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## REDRESSING THE ADJUNCT STAFFING MODEL IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Dr. Jill Rappoport, Director of Graduate Studies

REDRESSING THE ADJUNCT STAFFING MODEL  
IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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DISSERTATION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
College of Arts and Sciences  
at the University of Kentucky

By  
Andrew Christopher Casto

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Pearl James, Associate Professor of English

Lexington, Kentucky

2017

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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### REDRESSING THE ADJUNCT STAFFING MODEL IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Since their advent as supplemental staff at community colleges four decades ago, part-time instructors, or adjuncts, have since been employed with increasing frequency and in escalating numbers across all institutional types of American higher education. Currently comprising approximately forty percent of all postsecondary faculty, part-time instructors now outnumber full-time nontenure-track, tenure-track, and tenured faculty respectively on many campuses. This pervasive trend has created a professional climate of uncertainty and, in some cases, even hostility as American colleges and universities struggle to adapt to ever changing enrollment populations, market demands, technological innovations, and political pressure. As the sustainability of traditional faculty tenure hangs in the balance and as opportunities to secure tenure-track appointments continually diminish, the arguably inequitable working conditions of college faculty hired off the tenure track have fallen under public and political scrutiny since these instructors now provide such a large proportion of undergraduate education. This dissertation offers a comprehensive overview of the adjunct staffing model's development and consequences as well as a proposed solution particularly to chairpersons of academic departments that have become inordinately dependent upon part-time instructors to teach their undergraduate curriculum.

Combining personal experience with recent research, the first chapter offers a detailed description of the typical adjunct's current working conditions, which include heavy workloads, poor compensation, and insufficient time for preparation and professional development. I briefly review the origins of and dramatically increasing reliance upon postsecondary adjunct employment over the past forty years. I situate the present undervaluing of part-time instructors within the context of colleges' persistently rising "sticker prices," which most commonly derive from curricular as well as extracurricular amenities and a drastic increase in non-instructional staff. I suggest that colleges cannot afford to ignore the adjunct problem much longer due to growing public and political awareness of the issue. I conclude by encouraging college governing boards, administrators, and faculty to collaborate in order to arrange respectable and sustainable terms of employment.

The second chapter analyzes how the current model of adjunct employment adversely affects higher education. In addition to the first chapter's grievances pertaining specifically to adjuncts, college faculty as a whole suffers from the deprofessionalization and bifurcation resulting from the widespread overdependence upon part-time instruction. Furthermore, college students suffer from part-time instructors' compromised ethos and resultant "shielding," last-minute staffing practices by means of which institutions often hire adjuncts, part-time instructors' inadequate access to instructional resources, and irrational models for adjunct compensation. Finally, the adjunct problem harms the reputations of postsecondary institutions overall, indicating dysfunction and lack of accountability to an already skeptical public. The chapter closes with a call to action, encouraging all postsecondary institutions to consider improved, sustainable employment for all faculty.

The third and final chapter proposes a solution in the form of a standardized college faculty position, which I call the core-survey instructor. Based loosely on a specific definition of contingent faculty, such a professor would assume reasonably heavy teaching loads as a full-time employee of one institution in exchange for a respectable salary, renewable multi-year contracts, and limited benefits. I explain how core-survey instructors will benefit postsecondary institutions not only by resolving the detriments listed in the second essay but also via improved remedial instruction, academic advising, and participation in shared governance.

**KEYWORDS:** Adjunct faculty; College teachers, Part-time—United States; Nontenured faculty; Teaching conditions; Universities and colleges—United States—Faculty.

Andrew C. Casto

October 17, 2017

Date

REDRESSING THE ADJUNCT STAFFING MODEL  
IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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October 17, 2017

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*To all my fellow adjuncts  
whose seldom told dedication and sacrifice  
has helped sustain higher education  
over the past four decades.*

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## Introduction

Nearing the end of my doctoral studies, I concluded that my ideal professional goal consisted of securing a full-time faculty position with an English department at a liberal arts college. So during my exploratory research for this project, the problem of determining the challenges currently facing liberal arts institutions and how the humanities in general and English departments in particular can adapt in order to meet those challenges initially guided my investigations. I soon realized that many of the broader obstacles facing liberal arts institutions resemble if not coincide with those facing all institutional types. And while I still recognize the heterogeneous nature of American higher education and the unique distinctions separating various institutions, I nonetheless decided to expand the application of my research while refining my subject to address a problem with which I am well acquainted: the adjunct staffing model.

### 1. Constraints of Subject

#### 1.1. Definition

Although I define adjuncts and describe their typical working conditions in my first chapter, the context for that discussion warrants a few prefatory comments here. First, when I use the term “adjunct,” I refer specifically to part-time, nontenure-track college faculty<sup>1</sup>. At the risk of sounding overly repetitious, I restrict my terms throughout the following chapters to “adjunct” and “part-time instructor/faculty.” Professor of Higher Education Adrianna Kezar and postdoctoral fellow Cecile Sam explain that an “alphabet soup of names” (e.g., contingent faculty, instructor, lecturer, clinical faculty, sessional

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<sup>1</sup> c.f., Tuckman’s operative definition borrowed from the A.A.U.P. (315), Gappa and Leslie’s definition (3), the U.S. House Committee’s description (United States 1), and Shulman et al.’s definitions (“Visualizing Change” 8, 25).

faculty, &c.) currently applies to all nontenure-track faculty<sup>2</sup>, which makes for difficult research and a confusing discourse (5). Therefore, my limited use of synonyms proceeds from a desire for clarity rather than from a lack of creativity.

Second, such an extensive catalogue of job titles has proven to be more than a mere inconvenience; in truth, the phenomenon is rather telling. Kezar and Sam admit that the origins, developments, and applications of these labels are difficult to identify (6); nevertheless, they are rife with implications. In contrast to the largely standardized titles for tenure-track professorships, the variety of titles for non-tenure-track faculty derives from the fact that “institutions often define and establish such titles for themselves” (38), indicating a “decentralized nature of hiring” (37) resulting in inconsistent expectations and attitudes between employers. Furthermore, I suspect that such a variety may have developed at least partly in response to the growing stigma surrounding adjunct instruction, which I detail in the following chapters. For example, a “classier” name may lend an exclusively nominal dignity to the position or may obscure an institution’s overreliance upon adjunct faculty.

Third, the import of job title responds to the question, “What’s in a name?” For what at first appears to constitute merely a scrutinizing issue of definition in fact demonstrates one of the elemental problems resulting from this staffing model. Whether consciously or not, adjuncts must endure a peculiar professional identity crisis. For instance, our varying titles at times suggest position—that which we are (e.g., part-time, contingent, adjunct, &c). At other times, we must professionally conceive of ourselves via negation—that which we are not (e.g., nontenure-track). Like the titles of every career,

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<sup>2</sup> Also see Baldwin and Chronister’s *Teaching without Tenure*, pages 2-3.

those of part-time college faculty suggest a number of responsibilities—to our students, to our departments, to our institutions, and even to ourselves and our loved ones. The means by which we distinguish these obligations in turn affects how we distinguish our dedication to our duties—in short, our performance. And since so many undergraduates now directly interact with adjunct instructors, these distinctions prominently determine the quality of general education that the majority of American postsecondary institutions currently offer.

Therefore, while I consider the term “adjunct” to have become a largely outmoded modifier in recent decades, I nonetheless adhere to it due to its frequent usage and relatively stable application throughout academia.

## 1.2. Heterogeneity

One of the obstacles Kezar and Sam identify in researching nontenure-track faculty concerns too many studies disregarding the “different motivations, experiences, contracts, working conditions, disciplinary backgrounds, and institutional types” that characterize such instruction (11)<sup>3</sup>. They compare such generalizations to “pointillist portraits” that fail to yield accurate and specific data (19)<sup>4</sup>. While I certainly agree that such considerations are integral to understanding adjunct faculty, I deliberately avoid such meticulous dissection for four main reasons.

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<sup>3</sup> As one of the earliest observers to acknowledge this diversity, Tuckman creates a taxonomy relegating part-time instructors to one or more of seven categories: semiretired, students, hopeful full-timers, full-mooners, homeworkers, part-mooners, and part-unknowners (307). Fifteen years later, Gappa and Leslie “broadened Tuckman’s typology into four loose categories: career enders; specialists, experts, and professionals; aspiring academics; and freelancers” (47).

<sup>4</sup> Baldwin and Chronister share this perspective, arguing “that superficial generalizations about faculty off the tenure track can be both inaccurate and misleading” (4). While I certainly agree with and appreciate such considerations, I question how much time must pass and how many studies must be conducted in order “to understand the rich diversity of roles and experiences that fall under the heading of non-tenure-track appointments” (4) before any positive and meaningful reform transpires.

First and foremost, I construct my argument upon the premise that colleges' overreliance upon the prevailing model of adjunct instruction invites exploitation. The poor compensation, inadequate instructional resources, lack of benefits, and other deficiencies I describe at length in my first chapter insufficiently recompense these staff members for the extensive education, experience, and time commitment such positions demand. I assert this claim regardless of such auxiliary factors as an adjunct's particular age, race, gender, motivation, professional goals, career stage, satisfaction, discipline, and institutional type because the potentially abusive variables remain constant despite these traits, important as they are.

Second, maintaining a broad definition expands the scope of my subject. While I note exceptions when appropriate, I prefer to concentrate my argument on the aspects of part-time instruction that most adjuncts share in common. My purpose in doing so aims not only to address but also to redress pervasive problems in the hopes of ameliorating the working conditions of as many college instructors as possible.

Third, while typological distinctions serve individual studies well, they create competing taxonomies that obfuscate broader discussion. For example, I began my career as an adjunct under Tuckman's "student" and Gappa and Leslie's "aspiring academic" categories, transitioned to Tuckman's "hopeful full-timer," and now constitute Tuckman's "part-mooner" and Gappa and Leslie's "freelancer" while retaining many "hopeful full-timer" and "aspiring academic" traits. Initially, I was encouraged that such designations already existed but soon realized that integrating them into my own argument would ironically obscure rather than refine definition. Also, they suggest a clear delineation of characteristics that does not always correspond with the overlap that often occurs in part-

timers' actual work experience, which reinforces my previous two points. For, while specific needs will certainly vary from one adjunct to another, the general needs I address in the following chapters pertain to most if not all part-time instructors, regardless of their unique circumstances<sup>5</sup>.

Finally, suggesting that ethical hiring practices are contingent upon such inconstant variables strikes me as a dangerous contradiction because doing so undermines my insistence that immoderate application of the adjunct model itself is intrinsically flawed. Furthermore, such an implication could conceivably lead to discrimination and stagnation. Take, for example, a popular research topic such as "employee satisfaction." Let us say that men nearing retirement age who express no desire to teach full-time and whose expertise lies in professional or vocational fields tend to find the greatest gratification serving as adjuncts. Entirely removing ethics from the selection process and privileging such subjective criteria above all others would rule out any applicant who does fulfill this typology. And while such qualifications may lead to a more satisfied instructional staff, they would not necessarily translate into a more satisfying educational experience for tuition-paying students. Absent from such a "rubric" are perhaps the most essential considerations of educational background and professional experience. Moreover, seeking to recruit a "satiated" faculty could easily result in complacency and ineffectiveness. Therefore, while I readily admit to my argument's potential of presenting adjuncts as stereotypes rather than as flesh-and-blood humans, devoting too much attention to our

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<sup>5</sup> Gappa and Leslie would most likely refute my approach, insisting, "If the use of part-timers varies and if part-time faculty themselves have such widely differing backgrounds, it does not make sense to us to issue sweeping policy statements based on assumptions about part-time faculty as a homogeneous group of itinerant workers who are potentially damaging to academic quality" (5). Nevertheless, I contend that establishing full-time nontenure-track instructors as the ruling paradigm to supplementing (rather than replacing) tenured faculty while employing adjuncts as a rare and truly need-based exception would better acknowledge patterns transcending adjunct diversity while improving educational quality.

diversity with the commendable intentions of better understanding us could ironically bring about an equally dehumanizing corollary.

That said, two specific characteristics of adjuncts are worth mentioning here in order to avoid misrepresentation in the following chapters. First, in their study of nontenure-track faculty, Kezar and Sam insightfully distinguish between voluntary and involuntary instructors. They define voluntary nontenure-track instructors as those who “actively choose not to take a full-time position or tenure-track position” (35). By contrast, involuntary non-tenure-track instructors consist of “faculty who are looking for tenured positions in their field and currently hold the appointment waiting for a tenure-track opening” (36). The constant assumption regarding the arguably exploitive nature of the adjunct model underlying my argument could easily mislead the reader to conclude that all part-time instructors are so-called “aspiring academics” (Gappa and Leslie 54-55) who “make do” with their positions until they can attain full-time, tenure-track status, which admittedly is not the case.

In fact, some adjuncts actually prefer part-time employment for several reasons. Again, these preferences are both negative and positive. By negation, most adjuncts are not required to devote the extracurricular time to conducting research and seeking publication (Kezar and Sam 9) that often consume tenure-track faculty’s “breaks” (64). Some part-time instructors feel relieved to be excused from faculty governance and professional development (64), and some report experiencing less job-related stress than do their tenure-track peers (67). By position, some adjuncts enjoy a greater work-life balance (36) and schedule flexibility (66), which allow for more time to spend with their families (9), to engage in other full-time employment (14), and “to pursue their interests” (63). For some



adjuncts, part-time teaching offers the “psychic rewards” deriving from an opportunity to participate in academe that they may not have otherwise (Tuckman 306).

While such perquisites definitely apply to some adjuncts, however, they are nonetheless contingent upon a certain degree of privilege. For example, Tuckman notes that “for those who would prefer to work full-time...flexibility is likely to have little value” (305)<sup>6</sup>; devoting time to one’s family or a hobby assumes that the adjunct does not have to hold down at least one other job that consumes such spare time. Moreover, “exemption” from research and governance essentially equates to “forbearance” for the many adjuncts who actually desire to conduct research and serve on institutional committees. Furthermore, enjoying the “summer off” assumes that adjuncts’ personal budgets do not compel them to scramble to secure other employment after submitting their final grades for the spring semester. Therefore, while these benefits do indeed exist for some adjuncts, their subjective nature relegates them to the category of inconstant variables I discuss above. Again, I mention this point strictly out of a desire to be fair to my readers so that they do not receive the false impression that every adjunct seeks a full-time tenure-track appointment.

Second, and related to the first, Kezar and Sam address the narrative that has grown up around this academic subculture: “The common mythology is that part-time faculty are strongly dissatisfied with their jobs and feel exploited given the poor working conditions, hostile climate, and unclear role definition” (65). They proceed to call this perception into

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<sup>6</sup> Tuckman proceeds to elaborate on the rather subjective nature of flexibility’s benefits: “Denied the opportunity to work as much as they wish, limited in their opportunities to participate in departmental decisions, and often unable to find satisfactory alternative positions in academe, this group is unlikely to see part-time employment as conferring the benefits discussed above. What seems like flexibility to the other groups may appear as rigidity to these persons” (307).

question, admitting that “one of the most confusing findings of studies is that part-time faculty tend to be more satisfied or as satisfied as their tenure-track colleagues” (65). This apparent discrepancy evidences the ambivalence that accompanies adjunct employment. While some adjuncts are perfectly content and others are perpetually miserable, the experiences of many—I dare say, most—adjuncts entail both great satisfaction as well as remarkable dissatisfaction concomitantly. In response to the inconsistency they pose, Kezar and Sam accurately observe, “Although non-tenure-track faculty are satisfied overall, they are less satisfied than tenure-track faculty with regard to salary, benefits, job security, or time to keep current in their field” (65), in short, because “they universally feel like second-class citizens in a caste system” (75). We can resolve the seeming contradiction when we understand that it is entirely possible to love one’s work while simultaneously loathing the conditions under which that work transpires.

In my case, for example, I derive great satisfaction from working with my students, teaching the content of my curriculum, and my departmental colleagues’ support. Nevertheless, I am frequently infuriated by the insulting stipend, lack of benefits, and dismissive if not negligible attitude displayed by particular administrators. Consequently, my own work as an adjunct amounts to a sort of split-service. On the one hand, I serve my students, my department, and even, to an extent, my institution out of joy and pride while, on the other hand, I serve some of my administrative masters out of an almost spiteful sense of duty seething from little else than my own defiant self-respect<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Gappa and Leslie’s remarks demonstrate the enduring prevalence of this ambivalent disposition. They record that, on the one hand, “despite their frustrations and unhappiness with their career choices or life-styles or with the employment policies or practices at their institutions, part-timers remain very committed to teaching at the college level” (41). On the other hand, they proceed to reiterate that, “however much pleasure part-timers may receive while teaching, they are dissatisfied with many aspects of their employment” (42).

I take the time to expound upon this distinction because I realize that the forthcoming chapters may, again, mislead my readers to believe that adjuncts are, without exception or variation, a disgruntled lot. We are conflicted to be sure, but to portray us as implacable malcontents would be an unfair misrepresentation on my part. Nevertheless, I stand by my claim that institutions must abandon the ruling adjunct model in favor of a more equitable paradigm regardless of each adjunct's respective level of personal satisfaction. My insistence upon greater job security, improved compensation and benefits, and facilitated access to instructional resources applies all across the board—to not only the involuntary cynic but also the voluntary optimist and every variant between those extremes.

### 1.3. Provisions for Voluntary Adjuncts

The distinction between voluntary and involuntary adjuncts demands an additional point of clarification. Upon reading my dissertation, my audience may conclude that I am calling for postsecondary institutions to eliminate all part-time faculty positions, which is not the case. Rather, I urge colleges and universities to replace the adjunct model with full-time nontenure-track instructors as the rule instead of the exception. My earlier claim that the practice is intrinsically flawed pertains to its misapplication and overuse rather than to any inherent deficiency in part-time instruction itself. In fact, some studies have demonstrated that, under certain circumstances, adjunct employment actually constitutes a superior arrangement.

Take, for instance, Tuckman's "full-mooner" (308) and Gappa and Leslie's "specialist, expert, or professional" (48). These adjuncts typically "have full-time positions elsewhere [and] already enjoy comparatively high salaries and relative employment

security” (51). Their teaching amounts to “a professional commitment, a community service, and a source of personal satisfaction” rather than a means to pay the bills (51). They have proven themselves to be particularly valuable in “professional and applied fields” (Baldwin and Chronister 81), such as architecture, dental hygiene, accounting, education (Gappa and Leslie 120), engineering, management (220), law, health sciences (Baldwin and Chronister 35), social work (124), and industrial technology (126).

