

2018

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Recommended Citation

Clark, Richard D., Buchanan, Carrie, & Rawls, Christina (2018) "The Poor and Marginalized Among Us: Contingent Faculty in Jesuit Universities," *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal*: Vol. 7 : No. 2.

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The Poor and Marginalized Among Us: Contingent Faculty in Jesuit Universities

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Abstract

Faculty of institutions of higher learning have an opportunity to discuss, debate, and discern how to create workplaces that are just and inclusive. As members of Jesuit institutions, we have a moral obligation to do so. How, then, can Jesuit universities justify the poor treatment of contingent faculty, who are now a majority not just in our institutions but in the country as a whole? Tenure-track employment is a fading tradition in universities throughout the United States. The data also show that non-tenure-track faculty, particularly the growing number of part-time adjunct faculty, constitute a population of marginalized, often poor, employees working alongside more privileged colleagues. Furthermore, the data show that the burden of inequality falls more heavily on women and people of color. How do Jesuit values and the mission statements of Jesuit universities guide us in this situation? How do Catholic social teaching principles help us to see and articulate the current situation more clearly, and find a path to more just and equitable employment in Jesuit higher education?

Introduction

Faculty of institutions of higher learning have an opportunity to discuss, debate, and discern how to create a more just and inclusive workplaces. As members of Jesuit institutions, we have a moral obligation to do so. We often turn to Jesuit values to guide us in our professional and personal lives. These values are moral guidelines that instruct us as to the appropriate responses to many of life's more difficult questions. They also offer us checks on our behavior, as they encourage us to reflect on whether our behaviors are consistent with our values. Are we acting in a way that is consistent with how we wish to behave? Are we acting in a manner that is consistent with what we teach our students? Although we all realize that outside

factors often may impact our decision-making, we strive to live up to our values.

One area where we as academics have fallen short of our values is our treatment of contingent faculty, defined by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) as "both part and full-time faculty who are appointed off the tenure track."¹ Among this group, those who work part-time—usually called adjunct faculty—constitute a population of marginalized employees working alongside more privileged colleagues. As we will document below, adjunct faculty are poorly treated compared to their full-time tenurable colleagues. Furthermore, the data show that the burden of inequality falls more heavily on women and people of color.

Tenure-track employment is a fading tradition in universities throughout the United States. The first section of this paper will examine the available data, although it is admittedly incomplete, and attempt to describe the numbers and types of contingent faculty on our nation's campuses. The second section will examine the working conditions of adjunct faculty in particular, exploring how their lives and careers—as well as the institutions for which they work—are affected by these conditions. The final section will examine the question of our mission and values. How do Jesuit values guide us in this situation? How do Catholic social teaching principles help us to us to clearly see and articulate our obligations, and find a path to more just and equitable employment in Jesuit higher education?

The term *cura personalis*, or care of the whole person, is typically heard in Jesuit universities and institutions because their mission and purpose encompass all of our being. *Cura personalis* is a reminder to us, as university employees, that our treatment of both our colleagues and our students includes care and respect for the entire individual. In addition to *cura personalis*, there is also the concept of *cura apostolica*, the care of the ministry or, in our case, the institution of higher education. Although it is important that we care for the whole person, it is equally important that we care for the institution itself. Without a vibrant and effective institution, the work we do is endangered. Thus, this analysis will approach both concerns: the care of persons and the care of institutions essential to realizing our mission.

A Growing Problem in Our Institutions

Contingent faculty include part-time adjuncts, full-time visiting professors, and graduate students who teach, as well as clinical faculty. Most marginalized among these are adjuncts, who are usually poorly paid (see more below on pay rates), lacking the full-time status that would entitle them to healthcare and retirement benefits, minus the academic freedom and job security granted by tenure, and usually prevented from playing a meaningful faculty role in shared governance of either their academic departments or the university. Although this set of conditions does not limit the careers of adjuncts who are retired faculty or those who work full-time in other

professions and teach on the side, many adjunct faculty are in neither of those categories. It is this latter group about whom we are most concerned. They are the focus of this paper.

Precise numbers indicating how many adjuncts are in each of the categories just listed are difficult to find, but a 2016 article by economist Paul Yakoboski provides some figures, drawn from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) of the U.S. Department of Education and additional surveys, notably the Faculty Career & Retirement Survey (FCRS) conducted by the TIAA Institute.² Yakoboski compared the FCRS data with information from surveys conducted by the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The FCRS survey found that 79% of adjunct faculty teach at only one institution, meanwhile 17% work for two and only 4% for three or more institutions. These findings are confirmed by the CAW survey's finding that 30% of adjuncts work for two or more institutions, whereas the AFT survey found that 55% worked at multiple institutions.³ Thus, the so-called "travelling adjunct" who teaches at numerous institutions is a significant component of all part-time faculty. In absolute numbers, the AAUP (using data from the federal government) reports that there were 761,996 part-time faculty in 2011.⁴ This means at least 228,000 people—and possibly as many as 400,000—were working as travelling adjuncts.

The FCRS also found that 86% of adjunct faculty teach three or fewer courses, with the average pay per course about \$3,000. This would seem to indicate that many are living at poverty levels. When asked in the same survey for their household income, however, the data indicate that many adjunct faculty have additional income derived from a spouse or other household member, full-time career, and/or pension.⁵ Nonetheless, in the AFT survey about 60% of respondents said they would *prefer* a full-time teaching position over their part-time one, and in the CAW survey, only 24% said they preferred part-time, non-tenure-track work.⁶

Perhaps most significant is the degree of underemployment among part-time faculty in the adjunct category. Eagen, Jaeger and Grantham, in a study of more than 4,000 part-time faculty

