the department-written current-traditional textbook and another instructor’s syllabus

as a model, and began teaching Monday. Despite the hectic beginning, I was completely hooked.

I loved teaching, showed up regularly, and “passed” my first-semester observation, so I ended up with three classes the following spring. My girls were five and three then. For thirteen years, I would patch together part-time teaching jobs, the last four years while simultaneously pursuing a PhD in rhetoric/composition—and all the while still a single mom. The semester when I hit pay dirt, I taught eight classes at four institutions in three counties. It took me a month to remember where I had to be when, so I had to keep a written schedule in my car. An essential ingredient in surviving my crazy schedule was reading aloud to the girls, breathing the fragrance of their hair as they snuggled close. After a frenetic semester, when I was trying to bridge the gap between paychecks in January or June, I’d consider a “real” job—with benefits. I would send out my resumé for tenure-track community college teaching jobs, but with only an MA and my transcript filled with BritLit courses, I would be passed over. Temporary full-time appointments for a semester or a year might come along, but each time I got a temporary full-time job, someone else got the tenure-track position. That put me into a PhD program when my daughters were in eighth and sixth grades.

Did life get easier? Not for the four years I worked on the PhD! I still taught as an adjunct, commuting 60 to 80 miles each way to teach three to five classes a semester while taking graduate courses, preparing for comprehensive exams, and writing my dissertation. To keep us afloat, I also freelanced as a proofreader, briefly tutored for minimum wage, and signed on with a temp agency for secretarial work between semesters. We moved three times while I was in graduate school.

At ABD status, I sent out a pile of resumé and was offered a community college job in a depressed urban area. It was 1995; the salary was \$25,500 for ten sections of first-semester composition or basic writing a year, with no computer in the office, let alone in my classroom, even though my dissertation study focused on reentry women students in a networked computer lab. I turned down the offer and turned to credit cards, wrote like a demon, and defended my dissertation three-and-a-half years after starting the program.

**Mary:** The year is 1996. The place: a small university town in western Pennsylvania. I am 16. My mother, adjunct professor of composition, doctoral candidate, and single mother extraordinaire, is at CCCC, presenting a paper about her adjunct teaching role as that of “the governess . . . in the tidy house of post-secondary education.”

What am I doing while my mother moves in an incessant loop of commuting and conference traveling, as she works to establish a professional life in the field of composition? I am cooking dinner for my younger sister and myself while plotting

my escape from a less-than-thrilling public school situation. My success in my campaign to be homeschooled for my remaining two years of high school solidifies my household duties: now, not only am I cooking dinner routinely, but I am a traveling companion on the two-hour commute between my mother's student and teaching institutions, and I share the driving when we road-trip to a conference every few months. I even read large portions of her dissertation aloud as she revises.

By the time my mother finishes her comp-rhet doctorate, I have read pages about reentry women in the computer classroom. I also have read my fair share of her source material that floats freely around the house: Sadker and Sadker's *Failing at Fairness*, Pipher's *Reviving Ophelia*, and Sheffer's *A Sense of Self: Listening to Adolescent Homeschooled Girls*. What were the effects on a daughter of this crash course in gender studies, combined with the lived experience of being raised by a mother splitting her personality among teaching, graduate school, and parenting?

The first lesson was that women are often marginalized inside and outside the classroom. The second lesson is that women have opportunities to create their own spaces of increased agency at the margins, whether as girls creating lives outside of school or women carving out new academic territory that reflects their own outsider narratives.

Leaving high school, I became a student of the workings of higher education. I watched the bizarre transformations in my mother's professional life as she navigated new technologies, presented at conferences, defended her dissertation, and eventually landed a tenure-track job at a liberal arts college. One does wonder why watching the insanity of her reentry studenthood did not send me running and screaming from post-secondary institutions.

**Alice:** Within weeks of defending, I sent out eighty-plus applications, and one brought my first "real" job—tenure-track assistant professor at a liberal arts college in Virginia—at age forty-eight after thirteen years of adjunct teaching. I maxed out the credit cards and borrowed gas money for the U-Haul to get us to Bridgewater.

At the end of my daylong interview the preceding January, the dean told me that if I got tired on my four-and-a-half-hour drive home, I should stay at a motel and he'd see I was reimbursed. How could he know that, between semesters, therefore between paychecks, and several days before the next child support payment, there was no way I could pay for a night in a motel!