Although these instructors commonly lack the academic credentials their tenured colleagues possess (Baldwin and Chronister 35, 126), they infuse current, “real world” experience into their teaching (40, 143; Gappa and Leslie 122, 225, 282). They avail their professional “contacts and connections” to their students and institutions (Gappa and Leslie 61). They facilitate access to “clinical experience” as well as “state-of-the-art equipment or front-of-the-curve ideas and practices” (122). Medical schools and education programs have employed such teachers in supervisory positions, and nontenure-track instructors have frequently coordinated internships in fields such as sociology, social work, and psychology (Baldwin and Chronister 36). They have compensated for faculty shortages in fields such as business, government, industry, engineering, and management during times when strong markets have afforded more lucrative career opportunities than has academia (Gappa and Leslie 220).

Baldwin and Chronister’s study revealed that such instructors often comprise “an influx of new people with new ideas and a high level of motivation” (124) who “provide a valuable supplement to the theory- and research-based knowledge of more traditional academics” and “help students bridge the gap between theory and practice” (126). Consequently, for some departments, refusal to hire any part-time instructors would prove

to be a costly error. Since the main point of improving adjuncts' working conditions is to offer higher quality education to students, it would defeat the purpose to dismiss excellent voluntary adjuncts simply because they are unwilling or unable to teach full-time. Granted, they still deserve better pay, but retaining talented voluntary adjuncts would not only preserve educational quality but also allow for the labor flexibility that institutions have been claiming as their primary motive for employing part-time instructors in the first place.

## 2. Audience

While a number of stakeholders should take an interest in the growing use of part-time instructors in higher education, not all of them have historically done so. Consequently, I have written this dissertation with two audiences in mind: a primary, realistic audience, who would more likely take action in response to my findings, and a secondary, ideal audience, who might acknowledge the merits of my argument but may disagree that the adjunct model presents an actual problem worth redressing. In short, while both audiences are affected and constitute agents of change, it will most likely be incumbent upon the former to motivate the latter.

### 2.1. Primary Audience

Accordingly, I have framed my argument to target department chairpersons, particularly in the academic fields of English, foreign language, and mathematics because these disciplines tend to rely most heavily upon adjuncts in order to teach their core curriculum and introductory courses<sup>8</sup> (Baldwin and Chronister 84-85, 87, 92, 123, 179; Gappa and Leslie 36, 90, 117, 156, 195, 220). Recent research has suggested the potentially

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<sup>8</sup> The adjuncts employed in these disciplines differ from those in the professional and applied fields in that they do not enjoy the same variety of career options beyond the academy. Trying to make a living exclusively by teaching at the college level, they often assume extremely heavy teaching loads in order to make ends meet.

detrimental long-term effects of this persisting short-sighted model. For example, education and economics professors Eric P. Bettinger and Bridget Terry Long explain that, for students,

early experiences within a discipline may influence subsequent decisions, and this has implications for future labor market returns as well as the distribution of workers across fields. Future course-taking behavior is significant in that it can be an indication of student interest, an expression of an expectation of future earnings, and a revelation of students' expected success. Additionally, college administrators and policymakers often track course-taking behavior because it can be a determinant of departmental funding and since the distribution of majors has implications for the oversupply or undersupply of certain professions. (599)

Given this consideration, excessive use of part-time instructors could create the proverbial vicious cycle for certain disciplines. A declining number of majors resulting from less than satisfying introductory experiences with adjuncts may reduce institutional support, which would most likely exacerbate the problem by forcing such departments to hire an even greater percentage of part-time instructors due to budget restrictions. Such a self-perpetuating predicament could very well jeopardize the future viability of a given field within the academy as well as its legitimacy beyond<sup>9</sup>.

I explicitly address department chairs because, while the constraints under which they must operate vary widely between not only institutions but also departments, as Gappa and Leslie identify in their study, “department chairpersons are the key leverage point in all of this” (276). That is to say, across the board, they play a “pivotal role” in the adjunct dilemma (145):

almost universally, deans and vice presidents delegate to department chairs responsibility for the implementation of employment policies and practices, and the choice of whom to hire. It is the *department chair* who...makes

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<sup>9</sup> A 2016 A.A.U.P. report confirms that “having a part-time instructor decreases the likelihood that a student will take subsequent classes in a subject and that instruction by part-time faculty is negatively associated with retention and graduation” (Shulman et al., “Higher Education” 14-15).

decisions that affect the lives and, occasionally, the careers of part-time faculty. (143)<sup>10</sup>

Such decisions entail a number of responsibilities. Decentralized institutions allot a budget to each department, delegating the specific staffing plan to the respective chairpersons (129, 131). Therefore, the burden of aligning faculty appointments with the institutional mission falls squarely upon them (131). They must hire, orient, integrate, and assess the faculty within their departments according to established standards while ensuring adequate access to instructional resources (264) and professional development opportunities (Baldwin and Chronister 68) as well as fostering a collegial environment across tenure lines (Gappa and Leslie 276). Nontenure-track instructors depend upon the chairperson's consistency regarding such matters as policy application, contract renewal (Baldwin and Chronister 46) and length (151), and the instructor's degree of involvement in governance (59). Furthermore, the department chair is often the most immediate if not the only point of contact between an adjunct and the employing institution (Gappa and Leslie 264). It is therefore a crucial mediatory position, constituting perhaps the sole institutional voice representing the needs of part-time faculty. Thus, I hope to offer to concerned chairpersons the necessary information to present a strong case before administrators and governing boards for improved faculty working conditions.

## 2.2. Secondary Audience

Although I anticipate that only department chairpersons have both the interest and the influence to advocate for reform, I have written these chapters (particularly the first)

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<sup>10</sup> Baldwin and Chronister affirm this position: "We believe that the department chairperson's role in supporting the work of...non-tenure-track faculty cannot be overemphasized. At many institutions we visited, we learned how department chairpersons made life easier or more difficult for...faculty off the tenure track" (169).

while taking into consideration also a broader audience of virtually anyone who is even peripherally invested in American higher education. For example, prospective students and their parents deserve to have an idea of how many classes may be taught by part-time instructors before they enroll. Current students would do well to understand how much investment they can reasonably expect from their adjuncts as opposed to full-time faculty. The risk of losing students and their tuition money to competing institutions that employ a greater percentage of full-time faculty may speak louder than would faculty insistence, no matter how well reasoned.

Of course, the most obvious members of my ideal audience consist of high-ranking campus administrators and governing boards, which have the most authority in determining budgetary allotments for staffing plans. College leaders could reprioritize student education by means of greater investment in their faculty without raising tuition. Such measures could include diverting existing funds away from nonessential administrative and student-services positions, nonrevenue athletics programs, and nonacademic facilities construction as well as actively raising funds through endowment campaigns.

Realistically, however, I suspect that the campus officials who could do the most good would also be the least likely to initiate reform due to the increasing academic capitalism I discuss in section four of this introduction. Consequently, external sources of pressure such as politicians, accreditation agencies, ranking companies, and even athletics associations also comprise part of my broader audience. For instance, state governments and the Department of Education could continue to calculate each institution's eligibility for funding according to current metrics but reduce that aid by the percentage of part-time faculty the institution employs. Regional assessment and prominent college-ratings guides



could supplement their current evaluative rubrics with a category contrasting the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty, significantly rewarding or punishing each institution according to the degree of its reliance upon adjunct instruction. The N.C.A.A. could include among its criteria for “legitimate academic standards” (“Restoring the Balance” 14) the provision that participating institutions employ no more than a fixed proportion of part-time instructors. Failure to meet these stipulations could result in disciplinary measures ranging from postseason tournament bans to loss of certification. Although such stakeholders’ connection to the adjunct problem is not as immediately apparent, they nonetheless possess the leverage to effect change by hitting colleges where it hurts.

### 3. Exigency

While most academics may readily acknowledge that employing adjunct instructors is certainly problematic, if not—as I contend—potentially exploitive, few probably consider it among the more pressing issues confronting postsecondary institutions nowadays. To an extent, I agree. American higher education faces a host of troubling challenges, and the future promises little relief. For example, with each passing year, not only state funding but also the average household income lag further and further behind the pace of persistently rising college tuition and spending (Blumenstyk 7). The national student-loan debt has climbed to an unprecedented \$1.2 trillion (Blumenstyk 1, Schultz), which has created the so-called “college bubble” that some analysts predict will burst in similar fashion to the recent housing-market crash. Experts continue to bicker over the supposedly conflicting agendas of liberal-arts versus career-readiness models of education. Many observers lament that higher education has devolved from the cultivation of a socio-cultural intellect to a mere commodity, the quality of which many employers have lately

found wanting. Traditional colleges now encounter new competition from MOOCs, for-profit institutions, and alternative forms of higher education. As college admission becomes increasingly accessible, campus demographics are changing since more nontraditional, minority, and low-income students are enrolling than ever before. This overview comprises but a sampling of problems that says nothing of grade inflation, high attrition rates, the dubious legitimacy of “merit” scholarships, merely nominal shared governance, business partnerships resulting in corporate meddling in college administrative affairs, and so on (Blumenstyk 1-10). So my claim is not that the adjunct problem is necessarily the single worst issue besetting academia.

### 3.1. Rhetorical Motivations

Nevertheless, I have decided to pursue this topic for a few reasons. First, while college faculty and administration are well acquainted with the adjunct model that has existed in American higher education for decades, the Center for the Future of Higher Education rightly notes that “too few outside of academe are aware of the distinct faculty tiers in American higher education today” (Street et al. 2). As I address in my second chapter, even my students, who pay such high premiums for their education, arrive in my classroom on the first day of the semester completely oblivious to the difference between my employment status and that of the tenured professors who teach their other classes.

This pervasive lack of awareness results in false expectations that adversely affect American higher education. On the one hand, many students still sincerely believe that the majority of their tuition money is allocated toward their education, which sets them up for disillusionment upon learning the harsh reality that part-time faculty teach many (in extreme cases, all) of their general education courses. On the other hand, the increasing

political and public criticism of traditional higher education cannot fairly assess the overall effectiveness of college faculty in the United States without this knowledge. Already, many high-school graduates and nontraditional students have begun scuttling for alternatives to pursuing a traditional college degree, a trend that compromises the future of postsecondary undergraduate institutions. Without an understanding of not only the severity but also the ubiquity of the adjunct problem, “policymakers and academic managers [will] continue to advance a caricatured image of faculty when critiquing the professoriate, misrepresenting the actual working conditions of most faculty and the effects those conditions have on professors and their students” (Street et al. 1). So in raising awareness as to not only the existence but also the urgency of this problem, I hope to encourage department chairpersons to advocate for institutional reform before even more American students abandon a traditional college education, which I continue to believe, when properly facilitated, cultivates better citizens comprising a stronger society.

Second, I have rather extensive personal experience in this area. After serving as a graduate teaching assistant for a year and a half while completing my M.A. in English at a public research institution, I accepted a teaching assistantship at another public research institution while pursuing my doctorate in English there. During my second year of doctoral study, I began working as an adjunct instructor at a nearby liberal arts institution in order to earn some extra income. Over the course of the fall, spring, and summer terms of that academic year, I taught a total of nine course sections—four as a teaching assistant and five as an adjunct—while enrolled as a full-time Ph.D. student.

Learning that a rather sizable student loan (the monthly payments of which I was unable to afford on my present stipends) had reached its maximum deferment period that

summer, I was granted a leave of absence from my doctoral studies in order to teach full-time as an adjunct at not only the liberal arts school but also the research institution and two of the local community college campuses—for a grand total of five classes per semester—so as to repay all my student loans, which would inevitably come off deferment as a result of that leave. Currently, I continue to teach six course sections per academic year at the liberal arts institution while working part-time at a seminary physical plant as a groundskeeper in the same town in order to devote the time I would have spent commuting to the completion of this project and, consequently, my degree. So over the past seven and a half years, I have taught sixteen postsecondary core-curriculum course-sections as a graduate teaching assistant and thirty-two such sections as an adjunct instructor. Despite my intensive investment in the profession, however, my motives for conducting this research do not proceed from simple self-interest. Rather, I feel confident that I have the ethos to speak to this particular issue with authority.

That is not to say, however, that the future of higher-education staffing trends does not affect me personally. In all transparency, I readily confess that the stake I hold in the development of this issue is certainly high. Thus, my third motivation responds to the question, “Why would a student of English literature write his or her dissertation on this subject?” The short answer: because the adjunct problem adversely impacts my academic field more than it does most others. As I have previously explained, compared to most other disciplines, English departments employ a disproportionate number of part-time instructors, particularly to teach introductory composition courses. If the quality of education students undergo in a specific subject during their initial college years is less than rigorous due to enrolling in classes taught by overburdened adjuncts, these students

may be less likely to choose that subject as a major. And even those who do pursue a major in that subject may be poorly prepared for their more intensive advanced seminars. In either case, the program in question suffers. Therefore, I have written this dissertation out of a very real concern for the future vitality of English programs as well as others that heavily rely on part-time instructors to teach sections of introductory courses.

Fourth, solving the adjunct problem would involve a complex process. To be sure, the solution I propose in my final chapter calls for nothing short of the wholesale abandonment of the academic capitalism that has infested, to varying degrees, nearly every American postsecondary institution over the past quarter-century. Reversion to a more sustainable and humane precedent that is adapted to contemporary socio-cultural needs would compel colleges to amend not only adjunct exploitation but also several other issues, many of which I list above. Because, as I illustrate in my second chapter, so many of higher education's deficiencies are intertwined, solving the adjunct problem would take a prerequisite step toward addressing other, arguably more pressing, concerns and possibly even improve them obliquely.

Finally, this point in not only our institutional but also our national socio-economic history seems to be a particularly opportune, if not pivotal, moment to move with haste toward a solution to this lingering dilemma. My project's general objective as well as the issue it addresses are nothing new. Essentially, I identify and explain a persistent problem regarding higher education faculty and promote a superior model<sup>11</sup>. However, my research comes at a time when some observers contend that many American colleges have arrived at a structural stalemate. For example, in "The Professoriate Reconsidered," Adrianna

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<sup>11</sup> See Shulman et al. ("Higher Education" 18-22) for a detailed conversion plan that closely resembles the solution I propose.

Kezar and doctoral research assistant Elizabeth Holcombe acknowledge the urgent nature of this exigence: “There is no shared vision among key stakeholder groups for the future of the faculty. Lacking any compelling options or ideas around which changes might coalesce, the enterprise has remained at a standstill or devolved as non-tenure-track (mostly part-time) positions have grown.” With Kezar and Holcombe, I agree that

the time is right to change the faculty model to support student outcomes and a high-quality learning environment. The changes that have taken place in recent decades have only degraded the faculty role, giving faculty members today an incentive to consider...changes to their role....Faculty are beginning to realize that resistance and inaction are leading backward, not forward. Administrators are beginning to acknowledge that the shift to a largely adjunct faculty does not serve the purposes of the enterprise well, either. There is at least agreement that the direction taken in recent years has not been positive.

At this moment in our institutional history, research such as mine, which not only bemoans the problem but also culminates in a potential solution, is relevant and desperately needed.

### 3.2. Increasing Public Scrutiny of Higher Education

From a contrasting perspective, the time is not “right” at all to abandon the adjunct model; rather, it is long overdue. Generally speaking, a growing number of Americans consider the exorbitant costs and questionable results of higher education in the United States to be a violation of the public trust. For example, education professors Roger G. Baldwin and Jay L. Chronister note that, for at least the past three decades, “government officials, corporate executives, and concerned citizens” (14) have accused higher education of seeking revenues beyond justifiable academic expenses and of maintaining an obsolete, inefficient tenure model that privileges research over teaching and service to the detriment of undergraduate education, which poorly prepares college graduates to enter the workforce (14-15). And as the public continues to express dissatisfaction with various

aspects of higher education, the arguable exploitation of part-time faculty just adds one more item to the list of complaints.

One of the most commonly recurring criticisms from this list has manifested as the “accountability movement” (Blumenstyk 109). From taxpayers to employers to politicians, several Americans are calling for greater transparency regarding student-loan debt, graduation rates, job placement, alumni salaries, and colleges’ allocation of “tuition dollars and public funds” (109-10). Furthermore, in 2012, the Department of Education proposed awarding federal aid according to colleges’ rankings based on a “federal college rating system” (114). Also, the term “disruptive innovation” applies to such cut-rate “alt-ed” routes as for-profit education, MOOCs, badges, “stackable credits,” competency-based degrees, “DIY U,” and apprenticeships due to their potential to compete with traditional institutions (125-42; Barnshaw and Dunietz 12-15). The success of such disruption not only threatens the financial sustainability of established colleges but also risks cheapening the quality of education offered via distance learning and the like, which would only exacerbate the disparity between those students who can afford a traditional education and those who cannot (Blumenstyk 126).

The particularly compelling point concerning the public outcry against postsecondary institutions is that it has facilitated political action that threatens all sectors of higher education. For example, during the summer of 2015, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker’s signing into law a state budget that undermines “tenure protections at public colleges and universities” (Hefling) established a precedent that obviously jeopardizes academic freedom and faculty influence in shared governance. The University of Wisconsin system has already needed to raise millions of dollars in order to prevent “high-

profile tenured faculty members” from being “poached” by other institutions, and questions remain regarding how Wisconsin public colleges will be able to attract the highest quality aspiring academics in the future (Schuman).

Yet college faculty are not the only higher-education employees whose professional security has recently grown precarious. During the summer of 2016, Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin dismissed nearly the entire governing board at the University of Louisville while concomitantly “accepting” the resignation of the university’s president. This executive order has not only encountered legal resistance from the state attorney general but also drawn the attention of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, which sanctioned the institution with a one-year probation after formally reviewing the legitimacy of its accreditation (Douglas-Gabriel and Higdon).

I cite these two recent incidents as evidence that no position within the institutional hierarchy of higher education is immune from government intervention arising from public unrest. But how does the adjunct problem play into such scenarios? Again, I insist that the prerequisite measures necessary to establish a more equitable instructional staffing model would compel postsecondary institutions to display greater responsibility with tuition and public funds, which would demonstrate the accountability for which so many Americans are calling by improving the quality of education while reducing college spending and, subsequently, cost. And if current events are any indication of what lies ahead, the stakes are high for everyone involved. Therefore, a self-initiated overhaul of the corporate university, painful though it may be, by those who are actually experienced in the institutional operations of higher education may nonetheless be preferable to leaving the future of higher education in the hands of politicians and the public they represent.