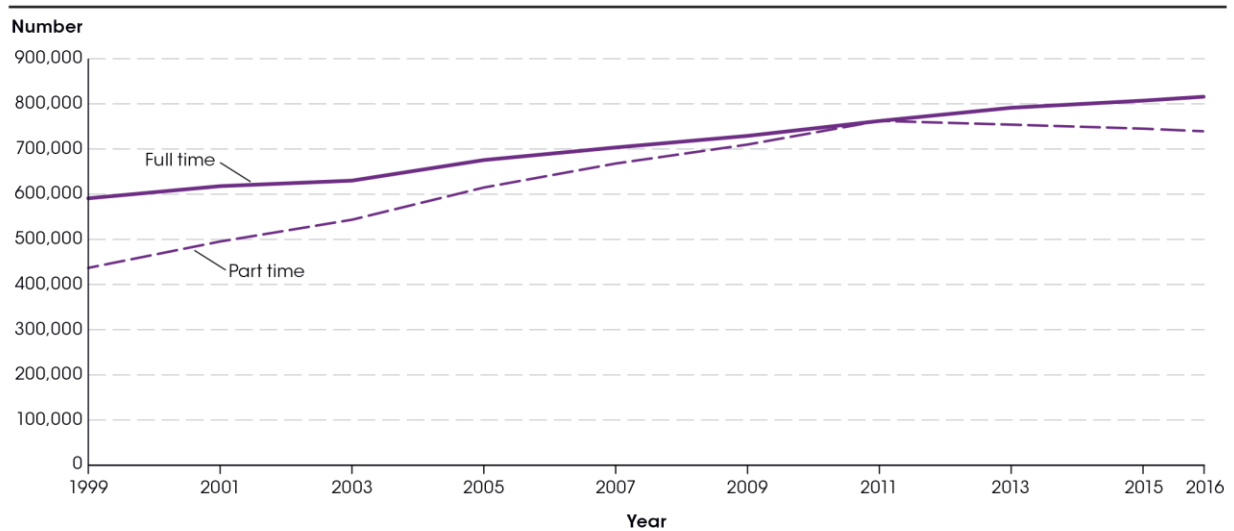
teaching at four-year public colleges, found that 73% were working part-time involuntarily.⁷ Ott and Dippold found similar underemployment among part-timers at community colleges, with two-thirds “at least somewhat interested in becoming full-time faculty at a postsecondary institution, with 47% expressing strong, immediate interest in such a position.”⁸

It is challenging to find detailed employment data on adjunct faculty, including pay and benefits, because such information was not collected at a national level until recently. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), for example, only began asking universities systematically to provide adjunct salary information in the academic year 2016–2017.⁹ Maria Maisto of the New Faculty Majority, a labor group that represents adjuncts, stated in a 2014

interview, “There is no federally mandated data collection on salaries or pay for adjunct faculty.”¹⁰ Only the most basic data—the number and/or percentage of part-time faculty employed, for example—is available from neutral, comprehensive sources such as the federal government.¹¹

Despite this paucity of information, there is solid documentation of the rapidly increasing numbers of adjuncts in higher education. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education¹² concludes that part-time faculty have been a majority or very close to it in number (although not in the number of courses taught) since about 2010 in U.S. colleges and universities. See Figure 1 for a graph of NCES data from 1999–2016.

Figure 1: Number of Full-time and Part-time Faculty, 1999–2016¹³



NOTE: Includes faculty members with the title of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, lecturer, assisting professor, adjunct professor, or interim professor (or the equivalent). Excludes graduate students with titles such as graduate or teaching fellow who assist senior faculty. Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Beginning in 2007, includes institutions with fewer than 15 full-time employees; these institutions did not report staff data prior to 2007. Some data have been revised from previously published figures. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Fall Staff Survey" (IPEDS-S:99); IPEDS Winter 2001–02 through Winter 2004–05, Fall Staff survey; IPEDS Winter 2005–06 through Winter 2011–12, Human Resources component, Fall Staff section; and IPEDS Spring 2013 through Spring 2017, Human Resources component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 315.10.

In the graph from the AAUP, Figure 2A, illustrates how dramatically the tenure system has declined across the country, as the steady increase in contingent faculty from 1975 to 2011 clearly indicates.¹⁴ Note that the three categories to the

right in the graph (full-time non-tenure-track, part-time, and graduate students) total 76 percent of all faculty who were teaching in 2011. Only 24 percent remain in the two categories at left: tenured and tenure-track faculty.

Figure 2A: Percentage Trends in Instructional Staff Employment Status, 1975–2011¹⁵

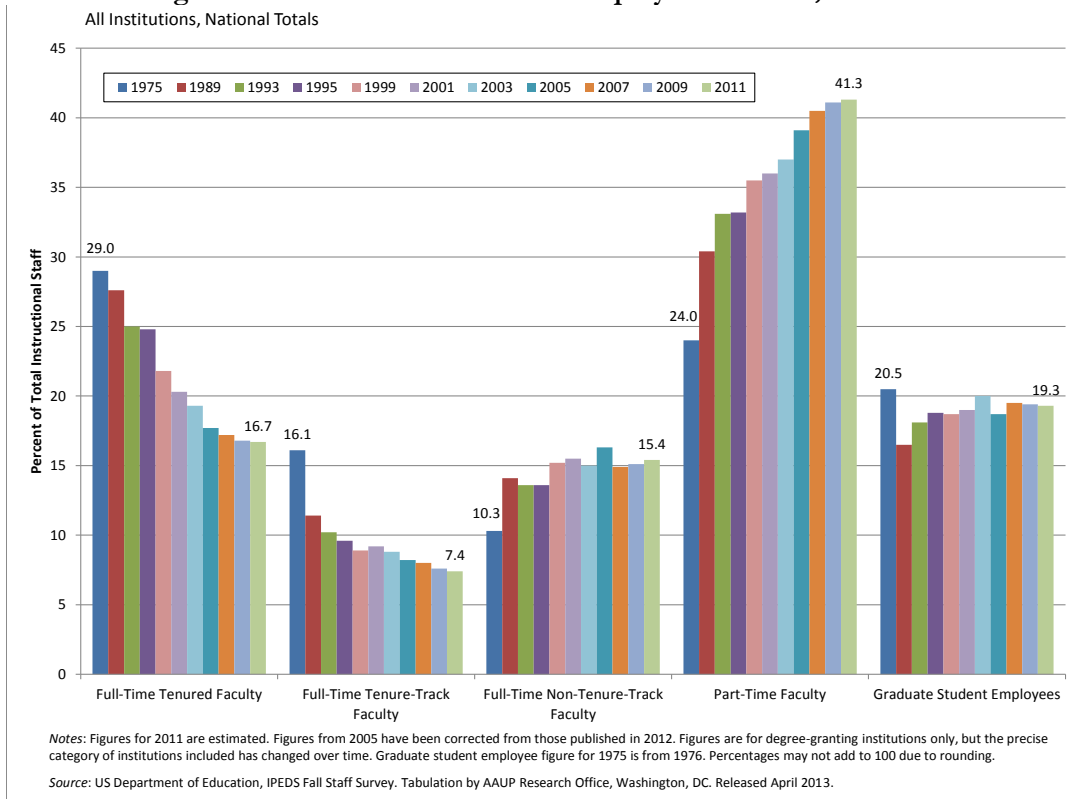


Figure 2B: Numerical Trends in Instructional Staff Employment Status, 1975–2011¹⁶