**Mary:** As my mother's life settled into relative stability, I was launched into the first stages of my own career path. I thought I was ready to go off to college about the time I started high school, but I had to wait out her schooling before embarking on my own college and graduate education.

My twin loves were art and writing. At home, there were art activities from day

one and, while there may not have been new clothes in high school, there were always books and more books. By age twenty-six, I had a Master of Fine Arts in book arts. Practitioners in this field are walking variations on the lifestyle with which I grew up. Artists juggle adjunct teaching, small businesses, deadlines for exhibitions, family and community obligations, and unrelated employment, seeking a balance that will pay the bills, reap professional rewards, and allow them to practice an art that they believe in on both the philosophical and gut levels.

As an artist and independent scholar, I enact a peculiar kind of success—professional recognition, at the price of security. Creating this life is the practice of pastiche. I crave the stability I did not have growing up, yet I've been socialized into a role that makes stability difficult to obtain. Seldom do we receive any remuneration for the work we put into conference presentations, the writing we contribute to the journals of our field, or the art we exhibit. On my art resumé, I am a model young professional: I have worked in an average of eight shows each year; I publish articles, present at conferences, teach workshops, and hold artist-in-residence positions. I am well on the road to completing the thesis in children's literature, which will give me another master's degree and a book manuscript.

In order to do all of this, though, I have been continually underemployed, my belongings in storage for months on end, my bank balance all too often at zero. Sometime frighteningly soon I must start repaying large sums of student loan debt. And here I am, a shining success. It is not easy, but the good news is that, experiencing some of this secondhand in high school, I got a head start on the process of carving out a professional life against the odds.

*Alice L. Trupe is Director of the Writing Center and Director of Composition at Bridgewater College in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. Mary Tasillo is a writer and book artist based in Philadelphia.*

## **Growing Into and Out of My NTT Lecturer Position**

Mary R. Lamb

I'd been yearning to write this story for a while, but I didn't know the ending. Now I do—the ending of my time as nontenure-track, full-time faculty, that is, and the beginning of another story of my tenure-track life.

Georgia State, a large, urban, research university in Atlanta, Georgia, profiled widely as one of the leaders in the move from adjunct to full-time instructorship positions (Wilson "Georgia" and "How"), is now in its eighth year of this radical staffing shift. I was hired as one of the first visiting instructors in 2000 and then as lecturer and associate director of lower division studies in 2002. My experience

reflects the growing national trend of replacing adjuncts with full-time teaching-intensive positions, usually off the tenure track. Noting this trend, Michael Murphy has called for a “combination of traditional research-informed faculty and full-time tenurable teaching-intensive faculty” (25), an approach that would work at many institutions, including GSU. But the reality is different, so I’ll share my experience to add one more particular, lived story to the ongoing scholarly discussion about employment realities in higher education and to explain the benefits and limitations of the current hierarchical hiring system.

My story is common—even cliché—for many nontenure-track faculty, especially women: I am in Atlanta because of my partner’s job. We are close to both of our families, which we value for our two children. I loved my job; I always imagined teaching at a small liberal arts college with a heavy emphasis on teaching, service, and scholarship that supported teaching. In addition, I wanted to have a hand in administration and training future teachers; I even hoped to teach courses cross-listed with women’s studies. I did all of this at Georgia State, an urban research university. I especially enjoyed teaching upper-level composition theory to mostly future teachers and advising and mentoring graduate teaching assistants (GTAs)—options that aren’t possible at most four-year, teaching-intensive schools without graduate programs. The teaching load for lecturers is 4/4, but since I also served as associate director of lower division studies, my load was 2/2 (although it had been 3/2 as departmental needs shifted). In the past eight years, I finished a PhD, had two children, published an advanced writing course proposal, presented numerous conference papers, taught various lower and upper division writing courses, served on committees, led teaching workshops, mentored new GTAs, assumed the responsibilities of associate director of lower division studies, co-authored a textbook for our regents’ writing course, collaborated on a handbook for our GTAs, reviewed two textbooks, published a review essay on a scholarly book, published one book chapter, and served as a reviewer for *Composition Studies*. I also recently acquired a contract to write a scholarly book (with Lynée Gaillet) for Parlor Press that examines approaches to reading in composition scholarship. In short, I’ve become a full-time contributing professional focused on teaching and service rather than scholarship.

