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Research Panel: Variation in Women Attaining Full Professorships at Research Universities and Non-Tenured Faculty Systems in the US and Abroad

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ADJUNCT FACULTY: WHY AND HOW WE SHOULD HELP THEM

Lisa Allen
Spring 2019

UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS FIT IN ONE OF TWO CATEGORIES

▶ Tenure or tenure track professors

- ▶ Obligations include teaching, research and publication, and obligations to the university community such as committee work.
- ▶ Some professors bring in grant money, and may use some portion of that money to “buy” their teaching time.

▶ Non-tenure track faculty (NTTF) or ADJUNCTS

- ▶ One attempt to categorize them included 9 classes of NTTF, including “part mooners” who hold multiple part time jobs, “hopeful full timers” who teach part time but hope to become full time employees, and even “sunlighters” who choose to work part time.

BROAD CATEGORIES OF ADJUNCTS

Teaching to make a living

- ▶ NY Times has done two stories, 14 years apart, about adjunct liberal arts professors.
- ▶ NYT article about professor James Hoff in 2014 documented that he was earning < \$21,000 per year, living in New York, teaching part time at three different institutions.
- ▶ Nothing changed between the two articles.

Teaching to be connected

- ▶ Medical school adjunct professors usually are **NOT PAID**.
- ▶ Law adjunct professors, on average, earn <2% of their income from teaching.
- ▶ Symbiotic, non-exploitive adjunct teaching is common in professional schools.

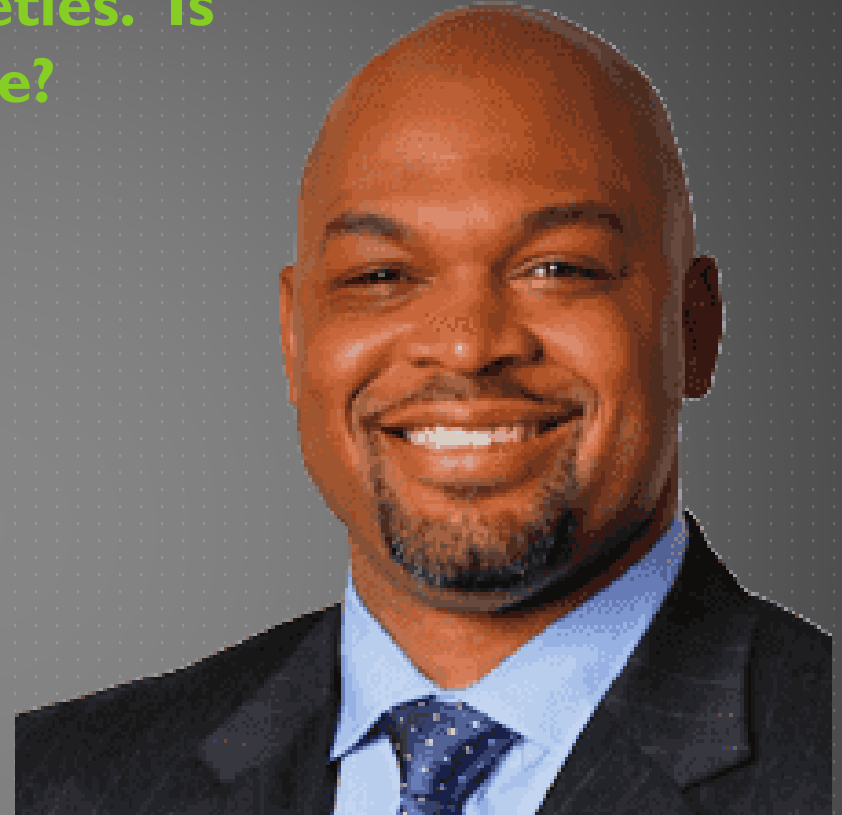
Adjuncts come in many varieties. Is all adjunct teaching exploitive?

Not by a long shot!

Meet Chris Jones, from Allen & Allen, an adjunct in Law Skills III at University of Richmond School of Law.

Chris is an adjunct because he is an alumnus, he loves teaching, he's flattered to be asked, and he loved the adjunct professors he had as a student here.

He's also very cool, lots of fun, and not teaching for the money.



The supply of working physicians and lawyers who are willing to give their limited free time to teaching professional program graduate students for a mere honorarium or for free does NOT dramatically exceed the demand for these professionals.