	1975	1989	1993	1995	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011
Trends in Instructional Staff Employment Status, 1975-2011 All institutions, national totals											
Full-Time Tenured Faculty	227,381 29.0%	272,661 27.6%	279,424 27.0%	284,870 24.8%	284,984 21.8%	278,823 20.3%	282,429 20.3%	283,434 17.8%	290,381 17.2%	257,460 16.8%	308,360 16.7%
Full-Time Tenure-Track Faculty	126,300 16.1%	112,593 11.4%	114,278 10.2%	110,311 9.6%	114,805 8.9%	123,811 9.2%	128,602 8.8%	131,140 8.2%	134,826 8.0%	133,230 7.6%	136,320 7.4%
Full-Time Non-Tenure-Track Faculty	80,883 10.3%	139,173 14.1%	152,004 13.6%	157,641 13.6%	196,337 15.2%	213,232 15.2%	219,388 15.0%	233,171 14.8%	251,361 14.9%	266,441 15.1%	284,303 13.4%
Part-Time Faculty	188,000 24.0%	299,794 30.4%	389,768 33.1%	380,884 32.2%	460,377 35.3%	495,313 36.0%	543,137 37.0%	624,753 38.3%	684,668 40.5%	727,098 41.1%	761,996 41.3%
Graduate Student Employers	160,806 20.9%	163,298 16.3%	202,819 18.1%	215,509 18.8%	244,213 18.7%	261,136 19.0%	282,801 20.0%	317,446 19.9%	328,979 19.4%	342,393 19.4%	353,516 19.3%
Total Instructional Staff	783,370 99.8%	987,518 100.0%	1,118,293 100.0%	1,147,613 100.0%	1,296,276 100.1%	1,374,319 100.1%	1,466,337 100.1%	1,291,644 100.0%	1,690,413 100.1%	1,768,642 100.0%	1,846,893 100.1%
Contingent Instructional Staff	429,689 54.9%	602,263 61.0%	734,291 64.8%	732,434 65.6%	899,437 69.4%	969,683 70.6%	1,035,326 70.8%	1,177,070 74.0%	1,265,008 74.8%	1,333,932 73.3%	1,402,213 75.9%

Notes: Figures for 2011 are estimated. Figures from 2003 have been corrected from those published in 2012. Figures are for degree-granting institutions only, but the precise category of institutions included has changed over time. Graduate student employee figure for 1975 is from 1976. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS Fall Staff Survey; published tabulations only.

Compiled by AAUP Research Office, Washington, DC; John W. Curtis, Director of Research and Public Policy (8/20/13)

It is important to consider the numbers in Figure 2B, which do show a steady increase over the decades in the absolute numbers of tenured and tenure-track faculty: from 353,681 (the total of tenured and tenure-track faculty in 1975) to 444,680 (the total in 2011 for those two categories). That is a 25 percent increase. Those increases have been vastly outpaced, however, by the rise in contingent faculty. The category of part-time faculty shows the greatest increase: from 188,000 in 1975 to 791,996 in 2011. That is a 321 percent increase.

Further confirmation of the decline in the tenure system comes from the NCES, which reports that, as of the 2015–2016 academic year, only 52 percent of degree-granting post-secondary institutions had a tenure system, including only 1 percent of for-profit institutions.¹⁷ This compares to 100 percent of public, doctorate-granting institutions. Furthermore, among full-time faculty at institutions with tenure systems, only 47 percent had tenure in the 2015–2016 academic year compared to 54 percent in 1999–2000. Somewhere during that period, untenured faculty became the majority, even among full-timers at the reduced number of institutions that offer tenure.

As recently noted by the AAUP, tenure's decline brings significant perils for academia:

Because faculty tenure is the only secure protection for academic freedom in teaching, research and service, the declining percentage of tenured faculty means that academic freedom is increasingly at risk. Academic freedom is a fundamental characteristic of higher education, necessary to preserve an independent forum for free inquiry and expression, and essential to the mission of higher education to serve the common good.¹⁸

A dramatic rise in the number of faculty relegated to adjunct status has been reported elsewhere. Data put together by Georgetown University's Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor suggest that between 1970 and 2011 part-time faculty members at American colleges and universities increased by 200 percent.¹⁹ Budget

cuts have heightened the decline in full-time, tenure-track faculty jobs. Universities have reported cuts to tenure-track lines due to budget concerns.²⁰ Stephanie Saul notes in *The New York Times* that cuts to university budgets have resulted in the loss of full-time tenure-track faculty, with lower-paid adjuncts serving as replacements.²¹

Others, such as Jason Brennan and Phillip Magness, have questioned whether the number of full-time faculty members have actually diminished over the last few years.²² Even these critics of the use of the term "exploitation" to refer to adjuncts do concede that the number of adjunct faculty has "exploded over the past 40 years."²³ The New Faculty Majority also estimates that more than 50 percent of all faculty today are part-time adjuncts.²⁴ Finally, while we can debate the exact number of full-time versus part-time faculty, it is clear that "the likelihood that undergraduate courses are taught by poorly paid, insecure, adjunct faculty members has increased markedly."²⁵

Sadly, among those without the protections of tenure, the most marginalized are those who work part-time. The term marginalized applies not just because of their job's inherent insecurity and lower pay but also their frequent omission from department meetings, faculty governance, and even office space. When colleagues don't know your name or greet you in the halls, when you have no office where you can meet with students or store your belongings and thus are forced to "schlep" a rolling suitcase from one campus to another—a situation described as common by numerous adjuncts who attended a July 2017 national AAUP workshop—the feeling of invisibility and marginalization is tangible.²⁶

The Lives of Adjunct Faculty

In a July 2017 article in *Newsday*, adjunct professor Larry Jaffee of St. Joseph's College and the New York Institute of Technology wrote, "I wrapped up in May teaching five courses and three independent studies at two colleges. The take-home pay puts me at poverty level."²⁷ Another part-time professor, working at VCUArts, the largest public arts college in the U.S., recently declared, "This is an urgent crisis.... When we're talking about equity issues, we're not just talking

about what's fair and unfair, we're talking about someone's life and where they're going to sleep at night."²⁸ Anecdotal stories abound of adjunct professors resorting to selling their plasma, utilizing food stamps, and/or using Medicare or related services for healthcare in order to make ends meet.²⁹

Even though the Jesuit institution for which two of this paper's authors work provides adjuncts with shared office space and, within the past two years, has started providing limited employee benefits, access to professional development opportunities, and representation on faculty governance, this is not the case on many of our nation's campuses. In many places, adjuncts are "invisible" faculty, so described by AAUP experts David Kociemba and Nick Fleisher because they lack dedicated office space, are not invited to participate or vote in department and faculty meetings, and tend to commute daily between institutions.³⁰ Indeed, the fact that no one bothered until recently to keep track of their employment data at a national level is both an indicator and perhaps a partial cause of this state of affairs.

