

# FORUM

ISSUES ABOUT PART-TIME AND CONTINGENT FACULTY

18.2 SPRING 2015

CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION

## INSIDE

- From the Editor: The Work of/about Contingent Faculty** A1  
Vandana Gavaskar
- Encouraging Connections to Support a Positive Culture of Writing Assessment: Adjunct Composition Instructors, Students, and Campus Resources** A2  
Eileen M. James
- Roles of the Writing Studio: The Novice Administrator** A11  
Jenna Miller
- A Documentary That Works: *Con Job: Stories of Adjunct and Contingent Labor* by Megan Fulwiler and Jennifer Marlow** A14  
Jes Philbrook

### **From the Editor: The Work of/about Contingent Faculty**

Vandana Gavaskar

*Forum* continues to be dedicated to the evolving scholarship of contingency studies (Hammer) that is inextricably linked to current labor conditions, debates about higher education, and the increasing impact of competency-based education on course delivery and student learning outcomes. What is emerging in this new climate of shrinking budgets and greater accountability is a highly trained and experienced class of academic worker who remains severely underpaid year after year, cycle after cycle. Every contingent position advertised on Higher Ed Jobs (and there are many more of these positions) prefers considerable experience and terminal degrees yet offers very little in terms of salary—or security. These trends should concern new PhDs and those who are still seeking that one job that will give them institutional validation and rewards for the jobs that they are already doing. *Forum* continues to examine the complexity of this crisis from varied perspectives and from the various institutional positions that contingent and non-tenure-track faculty occupy.

**Editorial Board**

Sue Doe, Colorado State University, Fort Collins  
Megan Fulwiler, The College of Saint Rose,  
Albany, New York

Dayna Goldstein, Georgia Southern University  
Bradley Hammer, University of North Carolina at  
Chapel Hill

Amy Lynch-Binieck, Kutztown University  
Bob Samuels, University of California, Los  
Angeles

**About Forum**

*Forum* is published twice a year by the Conference on College Composition and Communication. The incoming editor, Amy Lynch-Binieck, invites you to submit essays related to non-tenure-track faculty in college English or composition. Of particular interest are impacts on the professionalization of the field of rhetoric and composition, the creation of best practices models in diverse academic environments, and the impact of accreditation standards on contingency. Administrators of writing programs and scholars in the field are invited to write about the issues from their perspective.

Essays should address theoretical and/or disciplinary debates. They will go through the standard peer-review and revision process.

Submissions for the fall issue should be received no later than April 1; for the spring issue, the deadline is August 1. Note: Submissions will not be returned. Submit your work electronically and put the words “*Forum* article” in your subject line. Submissions should include your name, your title(s), your institution(s), home address and phone number, institutional address(es) and phone number(s), and if applicable, venue(s) where submission was published or presented previously.

**For further information and to make submissions, please contact Dr. Amy Lynch-Binieck, Editor, *Forum*, at [lynchbin@kutztown.edu](mailto:lynchbin@kutztown.edu).**

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

As my tenure as editor comes to a close, I am grateful to the contributors for sharing their stories, insights, and analysis of our common predicament. It is reassuring to see a growing awareness and urgency about the plight of academic labor and the call to action in various quarters and through various mediums.

**Work Cited**

Hammer, Brad. “From the Editor: Contingency and the Quality of Instruction.” *Forum* 15.2 (Spring 2012): A1–A3. Print.

**Encouraging Connections to Support a Positive Culture of Writing Assessment: Adjunct Composition Instructors, Students, and Campus Resources**

Eileen M. James

To strengthen writing instruction that leads to successful student learning outcomes, it is necessary for institutions to build a positive culture of assessment. A positive culture of writing assessment places student learning outcomes at the center of an institution’s work in and out of the classroom. In light of the many contingent instructors who are not official members of their English/writing departments, yet who contribute as a body to students’ experiences, one way to build this positive culture is through on-campus connections.