Admittedly, when I began at GSU, I wasn’t “ready” to be an assistant professor at a Research 1 university—I was still finishing my dissertation, and I think of the early years as my apprenticeship. I imagined finishing my dissertation and going into the job market. In fact, I did earn my PhD in 2001, and I read the job descriptions hopefully each fall. Soon I realized GSU was my dream job—without the dream title, financial reward, or institutional agency that would make the job tenable long-term. So I stayed, hoping against odds that GSU would open a tenure-track job search in my area. You see, ever since I was a child, I’ve ignored most “givens”

and learned instead experientially, (i.e., touching the iron myself, eating too much cotton candy before the roller coaster ride, etc.). Many experiments have ended with reinforcement of the given, but some “rules” I’ve broken with delightful consequences as I’ve charted new paths personally and professionally (such as “you can’t find a job unless you do a national search”). So I hoped that maybe a local tenure-track job would open, and if so, maybe the school would break the “rules” and consider a local (or even internal) candidate for the job.

Of course, I’d recognized my limited “agency” all along, but when I was just starting out, I was happy in the apprentice role—I had so much to learn! Gradually, when those responsibilities never came, the disadvantages outweighed the advantages. Since lecturers don’t vote in faculty meetings, I was stuck—do I prove myself as a “team player” by going to meetings, or do I stay home and write? Interestingly, academic professionals (such as the assistants to the Writing Across the Curriculum and Critical Thinking through Writing programs) are allowed to vote in faculty meetings. So as the years passed, graduate students that I mentored were hired as academic professionals who could vote in faculty meetings, but still I could not. My visibility in the department was limited in other ways as well: not being listed as faculty on the website, not having my specializations listed, etc.

The most pressing disadvantage was the increasing sense of wearing out my welcome and general unease about my future. For the first four or so years, I prepared and yearned for the adjudication of a job search, for the visibility and respect associated with it. I dabbled in the market, but few jobs suited my professional and personal needs. In addition, I was busy *keeping* my job by creating professional portfolios for third- and fifth-year reviews, serving on committees, delivering conference papers, publishing, and teaching new courses. So year after year as no tenure-track positions emerged, I entered the “protection” stage: I began to purposefully protect my family time and aimed to not be taken advantage of. My mentor kept encouraging my publishing projects, but I became disillusioned—why go through the effort without the reward?

Ironically, being promoted to senior lecturer clarified my realization of the limits of this position: no more levels of promotion, no more opportunities for more responsibilities or more money, and no matter how long I “apprenticed,” no chance to become the master. Then in the spring, I heard that the director of the lower division was stepping down to take a university-level appointment and, for the first time in a year or so, I felt a rush of excitement at the professional possibilities. I asked around—who would be the next director? Could I? I floated the idea to colleagues. The chair and assistant chair deferred to the executive committee. My rhetoric/composition colleagues ranged from “you’d be perfect” to “why in the world would you want to put yourself through that, without tenure?” I turned in my application to the executive committee, but I was turned down. Most agreed I was

utterly qualified—except for the tenure part. I don't mean to discount this achievement. I, in fact, had not yet gone through this adjudication process, this developing and maturing as a scholar—but I realized in stark reality that's what I wanted to do, and by staying there, I'd limit myself to a job that had suddenly become too small.

Here lies the danger of these positions: not only are they *limited*, but they are *limiting* in the long run. I had been so hopeful that by drawing attention to the value of excellent teaching (even at a research university), the positions would begin to disrupt the efficacy of the traditional academic hierarchy, but I'm afraid they've merely added another (underpaid, subordinated) layer. Some argue that because lecturers aren't required to publish, this justifies the pay disparity; yet lecturers are required to carry double the teaching load of research faculty. Thus, by reinforcing lecturers' subordination with lower pay, no voting rights, etc., the university maintains the traditional academic hierarchy of "pure" research on top and teaching undergraduates in required courses on the bottom. GSU could do better for its lecturers in the short term by paying lecturers the same as assistant professors, creating levels of advancement, and ideally, in the long run, creating a mix of teaching and research tenure-track positions.

To make a long story short, after I was denied the director position, I looked in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, found a tenure-track job ad, applied, and am now assistant professor and director of first-year writing at a regional university near Atlanta. My job includes observing adjuncts, offering input on their hiring, designing curriculum, etc.—all the things that my position at GSU prepared me to do. Even though I wasn't on the tenure track, I was indeed preparing for a tenure-track job: I matured as a teacher, gained practical and theoretical experience in writing program administration, honed my research skills, and developed courses. Perhaps most importantly, I developed the clarity, self-confidence, and tenacity to strive for my goals. I hope that my story continues to focus attention on academic labor practices that have plenty of room to grow to reach their full potential.