Departments and universities have the option of nonrenewal of adjunct contracts at any time without stating a reason. Thus, whereas their universities might claim that part-time faculty have academic freedom, without protection for job security or institutional support should their teaching methods, statements, and use of particular readings or texts generate controversy, this is essentially meaningless.³¹

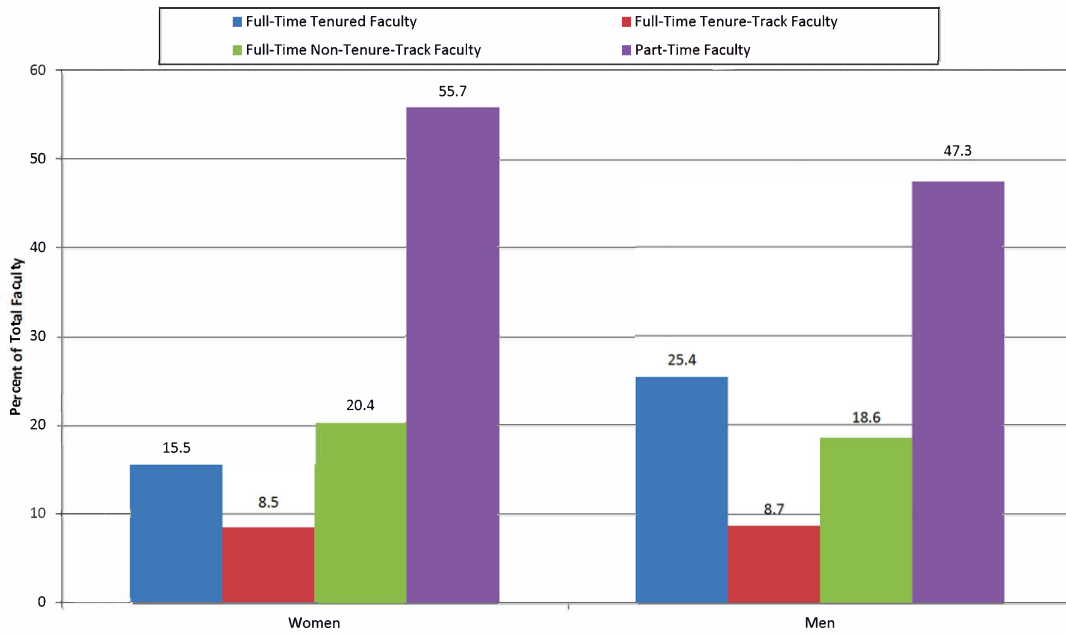
Statistics demonstrate that contingent status tends to affect women and members of ethnic minorities disproportionately. (The AAUP data,

based on Department of Education IPEDS statistics and contained in Figures 3 and 4, illustrate this.) Fredrickson, for example, reports that women make up 60 percent of contingent faculty whereas men constitute 59 percent of full-time tenured faculty.³² Others have been more direct. Zheng, for example, in noting how the decline of tenure has negatively affected women more than men, has suggested that this process exacerbates the feminization of labor and more importantly, the process of precarity. Defined by the idea of abandonment, precarity refers to a process of social marginalization that pushes people away from a livable life. The decline of tenure and the subsequent use of part-time employment further exacerbates this problem.³³

In addition, Ott and Dippold, in surveys of part-time faculty, found that "Adjuncts who identified as Black or African American had 164% higher odds of wanting a full-time faculty position compared to Whites ($p < .005$), while Hispanic/Latino faculty had 83% higher odds."³⁴ Eagan, Jaeger and Grantham found much higher levels of satisfaction among Whites, compared to non-Whites, with the status of "involuntary or underemployed part-time faculty"³⁵ as well as "levels of workplace satisfaction"—a measure that combined answers about tangibles like offices and computers with such intangibles as respect from administrators and colleagues, rewards for good teaching, and alignment of their work with personal values.³⁶

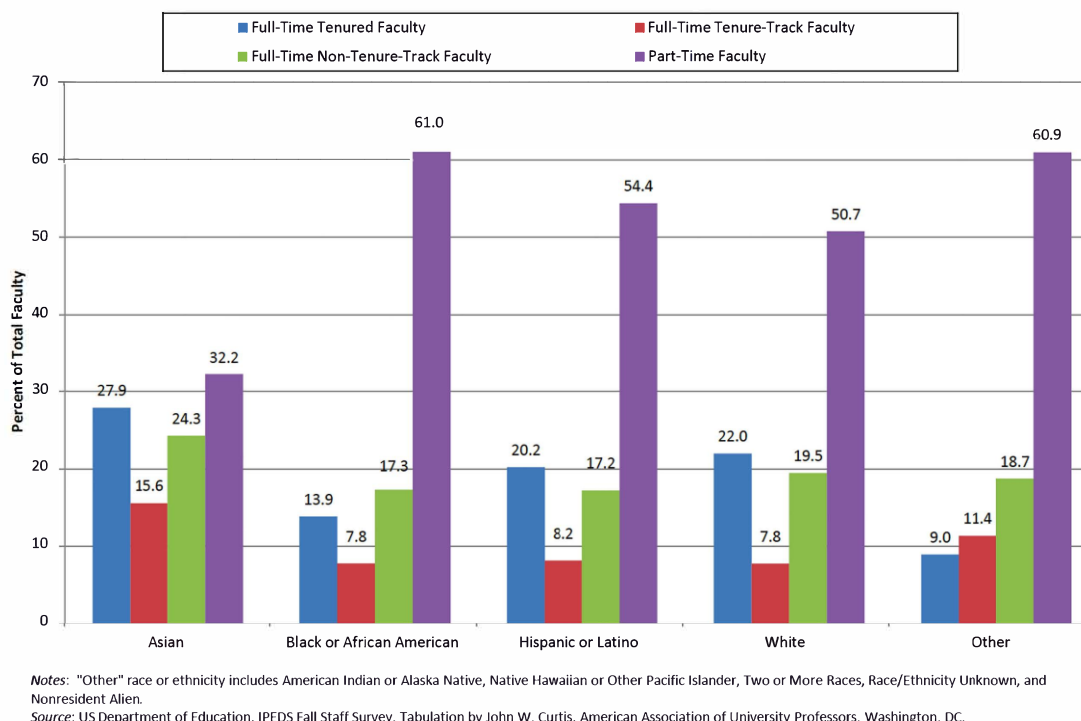
It is ironic that an institution designed to enhance progress and improve the human condition strengthens social structures that impede economic and social progress by those at the historic margins of society.