**Purpose: Connecting Adjunct Writing Faculty to Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

Pragmatic recommendations that address

the role of adjunct instructors provide a means to promote a positive culture of writing assessment through on-campus connections. Forging collaborative relationships with related professionals (e.g., writing center staff, librarians, placement testing personnel, etc.) could best serve adjunct instructors' need for professional growth and acceptance, provide their students with meaningful academic connections in and outside of the classroom, and even meet the related professionals' objectives for their departments. Most importantly, these kinds of collaborative connections can contribute to an institution's goals for writing assessment. It is possible to develop a positive culture of assessment that holds the entire professional community of an institution accountable for the learning that takes place. When adjunct writing instructors are left out of assessment practices, especially considering the large number of adjuncts on campuses nationwide, then these assessments are futile work.

### **Literature Review: A Positive Assessment Culture, Adjuncts, and Collaboration**

It has been widely accepted that thoughtful and skillful measurement and interpretation of student learning outcomes can result in more effective educational practices. The acceptance of assessment as an integral part of education has emerged in efforts to build, maintain, and support a positive culture of assessment (Yancey; Slevin; Pagano et al.; Moore, O'Neill, and Huot; Duff; Sweet, Greco, and Jadlos).

#### ***On Supporting a Positive Culture of Writing Assessment***

Much of the literature asserts that when approached well, writing assessment can lead to powerful results that can affect teaching and learning, influence curricular decisions, and shape institutional initiatives (Yancey; Moore, O'Neill, and Huot; Adler-Kassner and O'Neill). Yancey traces the development of writing assessment and how this type of assessment has the potential to inform writing instruction through "theoretical expertise that grows out of and is integrated with practice" (496). Duff discusses the efforts of Columbian College of Arts and Sciences at George Washington University to begin the process of assessing student learning, noting that along with the difficulties, there emerged many benefits to faculty and students and much potential for future gains. Pagano et al. note that the U.S. Department of Education's recent concerns with decreased college graduation rates and the public's economic concerns about funding public colleges and universities have led to an increased interest in student learning outcomes at the university level (286). Considering its current direction in higher education, writing assessment is a vital issue "not only because composition programs will be asked to demonstrate their contributions to student learning, but also because . . . many universities are

turning to writing assessments to measure a wide range of learning outcomes, such as critical thinking, research skills, and diversity awareness" (297).

For Moore, O'Neill, and Huot, a positive culture of writing assessment can only grow from within institutions where "writing faculty, including program administrators, . . . embrace large-scale assessment as a powerful means to positively affect teaching and learning, and they . . . have the historical, theoretical, and contextual knowledge needed to argue for and design meaningful approaches" (125). Because writing assessment has power beyond demonstrating student learning outcomes for composition, it is vital that assessment be embraced in a positive manner in order to further the effectiveness of higher education.

### ***On Considering the Role of Adjunct Writing Faculty***

Meixner, Kruck, and Madden discuss how an institution's inclusion of contingent instructors benefits its students. They point to the lack of attention to this growing population of adjunct faculty in instances other than "shock-and-awe statistics about the percentage of adjuncts employed . . ." (141). In addition, they cite statistics from Gappa that state that 60 percent of all faculty positions were not held by full-time, tenure-track faculty but by contingent faculty (142). Jaschik approaches the number of adjunct instructors working in English departments, wherein many institutions' writing departments are housed. In his commentary, Jaschik cites the Modern Language Association's report, "Education in the Balance: A Report on the Academic Workforce in English," which states that adjuncts teach 40 percent of the English courses in four-year schools and 68 percent of such courses in two-year institutions. Jaschik further discusses the implications of this large body of contingent instructors on student learning. Cook and Caouette also consider how the growing number of adjunct composition instructors affects student writing. They state that "adjuncts bear the brunt of much of the most challenging pedagogical work in higher education [and . . .] are most often assigned the classes [that] enroll the newest students. These are often called General Education courses, or First Year courses, or the dreaded 'Pre-Requisite'" (51). A majority of multisection undergraduate writing courses are taught by a transitory workforce in many institutions; therefore, for any discussion of learning outcomes and writing initiatives to be effective, writing program administrators need to promote an environment where those who teach are involved in all aspects of assessment.