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*Mary Lamb teaches at Clayton State University in Morrow, Ga.*

## Austin Community College: Best Practice for Adjunct Faculty Working Conditions?

David Lydic

I recognize that labeling a college as using “best practices” is making it a target. Others will quickly wonder, “How are you defining ‘best’?” and “Have you compared yourself with all other colleges?” They will observe, “I bet not all of your adjunct faculty would agree that your practices are the best.” All of these are legitimate responses. I don’t mean to suggest that we are the “best” but rather that we are doing our best and have made great strides. I am proud of what we have done for adjunct faculty in the last twelve years. I have not compared Austin Community College with every other institution, but in my twenty-eight years of teaching at ACC—including many administrative positions which hired, supervised, and evaluated adjunct faculty—and through my roles as an officer in the Two-Year College English Association, Southwest, and as that region’s representative to the National TYCA Executive Committee, I have seen how adjunct faculty are dealt with in hundreds of colleges. Below is a brief review of what we do at ACC. Judge for yourself.

**ACC demographics:** We have almost 36,000 students; seven full-service campuses, average enrollments varying from 7,000 to 10,000, with plans in the works for a new campus, our largest; 460 full-time faculty (28 in English), including librarians and counselors; about 1,200 adjunct faculty (130 in English in fall 2008).

**Pay:** ACC has an entering adjunct salary of \$815 per Lecture Equivalent Hour (\$2,445 per three-hour course) and longevity up to 20 years (\$1,632 per LEH; \$4,896 per three-hour course). This is the highest adjunct pay in Texas.

**Benefits:** Basic medical insurance is paid by ACC for the employee, with 50 percent paid by ACC for dependents. Life insurance, short-/long-term disability, and dental insurance are paid for by the employee but available at a rate cheaper than on the open market. An exception is with the Employee Assistance Program (personal counseling), which is paid for by ACC for up to eight visits per year. Retirement is paid for by the employee but is available at a rate cheaper than on the open market.

**Shared governance:** All college-wide committees have adjunct faculty serving on them; most committees have representatives from all employee organizations. All departments have a number of elected voting adjunct faculty members equal to at least half of the number of full-time faculty in the department. A department may choose to allow a greater percentage of adjunct faculty to vote. English has 10 to 15 voting adjunct faculty each year, depending on how many express interest. Adjunct faculty members are paid a stipend for service on departmental and college-wide committees.

**Adjunct organization:** ACC has quite a strong Adjunct Faculty Association, which has been in existence for about 15 years. It has an executive committee and varying numbers of representatives for each campus as its leadership. Its executive committee meets monthly with the college president, just as the leadership of the full-time faculty senate does. The AFA is primarily responsible for the gains of its constituency. It has been forceful and articulate. Over the years it has even recruited and succeeded in electing two members of the Board of Trustees who were especially sympathetic to their needs.

**Office space and administrative support:** All campuses have dedicated office space with computers and phones. Newer campuses have much better space because it's planned from the beginning. Space includes lockers or file cabinets, supplies, and a private room for student conferences. Typing and duplication services are available to adjunct faculty as they are to full-timers.

**College phone, email, and website:** All are available to adjuncts; website creation is optional for all faculty, but an adjunct who wishes to create one receives the same training and support as a full-time faculty member.

**Professional development:** A number of workshops and events are available to all faculty each year. Some events are specifically for adjunct faculty. For example, the English Department sponsors an adjunct faculty fair before each fall semester. Adjunct faculty often are the ones conducting a workshop. Some money is available for adjunct faculty travel. It used to be placed in a separate account but is now part of general faculty travel. Part-time and full-time faculty request travel support; any of us may or may not get it. In February 2009 ACC rejuvenated its Celebration of Great Teaching after a several-year absence due to budget cuts. This weekend retreat included adjunct faculty as well as full-timers.

**Adjunct faculty tenure or guarantee of employment:** There is no tenure, but full-time faculty don't have tenure either. Adjuncts who began teaching for the college before 1998 may apply for a Multiple-Semester Term Appointment. This MSTA status—limited by department to 25 percent of the total adjuncts in that department—pretty much assures the faculty member at least three classes per semester for fall and spring and two classes for summer. A full-time faculty member whose class is cut because of low enrollment may bump any adjunct faculty members and take their class. However, an MSTA adjunct may bump other adjuncts in the same way.