#### 4. Neoliberalism and the Corporatization of American Higher Education

Along with the several other previously mentioned challenges facing American colleges, the adjunct problem is often located by critics within a larger trend that has been the subject of much and heated debate over the past two decades: the neoliberal influence on American higher education. So frequently during my research did I encounter criticism of neoliberalism that I began drafting another essay on the topic before realizing that the discussion was taking me too far afield from my limited subject. Nevertheless, the nigh ubiquity of the term “neoliberalism” has made avoiding references impossible in my own work. Thus, I consider it necessary to devote at least a passing word on the phenomenon here while explaining my evasion of it in my own argument.

##### 4.1. A Brief History of Neoliberalism

Sociology professor Manfred B. Steger and political science professor Ravi K. Roy define neoliberalism as “a rather broad and general concept referring to an economic model or ‘paradigm’ that rose to prominence in the 1980s” and that is based upon the “ideal of the self-regulating market” (11). It is “new” in the sense that it derives its principal tenets from “classical liberalism”—an Enlightenment economic theory that “preached the virtues of the ‘free market’ and ‘laissez-faire’ economics” in opposition to government intervention (2). Shortly into the twentieth century, especially during the American Great Depression, classical liberalism lost its credibility as a sustainable economic theory (5) and gave way to “modern liberalism”—a model based largely on “Keynesian macroeconomics” (8)—from approximately 1945 to 1975, a period that many refer to as “the golden age of controlled capitalism” (7). By way of heightened government regulation, taxation of the wealthy, and welfare programs, modern liberalism purported a

more egalitarian dispersion of profits across social strata, thereby allowing for a large middle class that could afford to purchase mass-produced goods (7-9). This new paradigm yielded remarkable results until the 1970s, when oil prices, unemployment, and inflation dramatically rose while corporate profits fell (9).

Amid this economic crisis, “an entirely new breed of liberals” (or “neoliberals”) emerged, “reviving the old doctrine of classical liberalism under the novel conditions of globalization” by adapting and applying ideas formulated by Friedrich August von Hayek and the Mont Pelerin Society, Milton Friedman and the “Chicago School,” and the Washington Consensus (9). Politically, “first-wave neoliberalism” has been almost synonymously associated with “Reaganomics” in the United States and “Thatcherism” in the United Kingdom (20). Upon the fall of the Soviet Union and economic reform in communist China (10), “second-wave neoliberalism” enjoyed its “heyday” (x) during the “Roaring Nineties” (xi) under “Clinton’s Market Globalism” and “Blair’s Third Way” (50). Beginning around the turn of the twenty-first century and culminating in the 2008 world financial crisis, however, neoliberalism has taken on almost exclusively negative connotations, becoming strongly affiliated with greed, fiscal irresponsibility, and the refusal to make sacrifices for the sake of either the future or the greater good (1).

#### 4.2. The Corresponding Corporatization of Higher Education

Neoliberalism’s most obvious effect on American higher education has manifested in the so-called “corporatization” of the university. Along with the close of “the golden age of controlled capitalism” also came the end of what political science professor David Schultz refers to as the “Dewey Model” of higher education, which was characterized by nearly thirty years of substantial public funding, a significant increase in lower- and

middle-class student enrollment, and the subsequent “expansion of inexpensive public universities, generous grants and scholarships, and low-interest loans.” The same economic downturn that overcame Keynesian macroeconomics, however, also vanquished the Dewey model in the mid-1970s due to lack of state and federal funds made available for higher education. Consequently, universities began to rely on excuses and to resort to practices that continue to this day: soliciting corporate sponsorships (Eastman and Boyles 28, Giroux 147) in order to sustain the increasingly sophisticated operations of the contemporary postsecondary institution (Blumenstyk 100). (Obviously, the “chicken or the egg” nature of this self-perpetuating logic has become vulnerable to rather scathing critique). Nevertheless, in place of the Dewey Model developed an administrative construct imported from the business sector that privileged top-down, unilateral decision-making over shared governance and prioritized profit gains over nearly all other considerations (Eastman and Boyles 33, Ginsberg 4, Mills 6, 8; Schoorman and Acker-Hocevar 322-23; Schultz)—practically realizing “Dewey’s fears that funding would become the end rather than the means of academic life” (Eastman and Boyles 32). Consumer demands have effected the “agile university,” which, regardless of its purported mission statement, operates according to the philosophy that “unless this university is run like a business, it will soon be out of business” (Deboy 15). While the specific criteria for this phenomenon remains up for debate, some prominent patterns have emerged from the spate of criticism over the past twenty years. I have loosely relegated these recurring complaints into four categories.

The first subject broadly regards institutional public relations. For example, colleges now devote more funds than ever before to “marketing and public relations,” and

“branding consultants and polling firms” now appear on many universities’ payrolls (Blumenstyk 121). More and more institutions enter into business partnerships involving corporate-sponsored campus buildings, research, and even faculty positions (122, Schultz). Obsessed with their academic profiles, many colleges now participate in the “ratings war” or “rank tyranny,” reforming institutional policies for the sake of securing the highest possible positions in the annual *U.S. News and World Report*’s “Best Colleges” guide (which, incidentally, first appeared during the rise of neoliberalism) (Mills 6, 9). Some prestigious institutions are establishing campuses abroad, even “in countries with authoritarian regimes,” despite faculty protests regarding potential “civil rights abuses” in which the “imperial university” would be complicit (7). The general consensus suggests that colleges have become more concerned with securing private interests than with the public trust (Eastman and Boyles 28, Giroux 146).

The second focus of scrutiny concerns institutional policy and curriculum. For the past couple decades, graduate schools have offered expensive law degrees and M.B.A.s—the dubious marketability of which Schultz likens to a Ponzi scheme—in order to subsidize other university expenditures (Schultz). Liberal arts colleges are undergoing “mission drift,” in which they shift “templates” in order to resemble competing universities, most notably by offering graduate programs (Jaquette 519) or by recruiting more out-of-state students to compensate for shrinking state appropriations (Shulman et al., “Visualizing Change” 12-13). Learning outcomes have become more quantitative than qualitative, underscoring graduation and attrition rates, “time-to-completion data,” job placement, and alumni salary instead of “criticality, social justice, or deliberative democracy” (Eastman and Boyles 29-30). In the name of democratizing education, brick-and-mortar institutions

have emulated the for-profit sector by offering online courses that maximize class roster size while eliminating the unwieldy overhead of a physical classroom (Deboy 16, Eastman and Boyles 30, Schoorman and Acker-Hocevar 312, Schultz). In brief, the growing trend of observing “best practices,” which political science professor Benjamin Ginsberg considers but a thinly veiled lack of administrative creativity (12), has resulted in less distinction between the diverse types of American postsecondary institutions.

Third, while all points of this debate affect students to some degree, certain symptoms impact them more directly than do others. For instance, ever-increasing tuition continues to benefit lending institutions while saddling students with debilitating debt (Blumenstyk 121). Many critics contend that the value of higher education has degenerated into a consumerist transaction between the institution and the student-customer (123, Eastman and Boyles 29, 33; Mills 6-7, Schoorman and Acker-Hocevar 312). Accordingly, many institutions have adopted “proprietary” objectives (Eastman and Boyles 28), devolving into “factor[ies] for producing patented knowledge” (36) that offer “more or less sophisticated forms of vocational training” (Ginsberg 3), thereby privileging the “Mechanical” over the “Philosophical” (Newman 1231) as though, to reverse the perennialist assertion, students were workers first and human beings second. Fierce competition in the “enrollment economy” (Jaquette 539-40) has arguably led to the so-called “edifice complex” (Blumenstyk 95) or “climbing wall wars” (9), involving the construction of new (often non-academic) facilities despite the sufficiency of current campus buildings in an effort to dazzle prospective students (Eastman and Boyles 30, Mills 7). As disinvestment in instructional spending becomes more common, institutions increasingly place greater emphasis on the “college experience” (Ginsberg 20) and esteem

“valuable life lessons” (often acquired “outside the classroom”) as highly as a rigorous, traditional curriculum (12). Essentially, the corporate university has commodified education and proffered it to students as though they are “always right” clients, thereby replacing “critical citizen[ship] and democratic agen[cy]” with “consumerism” and “market ideals” (Giroux 146).

The final category of complaints concerns institutional personnel. For example, some observers point to the “corporate-style salaries” of some administrators, coaches, athletics directors, and investment officers as evidence of corporatization (Blumenstyk 121, Mills 8). Others cite the growing number of administrators whose influence has usurped faculty deliberation regarding matters of institutional policy (Deboy 16). Spending on student services and other non-academic personnel has increased faster than that for academic instruction and financial aid (Mills 7). Contracting out food service and custodial labor in order to sidestep complaints regarding working conditions has become a more common practice (8). In the name of efficiency, corporate-style “streamlining” has largely effected a “culture of silence” (Eastman and Boyles 35) in which potential dissenters have become less difficult to “manage” (i.e., to fire or to ignore).

In light of this last topic in particular, it comes as no surprise that “adjunctification” (Blumenstyk 121) appears as one of the most frequent indicators of corporatization (Eastman and Boyles 30, Schoorman and Acker-Hocevar 312). Ginsberg observes that, with greater frequency, “schools claim to be battling budget crises that are forcing them to reduce the size of their full-time faculties” (2) while the numbers of not only part-time faculty but also full-time administrators continue to escalate (19, Deboy 16, Mills 8). Moreover, this tiered division of the faculty is not always as incidental as some

administrators contend. For instance, in “From One Bargaining Unit to One Faculty,” English professors Walter Benn Michaels and Scott McFarland describe how their efforts to organize an inclusive faculty union encountered strong institutional opposition. They deduce that, according to the “neoliberal fantasy” of the corporate university, the ideal faculty would consist of a handful of prestigious researchers who would bring in grant money—a practice that Eastman and Boyles refer to as “academic prospecting” (32)—while “tuition dollars would be generated by low-cost, contingent instructors” teaching “commodities courses” that subsidize other institutional costs (Blumenstyk 88). Furthermore, not only the inexpensive but also the expendable nature of contingent employment makes nontenure-track employees easy to intimidate or even terminate should their teaching become too controversial (Eastman and Boyles 33)<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, while I discuss other possible causes of the overdependence upon adjunct instructors in my first chapter, most critics unanimously agree that all these reasons spring from the corporatization of higher education.

#### 4.3. Reservations

Neoliberalism definitely makes for an easy scapegoat. Nevertheless, the word appears primarily in references to others’ work throughout my dissertation and seldom in my own prose. And given the abundance of academic criticism that has been published against neoliberalism, I feel that I owe my reader a brief explanation here.

First, while I wholeheartedly agree that higher education has been corporatized to its own detriment, I nonetheless maintain serious doubts that that corporatization is strictly neoliberal in character. For instance, on the one hand, treating students like consumers most

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<sup>12</sup> Also see Baldwin and Chronister’s discussion regarding the expendability of non-tenure-track faculty (7).

certainly corresponds with the neoliberal “model of public administration known as ‘new public management’” that rose to popularity during the early 1980s (Steger and Roy 13). As a “mode of governance for public servants,” new public management “redefined citizens as ‘customers’ or ‘clients’ and encouraged administrators to cultivate an ‘entrepreneurial spirit’” (13). On the other hand, however, the distending ranks of administrators and non-academic professionals in colleges’ employ utterly contradict neoliberal theory. English professor Martin Kich compares this model to a corporate trend that was popular during “the third quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” that businesses have largely abandoned since due to its inefficiency. If Kich’s observations are accurate, the administrative model of the typical American university is certainly corporate, but it is transplanted directly from the Keynesian era. Thus, it is neither innovative nor efficient—two of neoliberalism’s hallmarks (Steger and Roy 13-14). Such inconsistency may well explain why so many political conservatives and self-appointed “‘watchdog’ groups” (Eastman and Boyles 33)—often neoliberals themselves—are just as dissatisfied with the contemporary university as are political liberals. Unfortunately, too many right-wing critics are embarrassingly distracted by such relative trivia as faculty tenure and supposed leftist indoctrination instead of true plagues such as administrative blight.

Second, too many academics have grown reckless in their denunciation of neoliberalism as a veritable higher-education bogeyman. This impression proceeds primarily from a problem of definition. Steger and Roy’s analysis of neoliberalism helps to explain this ambiguity. For, despite its origins as an economic theory, neoliberalism has appeared in “three intertwined manifestations: (1) an ideology; (2) a mode of governance; and (3) a policy package” (11). As an ideology, neoliberalism is propagated to the masses



by “global power elites” (e.g., business executives, politicians, journalists, intellectuals, celebrities, &c.) who “saturate the public discourse with idealized images of a consumerist, free market” as “an indispensable tool for the realization of a better world” (11). As a mode of governance, neoliberalism functions as a Foucauldian “governmentality” that promotes “entrepreneurial values such as competitiveness, self-interest, and decentralization” of “state power” as well as “individual empowerment” over “pursuing the public good” (12). Finally, Steger and Roy describe neoliberalism as a policy package according to what they call the “‘D-L-P Formula’: (1) deregulation (of the economy); (2) liberalization (of trade and industry); and (3) privatization (of state-owned enterprises)” (14). Some of the most overt ways these policies have been executed include substantial tax exemptions for corporations and wealthy citizens, stripping down social services and government in general, and stabilizing inflation via interest rates (14).

Consequently, when critics deride neoliberalism, they could be targeting any one of these three manifestations or a combination thereof. Media and communications professor Terry Flew poses that the multifarious nature of neoliberalism as a socio-political phenomenon has perhaps increased the term’s usage as more flexible and, therefore, more readily applicable than the more specialized vocabulary (e.g., “monetarism” or “the ‘new right’”) it replaced during the 1990s (50). Yet, while this versatility may increase neoliberalism’s appeal as a subject of criticism, it also intensifies the demand for qualification. Flew notes, however, that, while “a working understanding of what neoliberalism is seems to have developed in a range of disciplines, with a surprisingly strong degree of confidence about what the concept means” (50), the employment of the word all too often serves “as a rhetorical trope, where the meaning is already known to

those who would be interested in the topic....but at no point is neoliberalism defined or explained” (52). Thus, the vast scope of potential neoliberalist elements and corresponding need for constant qualification has prompted me to evade a direct critique of neoliberalism in an effort to prevent unintentional misappropriation for the sake of my agenda.

Flew challenges the academic fad of reflexively blaming all contemporary woes on neoliberalism. Examples of such haphazard attacks include the tendency to address neoliberalism “simply as an expression of the zeitgeist of global capitalism or as a conspiracy of ruling elites” (Flew 67) that too commonly constructs reductionist oppositions of individuals as either completely autonomous agents on the one hand or utterly mindless (or at least entirely impotent) puppets of the system on the other (64). Flew even goes so far as to contend that “one of the curious features of this generic literature on neoliberalism is that it almost presumes that political form does not matter. For a literature that puts such an emphasis upon the politics of knowledge, explicit consideration of formal politics is largely absent from the discussion” (52). For example, Flew takes issue with one of neoliberalism’s most outspoken critics: “If Giroux’s work is taken as indicative, politics is associated with the outspoken criticism on the part of public intellectuals rather than any tangible engagement with conventional politics or with the institutions of government” (53). Conversely, Flew notes that proponents of neoliberalism hold the opposite view. From this perspective, neoliberal thought pervades society as simply “the way things are,” ingrained in not only political policies but also the cultural *doxa* to the point that one struggles to conceive of any alternative worldview (53-54). Either of these perspectives is potentially dangerous because the diverse manners in which (as well as the extents to which) institutions—political or otherwise—practice neoliberal principles can result in

dramatically different outcomes. Thus, political form and methodology constitute crucial considerations when discussing such a sweeping topic.

Hence, I refrain from directly addressing neoliberalism in the following chapters so as to constrain my argument to a manageable purpose. Admittedly, I agree with the critics who identify within the contemporary academy specific neoliberal practices such as favoring profits over the public good, “civil society, and social justice” (Steger and Roy 12); replacing qualitative objectives with scrutinized “quantitative targets” (12); and enforcing “anti-unionization drives in the name of enhancing productivity and ‘labour flexibility’” (14). Yet, again, the corporate university’s administrative model that so clearly reflects neoliberal ideals in some ways would make a practicing neoliberal’s stomach churn in others. For, if we view higher-education administration as a governing body within the realm of the campus, it has increasingly centralized power and expanded its numbers. And the latter instance has resulted in either a classic case of “too many cooks in the kitchen” or a hierarchy of “Vice Yes-men” who wield only nominal authority. Neither scenario is conducive to the elimination of “government waste” nor to the promotion of “administrative efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability” for which new public management has purported to strive (Steger and Roy 14). Therefore, I do not wish to address neoliberalism as “a kind of conceptual trash-can, into which anything and everything can be dumped, as long as it is done so with suitable moral vehemence” (Flew 67).

## 5. Literature Review

While my goal and topic may not be innovative, the scope of my project certainly is. In all the research I have conducted, I have yet to find either extensive and current

treatment of specifically the adjunct problem or a detailed model of proposed reform. Most of the few books that are available on the subject assume the indefinite perpetuation of the practice. They offer insights regarding how institutions can best integrate adjunct instructors into the faculty ranks as well as helpful methods and approaches by means of which adjuncts can optimize their teaching experiences. Other book-length works obliquely touch upon the issue but, given their rhetorical purposes, must address it for what it is—but one star in a constellation of crises besetting contemporary American higher education. The most ambitious texts I have encountered have tended to be articles, written almost exclusively for publications such as *Inside Higher Ed.*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and *Academe*. Yet, while these sources effectively raise awareness and even call for change, the genre itself constrains these writers from conducting thorough investigations or outlining plausible solutions.

Nevertheless, a few works have been regularly referenced throughout my research. The earliest commonly cited source is the late economics professor Howard P. Tuckman's 1978 report "Who Is Part-time in Academe?" appearing in the *AAUP Bulletin*. Comparing academic part-time employment with that of other fields, Tuckman reviews the potential benefits and detriments of the hiring model from adjuncts' various points of view. As one of the earliest writers to recognize the diversity of part-time instructors, Tuckman offers a taxonomy consisting of seven categories into which adjuncts loosely fall. He compares and contrasts part-timers' "personal characteristics" (309), working conditions, and employment histories. Tuckman concludes that, while part-time work was plentiful at the time, promotion to full-time employment was unlikely. Thus, part-time instructors' varying satisfaction depended largely upon their personal reasons for accepting their appointments.

Gappa and Leslie's 1993 study *The Invisible Faculty* most closely resembles my own project in its subject but drastically differs in its methods. They interviewed administrators and faculty from eighteen colleges and universities, representing diverse institutional types, in order to evaluate experiences with and perceptions of the part-time staffing model in light of various institutional policies and practices. Gappa and Leslie illustrate part-time instructors' "demographic characteristics, academic backgrounds, [and] motivations," categorizing them according to the instructors' "kinds of work and career paths" (xiv). They review external constraints and other purported reasons for employing adjuncts as well as varying working conditions and the extent to which part-time faculty are involved in their campuses. They conclude by proposing solutions drawn from some existing precedents as well as from their respondents' recommendations.