Meixner, Kruck, and Madden discuss how an institution's inclusion of part-time instructors affects students and faculty, and they demonstrate adjunct faculty's concern with student engagement and learning (146). The analysis by Dolan of online adjunct instructors considers how feelings of isolation impact adjunct faculty

performance. Meixner et al. show that some contingent instructors feel disconnected from their communities and feel that they have few pathways “to cultivate additional knowledge requisite for advancing university teaching” (146). They go on to state that with more institutional attention, adjunct faculty would be better able “. . . to carry out the university’s mission in their own classrooms” (147). Morton stresses institutions’ responsibility to offer support and resources to adjuncts if they seek quality instructors: “Institutions of higher education desire quality adjuncts, yet fail to invest in their adjunct [faculty] to produce that quality” (396). Morton offers practical suggestions that would invite adjuncts into the community, provide them with professional development opportunities to strengthen their practices, and help them build on-campus relationships. “Institutions that invest in their adjuncts will empower the adjunct instructors to create the best teaching environment possible for their students” (402).

### ***On Building Collaborative Relationships to Support Assessment***

Although there is some literature focused on the importance of collaboration, overall, there are few examples that specifically focus on adjunct instructors. Much of the literature about collaboration and the writing classroom focuses on connections between library professionals or writing center professionals and composition instructors. These examples, however, lend much insight into the benefits of these kinds of connections from the point-of-view of instructors in disciplines other than writing and demonstrate an openness to collaborating that exists in many institutions. Rhoades and Hartsell “examine [a] proactive way to market first impressions of the library outside the library facilities” (91). This is just one example of on-campus service providers needing to perform outreach efforts to achieve their own goals.

A case study by McMillen, Myagishima, and Maughan describes the planning, development, and implementation of a program for freshman composition students facilitated by library faculty who had little experience with freshmen as a population. The study demonstrates the lessons learned from this project that pulled the academic library into students’ composition curriculum. Jacobs and Jacobs explore the results of the collaboration of a librarian and a composition instructor. Although the collaboration focused on research as a process, the connection made between the two professionals allowed for a dialogue between disciplines and offered an opportunity and framework for collaboration between other departments, faculty, and staff.

Cook and Caouette describe their experience bringing together adjunct writing instructors and high school English teachers for a professional development series

in Rhode Island. It is interesting to note that all selected participants were offered a stipend for their time, which certainly made a difference for adjunct instructors.

### ***On Adjunct Faculty and Writing Assessment Initiatives***

There seems to be a need to shift the current paradigm so adjunct faculty members are offered paths to inclusion in campus initiatives. In her study of the use of part-time/adjunct faculty at three community colleges in Florida, Bogert notes that contingent faculty are not required to become involved in their institutions beyond their classrooms, which concerns those who believe the lack of connections can affect the quality of academic programs. If involvement extends into assessment initiatives, then integrating and socializing adjunct faculty into an institution's culture "is critical to organizations, and . . . has been linked to variables such as satisfaction, feelings of self-worth, effective performance, productivity, role clarity and performance, and commitment" (18). Engagement in their practice in academic communities can lead to adjuncts being more open and invested in assessment processes.

### ***Further Analysis of a Historical Problem***

Within this conversation about the position of adjuncts in the current paradigm are echoes of the concerns stated by Hairston more than thirty years ago about the state of first-year composition, wherein the majority of writing courses are often assigned to English professors who specialize in areas other than composition (and who are not very excited about being assigned such classes). Because composition studies is still an emerging field, there are still many more aspiring scholars who hold Ph.D.s in English than in composition and rhetoric, and unfortunately there is still an "assumption . . . that anyone with a Ph.D. in English is an expert writing teacher" (79). Therefore, the outcomes for writing assessment run the risk of poorly reflecting what is truly happening in writing classrooms. The implication of having large numbers of adjunct faculty when faced with assessment is addressed in Cook and Caouette, who state that "[i]nstitutionally, the overuse of contingent faculty . . . means that it is nearly impossible to conceive of and implement a cohesive, coherent writing program" (51). Thus, assessment initiatives are difficult to implement in a program with a disproportionate, disconnected part-time faculty. In this vein, Eng describes Shawnee University's efforts to include adjuncts in their writing assessment process with positive results. The findings from an assessment effort using a writing rubric demonstrated that there was little discrepancy between tenured faculty and adjunct faculty in the student scores for writing skills. However, adjunct faculty tended to grade students higher than their tenured colleagues. Eng, anti-

pating tension from adjuncts when sharing the results, found that they were interested in improving their practices. “Most [adjuncts], in fact, wondered if they could use the rubric in their instruction and agreed as a group to look into the grading issues” (67). In these cases, when viewed as professionals and informed about the process, most adjuncts approached the assessment process in the manner intended—to improve instruction.