**Staffing priority:** After full-time faculty have chosen classes for a given semester, MSTAs are allowed to choose from those courses remaining. An adjunct with "excellent" ratings on student evaluations may apply for a Highest-Priority-to-Hire, and the HPH adjuncts choose courses after MSTAs. The number of MSTAs and HPHs cannot exceed 50 percent of the total adjunct faculty in any department. After MSTAs and HPHs have chosen, the remaining adjunct faculty choose courses.

**Course restrictions for adjunct faculty:** An adjunct faculty member may teach

any kind of course. However, during the hiring interview each adjunct is determined to be “eligible” for one or more courses, and the college maintains a master “eligibility list.” English currently has 201 individuals on its eligibility list. An adjunct may choose only courses for which he/she is eligible. Each spring, however, adjuncts may request that one or more courses be added to their eligibility.

**Attitude of adjunct faculty and of full-time faculty toward them:** I believe these to be positive, respectful, and appreciative. As we all know, however, that is difficult to gauge. One still hears adjunct faculty express dissatisfaction with teaching schedules, favoritism for full-time faculty, concern that they are not being respected and listened to, parking, pay, benefits, and office space. Long-time adjunct faculty, however, are certainly more satisfied now than in the past when they had much less.

The college is continuously trying to reduce the percentage of sections taught by adjunct faculty, but we are growing fast enough that the percentage of adjunct-taught sections remains constant.

*David Lydic has been teaching at Austin Community College for 28 years.*

### **Dynamic by Design: The Writing Fellows Program and First-Year Writing at Quinnipiac University**

Christine Ross

Located in Hamden, Connecticut, Quinnipiac University’s first-year writing program recruits part-time faculty from the same pool of talented people as does Yale University, the University of Connecticut, Southern Connecticut University, Sacred Heart University, and several community colleges. The Writing Fellows program at Quinnipiac was created to increase retention of qualified faculty by providing more job security along with compensated workshops that would increase faculty salaries and support improved instruction. Writing Fellows workshops were not organized with the traditional concept of “faculty development” in mind, however. “Faculty development” most commonly situates faculty as subordinates to a “specialist” workshop leader often presumed to “have” what benighted classroom practitioners are understood to “lack.” That model is not optimal for any faculty member, but it would be particularly problematic for part-time faculty, in reinforcing the idea that they are not seen as legitimate members of their department and campus community. “Faculty development” is also commonly offered as single, self-contained units of educational experience usually ranging from a couple hours’ duration to a couple (weekend) days, with individual teachers taking from these

experiences what they will. Quinnipiac's Writing Fellows workshops were organized around ongoing *program* development as opposed to simply *faculty* development, as workshops became regular instantiations of an ongoing, critical enterprise integrated with normal program processes. The program's universal laptop requirement, writing instruction more fully integrated with instruction in reading, a more precise and profound concept of "revision," classroom-based portfolio assessment, directed self-placement, and a more precise definition of "argument" were all developed, vetted, monitored, and revised through faculty workshops. Through these workshops, writing faculty were organized as a "bottom up" professional learning community that is always hybridizing, clarifying, and inventing pedagogy and course design. As a result, part-time faculty have played an important role in determining the direction of the program's pedagogical vision over the last six years.

Program development and pedagogy were organized, initially, around a minimalist set of concepts and practices, as the core of a shared instructional discourse, which faculty have gone on to test, revise, hybridize, and extend. Workshops have been "critical" in the spirit of constructionist theories of learning, wherein one analyzes implicit and explicit models for doing work as a teacher in dialectical relation to ongoing proposed alternatives. By this means, faculty share critical concepts that support shared work and vigorous discussion of instruction and curriculum while differences in experience and interpretation support creative construction that can take teachers and the program in fresh directions.

One shared practice makes student text subject to interpretation rather than assessment only, which is typically organized around determining to what extent students have achieved textual clarity, generic or discursive order, and appropriate voice and style. By making student text—and the student's own hybridizing of program instruction—a site of textual authority relative to faculty assumptions about language, discourse, interpretation, legitimate performance, and instruction, program development remains grounded in the daily work of instruction at the same time as it is continually self-critical and innovative. For that reason, and despite the fact that some Writing Fellows have participated in close to 200 contact hours of faculty workshops, the intellectual engagement of faculty remains keen.