While these two publications are somewhat obsolete in their figures and statistics, the most striking realization I came to regarded how relevant their descriptions of the market climate and working conditions remain to this day. From this observation, one could reasonably infer that the most significant change to occur in the employment of part-time instructors at the college level over nearly four decades has been merely higher education's dramatically increased reliance upon adjuncts during that time.

Baldwin and Chronister's 2001 publication *Teaching without Tenure* focuses on primarily full-time, non-tenure-track faculty. Distributing surveys, reviewing institutional policies, and visiting twelve campuses, they describe these instructors and their contributions to higher education while recommending effective supportive strategies. They conclude that a "two-class faculty system" has derived from traditional tenure's failure to evolve in order to meet "educational needs of a complex, dynamic society" (7).

Despite inconsistent working conditions, non-tenure-track faculty constitute dispensable, “short-term solutions” to “long-term needs,” including the quality and sustainability of higher education (7-8).

Kezar and Sam’s monograph *Understanding the New Majority of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty* recounts the proliferation of nontenure-track faculty since the 1970s. It reviews the diverse work experiences reported by extant research and proposes policy reform based on a more precise reconceptualization of these instructors as professionals. Published in 2010, most of its observations remain pertinent, and it offers a useful organizational model upon which I structure my own argument.

While the latter two works have contributed to my project, my research focuses on a subcategory—adjunct faculty—of their broader subject—nontenure-track faculty. Consequently, I have taken great care to discern when their findings apply to my topic and when they may be too general to integrate. The more expansive concentration on nontenure-track faculty as opposed to exclusively part-time faculty may indicate a slight shift in research interests at the turn of the century for which I cannot account. However, such research demonstrates that an established precedent for the core-survey position I propose in my third chapter has existed all along.

Thus, another exigence to which my research responds concerns the absence of a recently published monograph treating part-time faculty in particular. Collectively, my chapters synthesize the fragmentary data that are currently available on specifically adjunct instruction in such a way as to demonstrate that, on the one hand, the problem is far more detrimental and pressing than most institutions realize while, on the other hand, its solution could be far more feasible and beneficial than most institutions can foresee. I ground my

discussion in secondary research and, when appropriate, supplement these results with primary research drawn from my afore-mentioned firsthand experience.

#### 6. Contextual Placement: Strengths and Weaknesses

I will be the first to admit that, despite my best efforts, my argument falls short in addressing absolutely every consideration surrounding this issue. As I have already explained, this deficiency is partly intentional in that I have sought to present a case comprised of the most frequently encountered “common factors” while omitting outlying considerations in the interest of increasing my argument’s appeal. Yet it would be an equivocation to imply that some of the gaps in my argument are not incidental as well.

For instance, my project fails to meet several of the expressed research needs on this topic. The most salient examples of such oversight include identifying and examining differences between a multiplicity of valid considerations, including contractual agreements (Kezar and Sam 113), “functional typologies” (33), adjunct “age, educational degree, career path, and time at the institution....salary, recruitment, hiring, and orientation” (115), individual motives, departments (108), disciplines, institutional types, professional rank and status, and policies (2). Lacking the necessary time and other resources, I have been unable to conduct any original “systematic research” (50, 60) or “context-based” study (114) that are so scarcely published on this subject.

Moreover, like much of the available research, my rhetorical purpose is “ideologically driven,” seeking “to demonstrate the oppression of the faculty experience and demonstrate how non-tenure-track faculty represent the inequities and problems of the academy” (Kezar and Sam 2). And while my experience as an adjunct grants me the authority to speak to these issues on the one hand, on the other hand, it reveals a prejudiced

agenda<sup>13</sup> that frames the widespread problem I attempt to represent via secondary research (16). Even these shortcomings, however, bolster my thesis in a way because they demonstrate how the time I have been able to devote to proper research has been restricted by my working conditions as an adjunct.

Yet, for the very same reasons, my work at least partially meets one prevailing need. Repeatedly throughout their monograph, Kezar and Sam lament the dearth of systematic research conducted by nontenure-track faculty themselves. They emphasize the “importance of non-tenure-track faculty conducting their own research and voicing their concerns, because current studies (done typically by tenure-track faculty) have at times misunderstood their experiences or framed a study in a way that does not capture the complexity or true issues” (61). Granted, Kezar and Sam are far from ignorant of the reasons behind this void, citing as an example a 2010 A.F.T. survey that “experienced difficulty obtaining responses, as many of the faculty were part-time and have multiple job responsibilities” (61). The omnipresence of this predicament across all institutional types of American higher education creates a suspiciously advantageous arrangement for those who benefit from adjunct exploitation.

For, just as Earl Shorris identifies the reciprocal relationship between poverty and political disfranchisement in “As a Weapon in the Hands of the Restless Poor,” conveniently enough, the very working conditions of adjunct instructors ensure their own obscurity. Indeed, our professional lives metaphorically resemble an Ellisonian dream-circus at which we half-expect to open a briefcase containing nested envelopes bearing the message to keep us running. Essentially, the adjunct staffing model manifests a variation

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<sup>13</sup> Gappa and Leslie have criticized such writings as “highly subjective polemical arguments” (4).



of the old political trick—intentional or not—of institutionalizing self-perpetuating practices of inequity if not oppression. In other words, perhaps college leaders are not entirely blind to the fact that, if the nature of adjunct employment drives us just close enough to the edge of financial stability so as not to push us over, we will remain so preoccupied by our duties in an effort to make ends meet that our potential for political activism and our capacity as agents of positive change become virtually negated.

Incidentally, the very inhibitors of legitimate firsthand studies thus constitute the most pressing exigencies for such research. Consequently, my work responds to as much of Kezar and Sam's call as possible given my life circumstances. The rhetorical benefit of my argument's shortcomings lies in the point-by-point exhibition of the adjunct model's adverse effects on the quality of scholarship that the majority of American higher-education faculty can offer (if we can offer any at all). Therefore, that which my project sacrifices in scholarly objectivity, it gains in authenticity. For each word of my dissertation has been written beneath the daily pressure of the very constraints those words articulate.

As a working adjunct, I have not composed these lines from the relative leisure afforded by impartial distance or from the reflective hindsight of memory. On the contrary, I have scribbled in pencil fleeting insights in the margins of my students' papers while grading stacks of essays. I have chipped away at my drafts during countless pre-dawn, sleep-deprived hours prior to dropping off my toddler at daycare *en route* to the first of my two jobs. I have pored over journal articles and ILL books in the physical plant breakroom, reeking of sweat, mixed gas, grass clippings, and trash. I have grappled with my internal naysayer over undeveloped or contentious points while negotiating a roaring, smoking chainsaw through fallen trunks of walnut, ash, and pine. *In nuce*, I have not "been there;"

I am there. And if Kezar and Sam are genuinely curious to learn of “the psychological states” (114) and to listen to “the experiences and voices of non-tenure-track faculty themselves” (113), the following chapters certainly offer such insight.

Of course, skeptics would perhaps reasonably suggest that I have intentionally sabotaged my own purported goals for the sake of proving this point. To that, I can respond only that such an implication proposes a degree of reckless masochism with which I cannot personally sympathize. First, since I have written this dissertation in fulfillment of my doctoral requirements, submitting any less than my best work would compromise the integrity of the institution from which I seek my degree and, therefore, of the degree itself. Second, since the market for English composition and literature is already flooded with terminal degree-holders, such antics would assuredly perpetuate my current living conditions indefinitely. So, while I believe that it should go without saying, I wish to assure my readers that I have made every effort to produce the best possible work my situation has permitted.

And while my dissertation is a far cry from the needed quantitative analyses of large sample groups, I have nonetheless identified plenty of worthwhile considerations that may at the very least prompt college leaders to approach this problem (and perhaps even others within traditional higher education) with greater creativity and innovation. Furthermore, my proposed solution is far from a rigid, “all-or-nothing” offer. On the contrary, in its flexibility lies its virtue, for it lends itself to adaptation according to the needs of the diverse types of institutions that currently depend so heavily on adjunct employment.

## 7. Plan of Development

I begin my first chapter by defining the adjunct instructor. Combining personal experience with recent research, I offer a detailed description of the typical adjunct's current working conditions, which include heavy workloads, poor compensation, and insufficient time for preparation and professional development. I briefly review the origins of and dramatically increasing reliance upon postsecondary adjunct employment over the past forty years. I situate the present undervaluing of adjunct instructors within the context of colleges' persistently rising "sticker prices," which most commonly derive from curricular as well as extracurricular amenities and a drastic increase in non-instructional staff. I suggest that colleges cannot afford to ignore the adjunct problem much longer due to growing public and political awareness of the issue. I conclude by encouraging college governing boards, administrators, and faculty to collaborate in order to arrange respectable and sustainable terms of employment.

My second chapter analyzes how the current model of adjunct employment adversely affects higher education. In addition to the grievances pertaining specifically to adjuncts I list in my first chapter, college faculty as a whole suffers from the deprofessionalization and imposed schism resulting from the widespread overdependence upon part-time instruction. Furthermore, college students suffer from part-time instructors' compromised ethos and resultant "shielding," last-minute staffing practices by means of which institutions often hire adjuncts, part-time instructors' inadequate access to instructional resources, and irrational models for adjunct compensation. Finally, the adjunct problem harms the reputations of postsecondary institutions as a whole, indicating dysfunction and lack of accountability to an already skeptical public. I close with a call to

action, encouraging all postsecondary institutions to consider improved, sustainable employment for all faculty.

In my third chapter, I propose a solution in the form of a standardized college faculty position, which I call the core-survey instructor. Based loosely on a specific definition of contingent faculty, such a professor would assume reasonably heavy teaching loads as a full-time employee of one institution in exchange for a respectable salary, renewable multi-year contracts, and limited benefits. I explain how core-survey instructors will benefit postsecondary institutions not only by resolving the detriments listed in the second chapter but also via improved remedial instruction, academic advising, and participation in shared governance.

## 8. Conclusion

While some readers will assuredly find my insistence to be overzealous and my solution to be impractical, I encourage my skeptics to consider the conceivable alternative. Failure to take action before time runs out may suggest the larger implication that American higher education is whistling past the graveyard. A 2015 A.A.U.P. report observes, “The profession may be in danger of losing its attractiveness because of the radical erosion of compensation, especially for part-time positions, and the decline of tenure” (Barnshaw and Dunietz 12). And the ugly truth undergirding current adjunct employment may dissolve certain fields over time.

For example, when my students witness firsthand the enervating effects of the life circumstances proceeding from my working conditions, what incentive would compel them to major in English? Fewer majors leads to not only reduced budgets for undergraduate programs but also fewer applicants to graduate schools. Fewer advanced

degrees in the market translates to fewer qualified instructors, which may result in departmental conflation with related disciplines.

Such degradation of particular academic fields may threaten missional diversity, homogenizing the spectrum of institutional types into varying shades of vocational or trade schools. The colleges promoting a traditional liberal arts curriculum that do survive may become “playgrounds for the rich,” as my uncle is so fond of saying, or mere “finishing schools” for the social elite. The humanities and any other discipline that cannot promise a lucrative career immediately after graduation will seem like a foolish investment of time and money for more pragmatically minded students who cannot afford the tuition. In this way, perpetuating the adjunct staffing model could eventually result in an entire generation forgoing the opportunity to cultivate its capacity for critical thinking, which could drastically alter America’s social fabric in years to come.

Granted, such baleful prognostication may constitute a slippery slope. In all honesty, I hope that it does. But that hope is offset by my legitimate fear that, for the past forty years, American higher education has been whistling its own swan song. I therefore implore college stakeholders, particularly department chairpersons, to move with great haste, creativity, and resourcefulness toward improving their adjuncts’ working conditions for the sake of their entire faculty, their students, their institutions, and the future of the American public sphere.

## Chapter One

### The Current State of Adjunct Employment

*With labor markets likely to tighten, we are bound to see the emergence of a permanent pool of "temporary" part-time employed in academe. If it is true that academics work best free from the vicissitudes of the marketplace and immune from the pressures of imminent unemployment, this may be a source of some concern. (Tuckman 314)<sup>14</sup>*

One early September afternoon, I walked into a classroom of the liberal arts institution where I teach general education composition and literature courses and began unpacking my satchel in preparation for the day's lesson. Meanwhile, my students were frantically assembling the contents of their portfolios for their first essay submission of the semester. Amid the shuffling of drafts and peer-review worksheets, one student attempted to ease the anxiety accompanying any formal assessment by sharing a lighthearted observation: "You know, professor, if you think about it, these essays are worth hundreds of dollars."

"Oh, really?" I smiled, genuinely intrigued. "How so?"

"Well," he reasoned, "since we're paying tens of thousands of dollars a year to go here, I figure that each of the essays we turn in must be worth at least a couple hundred dollars."

"Oh, I see," I responded, granting him my full attention. "Well, you're certainly right about paying thousands of dollars to attend each year. However, the worth of your essays depends upon the allocation of those funds. So let's break it down, shall we?"

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<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that Tuckman made this prediction in 1978.

The room grew quiet as I uncapped a dry-erase marker and launched into an impromptu lesson that, although unintended, had been the subject of many a sleepless night's contemplation. "Most, if not all, of you pay a flat rate of \$13,335 in tuition each semester," I began. "So, assuming that the average full-time college student is enrolled for fifteen credit hours, a class this size typically brings in about \$45,000 in tuition money." I paused to scribble these figures on the board while whispers scattered about the room. "Now, out of that 45-grand, give or take," I continued, "the university pays me \$2,580 to teach this course section. So, if we divide that figure by the number of students in this section, each of you pays me about \$152 for a semester's worth of instruction. Now, for argument's sake, let's make the absolutely ridiculous assumption that the only time and effort I invest in my job occurs during class-time. Since this class meets forty-four times throughout the semester, each of you pays me about \$3.45 per class."

I capped the marker and provided my astonished students a moment to process the terms of my daily reality. "Now, let's put this in perspective. If, instead of showering and changing at the campus gym after my day job, I were to eat lunch at the cafeteria, with my faculty discount, I would pay \$3.75<sup>15</sup>. So, while your essays—or any other course activity, for that matter—may be worth hundreds of dollars to you, the fact of the matter is that the university charges thirty cents more for a discounted lunch than it does for fifty minutes of my instruction. And as for all the grading...well, I guess that's *pro bono*."

"Now, let's have those essays."

Although I delivered this off-the-cuff analysis good-naturedly enough, the point visibly hit home with most of my students. And while this scenario may strike some as

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<sup>15</sup> In the time that has passed since this class discussion took place, the institution raised the price of lunch to \$4.00 for its employees. My stipend, however, has remained the same.

extreme, it is sadly the rule rather than the exception. For I am an adjunct. And variations of my plight are shared by “the largest share of the academic labor force” in the United States (Shulman et al., “Visualizing Change” 4)<sup>16</sup>.

While the problematic employment of adjunct instructors has persisted for decades, higher education has recently fallen under the scrutiny of the increasingly hostile and impatient public eye. As a result, if postsecondary institutions do not promptly improve the working conditions of such a substantial proportion of their faculty, the mounting unrest surrounding this issue will only add fuel to the fire of American dissatisfaction with higher education. In the following pages, I will define the typical adjunct instructor and offer a brief history of the emergence and development of this position within higher education. I will explain why, in its current state, the employment of adjuncts constitutes a potentially exploitive practice. Finally, I will relate the critical nature of this exigency to the current crossroads at which academia finds itself. Via these points, I argue that, despite the ongoing financial crisis in higher education, postsecondary institutions must provide better working conditions for part-time faculty in order to salvage their already compromised ethos.

## 1. The Typical Working Conditions of Part-time Instructors

### 1.1. Definition and Qualifications

While most people working outside academia may not be familiar the term “adjunct,” chances are that anyone who has undergone almost any type of postsecondary education during at least the last quarter-century has most likely enrolled in a course taught by an adjunct. So what exactly is an adjunct instructor? Educational policy studies and

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<sup>16</sup> In 2017, the A.A.U.P. reported, “Over the past four decades, the share of part-time faculty has increased by 66 percent. Part-time faculty today comprise approximately 40 percent of the academic labor force, a slightly larger share than tenured and tenure-track faculty combined” (Shulman et al., “Visualizing Change” 8).



evaluation professor John R. Thelin accurately and comprehensively describes adjunct faculty as

one of the largest categories of faculty at colleges and university. Appointments are limited and specific—and contracts usually expire at the end of a semester. Seldom do adjunct faculty receive the benefits of full-time professors such as health insurance, a retirement plan, or job security. Often the contracts lead to piecemeal work so that many adjuncts cobble together a slate of courses at different institutions, in which case they become higher education’s itinerant or gypsy faculty—which translates into demanding work, low pay, and little job security. (109)

Along with graduate teaching assistants and contingent faculty, adjuncts teach primarily general education courses in several academic fields at not only community colleges and vocational schools but also research universities and liberal arts institutions.

While many adjuncts teach out of a passion for educating the forthcoming generation of students, they are more than merely devoted enthusiasts. Rather, a recently published House Committee Staff Report finds that they “possess impressive educational backgrounds, often with many years of teaching and industry experience” (United States 25)<sup>17</sup>. In my own case, I have earned a Master’s degree in English and have completed my coursework and passed my qualifying examinations at the doctoral level. I have taught general-education English courses over the past seven and a half years at four institutions of higher learning as a graduate teaching assistant and an adjunct instructor. Like most adjuncts, however, the years I have devoted to graduate study do not translate into securing employment rewarding a salary sufficient enough to pay back the student loans I borrowed in order to acquire that education.

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<sup>17</sup> In their study, Gappa and Leslie also “found that part-time faculty are, for the most part, superbly qualified for their teaching assignments, highly committed, and conscientious about doing their jobs” (6). They offer a more detailed review of adjuncts’ “academic background” on pages 31-34.

## 1.2. Low Compensation Rates and Heavy Workloads

In a 2010 survey, the Coalition on the Academic Workforce found that, for part-time college instructors,

the median pay per course, standardized to a three-credit course, was \$2,700 in fall 2010 and ranged in the aggregate from a low of \$2,235 at two-year colleges to a high of \$3,400 at four-year doctoral or research universities. While compensation levels varied most consistently by type of institution, part-time faculty respondents report low compensation rates per course across all institutional categories. (“A Portrait of Part-time Faculty Members” 2)

These results accurately reflect my own experience as an adjunct. In the area of central Kentucky where I teach, stipends range from \$600-\$1,025 per credit hour for part-time instructors holding a Master’s degree. Since nearly all English courses consist of three credit hours, an adjunct teaching literature or composition in this part of the country can earn anywhere between \$1,800 to \$3,075 per course section<sup>18</sup>.