### **Recommendations: Practical Suggestions in an Imperfect World**

As the literature has shown, collaborating with others can address some needs of adjuncts, can promote more effective teaching and learning, and can contribute to an institution’s positive culture of assessment.

Assessment can be seen as a recursive process, and more information and research on collaboration between writing instructors and other professionals can inform the direction an institution needs to take to meet its writing outcomes. Zubrow points out that “while the literature on outcomes assessment is rich in its attention to the role of faculty, disproportionately little of the assessment literature specifically addresses adjunct faculty” (78). Therefore, more scholarly attention is needed to find effective and practical solutions to including adjunct faculty in the assessment process.

### ***Identifying Potential Collaborators***

Because writing assessment has power beyond demonstrating student learning outcomes for composition, it can be beneficial for adjunct writing instructors, especially those without an institutional system of support, to find resources that can contribute to their teaching practice. One method is to make connections with related service providers on campus. When working with other departments, it is important to note that other departments have their own sets of goals they are working toward. As in any working relationship, the “key to collaboration is open mindedness in order to understand learning outcomes and to agree on assessment types” (Jenkins and Pula 111).

A first step is to identify potential collaborators. Academic resource providers include librarians, writing center personnel, learning center staff, and even information technology staff. Many libraries offer research classes, like the “one shot” visits described by Rinto. During these sessions, instructors can make connections with staff that extend beyond the current term, which can cut down on the time spent planning library sessions and explaining one another’s goals during future terms. In addition, librarians can offer suggestions to students about research methods that instructors can incorporate into their own teaching repertoires. Because writ-

ing centers can be valuable resources to students who are looking for additional avenues to strengthen their writing skills, meeting staff members can encourage students to make use of this campus resource. Some writing centers offer in-class workshops that can include documentation formats, grammar skills, and revision (Petit).

In addition to writing centers, some institutions offer academic support centers, sometimes called success centers, learning centers, or academic enhancement centers. Many academic support centers offer in-class workshops to instructors seeking additional resources that can benefit their classes (“Academic Support”; “Services”; “Workshops”). For adjunct instructors, inviting an academic support professional to give a workshop in time-management to a class of first-year writing students as part of the work leading up to research paper assignments, for instance, can go a long way in supporting new college students by helping them to manage long-term assignments.

Forging connections should be a shared responsibility, not just the burden of already overworked adjunct instructors. Tenured faculty can suggest ideas to part-timers and point out relevant resources of which many adjuncts might not be aware, such as campus speaker series, upcoming workshops, or even campus art gallery shows. With creativity and thoughtfulness, campus resources can offer part-time instructors opportunities to enhance the learning of students in their classrooms.

### **Call to Action: Working toward Solutions**

Department heads, writing program administrators, writing faculty, and adjunct instructors should encourage the larger adjunct population to build connections on campus that benefit teaching and learning. Although it is not a popular topic, the current paradigm needs to be addressed. Without a complete and candid picture of writing faculty, it is less likely that meaningful changes will actually take place. Ground-breaking ideas and thoughtful initiatives could remain forever in the realm of the theoretical and never materialize into innovative practices that benefit student learning in composition classrooms.

For meaningful and applicable results, all levels of writing faculty should be included in the assessment process. When the assessment loop ignores the work of part-time instructors (and by default, their students), then segments of the student population are not being included in the process. By collaborating with other professionals on campus, the underrepresented group of contingent writing instructors is more likely to be included (and initiate their own inclusion) in the assessment process, and the work of adjuncts can be better aligned with the goals for student

writing outcomes. Partnerships between writing faculty and related service providers benefit all involved groups. Students can make meaningful academic connections in and out of the classroom. Adjuncts can experience needed professional growth and acceptance, which can positively affect their work in the classroom. Related professionals can meet the goals for their departments with less outreach. Therefore, these kinds of connections can lead to an environment where adjunct instructors can feel more invested in their work. In addition, if student learning is truly at the center of an institution's work, collaboration can benefit teaching and learning, and these benefits can be reflected in assessment outcomes.