Figure 3: Faculty Employment Status by Gender, Fall 2011³⁷



Notes: Title IV degree-granting institutions only.

Source: US Department of Education, IPEDES Fall Staff Survey. Tabulation by John W. Curtis, American Association of University Professors, Washington, DC.

Figure 4: Faculty Employment Status by Race or Ethnicity, Fall 2011³⁸

Things that appear small can have large impacts on people earning low-level wages. For example, having to wait for a paycheck for more than a month after beginning a course, the unpaid hours it takes to grade assignments and answer student emails, travel time and costs, and lack of office space to store materials and meet with students can produce significant hardships, especially for adjuncts teaching part-time at more than one university.³⁹

The average part-time professor holds a master's and sometimes also a doctorate in his or her field; some are specialists whose research has made significant contributions. Like tenured or tenure-track professors, they are often excellent teachers and take teaching seriously. This absorbs one's preparation time outside of the classroom, including reading relevant research and developing improved teaching strategies. Yet, those aspiring for a full-time position must continually apply for

other positions during each academic year, meanwhile part-timers must do so in the event that their current contract is not renewed. If a new position is obtained, they must perhaps move to a new location (with expenses often unpaid by the new employer). Many adjunct professors either move frequently from one city to another or drive long distances to positions at several institutions to make ends meet. In addition, as any academic is aware, one has to continue to work within one's field of specialty and do individual research including attending and presenting at conferences. The adjunct professor is encouraged to report such activities, but they are not usually reimbursed or funded in any way. Yet their university may list the activity publicly as part of a university-wide dedication to research and engaged scholarship.

Finally, the impact of contingent employment reaches into other areas, such as student loan debt. Many professors who hold advanced degrees have

student loan debt—one estimate puts the average close to \$61,000.⁴⁰ Even though data on student loan defaults for adjuncts is hard to find, it is difficult to imagine how one balances daily living expenses, student loan expenses, and saving for the future with the low wages earned by adjuncts.

In spite of these difficulties, many adjuncts remain loyal employees of their institutions. Best available estimates suggest that almost three-quarters of adjunct employees have been at their institution for at least five years, with two-fifths being at the same institution for 11 years or more.⁴¹ To those of us involved in higher education, it should be disconcerting that such loyalty and dedication to teaching are largely unrewarded.

Students, who are often unaware of faculty status unless informed by their professors, also suffer from having faculty who are rushed and short of time, lack office space for meetings, and are less available to requests for letters of recommendation, academic help outside of class, or career advice. Faculty members a student has come to know and admire can disappear suddenly and without warning. Lack of continuity and consistency can occur in courses and sequences taught by multiple professors who are unable to meet frequently for planning and coordination purposes. Adjunct faculty often lack support and mentorship from more experienced faculty, thus their teaching and research capabilities do not grow as quickly as those of tenure-track colleagues. Indeed, finding time to do any research at all is a challenge for contingent faculty.⁴² Yet research, with attendant publications, is essential to achieving coveted tenure status.

Kimmel and Fairchild, writing in *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, surveyed the literature on the teaching effectiveness of part-time faculty and found many of the issues just listed,⁴³ along with evidence that these factors did affect students negatively and contribute to grade inflation among part-time faculty eager to avoid student complaints. Eagan and Jaeger caution particularly against using part-time faculty to teach “gatekeeper” introductory courses in the major, as they found students were “significantly and negatively affected,” mostly by the lack of availability and accessibility of part-time faculty when they need help outside class, and that this

reduced the university’s retention of these students.⁴⁴

The Question of Pay

The average pay scale for part-time professors covers a wide range. The Kalmanovitz Institute estimated that adjuncts are paid anywhere from \$2,300 per course (often with a two-course limit per semester) up to about \$7,000 per course in exceptional situations.⁴⁵ More data come from an innovative “crowdsourcing” approach by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.⁴⁶ A database posted online for the past several years has invited all faculty, including adjuncts, to post their pay and the institution they work at. This database has been continually updated as new participants join the tables. It shows a wide range that varies by sector and discipline, from a low of \$250 among public sector four-year colleges for a literature course at Valencia College to a high of \$15,000 for an engineering course at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. Lowest among private-college contracts listed was \$508 for an anthropology course at the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico in Orlando, Florida, meanwhile the highest in this sector was \$20,000 for an architecture and design course at Cornell University. The database is searchable by faculty type, sector, state, and other categories.

The Kalmanovitz Initiative reports that median adjunct compensation for a three-credit course is \$2,700⁴⁷ and the *Chronicle of Higher Education* database confirms this in many fields,⁴⁸ although private colleges tend to pay more. Low pay factors into the decisions of an adjunct who wishes to teach and also raise a family. Some of the comments on the *Chronicle of Higher Education* database note dire circumstances among those working for extremely low pay.

Dissatisfaction with their status at some universities has led professors both full- and part-time (including graduate students) to organize and form labor unions with negotiating powers. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) has been involved in these efforts and has established a chapter at a Jesuit university.⁴⁹ The AAUP has also organized faculty unions at many universities and community colleges. In both the SEIU and the AAUP, some chapters include both

tenured and non-tenure-track faculty, whereas others separate the two types of faculty into different chapters.⁵⁰ In many states, however, these unions have been minimally effective, in part due to legislation or court rulings that prohibit or deny protection to those who organize.