To put these figures in perspective, in order to earn at least \$30,000 per year, an adjunct instructor would need to teach between ten to sixteen sections per academic year. Compared to the tenured professors who teach between seven to eight sections per academic year at liberal arts institutions and as few as half that number (and in some cases less) at research universities, adjunct instructors must assume extremely heavy workloads. Meanwhile, adjuncts still earn less than their full-time colleagues, whose average salaries can range anywhere from \$69,848 to \$119,282 depending on academic rank and institutional affiliation (Curtis and Thornton, “Losing Focus” 25)<sup>19</sup>. Personally, I have

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<sup>18</sup> During the 2016-17 academic year, “the average total pay from a single institution for part-time faculty members teaching on a per-section basis was \$7,066” (Shulman et al., “Visualizing Change” 4).

<sup>19</sup> Gappa and Leslie found that some institutions were conscientious “of the political implications of allowing part-timers to teach the equivalent of a full load while accepting much lower compensation than would be paid to a full-time faculty member for the same work.” (115). Rather than paying their adjuncts more for their labor, however, many institutions merely cut each adjunct’s hours. This compensation model obviously subordinates quality to quantity, suggesting that, as long as an institution restricts an instructor’s hours in the

taught as many as ten sections in one academic year, so the feat is certainly possible. But even with that determination, I have encountered another common problem facing adjunct instructors.

Securing so many sections is a challenge in itself for two main reasons. First, there are only so many hours in a week. Therefore, arranging one's schedule in order to accommodate for five or more courses in one semester amounts to a daunting task. Second, and even more frustrating, many institutions restrict the number of sections offered to each adjunct in order to maintain the instructor's status as part-time so as to avoid compensating him or her with any kind of benefits package or having to award "de facto" tenure status (Gappa and Leslie 68-69, 76). These restrictions result in the "freeway flyer" (Gappa and Leslie 48, United States 13) or "Road Scholar" phenomenon (Street et al. 2), in which even the most ambitious adjuncts must work at multiple institutions in order to take on such heavy teaching loads<sup>20</sup>.

The House Committee Staff Report confirms this common scenario: "Because they are paid based on courses taught, making ends meet requires a complicated juggling of multiple courses, often at multiple schools, sometimes with additional non-academic jobs squeezed in between" (United States 10). This "complicated juggling" adversely affects the adjunct's teaching proficiency in at least two ways.

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classroom, the value of those hours is somehow worth less than those that a full-time instructor invests. The logic of this correlation is not immediately cogent.

<sup>20</sup> Gappa and Leslie attest to the at least twenty-year persistence of this practice (18). They refute the "standard myth" that, in the early 1990s, such arrangements constituted "the principal mode of employment for part-timers" (48), speculating that its frequency was probably greater in "in large metropolitan areas" and insisting that "further direct study of this phenomenon is needed, with particular attention to geography" (49). Later, however, they acknowledge a potential obstacle to such research, admitting, "Their 'packages' of teaching assignments in multiple locations contribute to the marginal nature of their affiliation with each of their institutions and to the little that is known about them by their departments" (59). Such professional vagrancy has likely contributed to Tuckman's concession that, "in practice, the part-timer is often difficult to locate" for research purposes (314).

First, commuting requires time that detracts from the adjunct's professional responsibilities and development. The same report states, "Respondents who taught at multiple institutions recounted tales of commuting one-hundred or more miles in order to teach. The transit between classes was a time-consuming task" (14). Second, and not as immediately apparent, these freeway flyers must constantly shift back and forth between the curricular priorities and learning objectives (similar though they may be) of multiple institutions.

I have also experienced the alternative mentioned in the staff report. In this circumstance, in which I currently find myself, adjuncts fall under Gappa and Leslie's typology of "freelancers" who must take on a second job completely unrelated to their field of study (61). While this certainly offers some advantages (e.g., the manual labor demanded by my present "day-job" as a groundskeeper often provides a refreshing change of pace), it nevertheless takes time and attention away from the adjunct's growth as an instructor<sup>21</sup>.

### 1.3. The Nontenure Trap

But pedagogical development is not the only aspect of our professional lives that suffers. Heavy teaching loads and time-consuming commutes often lead to, what I call, "the nontenure trap" as well. In more competitive fields, many adjuncts accept part-time appointments as "a temporary last resort" in order to maintain employment until securing a full-time position (Gappa and Leslie 39). This strategy commonly backfires, however,

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<sup>21</sup> In their study, Gappa and Leslie encountered another discouraging aspect to freelance instruction that is not as immediately apparent: "Part-timers who work at other jobs in addition to their part-time faculty employment are among the most critical of the way they are treated. They have broad experience in the real world of corporate, government, and artistic life, and they can compare the way they are treated in academe with what they are accustomed to elsewhere. Many offer a cynical assessment of the petty and thoughtless treatment they receive and are often highly aware of the inequities in their employment despite their academic backgrounds and their stature in other arenas" (42). Such a contrasting perspective threatens to alienate voluntary adjuncts who are "specialist[s], expert[s], or professional[s]" (48), thus compromising the only legitimate claim institutions can make in defense of this staffing model.

because many institutions have subordinated teaching experience to published research during their selection process (195)<sup>22</sup>. Since overburdened freeway fliers frequently “[receive] no support for scholarly endeavors outside the classroom,” they struggle “in developing and maintaining a set of professional credentials that would make them competitive for tenure-track positions, either at their current institution or in the broader marketplace” (Baldwin and Chronister 136)<sup>23</sup>. In fact, some institutions give absolutely no preference to their own nontenured instructors during a formal search to fill a tenure-track position (38) despite years of consistently superior teaching (Gappa and Leslie 244). Thus, with no path to promotion even within their own departments, many adjuncts have realized that a part-time position constitutes a “professional dead end” (Baldwin and Chronister 136)<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> During a graduate seminar, one of my professors encouraged my cohort to position our teaching experience toward the bottom of our C.V.s because, in her words, “It doesn’t matter; everybody has that.” Gappa and Leslie accurately identify the paradox this viewpoint has created: “Ironically, the more skilled and effective the part-timers became at educating undergraduates, the less likely they were to meet the criteria for entry to the tenure-track faculty” (195).

<sup>23</sup> Gappa and Leslie confirm the inconsistent availability of professional development opportunities for adjuncts between institutions. While full-time faculty often benefit from “opportunities for conducting research, developing new courses or instructional methods, attending conferences, and taking leaves and sabbaticals” as well as resources such as “computer networks, libraries, support staff, research assistants, and equipment,” Gappa and Leslie found that “part-timers generally receive far less support for their work” (262). They suggest that this disparity may indicate poor adjunct integration (200), which not only impedes their effectiveness but also adversely affects “morale and commitment” (213). In response, Gappa and Leslie recommend the obvious: “It is simply good policy to invest in people’s ability to do their jobs better. For this reason, part-time faculty ought to have at least commensurate access to the kinds of professional development opportunities and support that are made available to full-time faculty” (274).

<sup>24</sup> In 1978, Tuckman observed, “As a means of gaining entry to a full-time position, the teaching experience that part-timers acquire is of dubious value. Little evidence exists to indicate that academic institutions hire part-timers at their own institutions for a full-time position rather than full-timers from other institutions....A person who becomes part-time in the hope that this will lead to a full-time academic position may well be disappointed....The more likely exit point to full-time employment lies outside academe” (307). This statement’s continuous relevancy may suggest that this tendency is less contingent upon the market than innate to the model.

#### 1.4. Lack of Benefits

Also, as I have mentioned, this jigsaw puzzle of a schedule typically derives from postsecondary institutions' unwillingness to extend benefits to their adjuncts<sup>25</sup>. Several respondents to the House Committee's report

explained that their benefit eligibility is based on the number of courses they teach. If an adjunct was unable to obtain a certain number of courses, they were ineligible for employer-provided benefits, if any were offered at all. In addition, those without benefits felt as though they were not being recognized for the number of hours needed to prep, grade, and meet with students; their employers were only accounting for the amount of time actually spent in class to determine benefit eligibility. (United States 16)

To be fair, just under a quarter of the respondents reported that their institutions did offer them a healthcare package (16). Moreover, adjuncts can often purchase health insurance through their institutions. However, the premiums for even the bare minimum coverage often exceed the disposable income available in most adjuncts' budgets<sup>26</sup>.

Further exacerbating this issue is the recently passed Affordable Care Act (A.C.A). Initially, A.C.A. seemed as though it would benefit part-time instructors. In their 2013 article for *The Wall Street Journal*, Mark Peters and Douglas Belkin optimistically anticipated that "most adjuncts who don't receive coverage through their employer will be eligible for subsidized insurance starting in 2014 through new exchanges set up by the

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<sup>25</sup> c.f., Gappa and Leslie (115, 154, 163-66, 257-58) and Shulman et al. ("Visualizing Change" 9).

<sup>26</sup> Again, this has become a customary institutional practice: "Even when a state or an institution has established the principle that part-time faculty are eligible to participate in group insurance programs, the standards are set in such a way that relatively few individuals may actually meet them....In some cases individual part-time faculty are not retained precisely because doing so would create additional financial obligations" (Gappa and Leslie 76). Indeed, the fact that "benefits costs are growing across all institutions and account for a rising share of compensation costs" has only encouraged postsecondary institutions to hire more adjuncts, whose utter lack of benefits remove this factor from consideration (Desrochers and Kirshstein 20). Curiously, however, most colleges continue to offer respectable salaries and benefits packages to noninstructional personnel even though such employees equal or outnumber faculty at most institutions (14-15, 18).

federal health-care law.” Despite this hopeful perspective, however, A.C.A. potentially harms adjuncts in at least two ways.

First, institutions have evaded not only offering their adjuncts affordable healthcare packages but also paying the resulting penalties by cutting adjuncts’ teaching loads, thereby hiring more adjuncts to teach fewer hours each. Peters and Belkin acknowledge that an increasing number of postsecondary institutions “have curbed the number of classes that adjuncts can teach...to limit the schools’ exposure to the health-insurance requirement.” While many may argue that such maneuvers violate the well-intended purpose of the act (Barnshaw and Dunietz 17), the reality is that A.C.A. has merely created a situation in which adjuncts may very well have to find yet another institution at which to teach in order to earn an amount comparable to the stipends they procured prior to the passing of the act.

Second, a few adjuncts such as myself are fortunate enough to live in a household that earns more than 400% of the federal poverty line. This apparent blessing becomes a curse, however, when one considers that most healthcare providers do not take burden of debt into account. In my case, for example, student loans absorb more than a quarter of our total household income before taxes. Consequently, while our income looks good on paper, in reality, we live on a shoestring budget that does not allow enough money for even the lowest bidding provider. Come tax season, this oversight translates into paying a penalty tax without any insurance to show for it. Thus, in the recently emerging battle waged between A.C.A. enforcers and institutions of higher education, adjuncts may be caught in the crossfire<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Admittedly, the probable alternative seems equally as bleak. A 2017 A.A.U.P. report predicts, “The potential full repeal of the Affordable Care Act could cause health-insurance premiums to increase and would likely place additional burdens on part-time faculty” (Shulman et al., “Visualizing Change” 9).

### 1.5. Structured Uncertainty and Just-in-Time Hiring

It is also worth mentioning that, while, on the one hand, assuming excessive teaching loads spread out over multiple institutions is certainly arduous, on the other hand, the opportunity to do so is actually a luxury. The House Committee reports that, of all their respondents, “an overwhelming 95 percent felt that they had no job stability and did not know whether they would be teaching courses from one semester to the next” (21). Gappa and Leslie’s findings over twenty years ago demonstrate the perennial nature of this problem: “While the pieced-together temporary assignments may constitute a full-time work load, they remain without the status, salary, benefits, and security normally associated with full-time or regular employment. At any time one of the part-time assignments can easily ‘disappear’” (55). This same indeterminacy often applies to seniority as well (175). And over time, procedures neglecting to recognize “long service and high performance” (177) can erode adjuncts’ “morale and self-respect,” leaving a growing proportion of the faculty feeling “disillusioned and alienated” (196) after years of enduring “a very stressful sense of vulnerability” (251). A report issued by the Center for the Future of Higher Education (C.F.H.E.) calls this scenario “structured uncertainty” because it has become such a widespread institutional practice (Street et al. 8). In my five years of experience as an adjunct, for example, my students’ gratifying question, “Which course-section are you teaching next semester?” has always resulted in the humbling admission that I have no way of knowing whether or not I will be returning the following term.

This lack of job security leads to much anxiety, especially during summer breaks, when course offerings are sparse and in high demand. Moreover, many adjuncts “are not notified as to whether or not they will be teaching a class until the day before the semester



[begins]” (United States 21), a practice known as “just in time” hiring (Street et al. 4)<sup>28</sup>. Waiting to see if course-sections meet the minimum enrollment to “make,” adjuncts must stand at the ready either to step into a classroom or to scurry for other employment options at a moment’s notice. In my personal experience, I have had as little as twenty hours to sign a contract, prepare a syllabus, and format the course module of a learning management system before greeting my students on the first day of class. In some cases, adjuncts even sign contracts for courses that do meet the minimum enrollment yet are “bumped” (Gappa and Leslie 115) or “reassigned at the last minute” (Street et al. 7).

What most students do not realize and what too many administrators disregard is the demanding preparation that course planning requires. A survey conducted by the C.F.H.E. reveals that structured uncertainty leads to a “double contingency” (Street et al. 7). In order to avoid the frenetic preparatory work resulting from the “‘just-in-time’ staffing model,” proactive adjuncts undertake “‘just in case,’ unpaid preparation” (7). In such circumstances, adjuncts must decide “whether to be ready—with courses prepared—for a possible last minute assignment....and such preparation time is uncompensated” because contracts (and the corresponding payment) typically do not take effect until the first day of class (7-8). The C.F.H.E. survey confirms, “Given that there is a difference between notice of appointment and the actual start of employment, *all* preparation time for contingent faculty is undervalued, unpaid labor” (8). Therefore, whether devoting weeks of unpaid time revising their curriculum for a class that is canceled at the last minute or hastily assembling that curriculum in a matter of days, either corollary amounts to a stressful situation for underappreciated adjuncts.

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<sup>28</sup> c.f., Gappa and Leslie (151, 255).

Furthermore, adjuncts may find themselves in a compromising financial situation due to one final aspect of their lack of employment stability. In her 2010 article for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Audrey Williams June reports that, when adjuncts whose classes are canceled file for unemployment, they

are regularly denied compensation, based on each state's understanding of a simple clause in the federal unemployment-insurance law that says benefits should not go to those with a "reasonable assurance" of continued employment. Colleges sometimes point to the assignment letters adjuncts receive describing their institution's intention to rehire them for the following term as evidence that they have such an assurance.

As a result, adjuncts have neither certainty regarding future employment nor a safety net to fall back on should an insufficient number of students enroll in their courses.

Discouraging as an adjunct's prospects may be, the preceding pages review merely the common frustrations with which part-time instructors grapple on a daily basis. They say nothing of marginal issues such as ostracism from faculty governance and departmental decision-making or swift termination for teaching controversial content. In light of this bleak state of affairs, one may wonder, "What kind of masochists would subject themselves to such mistreatment?"

The answer: highly educated, public intellectuals who, despite our thankless efforts, nevertheless earnestly maintain the conviction that we "perform work critical to our national efforts to lift the next generation's economic prospects" (United States 1). Kezar and Sam note that adjuncts may continue to teach part-time for any number of reasons, including the satisfying interaction with their students, the lack of a terminal degree or a sufficient number of publications, or working proximity to a partner who has been hired full-time at the campus (37). Regardless of our particular circumstances, however, many

adjuncts share the genuine conviction that higher education still offers students the opportunity to develop into informed citizens who will go out into the world and make positive contributions to the social order. While some skeptics may accuse me of speaking subjectively, the House Committee report confirms that I do not stand alone: “A recurring theme throughout the responses was the instructors’ dedication to their students....Teaching is often their core passion and career goal” (4)<sup>29</sup>. True, we may be gluttons for punishment. We may be naïve in holding out hope for obtaining a coveted full-time position or a reformed educational system. But at our base, we are believers. We believe in the intellectually empowering and liberating function of education. We believe in our students’ potential. And at the end of far too many days, that belief serves as the sole reward to which we so adamantly cling.

## 2. The History of Adjunct Employment

Unsettling as the state of core-curriculum instruction may be, this scenario has not appeared overnight. The reality that comes as such a surprise to my students (and undoubtedly to those parents who pay for their children’s education) concerns the steady development of this phenomenon, forty years in the making. During the mid-1970s, postsecondary institutions began “replacing full-time faculty with part-time instructors” (Sanchez, “Part-time Professors”). At first glance, the strategy seems wise and even well-intended: colleges and universities save money by contracting out the instruction of general education courses to adjuncts and teaching assistants. Purportedly, this approach constitutes a mutually beneficial situation—one in which the university can keep college

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<sup>29</sup> Gappa and Leslie’s observations support this assertion: “Most of the part-timers we interviewed derive their principal satisfaction from the intrinsic rewards of teaching. Part-time faculty love to teach! They are excited and challenged by their students and the engagement in teaching and learning” (40). Also, see their comments on page 121.

spending and tuition costs as low as possible while offering employment for qualified applicants seeking supplemental income<sup>30</sup>. While I have already argued as to why this assumption is false, one grows even more suspicious when considering universities' proportionately increased dependence upon part-time instruction.

According to a 2014 report published by the American Association of University Professors, from 1975 to 2011, the number of part-time faculty working in American higher education increased by 286%—over ten times the meager 23% increase in tenured and tenure-track faculty. This alarming figure is eclipsed by only the curious 369% growth in “full-time nonfaculty professional positions, a category that includes buyers and purchasing agents; human resources, training, and labor relations specialists; management analysts; loan counselors; lawyers; and other nonacademic workers” (Curtis and Thornton, “Losing Focus” 8)<sup>31</sup>. In and of itself, this statistic may not strike some as disconcerting. After all, I have specified that adjuncts are frequently “qualified applicants,” implying that they are highly educated and proficiently capable of teaching undergraduates. So, if the quality of instruction has not diminished, why should we worry about statistics and bar graphs?