### Works Cited

- "Academic Support." *JWU Providence Center for Academic Support*. Johnson and Wales University, n.d. Web. 1 Dec. 2013.
- Adler-Kassner, Linda, and Peggy O'Neill. "Why Does My Participation Matter?" *Reframing Writing Assessment to Improve Teaching and Learning*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2010. 145–78. Print.
- Bogert, Dorothea Taylor. "Use of Part-Time/Adjunct Faculty in Community Colleges: A Multi-Case Study of Three Florida Community Colleges." *Electronic Theses, Treatises and Dissertations*. Paper 3621. (2003). Web. 1 Dec. 2013.
- Cook, Jennifer S., and Becky L. Caouette. "All Hands on Deck: Bringing Together High School Teachers and Adjunct Instructors for Professional Development in the Teaching of Writing." *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education* 2.1. (2013): 47–57. Print.
- Dolan, Vera. "The Isolation of Online Adjunct Faculty and Its Impact on Their Performance." *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 12.2 (Feb. 2011): 62–77. Print.
- Duff, Paul B. "Promoting Change: Moving toward a Culture of Assessment." *Peer Review* 12.1 (2010): 20–22. Print.
- Eng, Joseph. "Beyond Quality Control: Writing Assessment and Adjunct Accountability at a Small Public University." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 29.1–2 (Fall 2005): 59–79. Print.
- Gappa, Judith M. "Today's Majority: Faculty outside the Tenure System." *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* 40 (2008): 50–54. Web. 1 Dec. 2014.
- Ghattas, Christine B. "Writing Center Outreach: What It Is and Why It Matters." *Dissertations, Theses and Capstone Projects*. (2010). Web. 1 Dec. 2014. Paper 220.
- Hairston, Maxine. "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 33.1. (Feb. 1982): 76–88. Print.

- Jacobs, H. L. M., and D. Jacobs. "Transforming the One-Shot Library Session into Pedagogical Collaboration: Information Literacy and the English Composition Class." *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 49.1 (2009): 72–82. Print.
- Jaschik, Scott. "The Adjunctification of English." *Inside Higher Ed*, 11 Dec. 2008. Web. 2 Oct. 2013.
- Jenkins, Katherine, and Judith Pula. "Creating Avenues: Partnerships in a Changing Environment." LOEX Conference 2006 (April 2006): 109–13.
- Johnson and Wales University. *2013–2014 Undergraduate Day Catalog*. Providence, RI: Johnson and Wales University. Web. 1 Dec. 2012.
- McMillen, P. S., B. Myagishima, and L. S. Maughan. "Lessons Learned about Developing and Coordinating an Instruction Program with Freshman Composition." *Reference Services Review*. 30.4. (2002): 288–99. Print.
- Meixner, Cara, S. E. Kruck, and Laura T. Madden. "Inclusion of Part-Time Faculty for the Benefit of Faculty and Students." *College Teaching* 58.4 (2010): 141–47. Print.
- Modern Language Association. "Education in the Balance: A Report on the Academic Workforce in English." *ADE Bulletin*, Dec. 2008. Web. 1 Dec. 2014.
- Moore, Cindy, Peggy O'Neill, and Brian Huot. "Creating a Culture of Assessment in Writing Programs and Beyond." *College Composition and Communication* 61.1 (Sept. 2009): 107–32. Print.
- Morton, Dawn R. "Adjunct Faculty Embraced: The Institution's Responsibility." *The Profession of Teaching Christian Ed.* 9 (Fall 2012): 396–407. Print.
- Pagano, Neil, Stephen A. Bernhardt, Dudley Reynolds, Mark Williams, and Matthew Kilian McCurrie. "An Inter-Institutional Model for College Writing Assessment." *College Composition and Communication* 60.2 (Dec. 2008): 285–320. Print.
- Petit, Karen M. "Services." *The Writing Center*. Community College of Rhode Island, Knight Campus, 2007. Web. 1 Dec. 2013.
- Rhoades, James G., and Arianne Hartsell. "Marketing First Impressions: Academic Libraries Creating Partnerships and Connections at New Student Orientations." *Library Philosophy and Practice* 10 (August 2008): 1–11. Print.
- Rinto, Erin. "Academic Libraries and English Composition Programs: A Literature Review of Current Trends." *Digital Scholarship@UNLV*, n.d. Web. 1 May 2012.
- "Services for Faculty and Staff." *Success Centers*. Community College of Rhode Island, n.d. Web. 1 Dec. 2013.
- Slevin, James. "Engaging Intellectual Work: The Faculty's Role in Assessment." *College English* 63.3 (2001): 288–305. Print.