IN CONTRAST WITH CHRIS JONES...

- ▶ Margaret Mary Vojtko was an Adjunct Professor of French at Duquesne University for 25 years.
- ▶ When she taught three classes per semester and two summer classes, she was not able to break \$25,000 a year. She had no health insurance through her employment, no retirement plan.
- ▶ As she got older, she could not afford to retire. The university cut her to one course per semester, leaving her with an income below \$10,000 for the year.
- ▶ She was diagnosed with cancer; treatments were expensive. She could not afford to pay her electric bill. With her house uninhabitable in the winter, she took to spending the night in her car working at the “Eat n Park” and sleeping during the day in her Duquesne office. When the university found out, they enlisted security to remove her from her office.
- ▶ She was let go following this incident. She was referred to protective services. She was told if she did not meet the case worker, her case would be sent to Orphan’s Court.

In August of 2013, after calling a lawyer describing these indignities and the stress she was under, Margaret Mary Vojtko had a heart attack. She never regained consciousness.

September 1, 2013, Professor Vojtko died.

Duquesne adjunct faculty has attempted to unionize, but the university has resisted, claiming that their goal of providing a Catholic education could be impinged by being forced to negotiate with the union.

Vojtko's friend and lawyer Daniel Kovalik has written about her death, and the story has been picked up by the media around the country. He blames Duquesne for her death.

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

- ▶ In 2017, non-tenure-track positions of all types now account for

over **70%**

of all instructional staff appointments in American higher education.

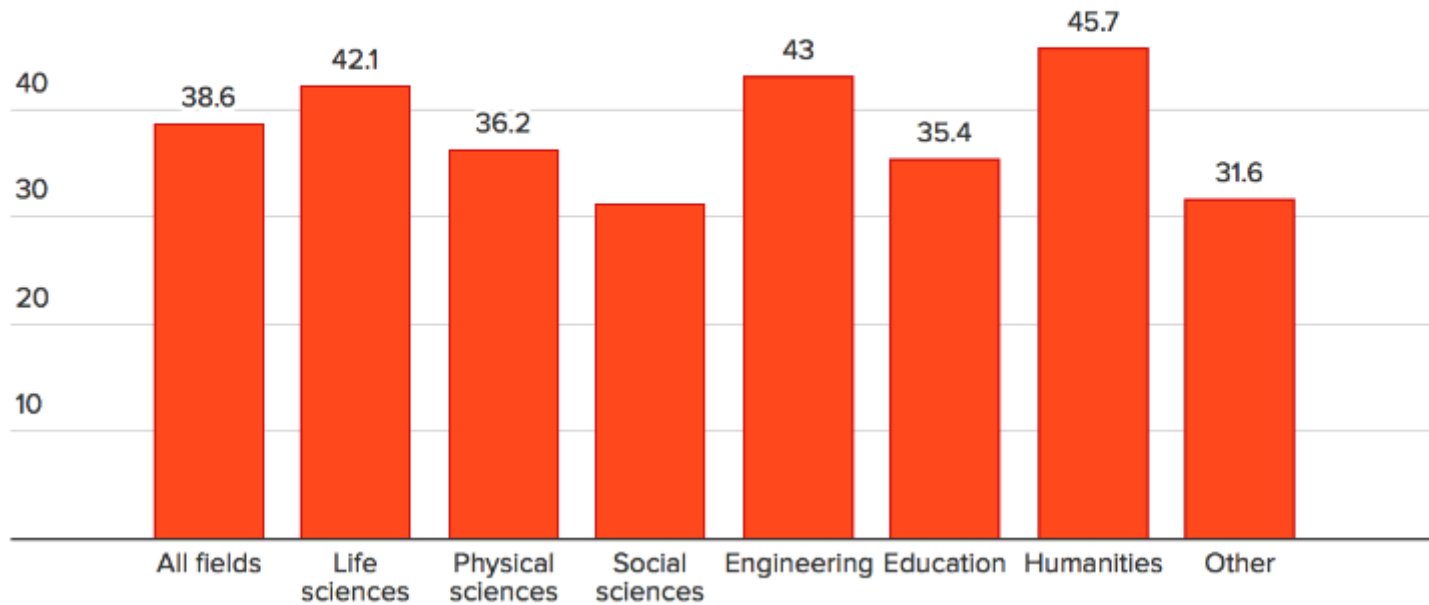
- ▶ Back in 1987, it was only 1/3 of instructors. Clearly, this is a **LARGE** and **GROWING** approach to staffing at universities.