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<sup>30</sup> In addition to the provisions for voluntary adjuncts I discuss in my Introduction, several other benefits are commonly cited for hiring instructors off the tenure track. Perhaps the most popular have been “the need for flexibility and cost control” (Baldwin and Chronister 35). On the one hand, nontenure-track faculty provide a “safe zone” (35) or “buffer” (Gappa and Leslie 132) in response to fluctuating enrollments. On the other hand, many institutions pay these instructors at a lower rate to teach as many if not more course-sections than do tenured faculty (Baldwin and Chronister 35, 116). Other advantages include excellent and committed instruction (Gappa and Leslie 120, 225; Baldwin and Chronister 124), versatility in meeting the learning needs of shifting student populations (Gappa and Leslie 121-22, 225), filling the gaps in tenured faculty expertise (117), “more recent graduate education than full-time faculty” (127), diversifying the faculty as a whole (128; Baldwin and Chronister 35), and fulfilling “‘bridge appointments’ linking instructional and administrative duties or instructional and outreach roles” (Baldwin and Chronister 179-80).

<sup>31</sup> Desrochers and Kirshstein report that, during the last third of that timespan (i.e., 2000-2012), “new part-time faculty” hires actually surpassed “new professional jobs,” the latter of which nonetheless still comprised “approximately 20 to 25 percent of on-campus jobs” (7).

We have cause for concern when we take into account the widespread institutional disregard of adjuncts I have described at length and how that maltreatment affects the adjunct's ability to provide the quality of education that students, parents, and society in general expect from colleges and universities. Commonly overwhelmed by excessive teaching loads, adjuncts all too often cannot offer their students the time and attention they require and, given higher education's consistently rising tuition costs, deserve. In short, capable instructors are hamstrung by their working conditions and resulting lifestyles and therefore cannot teach to their full potential. Hence, despite the *prima facie* advantages of delegating courses to adjuncts, in truth (and as no surprise to any collegiate faculty member) the practice invites exploitation, cheating not only part-time faculty but also students and undermining the ethos of any institution offering a liberal education.

How has higher education come to find itself in this unethical circumstance? In her book *American Higher Education in Crisis?*, reporter Goldie Blumenstyk offers a brief historical overview of the emergence and increased utilization of adjunct instructors:

Initially, adjunct instructors were prevalent only at community colleges. Often they were working professionals, hired with the idea that they could bring their real-world experience into the classroom. Over time, four-year colleges began to employ them, too. They supplemented the teaching ranks that were otherwise filled by full-time professors who had earned doctorates and similar credentials, and then entered higher education as instructors or assistant professors, hoping to eventually earn full professorships and tenure. Those working-professional adjuncts still exist. But many colleges have also turned many of the traditionally trained PhD holders and other aspiring professors into adjuncts. (102)

Hence, the origin of the term “adjunct” derives from the role's initially intended purpose. Teaching was adjunct—or added to—a primary means of employment related to the content of the courses these instructors taught. So what has motivated institutions to break from the original protocol?

### 3. Purported Reasons for Employing Adjuncts

#### 3.1. State Budget Cuts and Mitigating Tuition Increases

Several reasons have been offered to explain this trend. The most obvious cause for public institutions derives from continually decreased state funding (Blumenstyk 9; Barnshaw and Dunietz 9-10)<sup>32</sup>. Professor of higher education Paul D. Umbach explains that this financial shortage combined with “sharp increases in student enrollments” have compelled colleges to pursue “more flexible<sup>33</sup> and less expensive sources of instruction” (92). But given the nearly universal nature of this paradigm shift across all institutional categories, including private colleges that rely far less heavily on public funds<sup>34</sup>, we have reason to believe that other sources have also contributed to this crisis.

By now, pervasive skepticism within the academic community has roundly rejected institutional insistence that reining in growing tuition costs alone has led to the overdependence on part-time faculty, and for good reason. Blumenstyk observes that “cost structures—and prices—of colleges have grown much faster than the public’s ability to pay for them” (6). Studies show that the “average sticker price” of both public and private institutions has proportionately doubled in relation to the median annual family income,

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<sup>32</sup> See Gappa and Leslie’s explanation regarding how state budgets have influenced specifically part-time faculty staffing at state schools (93-94, 98-99, 221-22).

<sup>33</sup> The need for flexibility, which Gappa and Leslie consider “a frequently used euphemism for saving money” (92), is a common justification for relying upon adjuncts to teach general education courses. The administrative argument follows that, since institutions cannot predict precisely how many students will enroll from year to year, they cannot hire too many full-time faculty members who might not end up teaching should an insufficient number of students register during a given semester (Street et al. 15). While this claim is legitimate to an extent, too many administrators have abused this logic in order to rationalize hiring part-time instructors to teach all core-curriculum courses while hiring no full-time instructors for this purpose regardless of the close attention institutions devote to admissions and retention as well as observable consistencies in enrollment from year to year.

<sup>34</sup> Barnshaw and Dunietz argue that a reduction in endowments at private institutions has had an effect similar to declining state appropriations at public institutions (9).

which is further exacerbated, though somewhat tempered, by the fact that, between 1999 and 2012, that median income has fallen 10% (6-7).

Personally, I am reminded of the steady rise in sticker price on a weekly basis. At my alma mater—one of three area institutions at which I have taught as an adjunct—my students currently pay approximately \$8,000 more to attend than I did when I graduated twelve years ago. Despite the steady increase, however, as an adjunct pursuing his Ph.D., I still earn the exact salary I agreed to when I began teaching there five years ago<sup>35</sup>. This static stipend is particularly unsettling given that, when I worked at the same institution's physical plant shortly after graduating, we received a two-percent "cost of living" raise each year. This raise combined with benefits such as health insurance and retirement offers yet another disturbing perspective—my alma mater took better care of me when I mowed its lawns and shoveled its sidewalks than it does now that I teach its students. Therefore, in the case of my institution anyway, adjuncts see neither hide nor hair of those additional fees. So, if the continual employment and constant salary of adjuncts does not mitigate rising tuition, we must look elsewhere.

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<sup>35</sup> This practice varies between institutions, each of which establishes its own salary schedule (or lack thereof) (Gappa and Leslie 158). In the 1990s, Gappa and Leslie reported, "Once hired, part-timers do not necessarily receive automatic cost-of-living increases or merit adjustments. We almost always found that cost-of-living adjustments for part-timers were lower than those for full-time faculty. At several institutions we visited, anticipated increases had been cancelled or lowered because of budget exigencies" (159). Later, they imply the potential ramifications of such neglect: "Rewarding performance has become an axiom of sound management. Yet most institutions seem to let their part-time faculty work in a situation that offers virtually no incentives for outstanding performance or for improvement in performance. Low pay, intermittent or nonexistent pay increases, and ineligibility for various competitive rewards available to full-time faculty leave part-timers without the incentives that might motivate them to invest more energy and time in their work. It is simply unreasonable to expect part-timers...to continue a high level of performance without at least some prospect of reward" (274).

### 3.2. Unsustainable Tenure

Some critics point to the system by which faculty attain tenure. A common accusation insists “that tenure increases costs, stifles faculty productivity, and decreases the ability of colleges and universities to adapt in a rapidly changing society” (Umbach 91). Sadly, this narrow conception exists even within the ranks of full-time faculty. For instance, government professor George Ehrhardt concludes,

Everyone in higher education knows how adjuncts are exploited: they teach large sections of introductory classes to generate revenue that sustains a cadre of tenure-track faculty who teach fewer and upper-division courses that match their research interests. While they may rhetorically support progressive policies, many tenure-track faculty contribute to this practice out of self-interest. (620)

While the implementation of tenure in higher education is undoubtedly problematic, however, other evidence points to the contrary.

Designating tenure as a scapegoat may constitute a hasty conclusion for two main reasons, both of which I have drawn from Curtis and Thornton’s 2013 report “Here’s the News.” First, the percentage of total faculty comprised of tenured and tenure-track instructors significantly dropped between 1975 and 2011. Granted, while the total number of tenured or tenure-track faculty increased by 26% during that time, proportionately speaking, the percentage of those positions in relation to the total number of postsecondary faculty fell from approximately 45% in 1975 to just below 25% in 2011 (8). Consequently, as institutions have grown over the past forty years, tenured or tenure-track faculty has become far less common (Barnshaw and Dunietz 13).

For Ehrhardt’s claim to hold true, the drastically shrinking minority of tenured faculty must be earning copious sums of money. However, tuition rates have grown between three to fourteen times faster than have full-time faculty salaries (Blumenstyk 89),



which, for the most part, barely kept pace with inflation over the same period of time (Curtis and Thornton, “Here’s the News” 5). A 2010 report from the Delta Cost Project corroborates this evidence. Just as the percentage of tenure-eligible faculty has fallen, the percentage of funds devoted to all faculty constitutes a smaller fraction of overall expenses<sup>36</sup>. With the exception of a slight increase in 2005,

over the 1998 to 2008 period, the share of instruction spending declined against increased spending for academic support (libraries and computing), institutional support (administration), and student services....The common myth that spending on faculty is responsible for continuing cost escalation is not true. (Desrochers, Lenihan, and Wellman 22)

In fact, a 2015 A.A.U.P. report found that, during the 2012-13 academic year, “faculty salaries account[ed] for less than a third of total expenditures” at “two- and four-year public institutions” (Barnshaw and Dunietz 8)<sup>37</sup>. Thus, while tenured professors certainly make substantially more money than do adjunct instructors, they nevertheless earn relatively the same amount of money they did forty years ago. So if faculty, whether adjunct or tenured, have not caused the annual tuition-hike, again, we must search elsewhere for the source.

### 3.3. Facilities Construction

One of the most popular whipping boys among critics of higher education spending over the past two decades has been the so-called “climbing-wall wars” or “edifice

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<sup>36</sup> Four years later, the Delta Cost Project published an issue brief reaffirming this finding: “Although higher education’s primary mission is teaching, faculty compensation represents only about one half of total compensation costs. Full-time faculty salaries have grown little in recent years, making them an unlikely culprit behind rising higher education costs. Other personnel costs, including employee benefits and compensation for staff providing noninstructional services, have grown faster. Although reliance on adjunct faculty has held down instructional costs, it has not been enough to offset these other costs” (Desrochers and Kirshstein 15). One reason for this insufficiency is because, unlike adjuncts, noninstructional employees don’t come cheap: “Median salaries for professional workers generally ranged between \$55,000 and \$60,000 in fiscal year 2013....New student services positions typically pay around \$55,000—less than full-time professor positions, but significantly more than adjunct faculty appointments” (18).

<sup>37</sup> Later, Barnshaw and Dunietz further specify that “benefits represent only about 30 percent of the total compensation for full-time instructional faculty” (16).

complex” (Blumenstyk 94-95). Blumenstyk observes that “colleges are creatures of ambition and competition,” which, on the one hand, can promote “advances in scholarship and quality” yet, on the other hand, all too often result in accruing debt in order to attract prospective students with extracurricular amenities (9). Twenty years ago, English professor Mark Edmundson lamented this propensity, likening his own campus to “a retirement spread for the young” (44). Identifying this pattern as indicative of the consumer-driven mentality of the broader culture, Edmundson explains the logic motivating this investment: “Universities need to attract the best (that is, the smartest *and* the richest) students in order to survive in an ever more competitive market....If the marketing surveys say that the kids require sports centers, then, trustees willing, they shall have them” (44). Edmundson proceeds to share that a financial officer at his institution even admitted, “Colleges don’t have admissions offices anymore, they have marketing departments” (45).

Blumenstyk qualifies the somber spirit of this perspective with an insightful consideration: “About half of the buildings constructed during the twenty-five-year building boom that began on college campuses in the early 1990s were academic buildings, including many specially built to accommodate the needs of modern science. Another 25 percent of construction was directed at residential space” (93-94). At the same time, she does concede that not only do the accommodations at several universities “seem plenty lavish” but also many institutions compete in this amenities race out of a sense of necessity (if not survival), fearing that they will otherwise lose prospective students to other schools (94).

Since reading the Edmundson article a few years ago, I have made it a point to begin a related class discussion each semester with the question, “What convinced you to enroll here?” Of course, I always receive outlying responses such as, “Everyone in my family has graduated from here,” or “I came here on an athletic scholarship.” Yet, overwhelmingly, I hear variations of the same two responses: either “I really enjoyed the classes I sat in on as a prospective student,” or “Everyone here was so welcoming.” Interestingly, no one, not even the athletes, ever says anything about the recreational facility, the student center, or even the recently constructed library. And while this informal “survey” certainly does not draw from a representative sample size, nothing is at stake in these students’ candid responses. My point is that, although the few hundred students I have taught over the past five years show no aversion to the campus’ “bells and whistles,” the institution’s two traits that most appeal to them, year-in and year-out, have been the classroom experience and the community.

Nevertheless, at the same institution, that assertion can reasonably be called into question. Three summers ago, my wife and I received our issue of the alumni magazine, which celebrated the largest donation in the institution’s history. While I was satisfied to learn that over one-third of the donation was earmarked for student scholarships, I was somewhat dismayed that half the money would serve as a down-payment on a brand new \$25-million facility for business, math, and science, especially since the university had just completed the \$12.5-million construction of a communication arts center four years prior as well as of a \$1.6-million athletic complex two years earlier. Whether the exclusion of increased faculty compensation was the decision of the donor or the institution, I do not know. However, when I eventually convinced myself that, since this state-of-the-art facility

would serve educational purposes and, therefore, the public good, insult was added to healed injury (or, at least, licked wound). While browsing through the institution's website, I stumbled upon a page requesting donations for the current senior class' reunion gift—the proposed \$250,000 renovation of the student center (which I had helped renovate as recently as nine years ago)<sup>38</sup>.

So perhaps my students were simply telling me what they thought I wanted to hear. After all, the appeal of the edifice complex is that donors can leave a lasting mark. I suppose that, in the end, it is more gratifying to have one's name etched in limestone upon a physical structure than displayed as the title of an endowment for a full-time instructorship on a departmental webpage.

#### 3.4. Administrative Bloat

While the previous two complaints are common, however, perhaps the most likely culprit for rising tuition and increased reliance upon part-time instructors is what has come to be known as “administrative bloat.” Thelin explains, “Most campuses have steadily added administration and staff professionals since about 1970” (98). In his 2011 book *The Fall of the Faculty*, Benjamin Ginsberg describes the result of this forty-year pattern:

Every year, hosts of administrators and staffers are added to college and university payrolls, even as schools claim to be battling budget crises that are forcing them to reduce the size of their full-time faculties. As a result, universities are filled with armies of functionaries—the vice presidents, associate vice presidents, assistant vice presidents, provosts, associate provosts, vice provosts, assistant provosts, deans, deanlets, deanlings, each

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<sup>38</sup> In the time that has passed since I wrote this example, the institution has launched an ambitious fund-raising campaign, seeking a grand total of \$62 million. While that figure includes \$27 million for student scholarships, the university seems to have plunged headfirst into the competitive amenities current. The student center renovation project has grown from the \$250,000 I mention here to \$5 million, and construction of a \$2-million manor for visitors is currently underway in the campus environs. Also, “college experience” ranks as a high priority given the \$10 million goal that will be ambiguously allocated to such crucial educational expenditures as athletics and the outdoor program. In contrast, the handsome sum of \$1 million has been requested for faculty support.

commanding staffers and assistants—who, more and more, direct the operations of every school. (2)

A 2014 issue brief from the Delta Cost Project specifies that “new professional positions” such as “business analysts, human resources staff, and admissions staff” comprised the bulk of administrative growth while “professional jobs that provide noninstructional *student* services....were the fastest growing salary expense in many types of institutions between 2002 and 2012” (Desrochers and Kirshstein 3)<sup>39</sup>. A 2010 policy report conducted by the Goldwater Institute argues that this trend has created “*diseconomies* of scale” in American higher education, resulting in a less efficient system than that which existed in years past (Greene, Kisida, and Mills 2). The authors explain that

universities employ more people and spend more money to educate each student even as those universities increase their enrollment. Instead of being marked by productivity increases, academia suffers from bloat, particularly administrative bloat. It now takes more employees—especially more administrators—in higher education despite innovations in technology and increases in scale. (Greene, Kisida, and Mills 2)

In short, critics contend that the proportionately skyrocketing presence of administrators and staffers employed in higher education are significantly contributing to the consistent increase in tuition despite growing student enrollment.

In response to this claim, Blumenstyk offers a fair caveat: “The findings often do not fully reflect the changes in how universities operate....The increasing sophistication of sponsored research, and even the growing use of information technology has required additional hiring of nonacademic personnel” (91). Even so, however, Blumenstyk herself

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<sup>39</sup> This trend likely explains the surprising fact that, “on most college campuses, the majority of workers are not teaching students. Less than half of employees at four-year, non-research institutions are faculty (full- or part-time), and at research institutions faculty account for only 25 to 30 percent of all jobs” (Desrochers and Kirshstein 9). As of 2012, “there were between 1 and 1.5 full-time equivalent faculty members [counting part-time faculty] per administrator at public four-year institutions” (14). Interestingly, “middle-skilled jobs—those providing clerical, technical, skilled craft, and service/maintenance....continue to represent the largest group of workers on most types of campuses” (11).

expresses some doubt as to whether the extent of hiring non-instructional employees can be entirely justified.

The Goldwater Institute's report is also careful to concede that "universities derive most of their money from gifts, government subsidies and fees for noneducational services—as opposed to student-paid tuition" (Greene, Kisida, and Mills 2). Nevertheless, they demonstrate that universities have practiced poor stewardship of these resources. For example,

Increased governmental subsidies are not causing a reduction in cost to students, since inflation-adjusted tuition has increased by 66.7 percent. Nor are government subsidies primarily leading to an improvement in instructional quality, since instructional employment and spending increases have trailed administrative increases. The net effect of growing government subsidies has been to facilitate administrative bloat in higher education. (4)

Furthermore, as tuition costs rose by two-thirds at universities between 1993 and 2007, "the number of students enrolled in these leading institutions has increased by 14.5 percent, from 3.64 million to 4.17 million" (2). One would reasonably assume that higher tuition plus more students paying that tuition should equal a greater amount of money from which to compensate faculty. Sadly, however, that has not been the case<sup>40</sup>.

Adjusting for inflation, the same report finds that "there has been a 39.3 percent increase in expenditures per student for instruction....While these increases are large, they pale in comparison to the whopping 61.2 percent increase in expenditures per student for administration that has occurred between 1993 and 2007" (9). While these statistics were gathered just prior the Great Recession, they are nonetheless troubling because they

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<sup>40</sup> Generally, public institutions responded to increasing enrollment between 2000 and 2012 by simply hiring more part-time instructors rather than creating more full-time positions in order to accommodate their growing student populations (Desrochers and Kirshstein 12).

indicate that administrative bloat has exploited not only part-time instructors but also students and the general public:

Institutions increased their enrollment and, as a result, increased the direct and indirect government subsidies that higher enrollment provides. They also all significantly increased the tuition they charge their students. And what taxpayers and students received in return was more administrators and fewer teachers—probably not what they had in mind. (11)

Therefore, in public institutions anyway, administrative bloat is a problem not only restricted to academia but also adversely affecting all taxpayers.