Sweet, Cathy S., Nancy Greco, and Melissa Jadlos. "Closing the Mobius Loop: Creating a New Approach to the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes through Interdepartmental Collaborations." *Lavery Library Faculty/Staff Publications*. Paper 4. (2013). Print.

"Workshops, Training and Presentations." *Academic Enhancement Centers*. Kingston: University of Rhode Island, n.d. Web. 1 Dec. 2013.

Yancey, Kathleen Blake. "Looking Back as We Look Forward: Historicizing Writing Assessment." *College Composition and Communication* 50 (1999): 483–503. Print.

Zubrow, Judy. "Case Study: Engaging Adjunct Faculty in Program Assessment." *Journal of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness* 2.1 (2012): 77–102. Print.

*Eileen M. James is an English PhD candidate in the Writing and Rhetoric Program at the University of Rhode Island. With an MFA in literary writing from Brown University, she has worked as an adjunct composition, public speaking, and poetry instructor at the Providence campus of Johnson & Wales University and at the Community College of Rhode Island.*

### **Roles of the Writing Studio: The Novice Administrator**

Jenna Miller

When I was first hired to work in the QEP (Quality Enhancement Plan) Writing Studio at Elizabeth City State University, my job didn't have a title. "We'll figure out what to call you later," I was told. I had been hired at ECSU the semester after I earned my master's degree and had been a lecturer for about a year and a half when ECSU decided to write a quality enhancement plan (QEP), a key component for continuing accreditation with the SACS-COC (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges). I knew how fortunate I was to be offered the opportunity to work closely with the QEP's signature program, the QEP Writing Studio. My salary remained the same, but I was given course releases so I could spend the majority of my time in the QEP Writing Studio. I was told I would teach one class and then would assist our QEP Writing Studio director with the daily operations of the Writing Studio and tutor training. This sounded amazing—I had been teaching a 4/4 load of full classes, and I knew exactly how much work went into instruction, lesson plans, grading, and the myriad of other tasks instructors are responsible for. I enjoy being in the classroom, but the idea of helping with a new center was really appealing. I realize now how simplistic this notion of working in a writing studio really was. I had worked briefly as a tutor while I was in graduate

school, so I understood what it meant to work with students one-on-one, but I was blissfully unaware of how complex and demanding being a writing studio administrator would be.

As a key component of accreditation, QEP was, and is, tremendously important for our institution. ECSU had never created a QEP before, and although the Writing Studio is a critical part of its implementation, there were few involved in the process who had experience with peer tutoring. Our administrators were extremely dedicated to the QEP, but I understand now that it may have been difficult for them to articulate the role of the QEP Writing Studio because they had no prior basis of knowledge to pull from. ECSU had never had a tutorial center that functioned the way that the QEP Writing Studio does. At the time, there were a few tutoring centers on campus, but unfortunately students were often unaware that they had access to these services. When students did go to one of these centers, often the tutor would correct and respond to a draft the way an instructor would, rather than encouraging and assisting the student throughout the revision process as our peer tutors do.

When the Writing Studio director and I had talked about my position, she intended for me to have the title of associate director of the QEP Writing Studio. She was told by upper-level administrators, however, that the word *associate* could not be used for my position. She countered with *assistant director*, but was told that I could not use that title because I did not have a PhD. She explained that there is a tradition of writing studio administrators who only have a master's degree, but our leadership refused to budge. Instead, our QEP director offered the title *writing specialist*, because this was the designation given to the instructors who tutored in another department. However, when I went to sign my contract, it designated that I would be a twelve-month employee and not have faculty status as other writing specialists do. The title of *writing specialist* has very specific legal guidelines, according to Human Resources. Ultimately, a new job title was created for me, one in which I could be a nine-month employee and continue working in the QEP Writing Studio. I became the Writing Coordinator, but I had all the responsibilities of an associate or assistant writing studio director. As this was a brand new position, I was tasked with writing the job description for it. I wrote down a bulleted list of the tasks I performed every day, but that was inadequate to properly explain everything I did on a regular basis. In the writing studio, I was constantly moving. I held my office hours there, but in the few moments when I wasn't assisting a student, tutor, or instructor, I would sit down with my laptop and work on some other business of the QEP Writing Studio.