A good example of how unionizing has helped is the recent success of the collaboration between part-time and full-time professors at Notre Dame de Namur in Belmont, California, which, according to the SEIU, is “the ninth private institution to allow tenured and tenure-track... professors to unionize.”⁵¹ According to the SEIU, the union contract also protects faculty rights to academic freedom. These are social justice actions that can serve as models. In another example, there are 46,000 non-tenure-track professors in the California community college system alone, and a non-profit community action and labor rights resource has been created through the California Part-Time Faculty Association (CPFA) to support them.⁵²

In 2015, there was a move by some adjuncts to obtain unemployment compensation for the summer months when they were not teaching. Many claims were denied, and little to no information was given or easily obtainable on the process for appealing negative decisions. Moreover, several universities fought such claims. One adjunct familiar to the authors was an all-but-dissertation (ABD), part-time professor who did receive unemployment compensation in the summers of 2015 and 2016. Yet despite winning this compensation in 2015, the second summer request was fought by the university. The professor won upon appeal, with the added requirement and burden of proof that the professor did not have alternative employment for the 2016–2017 academic year. The problem our colleague faced was the tentative nature of contingency work, which made it hard to predict future employment. Such a scenario creates two problems: one for the professor and one for the university. For the professor, appealing an unemployment denial is risky due to the precarious nature of adjunct work. For the university, if more successful claims for unemployment are filed, the costs of hiring contingent faculty will increase.

The majority of community college faculty are adjunct professors as well but some states, such as Massachusetts, are making real strides to change the system. Massachusetts House Bill 639, entitled An Act Investing in Public Higher Education, specifically addresses reducing the reliance on, and exploitation of, part-time instructors at the state’s public colleges and universities. The bill, among other things, guarantees what they are calling “equal pay and benefits” for the state’s part-time instructors.⁵³

If contingent faculty were to unionize and go on strike, problems could arise for both the institution and its students. At York University in Ontario, Canada, a strike by 3,300 contract faculty seeking job security closed down the university for almost three months.⁵⁴ In Ontario, where the Ontario Public Service Employees Union has organized faculty at community colleges, a five-week, province-wide strike by more than 12,000 faculty in 2017 shut down all of the province’s 24 public two-year colleges. This affected more than 400,000 students.⁵⁵ Key issues were the rights of contingent faculty (which stood at 70 percent at these institutions) and protection of academic freedom.⁵⁶ Faculty were forced back to work by legislation in early December 2017, and binding arbitration produced a settlement that granted key gains for part-time faculty and a guarantee of academic freedom for all faculty.⁵⁷

The Role of Jesuit Values

One vehicle for exploring our moral obligations as Jesuit universities is the various mission statements of our institutions as well as the Mission Examen and Reaffirmations self-studies done by several Jesuit colleges and universities. Using our own institution as an example, John Carroll University’s mission statement says that, as a Jesuit institution, we hold ourselves to a high standard of care and respect for the individual. It reads in part:

Dedicated to the total development of the human, the University offers an environment in which *every* student, *faculty*, and staff person may feel welcomed [italics added]. Within this environment there is concern for the human and spiritual developmental needs of the

students and a deep respect for the freedom and dignity of the human person. A faculty not only professionally qualified, but also student oriented, *considers excellence in interpersonal relationships* [italics added] as well as academic achievement among its primary goals.⁵⁸

These goals are explored further in the statement “On the Catholic and Jesuit Identity of John Carroll University,” which is also posted in the Mission and Identity section of the university website. This statement emphasizes that “there is a particular care of the treasury of wisdom, meaning, beauty, and *ethical commitment* that is part of the Catholic intellectual and cultural tradition” [italics added].⁵⁹ John Carroll University is “Catholic in its radical commitment to forging a community that is faithful to the asceticism of authentic dialogue with others, *faithful in its mutual respect for the inherent dignity of all peoples*, and faithful in the practice of a Eucharistic-inspired hospitality that welcomes all God’s people” [italics added].⁶⁰

Furthermore, it says, “[This] commitment to the works of truth, justice, and peace binds the faculty, staff and student body of John Carroll University to an essential characteristic of its Ignatian heritage and Jesuit tradition.”⁶¹ The statement notes that its Catholic identity suggests the university lacks “meaning” if it is isolated from human culture and the world.⁶² As part of a community, the university has as its mission being “teachers of justice, and mentors for peace.”⁶³

A review of several Examen and Reaffirmation reports from Jesuit universities also sheds light on the role of adjuncts in our institutions of higher learning. We examined five of these reports, all completed in the last few years.⁶⁴ Interestingly, a search for qualifiers to faculty/professor like “adjunct,” “contingent,” “contingency,” and “visiting” found two self-reports with zero references to the above classifications, one report with one reference to visiting faculty, one report with one reference to contingency faculty, and two reports with a combined total of five references to adjunct faculty. For one institution, the single reference to contingent faculty and two of the three references to adjunct faculty were due to a recent unionization effort at their institution. In addition, a review of the document “Some

Characteristics of Jesuit Colleges and Universities: A Self-Evaluation Instrument”⁶⁵ reveals that, although faculty are mentioned twenty times, there is no mention of adjuncts and other contingent faculty in the document. Finally, a review of our own college’s Faculty Handbook reveals that the word adjunct is absent. On the surface this suggests that contingent/adjunct faculty are not viewed as a major part of an institution and are not considered essential to the operation and mission of the institution. Since they now are a majority of the faculty in number, their absence is striking. That said, personal communication with one of the main authors of our own Examen and Affirmation Report suggests that, even though adjuncts were not explicitly mentioned, the University does consider them a valuable part of the faculty. Our institution, for example, specifically includes adjunct faculty in its Ignatian pedagogy training.

Embedded within these university statements is the idea of a mutual respect for the inherent dignity of all, and the notion that this respect for all is a significant part of the glue that binds the various components of the institution together. When we fail to include all members of our institutions in our commitment to justice and the development of peace, we are in fact failing both ourselves and our students. We should all care about our contingent/adjunct colleagues. Not only are they deserving of a better life simply because they are humans created in the image of God but they also are deserving of a better deal because they bring value to our institutions. Adjunct faculty bring a richness to our institutions that tenure-track faculty cannot always deliver. They allow us to expand our course offerings and thereby allow us to develop our curricula in ways that we could not with our limited full-time tenure-track faculty. Due to the nature of their professional development, they also bring different levels of expertise to the classroom and offer connections to the community that busy, full-time faculty may not have time to cultivate. If given more resources, adjunct faculty could invest more time prepping classes, and more time bringing a different set of knowledge to advising and mentoring. These tasks (teaching, mentoring, and advising) are the essence of an undergraduate education. A fully engaged adjunct faculty member might be able to contribute in ways that a full-time

faculty member cannot. This would be beneficial: not only for the adjunct but also for the student and, therefore, the institution. More engaged adjuncts could add value to our tuition dollars, and this added value is what attracts students. As elegantly stated by David Perlmutter, “Human decency must act as a driving force but we... must work together to emphasize a key point. The quality of our education is our brand. Treating professionals badly, underpaying them, disparaging their contributions, marginalizing their intellects, is industrially foolish and budgetarily shortsighted.”⁶⁶

As faculty at Jesuit institutions, we are called upon to recognize the connection between our institutions’ Catholic social traditions and our moral commitment to promote a just workplace. This ideal is supported by Catholic teachings, which state that a basic test of morality is how we treat the most vulnerable among us. Church teachings, therefore, do not allow us to treat fellow members of our organizations as if they were not fully recognized and important members of our organizations, and so be placed routinely in situations where they cannot reach their full potential.