Granted, the face of higher education has dramatically changed over the past four decades, and every type of institution has needed to adjust accordingly in order to provide for its students the highest quality learning experience possible. So the argument opposing administrative bloat does not necessarily propose that we revert back to a 1970s model of operation. Rather, it critiques administrators for poorly wielding their leverage in the academy by carelessly and unethically allocating funds away from education and research.

Yet, while administrative bloat makes for an easy villain, the truth is that the exploitation of adjuncts results from a combination in varying degrees of all these causes as well as several other less obvious sources such as the “labor market” arising from “an aging faculty and a surplus of aspiring academics” (Umbach 91-92). Regardless of whom or what is to blame, however, this dilemma must be resolved quickly if colleges wish to entertain any hope of a sustainable future. Swelling tensions have been coming to a head over the past five years as adjunct consternation has received more and more attention in not only academic writing but also the press and social media<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Admittedly, Gappa and Leslie acknowledged adjunct dissatisfaction and unionization efforts two decades ago (2). However, the more recent popularity of social media has served as a vehicle to carry this message beyond the academy.

#### 4. Public Consciousness

One contributing reason for this heightened awareness has been adjuncts' recent efforts to organize. Over the past decade, advocacy groups such as the New Faculty Majority, Adjunct Nation, the Coalition for the Academic Workforce, the Adjunct Project, and the Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success have sprung up across the country. Scholarly societies such as the Campaign for the Future of Higher Education and even some accreditation agencies are also supporting improved working conditions for adjuncts. As evidenced by my many references earlier in this argument, within the past few years, the United States Congress has conducted an investigation into postsecondary institutions' utilization of adjuncts. Many adjuncts have turned to unions such as the American Federation of Teachers, the Service Employees International Union, and even the United Steelworkers for representation (Blumenstyk 103).

Regrettably, however, many colleges have responded to this exigency by obdurately digging in their heels. Rather than reassessing their operations in an effort to improve working conditions for the faculty who teach so many of their undergraduates, some universities have gone so far as to call in reinforcements in the form of "union-opposition law firms from the corporate world" (Blumenstyk 103). Such reactions indicate a dangerously short-sighted perspective of a ubiquitous problem. Such unyielding institutions have created a paradox in which, on the one hand, they treat unruly adjuncts as expendable nuisances whom they can simply shoo away while, on the other hand, they continue to rely heavily on adjuncts to teach an overwhelming number of courses. Granted, reflexive termination may offer a temporary solution by making a subversive adjunct



someone else's problem, but as the advocacy of part-time instructors continues to gain traction, what kind of adjunct do such institutions think will apply to fill the vacancy?

Perhaps institutions anticipate that, if they bide their time, this movement will fizzle out. However, that is unlikely in light of a single event that has catapulted the plight of adjuncts into mainstream news while inspiring proponents to double their efforts. The tragic death of Margaret Mary Vojtko in 2013 has served as a rallying cry for activists. In his *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* article, Senior Associate General Counsel for United Steelworkers, Daniel Kovalik, reported that Vojtko—an 83-year-old adjunct who taught French for twenty-five years at Duquesne—suffered a fatal heart attack on her front lawn.

Unfortunate as that may be, we may not see the correlation between her death and her profession until we consider her final days. Dividing her time between teaching and working the night-shift at a diner, Vojtko resorted to sleeping in her office during the day because she could not afford to pay the electric bill for her dilapidated home. Despite Vojtko's impeccable attendance and glowing student evaluations, Duquesne dismissed her without severance due to ineffectiveness. Undergoing radiation treatments for cancer and having just been reported to Adult Protective Services, Vojtko passed away and was laid to rest in a cardboard casket. In Kovalik's final portrayal, he summarizes, "Margaret Mary was forced to die saddened, penniless and on the verge of being turned over to Orphan's Court."

In all fairness, Duquesne Provost Tim Austin claims that the institution "did reach out to help Vojtko" and argues that her "case has been shamelessly exploited" (Sanchez, "The Sad Death"). I have also considered this possibility and have therefore attempted to

tread lightly. Yet the reason I include Vojtko in this argument is that her death has struck a chord that resonates with adjuncts everywhere.

They cannot help but endow her death with meaning, viewing her as “a sad sight, but an honest symbol of what she had been reduced to” (Kovalik). Perhaps advocates have appropriated Vojtko as a martyr for their cause, yet I cannot condemn them because her fate offers a ghastly glimpse into our own possible futures. Kovalik shares that Vojtko’s nephew “implored [him] to make sure that she didn’t die in vain....While there was nothing that could be done for Margaret Mary, we had to help the other adjuncts at Duquesne and other universities who were being treated just as she was, and who could end up just like she did.” I would agree to some extent with skeptics who would call Vojtko’s circumstances extreme. But the fact of the matter is that this incident actually happened and partly due to Vojtko’s life as an adjunct—the same kind of life that tens of thousands of adjuncts experience every day. So we are not entirely justified in writing off adjuncts’ trepidation as irrational or melodramatic.

Regardless, even without considering Vojtko’s death, other events have been making headlines in recent years. For instance, the *Associated Press* has reported on universities’ recognition of their adjuncts’ desire to join unions, beginning with George Washington University in 2006 and most recently Georgetown and Tufts in 2013. Adjuncts at these institutions are now represented by Service Employees International Union, which has announced its intentions “to file for elections at more colleges in the Los Angeles, Seattle and Boston areas” (Hananel).

In March 2013, *PBS* covered homeless professor Mary-Faith Cerasoli’s one-person protest outside the New York State Department of Education headquarters. And while she

went unnoticed by the department itself, her solo demonstration “sparked a weekend Twitter movement among adjuncts around the country, with many more emailing photos of themselves to adjunct union organizers” (Pathe, “Homeless Professor”).

Several articles have covered perhaps the most popular event surrounding the adjunct movement, which occurred on 25 February 2015. Simone Pathe’s article for *PBS NewsHour* recounts National Adjunct Walkout Day—a protest that “was originally conceived on social media” yet “grew as a grassroots effort that took on many different forms in different places.” While actual walkouts were few due largely to “contract and union agreements that made walking out risky for many adjuncts,” a number of “teach-ins, rallies, and talks” took place in observance of the event, which also displayed a widespread social media presence (Pathe “How a Hashtag”). Finally, *Inside Higher Ed* reported that a fair showing of adjuncts displayed their solidarity with “workers...from home health and child care, retail, fast food, and other traditionally low-paying fields” for the national day of protest on 15 April 2015 (Flaherty, “Adjuncts Participate”).

As far as headlines go, this coverage may not strike some as exactly breaking news. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that adjuncts’ message is receiving more attention and with greater frequency. Furthermore, it shows that social media is playing just as significant a role in getting the word out. The urgency surrounding this trend regards the acceleration of this cause that cannot be ignored for much longer. Politicians are already taking note of part-time instructors’ working conditions, and soon, this awareness will most likely spread to students, parents, and taxpayers. As public frustration surrounding the current state of higher education continues to build, American society may forsake traditional postsecondary institutions *en masse* in search of alternative forms of higher learning.

Who knows? Perhaps such a cultural shift is just what the nation needs right now. But I believe that I can safely speak for most adjuncts in saying that this is not the desired outcome. Therefore, advocates must be careful specifically to articulate not only their demands but also realistic solutions in order to avoid unintended and unpleasant results. I propose such potential resolutions in my third chapter. For, as unacceptable as the current practice of higher education may be, the last thing that anyone—trustees, regents, faculty, and administrators alike—wants is to bring about a worse state of affairs.

Thus, academia finds itself at a pivotal and decisive moment in the history of American higher education. Perpetuating the “us-against-them” stance on either side of the debate will lead only to continued gridlock, which may well result in a social abandonment of traditional postsecondary education. I recommend that institutions, faculty, and staff collaborate to arrive at a reasonable compromise in which every level of the academic hierarchy can achieve satisfactory validation. For, if we do not deal with the situation internally, we leave the academy’s fate in the hands of either the government or the general public. And just as critics of the corporate influence on higher education decry, external forces, unfamiliar and all too often unconcerned with the nuances involved in preparing the next generation to inherit the world, will make only a catastrophe out of a mess.

## Chapter Two

### The Multidimensional Detriments of the Adjunct Model

*This significant departure from the traditional faculty employment pattern—a pattern that most colleges and universities have followed since the early part of the twentieth century—may be quietly changing the academic profession and the American higher education system. (Baldwin and Chronister 3)*

During the several orientations I have attended as a teaching assistant or an adjunct over the years, I have detected an odd pattern: the proclivity of presenters to employ military metaphors when emphasizing the importance of our roles as educators. Typically, we are “on the front lines” or “in the trenches” with our students, standing tall amid the fray like stalwart NCOs. In typical American fashion, we are fending off the unflagging assaults of abstractions such as unexcused absences, academic dishonesty, and the most dreaded of all foes—attrition. Regardless of institutional type, the constant motif emerging from these evocations is the seemingly sincere impression of the postsecondary institution as a cohesive unit, dependent upon the integrity of all its many elements for successful operation.

Although my experience as an adjunct has made me rather skeptical toward anything resembling an institutional pep-talk, I nonetheless continue to believe in this idea of a university. In order to fulfill its purpose properly, an institution of higher learning requires optimal functioning at every level. Accordingly, whenever any element falters, the entire establishment suffers. Therefore, the problems I address in my first chapter negatively impact not only adjunct instructors but also all other institutional stakeholders to varying degrees. Specifically, the flawed model of adjunct employment has led to the deprofessionalization and division of college faculty as a whole. Adjuncts’ undermined

authority, last-minute hiring practices, insufficient access to resources, and irrational compensation frameworks have created unsatisfactory learning conditions for students. Internal dissention between faculty and administration has only added fuel to the fire of American criticism regarding the value of higher education. If we view postsecondary institutions in the United States as armies, they have become dysfunctional and are currently ill-equipped to combat the current and coming threats to their success, if not their survival. From this perspective, the adjunct problem becomes an exigency that demands redressing for not only part-time instructors but also colleges as a whole.

## 1. Adverse Effects on Faculty

### 1.1. Faculty Deprofessionalization or Casualization

Kezar and Holcombe argue that colleges' dramatically increasing reliance upon nontenure-track faculty—comprising the overall faculty majority of nearly seventy percent—has effectively “deprofessionalized” higher education faculty as a whole. One element contributing to the lack of professionalization among the growing percentage of part-time instructors concerns the lack of time to conduct research. In my first chapter, I explain that it is adjuncts' excessive workload—as opposed to some inherent aversion to study and publication—that prevents many of us from growing in scholarship. Ironically, the inordinate number of hours we spend in the classroom is the very condition that inhibits our effectiveness in the classroom because we do not have the necessary time to stay abreast of the ongoing conversations within our disciplines (Shulman et al., “Higher Education” 16). This paradox results in our practically automatic subordination among our colleagues within “the current model, which privileges research but expects faculty to

maintain a focus on all three roles” of teaching, research, and service (Kezar and Holcombe).

The problem with this emphasis is not that research is privileged instead of either of the other two but that any of the three are privileged at all. It demonstrates a one-dimensional view of the academic’s multifarious duties within the institution. Like many of my colleagues, I value all three obligations because each fulfills a crucial function to the academy’s smooth operation. Instructors develop their pedagogical skills in order to engage their students effectively in the classroom. Research not only ensures timely lesson plans but also enables professors to contribute to the discussions taking place within their fields. Service facilitates institutional efficiency by precluding even further administrative bloat. Therefore, this “tiered” faculty model dilutes the professionalism of college faculty as a whole, which in turn, inevitably hurts our institutions’ academic profiles.

Cornell professor of labor and employment law Risa L. Lieberwitz demonstrates how this deprofessionalization adversely affects all faculty’s (not simply adjuncts’) collective bargaining rights, especially at private institutions. In 1980, during the emergence of corporate tendencies within higher education, the U.S. Supreme Court’s *NLRB v. Yeshiva University* decision “all but halted [unionization] in four-year private colleges and universities” because college faculty (which, at the time, contained a much lower proportion of recently created adjunct positions than it now does) were considered “managerial employees” due to the largely independent nature of their work, particularly regarding “curriculum, teaching methods, grading policies, and student admissions.” This relegation “excluded [tenured faculty] from rights to unionize and bargain collectively under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA).” Thus, “the Court concluded that the

university administration would condition such delegated authority on the faculty's aligning with management's interests."

This oversight has proven costly for faculty, especially at private colleges, during the institutional developments of the three and a half decades that have passed since the ruling. Lieberwitz explains how the December 2014 *Pacific Lutheran* case brought this impediment to the attention of the National Labor Relations Board. The board discovered that the practically exponential growth of administrators versus the comparatively stagnant increase in full-time faculty has created an imbalance in power at postsecondary institutions, effectively rendering the conditions of the *Yeshiva* ruling obsolete.

Yet the addition of administrators drastically outpacing the growth of full-time faculty only partly explains this power-shift. As I describe in my first chapter, the second-fastest growing group of college employees has been part-time faculty, which are almost universally excluded from shared governance. Consequently, the professors serving on faculty senates represent only a fraction (in some cases, the minority) of the entire faculty. Therefore, the deprofessionalization of the faculty due to the ubiquitous employment of adjunct instructors as part of overall higher-education "corporatization has reduced collective faculty autonomy through unilateral decision making by the administration" (Lieberwitz).

Although Lieberwitz acknowledges that the *Pacific Lutheran* decision may facilitate collective bargaining for a greater number of faculty, she concedes that it will not necessarily bridge the gap between full-time and part-time faculty. Such faculty unification would require a concerted effort among the already burdened professoriate. Specifically,

the challenge of defining common interests will be compounded at institutions splintered between tenure-track and tenured faculty, on the one



hand, and non-tenure-track faculty, on the other. It will be essential, though, to create a unified faculty that serves everyone's interests, rather than allow corporatization trends to divide faculty ranks further.

Moreover, Lieberwitz anticipates that such efforts would encounter pronounced administrative resistance:

Faculty should be prepared for pushback by administrators against faculty organizing, with employer tactics that include both cooptation and coercion....The administration will likely attempt to reinforce the status divisions among faculty ranks. Those who are most vulnerable—contingent faculty and tenure-track faculty who have not yet been tenured—will be most sensitive to negative reactions by deans, provosts, and other administrators.

Therefore, although greater unionization may certainly improve collective bargaining, unfortunately, it may do little either to professionalize or to unify an institution's faculty as a whole.

## 1.2. Faculty Bifurcation

A veritable case in point that proves the likelihood of Lieberwitz' speculations is shared by Walter Benn Michaels and Scott McFarland regarding their efforts to form a faculty union at the University of Illinois at Chicago. In 2009, the Illinois Federation of Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers collaborated with U.I.C. faculty in order to organize a union that would include both full- and part-time instructors. Acknowledging that "Illinois law made no distinction between the groups," the labor board approved the motion, considering it not only legal but also logical. However, Michaels and McFarland relate that, upon the presentation of their case to the institution,

the university could have accepted the decision and begun to bargain with us, but instead the administration appealed the decision to the conservative fourth district appellate court in Springfield, spending more than a hundred thousand dollars on outside lawyers in the process. Three years and three court appearances after our initial meetings, the court ruled that we must form separate bargaining units.

Fortunately for the faculty of U.I.C., this administrative resistance brought about the ironic result of faculty solidarity.

Yet this unification did not occur on its own. Just as Lieberwitz insists, U.I.C. faculty formed a bond via the tenured faculty's proactive engagement with part-time instructors. All the while their administration worked to keep the faculty separated, full-time professors recruited part-time faculty and empowered them with a voice in every decision leading toward certification. And when the court eventually ruled in favor of U.I.C. administration, the faculty maintained their solidarity, creating a "bargaining team" of both part- and full-time professors who were assigned the task of drafting both contracts. In the process, they learned, "As vividly as we had come to see that our problems were essentially shared ones, we had come to see even more vividly that the power to produce solutions to those problems depended on our solidarity—that none of us would be able to do anything unless we did it together." In the end, this collective effort resulted in improved working conditions, including pay raises for all faculty, lecturer eligibility for promotion, and increased protection of academic freedom rights.

Despite the relatively "happy ending" for U.I.C.'s faculty, however, the manner in which these events transpired nonetheless demonstrates a troubling reality regarding at least one institution's conception and resulting management of its faculty. Initially, Lieberwitz' caveat concerning administrative opposition struck me as a bit extreme, perhaps even cynical. Yet, now that I have read Michaels' and McFarland's account, Lieberwitz' admonition seems entirely justified, if not prudent. Understanding the lengths to which U.I.C.'s administration would go in order to maintain a divided faculty calls into question not only the institution's motives but also its fiscal responsibility. I cannot help

but wonder from whence U.I.C. drew the money necessary to fund its legal action. If from student tuition, how would U.I.C. students respond to their tuition dollars contributing to faculty segregation? If from state or federal funding, how would tax-payers respond? If from endowments, how would donors respond? Then again, for all I know, the University of Illinois Board of Trustees or U.I.C. administrators themselves may have dug deep into their own pockets to pay for the legal fees, in which case, I suppose that the expenditures may be justified.

Nevertheless, the question of institutional motive remains. Michaels and McFarland depict their institution as an entity that actually prefers a divided academic workforce: “From the administration’s standpoint, it was important to have two different bargaining units—two different faculties—competing with each other over everything from teaching assignments to responsibility for shared governance.” While I am reticent to develop conspiracy theories, this explanation would account for my earlier point of contention with George Ehrhardt.

In my first chapter, I contest Ehrhardt’s claim that the “self-interest” of tenure-track faculty is largely to blame for adjunct exploitation (620). However, what I perceive to be Ehrhardt’s misconception is actually quite telling. For, while the tenure system is not solely responsible for the arguable exploitation of adjuncts in light of consistent tuition increases, Ehrhardt’s insistence sheds light on another adverse effect of the overreliance upon part-time instruction—dissension within the community of academics. Cultural studies scholar Henry A. Giroux has expounded on this very topic, observing that “powerlessness breeds resentment and anger among part-time faculty, and fear and insecurity among full-time faculty, who no longer believe that their tenure is secure. Hence, the divide between part-

and full-time faculty is reproduced by the heavy hand of universities as they downsize and outsource under the rubric of fiscal responsibility and accountability” (151-52). Giroux describes the potential corollaries of an academic working environment bereft of collegiality, reasoning that this “large pool of crippling fear, insecurity, and resentment...makes it difficult for faculty to take risks, forge bonds of solidarity, engage in social criticism, and perform as public intellectuals” (152). And while published over a decade ago, Giroux’ assessment remains relevant because tenure persists as a problematic issue that has drawn public criticism and contributed to faculty schism throughout American higher education.