In addition to training tutors, I was working on the QEP and QEP Writing Studio websites, developing handouts and resources for instructors, running workshops for students, updating GE 102 and 103 syllabi and course assignments, maintaining our AccuTrack database (which contains the record of tutoring sessions), using AccuTrack to run tutoring session reports for instructors, assisting the director with the paperwork that had to be completed for tutors to be cleared to work, assisting with a variety of assessments, and undertaking lesser but still essential tasks such as running copies of session report forms or responding to instructor emails. I was working the entire time I was there, but I always knew that there was more to do. The chaotic reality of the writing studio is a far cry from the tranquil tutoring space I thought I was signing up for, but I could see, on a daily basis, that we were helping our students become better writers. Even though our assessment data did not always show a vast improvement among our students, I knew how essential the work was. Frequently students would come back to the Writing Studio to thank the tutor they had worked with, and this was as energizing for me as it was for the tutors.

As a new administrator, I was tremendously fortunate to work closely with someone who was both incredibly knowledgeable and experienced, but also willing to teach me what I needed to know to succeed in this position. This made all the difference. I had classroom experience, but no experience with assessments or managing undergraduates who were not my own students. It takes a different skill set to both nurture and hold accountable undergraduate student workers who are still learning what it means to be a peer tutor. It seems like an easy, natural occurrence that a director would want to support a colleague and help her develop, but I recognize that this is not always the case. This is one of the aspects of this position that I had not initially considered: I had never worked that closely with someone I reported to. The dynamic between a full-time lecturer and her department chair is different; in this position, the director and I worked together closely every day, and I so appreciated her willingness to work collaboratively. Initially, there were “growing pains”; it took a little while for our personalities to mesh and cultivate a sense of trust, but having that support system was invaluable to me.

In any new position, there is a certain element of trial and error, but that is necessary to grow into a leadership role. Doing this largely invisible work has shaped me as a young professional in a fundamental way. A critical part of my job as writing coordinator is to mentor the undergraduate tutors who work with our first-year students, but I know how essential mentoring is for novice administrators as well. We must also be trained to serve our institutions in a new capacity, and benefit from the experience of others. It is essential that we continue to learn about our field and evolve as professionals so that in the future, we might return the favor.

Jenna Miller is currently the interim QEP Writing Studio director at Elizabeth City State University in Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

### **A Documentary That Works: *Con Job: Stories of Adjunct and Contingent Labor* by Megan Fulwiler and Jennifer Marlow**

Jes Philbrook

After reading Megan Fulwiler and Jennifer Marlow's 2011 article in *Forum*, "Making It Visible: Documenting Contingent Labor," I was eager to see their documentary in progress, which is entitled *Con Job: Stories of Adjunct and Contingent Labor*. Fortunately for me, and all others interested in this project, these writing teachers turned documentary filmmakers screened an early draft of *Con Job* at the Wednesday night meeting of Rhetoricians for Peace at the 2012 CCCC annual convention in St. Louis. Since then, the community discourses surrounding *Con Job* have gained momentum. There is even a Facebook group titled "Con Job: Stories of Adjunct and Contingent Faculty," which Fulwiler and Marlow started in early 2012. This group now claims 676 members and showcases several posts and links from community members each day. These paratexts have contributed to what the authors intended for the film to be: a space to share stories about adjunct and contingent labor. After witnessing and participating in the discussions happening in the Facebook group and seeing such a positive response to the early draft of the film, I am not surprised that there was a packed house at the Indianapolis CCCC conference on March 20, 2014, when the filmmakers debuted the recently published *Con Job* documentary. What this film does so well is present an overview of the problems that constitute the system of adjunct and contingent labor, address larger structural issues, and offer concrete actions that move us toward change.