Similar thoughts have been raised by Fr. Peter Kolvenbach, S.J., former Superior General of the Society of Jesus. In his noteworthy 2000 address at Santa Clara University, Fr. Kolvenbach wrote that even though the measure of our institutions lies in the vocations and avocations of our students, it also lies in how we treat one another.⁶⁷ The treatment of the marginalized should be the essence of a commitment to human dignity and the promotion of social justice. Without this commitment, our words ring hollow and we fall short of one of our most important values: the care and concern for the least among us. As Fr. Kolvenbach himself noted, the societal implications of how we manage our institutions internally is perhaps the most difficult aspect of how we proceed. Nonetheless, as a Jesuit institution, Catholic Social Teaching (CST) instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable foremost in our thoughts and actions. These thoughts have been amplified by the March 2014 statement from 150 Catholic scholars who call upon our Catholic academic institutions to “do all in their power to see that [adjuncts] are

treated with respect and justice and included in the daily life of their institution.” Adjuncts, they noted, are the “poor and vulnerable” among academics.⁶⁸ When we fail to treat our employees justly, we fail to take the “moral high road” that our faith suggests.⁶⁹

Other Catholic writers have also addressed the issue of justice and fairness in society. Novello, for example, has written that the Church may only move forward when it knows and lives with the truth.⁷⁰ Moving forward to reduce income inequalities provides not only economic benefits but also has cultural and spiritual benefits. What is at stake, he argues, is “the full flourishing of the human person.”⁷¹

Michael J. Buckley, S.J., in his book on the Catholic university,⁷² also brings many insights to this issue. He notes that, although the accumulation of knowledge is important, knowledge without a moral guidepost is not a desirable outcome. Perhaps more important than the “mere accumulation of knowledge,” he argues, is the moral framework that guides the use of knowledge. Jesuit education is designed to promote both the intellectual and moral faculties of an individual—with moral faculties being the more important. Knowledge, although useful, concludes Buckley, is not enough unless it has “a guiding and controlling force.”⁷³ The promotion of justice, he notes, cannot be a “choice” but rather must be an integral part of what we do. One step toward promoting and acting justly would be to recognize regularly and more fully the plight of adjunct faculty and to do so with reason and compassion. Tenure-track and tenured faculty, as well as administrators and students, are in particularly powerful positions to do so.

Buckley also notes that the number of poor and/or marginalized people is not the will of God, rather, it is the result of our institutions, which often fail to respond to human needs.⁷⁴ For Catholic institutions, this is not acceptable. As Crawford Sullivan and Pagano note, an institution should not be measured only by what it produces, but also whether it protects the dignity of the human person.⁷⁵

One important aspect of human dignity is equality, wherein all people share in the resources

of the institution. As CST holds, when we allow our institutions to separate people into various hierarchies—such as full-time and adjunct faculty—we often prevent people from achieving their full potential. It is a violation of Church teachings to exclude individuals from fully participating in society, thus their institutions, by extension. Inclusivity, therefore, is important. As Hall elegantly inquires, it also raises the question of how we “hear the voices [of adjuncts] over the silence of the tenured?”⁷⁶

When CST calls for a more equal sharing of community power and resources, it is extending the concept of human dignity to all humans: “to be excluded from playing a significant role in the life of a society is a serious injustice.”⁷⁷ Moreover, anything that prevents this from happening is also an injustice; when faced with an injustice, people of faith must speak out. As pointed out by Firer Hinze, CST and worker justice extend beyond the idea of a sufficient wage to meet one’s material needs.⁷⁸ When viewed in their entirety, CST also encompasses the ideas of security or the ability to be protected from the effects of illness, accidents, and/or calamities, due to low status. Also included is the ability of all employees to contribute their voice meaningfully to their workplace. Sadly, as noted above, many adjunct faculty lack these opportunities.

Moreover, while not intentional, the establishment of a social structure that fails to allow all individuals to fully flourish within an organization can be considered a “social sin.” As articulated by Massaro, social sins are what we fall prey to when we fail to think about the consequences of our actions or inactions, especially when the consequences extend to those who are most vulnerable.⁷⁹ In these situations, our failure to act can be just as damaging as our actions. This point has been reinforced by Finn in his analysis of sinful social structures.⁸⁰ He notes that social structures, through the relationships they develop, often impede the full development of individuals. Particularly when addressing adjunct faculty, Finn concludes that university structures often violate the “demands of human dignity” of adjuncts by restricting their opportunities for growth, and by impeding the development of human relations and the enhancement of duties.⁸¹ This question lies at the heart of our work, for no faculty or staff

member should be made to feel excluded, meaningless, or invisible. It also touches on a second concern: How do we ensure that the institution maintains viability while still addressing the concerns of those who are currently marginalized? As noted above, this concern is exacerbated by the fact that an inordinate number of adjunct faculty are women and people of color. As Jesuit institutions of higher education, it is imperative that we do not increase the structural injustices that affect these groups through our treatment of adjunct faculty.