SALARY DIFFERENCES?

- ▶ The average tenured professor earns roughly \$100,000 per year.
- ▶ Professors in an endowed chair, professors of engineering, law, or finance generally earn larger salaries.
- ▶ Tenured professors generally teach two classes per semester, or four classes per year.
- ▶ The average adjunct professor earns \$20,000 per year.
- ▶ Adjunct professors generally teach four classes per semester, or eight classes per year.
- ▶ Adjuncts have no tenure. They have no guarantee of a job beyond their present contract.

BUT, PH.D.s? THEY HAVE OPTIONS, RIGHT?

Percentage of Doctoral Recipients Without Employment Commitments, 2014

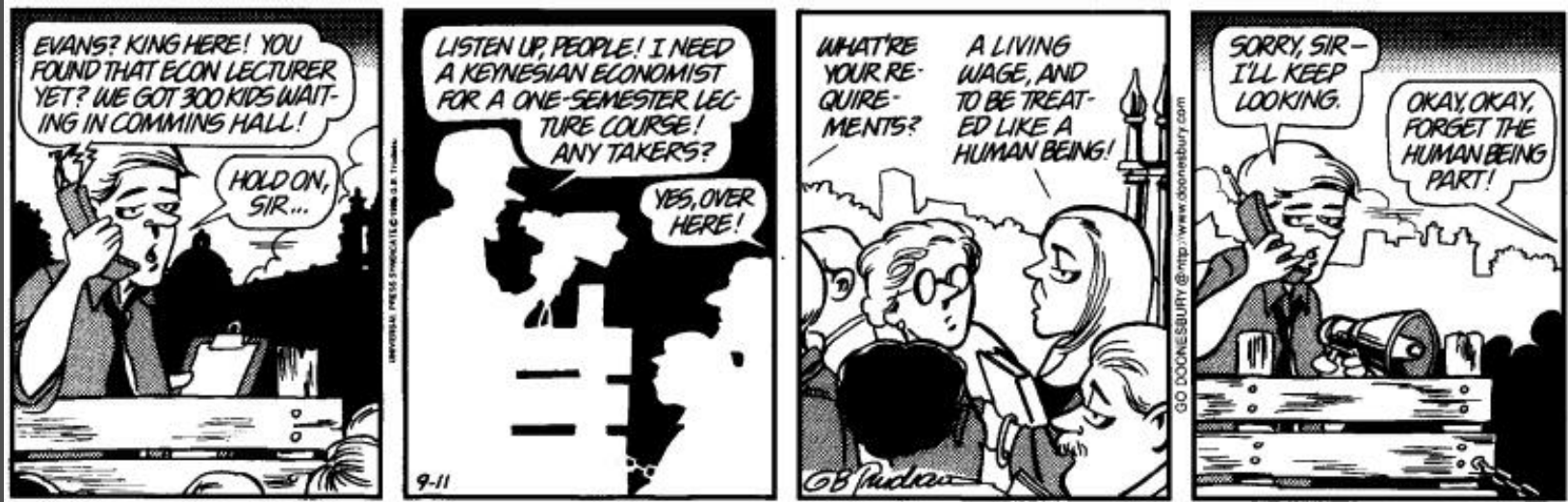


Atlantic Monthly, 4/21/16

SUPPLY OUTPACES DEMAND; UNIVERSITIES PROFIT



DETERIORATION IN WORKING CONDITIONS IS THE INEVITABLE RESULT WHEN SUPPLY OUTPACES DEMAND

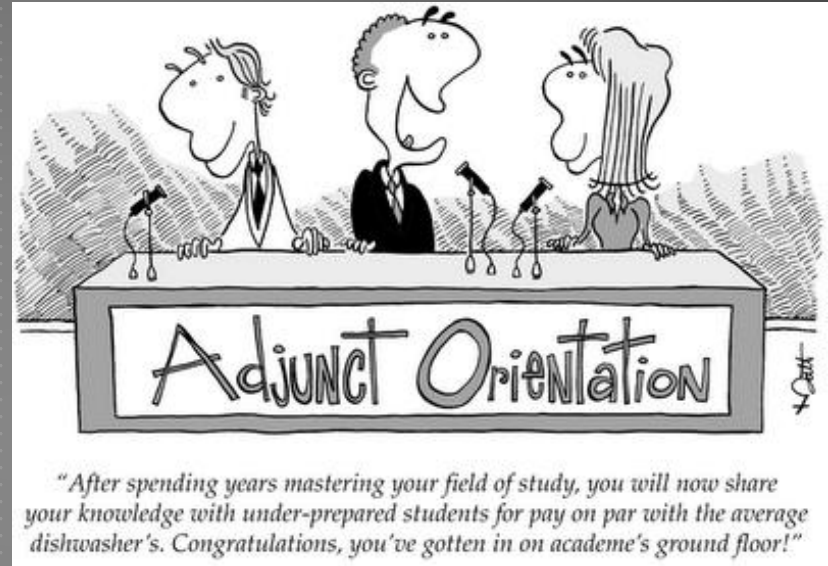


ORIENTATION

Adjunct professors are often hired at the last minute. There is usually NO ORIENTATION for adjunct professors.

There have been times when an adjunct was not even aware he had a campus mailbox.

How can a guy who doesn't know he has a mailbox advise students about opportunities on campus?

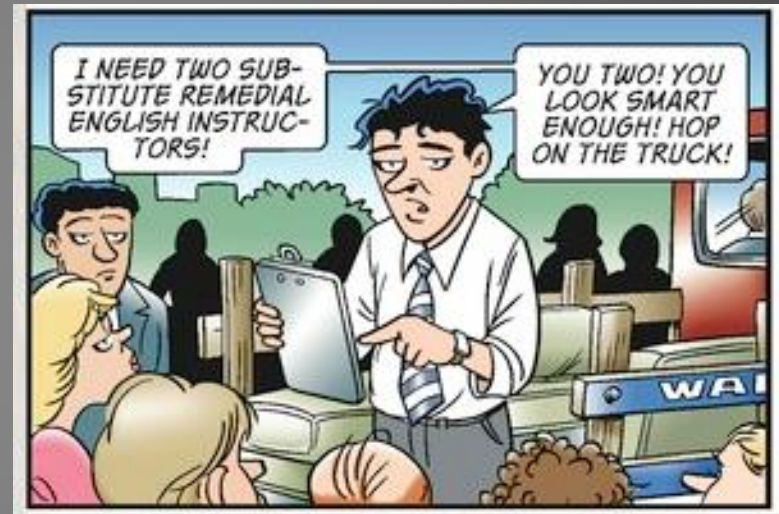


WHAT ELSE ARE THEY MISSING?

- ▶ Adjunct faculty often work in two or three different institutions. They don't have time to hang around at any one campus – they have to get to their next job. They have little time to work with students, to plan lessons, to learn about tools and support for their teaching.