Rather than providing one all-knowing narrative voice-over, the film combines the compelling voices of adjuncts telling their own stories with those of labor leaders, who explicate the problem and provide concrete actions for change. The film juxtaposes interviews with labor leaders Marc Bousquet, Seth Kahn, and Cary Nelson as they discuss the complexities of the problem and what might be done to change this system, with interviews of adjuncts like Julie Demers, Jennifer Lee, and Jessica Brouker. These representative adjuncts share the difficult working conditions they face and talk not only about the hardships of teaching several courses, often at different institutions, but also the reasons why they want to keep doing the work. What would make their living conditions better are more just and equitable conditions. In a nutshell, the documentary shows and tells stories which complicate

terms like *adjunct* and *contingent* while providing us with back stories and explanations based on institutional structure.

The film is broken into five segments, each focusing on a different aspect of the adjunct issue. The introduction splices adjunct interviews with intertitles that define basic terms like *adjunct* and *contingent*. The second segment then focuses on the history of the problem, combining interviews with labor leaders and adjuncts with intertitles highlighting statistics related to contingent labor. The third section focuses on myths and misperceptions about adjunct and contingent labor, largely including interviews with adjuncts discussing the realities of the jobs they have held. The fourth segment focuses on the high stakes of contingency, as adjuncts talk about the difficult positions they have found themselves in (e.g., not having access to health insurance or not being able to afford milk), and what they would like to see change. The final section focuses on tactics for the future, suggesting a host of different mechanisms for change, such as marketing efforts, unionizing, striking, and more. The pacing of the film is such that the first three segments focusing mostly on problems are about one-third of the film. The fourth and final section focusing on why this system needs to be changed and what can be done constitute about the remaining two-thirds of the film.

The most important contribution of this documentary, in my opinion, is the final section on tactics for the future. The interviewees propose strategies for moving toward change such as creating media campaigns targeted at undergraduate students and the general public; organizing by creating coalitions, speaking out, striking, and unionizing; and changing programs so adjuncts have longer contracts or alternative positions such as a teaching-intensive tenure-track job, for example. I sincerely appreciate that Fulwiler and Marlow dedicated an entire third of their movie to looking at ways to move toward and make change. *Con Job* is a breath of fresh air because of the amount of time it focuses on ways to move toward change.

Although I am most certainly biased, since I have been invested in this project and participating in the community surrounding it since the early days of its existence, I can confidently say that everyone in higher education should watch *Con Job*. It is a must-see for writing students, writing teachers, writing program administrators, and university administrators who deal with staffing issues. The 45-minute length and online format make it easily accessible and ideal for most class periods, and it could certainly be used for faculty training or in faculty development exercises and discussions. College students or parents of students should see *Con Job* because it shows a real picture of the lives of instructors of some if not many undergraduate classes and the less-than-ideal living and working conditions they are subjected to. Adjuncts should engage with the opportunity offered by *Con Job*

because it shows that there are so many others in the country working under similar conditions, and that the possibility for change is within reach. Writing program administrators should see this film because it shows how much working conditions impact adjunct and contingent workers' lives, but also offers ways to make change in writing programs.

It is clear that *Con Job: Stories of Adjunct and Contingent Labor* is intended to further more conversation about issues related to adjunct and contingent labor and to remind people not only of the need for change, but also how change might be reached. I look forward to seeing how this film's publication impacts discussions about adjunct and contingent labor in higher education, in local institutions, at CCCC in Tampa in 2015, and beyond.

### **Works Cited**

- Fulwiler, Megan, and Jennifer Marlow. *Con Job: Stories of Adjunct and Contingent Labor*. Logan, UT: Computers and Composition Digital Press/Utah State UP, 2014. Web. 1 June 2014.
- . "Making It Visible: Documenting Contingent Labor." *Forum: Newsletter for Issues about Part-Time and Contingent Faculty* 15.1 (2011): A6–A8. Print.

*Jes Philbrook is a PhD student in English with a focus on rhetoric and composition at the University of Missouri, where she teaches undergraduate courses in composition, professional writing, and women's and gender studies. She is a co-chair of the CCCC labor caucus, and her research focuses on labor studies in higher education.*