We believe change is possible because we create our social structures and therefore we can change our social structures and their underlying culture. As Buckley notes, “the University must instill a profound attention to and disciplined appreciation of the world of pain and misery in which so many live.”⁸² Even though this message often is addressed to the education of our students, we believe it should also be addressed to the treatment of our colleagues. Each of us finds our humanistic values confirmed through our participation in our community. Moreover, it is through our community that values, culture, and identity are developed and maintained. If we do not fully bring our entire faculty into our community, what does it say about our institution, and what message does it send to our students and community partners? Adjuncts, for example, have noted they feel like seasonal workers: necessary to complete the work of the institution but viewed as marginal individuals who can be easily replaced. One result is they often feel like “a ghost among the living.”⁸³

The CST call to solidarity states that we are just one family, and calls upon us to explore what it means to be fully human. CST calls upon us to act. We must explore the consequences of our actions or inactions, for a failure to act can be just as damaging as a wrongful act. Institutions, like societies, must respond positively to these concerns. As Catholic institutions this is even more imperative, as Christ’s teachings suggest that the call to justice is not optional, and therefore it is essential that we walk justly with all.⁸⁴

Although our moral objectives may not always mesh with the financial reality of our academic institutions, a constant reflection of both our

needs and our guiding principles is essential to continue to ensure that we are continually guided by our core values. For example, when faced with financial difficulties, it is tempting reduce our commitment to our Jesuit values. As market concerns in higher education have become more prevalent in recent years, it is helpful to look back on our Jesuit values to ensure that we are guided by more than just a financial bottom line. Moreover, we must remember that our Jesuit values exist not just to regulate our behavior but also as a social contract with our employees and our students. As suggested by Lauritzen, it is easy to take actions that reduce the human dignity of others.⁸⁵ Humans, however, are not commodities to be bought and sold on a semester-by-semester basis. A constant look back at our guiding principles will ensure that we do not drift too far from our norms, values, and beliefs.

Concluding Thoughts

Jesuit academic institutions hold teaching excellence as a paramount goal. Unfortunately, as noted above, adjunct and other part-time faculty can face numerous difficulties in creating an enriched learning environment for their students. Many cite lack of preparation time, heavy teaching schedules, less time to spend with students outside of the classroom, and other factors that can impede an individual's ability to offer a quality learning environment. Even though the data are mixed, Edmonds cites research that suggests that students who take more courses from contingency faculty are less likely to graduate on time and less likely to be mentored for future success.⁸⁶ Edmonds concludes by noting that parents should take it upon themselves to explore how colleges employ and treat their adjunct faculty. Schools that pay and treat adjuncts well "are more likely" to offer a higher quality education. Fredrickson, in reviewing the same literature, states that a key variable that influences the quality of adjunct instruction is the extent to which adjunct professors are brought into the university community.⁸⁷ Institutions that offered adjuncts instructional support, training, and integration into the social setting of the institution found students did better in their coursework and were more likely to return for their sophomore year. For academic institutions, these are benchmarks worth striving for.

At this point two concepts have been offered that need further clarification. First, we have discussed "justice" without offering a definition of what type of justice we are advocating. The term justice can be rather nebulous and may encompass a wide variety of behaviors. Although social justice certainly applies in this situation, as it may be considered a moral virtue that regulates social relationships, we believe that commutative justice may be the cleanest example of the type of justice we are seeking. We define commutative justice as a virtue that regulates *actions* between individuals. Therefore, certain actions require reciprocal actions from others. Failure to reciprocate can be considered a harm and requires remedial action.⁸⁸

As we have argued, even though adjuncts often enrich and bring value to the institution, many adjuncts are underpaid and ignored. This is a violation of commutative justice in that the obligation created by the work of the adjunct is not being met. If our institutions of higher learning are to remove the "ghost among the living," they will need to increase their attention to adjunct faculty and rectify the structural sin of low wages, low job security, and marginalization. This is commutative justice. Unlike Brennan and Magness we do not assume that those arguing for better pay are calling for universities to immediately pay all adjuncts \$15,000 per course.⁸⁹ Although increased pay is desirable, we are also calling for our institutions to increase the dignity and respect paid to adjuncts, especially those who have a long-term commitment to an institution. A chance to obtain pay raises, benefits, and a voice in the institution they serve would be a start. Some institutions have taken steps in this direction, but others need to follow. Adjuncts could be given a greater voice on university and department committees. Recognition for quality performance in the classroom or to the institution could be recognized with minimal expense. Our own institution has made significant steps in this direction with an Adjunct Teacher of the Year award.

Additional needs can also be met with minimal expense. Increases in resources for professional development would only improve the university. For adjuncts who lack healthcare coverage, provisions for minimal coverage would also be a significant contribution. One attempt to respond

to these issues is the development of the Just Employment Policy (JEP), which offers a guide for addressing the concerns and needs of adjuncts and other contingent faculty.⁹⁰ Developed at Georgetown University with input from multiple Jesuit Institutions, the JEP offers a model and guide for institutions of higher education that wish “to act as a model employer” by recognizing worker rights and by committing to paying a living wage to all employees. The JEP offers a guide to just employment, enunciating principles such as preference for full-time positions, equal access to community resources, the payment of a living wage, and the creation and maintenance of a dignified workplace.⁹¹ Elements of the JEP have been incorporated by several institutions, such as Georgetown and John Carroll University.

The end result of increased attention to the plight of adjuncts would be two-fold. First, there would be the instrumental aspect of the effort. If universities were to reach out to adjuncts and incorporate their voice in to the institution, one could foresee a more robust and vibrant institution. This outcome-based value would be a win-win for all involved in that it would enhance the educational experience of the students, faculty, and staff. It would make the institution a more inviting place for both new students and new faculty, thus enhancing the educational reputation of the institution. It is also possible that a more enriching adjunct experience may attract more talented people to consider the position. All things being equal, our students deserve the best faculty we can give them. If enhancing the adjunct experience generates better candidates for the position, both our students and our institutions will benefit. We prosper when we bring excellence to the table.

Secondly, better treatment of adjuncts would resolve some of the duty-based obligations of an employer. Currently, many believe we are failing our adjuncts in that they are poorly compensated and poorly treated. If someone gives value to the institution, they deserve value back. As faculty in a Jesuit institution, we are morally required to work for justice both outside the institution and inside the institution. A greater concern for commutative or reciprocal justice would not only ensure that we are consistent with our values but, as noted above, would have the distinct possibility of improving our institutions of higher education.

This brings us to our last concern—*cura apostolica*—the concern for the institution. We will only succeed and thrive if we care for the individual as well as the institution itself. As much as we would like to lower our discount rates, increase service learning opportunities, run more immersion programs, and so forth, we are constrained by logistical and fiscal concerns. Enhancing the status and remuneration of any group of individuals will increase the expenses of the institution. Increased budgeting is not a zero-sum game, however. Universities, like all institutions, manipulate budgets every year. Increases are often made with both the viability *and* the mission of the institution in mind. Budgetary increases are made due to a belief they will bring value to the institution. We believe that increasing the resources available to adjuncts will also add value to the institution. It will lift faculty expertise and service, enhance the student experience, improve the value of our tuition dollar, and allow us to meet better our moral obligations consistent with being a Jesuit institution. It will help us meet both the concept of *cura personalis* and *cura apostolica*. This is an effort worth pursuing. HJE

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