The Writing Fellows program emerged out of a number of collaborative efforts among the first-year writing program, academic technology, the liberal arts dean, and academic affairs, which were designed, initially, to offer ad hoc rather than regularly instituted workshops. The dean of academic technology volunteered technical and financial support for faculty workshops that would foster the integration of technology and writing instruction. Collaboration with the dean of liberal arts then led to \$20,000 in stipends to compensate part-time faculty for creating courses that supported the rollout of a universal laptop requirement. As a result, the

dean of academic technology agreed to expedite assigning a university-purchased laptop to all part-time faculty members, as well as providing continued compensated training in the uses of the laptop and our course management software. Because the university was investing a good deal to train part-time faculty for technology-rich courses in writing, it became increasingly important to retain them. A further collaboration finally led to our Writing Fellows program. Writing Fellows are part-time faculty who have more job security and an additional stipend for attending forty-five to sixty-plus contact hours of program development workshops in May, August, and January, along with six hours of faculty meetings each semester. The writing program then received an additional \$6,000 to compensate part-time faculty who are not Fellows for their ad hoc participation in those workshops. Because of recent, campus-wide changes in policy, part-time writing faculty can also participate in university health insurance and retirement plans after two years of service.

The Writing Fellows Program also has been supported, indirectly, by creating direct assessments of student learning that are responsive to the expectations of our accrediting agency, as well as program and departmental needs. These assessments are faithful to local faculty authority while also providing statistically significant data showing that student writing has improved. Not incidentally, part-time faculty earn additional stipends when they participate in assessment development and scoring.

An IRB-vetted survey administered to all current and former faculty we were able to contact in the spring of 2007 attempts to assess the impact of the program on part-time faculty experience. Survey data suggests that most part-time faculty experience Quinnipiac's first-year writing program as a project they are a part of rather than a place where they merely have a job. Most agree that workshops improved their effectiveness in relation to every instructional parameter presented for their consideration. Perhaps the most decisive question asked faculty which kinds of authority they most valued. Most affirmed that they would rather be part of a program working with other faculty toward common goals than have unquestioned autonomy in their approach to teaching. Discussion of part-time faculty authority often turns on the extent to which their autonomy is limited, relative to the "academic freedom" enjoyed by tenure-track faculty. However, Quinnipiac's part-time writing faculty appear to see greater value in an experience of shared ownership that follows from participating meaningfully in collaborative program development rather than solely individual course development.

*Christine Ross directed Quinnipiac's first-year writing program from July 2002 to June 2008 and presented a version of this article at the 2008 CCCC in New Orleans.*

## **It's Hard Work, but Someone's Gotta Do It! Unionizing in Southeast Michigan**

Marjorie Lynn

Joining the world of the gypsy scholar in 1988, I quickly became aware of the poorly paid, disposable nature of this class of workers, not new issues even then. To manage the chagrin of working in such an exploited situation, I joined efforts to organize coworkers into unions at three schools where I've taught. The professional teachers' unions, American Federation of Teachers and Michigan Education Association, have been invaluable help. Nontenure-track faculty unions have been steadily progressing in my part of Michigan recently. I've been lucky to have some connections to these successes.

Organizing involves hours of contacting fellow teachers to sell the idea of joining together in a union. Although most part-timers know they are being exploited to some degree, many are reluctant to participate for fear of losing those easily lost jobs. As Lynn-Marie Smith, an AFT staff organizer, said in an article called "One More Down": "Organizing academics can be complicated by the way they view themselves as professionals rather than workers [that are] like service employees. The light doesn't come on until someone in an organizing conversation helps them discover for themselves that they are exploited" (29).

My first efforts began in the early 1990s, when part-timers at Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, began to talk unionizing. We ultimately negotiated a step process by which part-timers could be promoted to adjunct status after teaching steadily for a number of terms. This step allowed for a pay increase and more job security. Adjuncts joined full-time faculty as members of the Michigan Education Association, and a part-time faculty task force was established. Today, part-timers have some access to professional development funds, virtual space on the campus website, and a physical part-time faculty commons that provides conference space, computer workstations, and secretarial and copying help.