- ▶ Adjuncts are not invited to department meetings, they don't participate in any activities that convey to them the goals and culture of the university.
- ▶ Tenured professors complain that the students taught by adjuncts are not well prepared for their upper level courses.

DO THEY DO A GOOD JOB IN THE CLASSROOM?

- ▶ One adjunct professor reported that in 13 years of teaching, he had never been evaluated.
- ▶ He might be a great professor. He might stink. The university hasn't any idea.



What is the relationship between tenure and adjunct teachers?

Non-tenure track faculty “used words like ‘invisible,’ ‘belittled,’ ‘degraded,’ ‘uncommitted,’ and ‘lowest of the low’ to describe the ways some of their departmental colleagues make them feel.”



Is it just a difference in pay? Is that it?

Evidence suggests that adjunct faculty are less likely to engage in behaviors that support student success.

“High Impact behaviors” include counseling and tutoring students outside class, advising them on campus support systems, grading to provide feedback, and spending time preparing for class.

WHERE IS THE CONCENTRATION OF ADJUNCT TEACHERS MOST NOTABLE?

- ▶ Of those who teach only developmental courses, the remedial classes that help underprepared community college students improve their skills, 76% are adjunct or part time.
- ▶ The students MOST IN NEED of professors who can advise them, the students least likely to be successful? These are the students being taught by adjunct professors.