Organizing became a tougher, longer task at Eastern Michigan University. We lecturers first organized in 1991. In 1993 we presented our petition to the labor commission, which rejected it in 1997, agreeing with the university's claim that lecturers are casual and temporary laborers, like lifeguards and people who mow lawns. We felt insulted, and refused to give up.

The committee hoped that if we could just get something for part of us, it would count as a success, so we narrowed the unit to lecturers with 100 percent appointments. We filed a new petition in 1998. This time, the labor commission agreed that a stable group of lecturers existed. In 2000, Eastern Michigan University Federation of Teachers was formed and began negotiations for a five-year contract. Since the unit now only included full-time nontenure-track lecturers, I and many others who had worked on the organizing committee for years gained nothing.

New efforts by AFT to unionize the 300 to 400 part-timers remaining on Eastern Michigan's campus began in September 2008. I'm gone, but I wish them well.

As of fall 2008, EMUFT represented 98 members, a loss from a high of 129 in 2005, partly due to loss of enrollment and curriculum changes, but one wonders. Russell D. Jones, the current president, commented in an email that "Things are working ambivalently. . . . Represented teachers and librarians are more respected today by the administration and their faculty peers than probably any other time in the past. But much remains to be done as well. Sorry you're not here to help."

Burned out, I did not organize at the University of Michigan. But those who did the hard work organized all three campuses—the big one in Ann Arbor and the two smaller campuses in Dearborn and Flint—by 2003. LEO, the Lecturers Employee Organization, represents about 1,300 lecturers.

Challenged to do something I found fearsome and to round out my unionizing experience, I joined the bargaining committee to participate in the contract negotiations. Negotiations aren't fearsome, I found, just tedious, and rewarding in many ways. Before even sitting down across the table, both teams sat together in win-win labor negotiations training. Nevertheless, trying to see the other's vision and worldview during the heat of bargaining demands some mental gymnastics. Negotiations also demand hours of time researching and writing proposals, hammering them out in discussions with our committees before even presenting them to the other team when they must be forged yet again. More hours are spent waiting around for the other team or sitting in caucus. We finally ratified the first contract in June 2004, after almost ten months. Relief!

Now that I knew what the commitment demanded, I didn't want to work on the second contract, but once again, I got caught up in the passions of making positive changes, even participating finally as a paid note taker. The second contract went more smoothly. We ratified it in 2007. I'm now a steward in my department.

Writing about neighboring unions is still hard work but more fun. For *Adjunct Advocate*, I profiled Susan Titus, who chaired the organizing committee at Wayne State University, a large urban university in Detroit, Michigan. Their Union for Part-time Faculty began organizing 900 part-timers in 2005. Titus, now the new president of UPTF, lamented,

Finding people, twisting their arms to move into leadership roles is one hard problem as is getting people together for meetings. For some, it takes a lot of personal contact to get them involved in any way. A hidden agenda in these contract negotiations is to give people a better sense of themselves. So many part-timers just feel a lack of respect from and connection with the University. (Lynn)

Three hard, productive years ended with the ratification of the new contract that went into effect in July 2008. All part-time faculty will get raises. A tier system

creates more raises, job security, and priority for job assignments the longer a person teaches.

On another assignment, I met the organizing committee at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn, Michigan. Fed up with the usual poor conditions, including lack of office space (“I held conferences in the anatomy room with the skeletons!” said Mary Beck, the new president of the adjunct faculty union at Henry Ford Community College), they began their membership drive to 600 part-time faculty in summer 2007. Aided by the full-time faculty union and the AFT, the AFO (adjunct faculty union) moved very quickly; it took them less than a year. Their efforts got boosts from administration tactics that backfired and from engaging students in their cause. Contract negotiations began in August 2008. They “optimistically” hoped for a final contract in December.

Although I have not personally worked with them, I am excited by these continuing efforts: lecturers at Michigan State University began their initial membership drive to about 1,500 nontenured instructors in September 2008. Western Michigan University held an organizing training retreat in September 2008, and with only 500 lecturers to target, should be able to form a union quickly. An AFT local represents both full- and part-time faculty at multicampus Wayne County Community College, the large county surrounding Detroit.

We have inspired each other here in Michigan, stood in each other’s picket lines, conferred and advised and commiserated, and shared solidarity. Each new success breeds more. In fact, the AFO at Henry Ford Community College has committed to developing a loose network of adjunct unions in Michigan, possibly forming a chapter of COCAL (Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor). I’m in!

### **Works Cited**

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