A COLLEGE SHOULD PROTECT ITS “BRAND”



WHY SHOULD A COLLEGE CARE ABOUT BRAND?

- ▶ Colleges are evaluated based on the number of students who graduate, among other criteria. Increasing student success is a mandate EVERY community college is trying to achieve.
- ▶ Yet they put their most vulnerable students – those whose success could alter the college's graduation rate – in the hands of professors who do not engage in the behaviors most likely to lead to student success.

ADJUNCTS TEACHING DEVELOPMENTAL COURSES SHARE MANY OF THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS

- ▶ Adjuncts are living below the poverty line.
- ▶ Adjuncts are not included in orientations, department meetings, or professional development.
- ▶ Adjuncts are working in multiple institutions to try to make ends meet.
- ▶ Adjuncts are less likely to be available to tutor students.
- ▶ Adjuncts are less likely to know about resources their students may need.
- ▶ Adjuncts are less likely to have office hours.
- ▶ Adjuncts spend less time planning lessons and grading papers.
- ▶ Adjuncts are less attuned to the university mission or brand.
- ▶ Adjuncts teach more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of developmental courses.

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?



JOB SECURITY?



JOB SECURITY?

- ▶ Courts have repeatedly said that adjunct faculty have no property interest in their employment beyond the contract, even when the college failed to rehire because of protected speech, or protected union activity.
- ▶ For many adjuncts, they have been offered contracts over and over. Job security for these adjuncts is protection on paper only – they already have job security as long as they continue to work for peanuts.
- ▶ Job security does not contribute to increased practices that influence student success.

MONEY?



MONEY: HOW DO COLLEGES JUSTIFY IMPROVING THE FINANCIAL SIDE OF ADJUNCTING?

- ▶ We want MORE from these adjuncts. We want them to engage in the behaviors that lead to student learning.
- ▶ If we want more, we have to pay more.
- ▶ Improving the adjuncts is a reasonable strategy for increasing student achievement.

MONEY: HOW MUCH IS FAIR?

- ▶ These teachers' work more closely resembles that of a high school teacher than a tenured professor.
- ▶ Use the pay and employment schedule that applies to secondary teachers to determine what the full-time salary and duration of availability should be.

MONEY: HOW MUCH IS FAIR?

▶ Example

- ▶ High school teachers have five classes per semester
- ▶ High school teachers work roughly 50 hours per week
- ▶ A PhD with zero experience on a salary schedule in many communities would earn \$60,000 / year, or \$30,000 / semester.
- ▶ This translates to 10 hours per week per course, at a rate of \$6000 per course.

HOW SHOULD THIS BALANCE LOOK?

More money for adjuncts

- ▶ Put adjunct faculty teaching developmental classes in community colleges on the same pay scale as secondary teachers in the same communities.

More accountability for adjuncts

- ▶ Expect a fixed number of hours per week of availability per course.
- ▶ Expect attendance at an orientation and at department and university-wide meetings.
- ▶ Evaluate teaching performance regularly.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

- ▶ Affordable Care Act sets a threshold of 30 hours as the point where employers have obligations to provide health insurance. Perhaps requiring 8 or 9 hours per course would protect adjuncts who regularly teach three classes per semester.
- ▶ K-12 pay scales include increasing salary for more years of experience. That may be a later step for negotiation. With no protectable property interest in adjunct employment, including experience lanes in salary scales may create a “reverse tenure” situation, where colleges are encouraged to shop for less experienced adjunct faculty.
- ▶ Adjuncts who teach non-developmental classes could use help, too. However, this population of adjuncts are “low hanging fruit” because of the populations they teach and the easy evidence of benefits to their employers of increasing their hours.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

To the employer:

- ▶ Brand protection
- ▶ Increased success of most vulnerable students
- ▶ Broader more collegial community of faculty
- ▶ Opportunity to provide meaningful evaluations

To the students:

- ▶ Professors are available for extra help
- ▶ Professors know about campus resources
- ▶ Better preparation for upper level courses
- ▶ Professors do more grading/ provide more feedback for students.
- ▶ Lessons take better advantage of technology and resources

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT TO THE ADJUNCT?



- ▶ A living wage
- ▶ The opportunity to do a good job
- ▶ Collegiality
- ▶ Job satisfaction
- ▶ Out of class contact with students
- ▶ Respect