Baldwin and Chronister explain that, beginning in the late 1980s, “when a poor job market for college graduates and corporate downsizing led to high white-collar unemployment” (25), college “patrons, including legislators, parents, and the corporate world began to raise questions...about the viability of tenure as the standard employment strategy for faculty” (22). Essentially, the argument follows that tenure artificially protects the professoriate from the types of market uncertainties that shape nearly every other economic sector<sup>42</sup>. Privileging research over teaching, the tenure system has reduced full-time faculty’s interaction with students in the classroom so that academics may devote more time to their scholarly pursuits<sup>43</sup>. This increased focus on specialized knowledge has resulted in full-time faculty’s lack of either interest in or ability to accommodate for shifting student demographics<sup>44</sup> as well as their lack of versatility to design and instruct new courses in response to emerging employment demands (Baldwin and Chronister 30,

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<sup>42</sup> See Baldwin and Chronister (15, 22, 25, 35) as well as Gappa and Leslie (1-2, 228-29).

<sup>43</sup> See Baldwin and Chronister (15, 25-26, 34-35) as well as Gappa and Leslie (97-98, 119-20, 193-95, 218, 226, 229-30).

<sup>44</sup> See Baldwin and Chronister (27-28, 30) as well as Gappa and Leslie (224).

35). Meanwhile, requirements for attaining tenure grew more rigorous at many institutions during the 1990s, making tenure status even more elusive (Baldwin and Chronister 22-23). Thus, Ehrhardt's claim corresponds with the critique that tenure has placed postsecondary institutions in a position in which they must resort to hiring nontenure-track faculty in order to bear the responsibility of teaching a growing proportion of the undergraduate curriculum (Gappa and Leslie 2-3, 97).

The corollary of this widespread institutional response has appeared in, as Giroux' passage describes, a "bifurcated" faculty (Gappa and Leslie 2), which has exacerbated dissention on either side of the tenure divide. Since the advent of this staffing model in higher education, nontenure-track faculty have held a "lower status" than have their full-time colleagues (Tuckman 312), a practice that institutions seem to have perpetuated over the ensuing four decades (Baldwin and Chronister 128-33, Gappa and Leslie 189-97). Such relegation has been compared to a caste system (Gappa and Leslie 12, 228; Kezar and Sam 75) that creates "a classic Marxian competition for scarce resources and gives each 'class' a rationale for economic conflict" (Gappa and Leslie 228). As I describe at length in my first chapter, nontenure-track faculty assume heavy teaching loads<sup>45</sup> at low rates of compensation<sup>46</sup> and often without benefits (Gappa and Leslie 43), support for professional development<sup>47</sup>, or time and resources for conducting original research<sup>48</sup>. Typically lacking professional titles or ranks, nontenure-track faculty seldom see any path to promotion (Baldwin and Chronister 48, 128, 133, 139), which only heightens their feeling of

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<sup>45</sup> See Baldwin and Chronister (7, 129) as well as Gappa and Leslie (2, 43, 195, 227-28, 230).

<sup>46</sup> See Baldwin and Chronister (7, 128-29, 139) as well as Gappa and Leslie (43, 228, 230).

<sup>47</sup> See Baldwin and Chronister (7, 128, 133, 177, 181).

<sup>48</sup> See Baldwin and Chronister (63, 129-30) as well as Gappa and Leslie (227-28).

expendability<sup>49</sup>. Unprotected by tenure, their academic freedom is precarious at best (Baldwin and Chronister 185), which commonly discourages them from even broaching potentially controversial topics in the classroom (69, 71; Shulman et al., “Higher Education” 16). Inadequately oriented to their campuses (Baldwin and Chronister 181), limited to instructing exclusively lower-division courses<sup>50</sup>, and striving to satisfy evaluation criteria that are inconsistent with their job descriptions and working conditions (Baldwin and Chronister 63), nontenure-track faculty frequently sense that teaching excellence has become a devalued skill in higher education (Gappa and Leslie 193-96, 227, 230). They often go unrecognized in shared governance<sup>51</sup>, departmental decision-making<sup>52</sup>, as well as social and academic functions<sup>53</sup> if they are included at all. Finally, because they are not hired as a result of a nationwide search (Baldwin and Chronister 129), nontenure-track faculty are sometimes perceived as less qualified academics (Baldwin and Chronister 132; Gappa and Leslie 193) and must, in particularly unpleasant situations, endure condescending attitudes from their tenure-track colleagues<sup>54</sup>.

Yet, while I concede that every institution most likely employs tenured professors who could not care less about the hardships of their part-time colleagues, my own experience working as an adjunct at four colleges has led me to believe that such professors comprise the exception rather than the rule. Furthermore, although tenure-track faculty undeniably benefit from this bifurcation in many ways, they are by no means ignorant of legitimate concerns that surround a growing “underprivileged class of faculty” (Baldwin

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<sup>49</sup> See Baldwin and Chronister (7, 41-42, 139) as well as Gappa and Leslie (43, 189-90, 218, 228, 230).

<sup>50</sup> See Baldwin and Chronister (55), Gappa and Leslie (155-56, 229), and Shulman et al (“Higher Education” 15).

<sup>51</sup> See Baldwin and Chronister (58, 128, 130-31, 139, 160) as well as Gappa and Leslie (196-98, 228, 266).

<sup>52</sup> See Baldwin and Chronister (128, 131, 177) as well as Gappa and Leslie (43, 190, 196, 266, 269).

<sup>53</sup> See Baldwin and Chronister (129, 184-85) as well as Gappa and Leslie (229, 269).

<sup>54</sup> See Baldwin and Chronister (139) as well as Gappa and Leslie (190, 192, 194-96).

and Chronister 129-30)<sup>55</sup>. For example, paltry institutional investment has led to the not entirely inaccurate observation that nontenure-track faculty seem uncommitted to the future of their departments (Baldwin and Chronister 132; Gappa and Leslie 266). Other common criticisms claim that an excessive percentage of faculty off the tenure track can warp the institutional mission (Baldwin and Chronister 130) by threatening educational quality and innovation<sup>56</sup>, program integrity (Gappa and Leslie 155-56), the value of scholarship (Baldwin and Chronister 130; Shulman et al., “Visualizing Change” 7), and the very existence of tenure itself<sup>57</sup>.

Along these lines, Michaels and McFarland affirm that many of the perquisites accompanying tenure-track appointments are no longer as secure as they once were:

The comparative advantages enjoyed by the tenure-track faculty (better job security, better pay, more autonomy) [have become] themselves increasingly at risk. It’s not just that the size of the tenure-track faculty has been shrinking; it’s that tenure itself is being eroded (see the University of Wisconsin), that the economic privileges of the tenure track are unequally distributed within the tenure track (see salary compression), and that faculty autonomy has been increasingly compromised (see, for example, administration-driven commitments to assessment that have not themselves been convincingly assessed).

In their 2014 issue brief, A.I.R. researcher Donna M. Desrochers and education and human development professor Rita Kirshstein draw from statistics made available by the Delta Cost Project Database that demonstrate the legitimacy of this concern. They explain, “As the number of part-time instructors grows, job security continues to erode among full-time faculty. Academics today are less likely than a decade ago to have tenure, hold a tenure-track position, or be full professors....The proportion of tenured faculty has declined across

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<sup>55</sup> Also see Gappa and Leslie (115, 142, 178, 196-98, 228-29, 280).

<sup>56</sup> See Gappa and Leslie (17, 229-30, 280) as well as Shulman et al (“Visualizing Change” 7).

<sup>57</sup> See Baldwin and Chronister (132-33, 185) as well as Gappa and Leslie (197).

the board, even in sectors with nearly universal access to tenure systems” (11). As of 2012, “the share of ‘professors’ declined by more than 4 percentage points since 2003, as adjuncts and other contingent faculty were increasingly at the lectern” at four-year institutions (11). And while I am hesitant to endorse Barbara Wolf’s analogy between adjuncts and migrant workers in her 1997 documentary *Degrees of Shame*, the situations both created and experienced by these different groups share a common symptom. The presence of adjuncts on the college payroll realizes the pervasive myth regarding laborers who will offer comparable quantity and quality of work for substantially less pay. Thus, in perpetuating this staffing model, college leaders have engendered a strange institutional variation of xenophobia, in which part-time instructors are becoming a threatening “Other” in the eyes of some of their full-time colleagues<sup>58</sup>.

One manifestation of this scenario hit particularly close to home for me when I recently read that Northern Kentucky University—located only one hundred miles away from where I work—has announced that the institution will be eliminating thirty-seven faculty positions. Consisting of primarily retiring faculty and a few nontenure-track instructors, these positions will be filled by “‘qualified and capable’ adjuncts” (Murphy)<sup>59</sup>. Although, fortunately, no tenured faculty were fired, the administrative readiness to spread retiring professors’ courses over existing tenured faculty’s workload and adjuncts (if not

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<sup>58</sup> In the late seventies, Tuckman challenged the popular rationale that “meet[ing] enrollment overloads” primarily drove the “rapid growth in part-time employment” because evidence suggested that adjuncts were increasingly “displacing full-timers” (312). Thelin confirms that this concern remains relevant, observing that “the percentage of faculty appointments that are full time and tenure eligible is shrinking year by year” (106) and that the adjunct model threatens the tenure system more so than do other emerging higher-education developments such as online education (50). The persistence of this trend over nearly four decades once again poses the question of whether or not this is yet another inherent proclivity of this staffing model’s application.

<sup>59</sup> Sadly, though perhaps unsurprisingly, such evasive administrative maneuvers are by no means new. Comparing these tactics to “an end-around run,” Thelin observes that this practice rose in frequency during the 1990s after widespread attempts to undermine tenure had failed (116).



eliminating those courses altogether) may imply that the institution regards even its full-time faculty as either expendable or, as they might put it, “too expensive.”

So, on the one hand, a given institution’s staffing policy may justify faculty consternation regardless of status. From another perspective, however, a brief review of the ongoing debate may suggest that the bifurcation narrative, while not necessarily false, is giving way to the corporatization narrative. That is to say that, rather than standing at odds with each other, both part- and full-time faculty may have come to view the administrative centralization of institutional power as the primary source of their respective woes. A perfect example of such a unified vision of the college faculty can be found in the AAUP’s One Faculty Campaign.

But what would compel postsecondary administration to perpetuate a potentially exploitive practice that divides its faculty? Michaels and McFarland surmise, “There’s a reason why our bosses and the people who appoint them are eager to bust unions when they can and to divide them when they can’t. United, organized faculties have some power. It’s distressingly easy to fire a professor who seems to have gotten out of line or a bunch of lecturers who have forgotten their place; it’s really hard to fire us all.” If this speculation holds true, then we can reasonably infer that the current model of adjunct employment effectually inhibits overall faculty professionalization, representation, and organization so as to ensure nearly absolute administrative power and control over institutional policy.

## 2. Adverse Effects on Students

In addition to harming part-time instructors in particular and the entire college faculty in general, the current model of adjunct employment’s perhaps most egregious offense falls upon undergraduates. Umbach would perhaps take issue with this assertion,

for he observes that “little evidence supports” the frequent claims that “reliance on contingent appointments negatively impacts undergraduate education,” citing publications that “have suggested that contingent faculty are as effective—and in some cases, more effective—in delivering instruction when compared with their tenured or tenure-track counterparts” (92)<sup>60</sup>. While, on the one hand, this contention may speak to nontenure-track faculty’s credit as quality instructors, on the other hand, words such as “suggested” and “effective” lead me to wonder whether or not the undergraduates in question would define “effectiveness” according to the same criteria. The reality of the situation is that, aside from voluntary adjuncts who may enjoy such luxuries as “spare time,” most part-time instructors simply lack the resources to teach as well as we are capable regardless of how we measure up to our tenured colleagues.

Moreover, Umbach’s surprising discovery misses the point in the first place. Even if these ambiguous “suggestions” ring true, the adjunct model is an outright affront to tuition-paying students. As Michaels and McFarland rightly assert, “A university in which first-year students take as many as half their courses from professors who not only have no job security and no opportunities for promotion but also are massively underpaid is not one that takes its responsibility to its students seriously.” In its 2012 report, the Center for the Future of Higher Education (C.F.H.E.) refines this claim, concluding specifically that “the deficiency and invisibility of contingent faculty members’ working conditions compromise students’ learning conditions, undermining students’ ability to engage with these

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<sup>60</sup> Desrochers and Kirshstein suggest that available research demonstrating the effects of adjuncts on educational quality is ambiguous at best (11). Gappa and Leslie concur with Umbach and, furthermore, rightly suspect that “part-time faculty were perhaps taking some of the blame for short-comings in a system where they are the victims of shortsighted and exploitive practices” (6). They further discuss this propensity on pages 13 and 78-79.

professors out of class and over time in important ways that contribute to student success” (Street et al. 1). In the following section, I explain how the weakening of part-time instructors’ authority, insufficient preparation time, inadequate access to instructional resources, and poorly justified compensation have created an unacceptable educational environment for undergraduate students.

### 2.1. Adjuncts’ Compromised Ethos and Shielding

One means by which adjunct instruction harms students’ overall learning experience involves the fact that our status within the hierarchy of the institution compromises our ethos by calling into question our capacity and authority to teach. For example, even now, most of my students are oblivious to the widespread employment of part-time faculty at the institutions they pay so much money to attend, which sets up some of them for a rather rude awakening during the first day of class. Ginsberg accurately observes, “College students generally view professors as individuals who exercise a good deal of power. Members of the faculty, after all, direct the lectures, labs, studios, and discussions around which academic life is organized. Professors also control the grades and recommendations that help to determine students’ graduate school and career prospects” (3-4). Arriving on campus with this expectation, some of my students experience quite a reality check when they find out that many of their general education courses are taught by contracted freelance instructors.

The previously mentioned C.F.H.E. report clarifies that this mistaken student perspective stems from a larger social misconception. It explains that a typical adjunct’s employment status “diverges sharply from the dominant view articulated by policymakers

and accepted by the general public” (Street et al. 1)<sup>61</sup>. Having made this unsettling discovery myself as an undergraduate, I was aware of the potential disillusionment that awaited my students at the onset of my graduate studies. So when I began teaching college composition, I made it a point to tell my students on the first day of class that I was a graduate teaching assistant, and I have adapted this practice to my teaching as an adjunct. Despite the intensity with which I deliver my present argument, however, my motive for enlightening my students is not “to make a statement” nor merely “to raise awareness.” Rather, I recall my appreciation as a student of my own professors’ transparency.

Like many adjuncts, I take my students’ education very seriously, and I personally believe that it is only fair that they know from day one that, should they choose to remain in my section, they will be paying the same amount of tuition money as their peers who are enrolled in a tenured or full-time professor’s section. (I even go so far as to inform them of who these instructors are should they wish to transfer out of my class so that they do not ironically enroll in another adjunct’s or TA’s course). A concerned colleague of mine once asked me if I ever worried that our superiors would frown upon my candor as a sort of airing of institutional dirty laundry. I could not help but laugh at the irony of the question and flippantly responded, “Well, I guess, if they want me to behave like a professional, they can pay me like a professional.”

With that in mind, I should note that I firmly believe that publicly voicing any grievances against the institution simply for the sake of doing so would be entirely

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<sup>61</sup> The student oblivion and larger social misconception I discuss here attributes also to the suspicion I address in my first chapter that tenured faculty compensation is driving up tuition. For example, in analyzing the “‘blame faculty for higher tuition’ narrative,” Barnshaw and Dunietz explain that, “since many view colleges and universities as having large numbers of faculty, particularly tenured and tenure-track faculty, on their payroll, they often conclude that sharp increases in faculty salaries must be the reason for tuition increases” (5).

pointless. If I do not approve of my treatment, I should either seek another occupation or explore appropriate channels for change. So, while I retorted half in jest, I have since reflected upon that conversation nonetheless and have arrived at a rather troubling conclusion. Adjunct instruction creates an unnecessary and counterproductive conflict between professionalism and honesty. Although I have occasionally witnessed cases for professionalism devolve into tautological defenses, I generally acknowledge its virtues and strive at all times to remain as professional in my teaching as possible. Nevertheless, to conceal my status in the institutional hierarchy in the name of professionalism strikes me as not only counterintuitive but also unethical.

I am sure that some of my administrators would contend that to broach the topic at all would be in poor taste because the matter is irrelevant and, therefore, unnecessary. But to argue that working conditions do not affect the quality of workmanship seems to be a gullible opinion at best. Perhaps I could see some merit to this argument were I teaching as a means of whiling away a comfortably uneventful retirement. But that is far from the case for not only myself but also all other involuntary adjuncts. Furthermore, such a position seems to take an approach toward college students that “what they don’t know won’t hurt them.” But, on the contrary, it most certainly does as it already has for decades. For actively hiding our employment status reinforces via negation the false notion that we have as much time to attend to our students’ needs both in and out of the classroom as do full-time professors. And consciously, even willfully, perpetuating a misconception arguably amounts to an implicit lie.

The only means of justifying such a lie would be to shift the blame to my students’ expectations. Sure, I could simply say, “It’s not my fault that the students who enrolled in

Professor Staff's class didn't understand the institutional logistics of American higher education" and wash my hands of the matter. Well, I have tried assuming that attitude, and believe me, it does nothing to help a conscientious educator sleep at night. For the question I cannot answer is, if it is not my responsibility to apprise my students of the luck-of-the-draw nature of course enrollment, whose responsibility is it? Their parents? Their high-school counselors? The admissions office? The registrar? Their academic advisors? And even if I could hold any of these parties responsible, is shifting the blame truly a strong example of the problem-solving to which higher education so enthusiastically sings paeans?

Perhaps a few recklessly bold skeptics may remind me that beggars cannot be choosers. Actually, I wholeheartedly agree. For the truth of the matter is, most adjuncts do not teach because they absolutely must. As I express in my first chapter, we teach because we believe that higher education can be empowering and that we can positively contribute to that end. I will even concede that we do not deserve better treatment insofar as no one owes us a full-time teaching appointment simply because teaching is our passion. But such an assertion overlooks two important considerations.

First, it presupposes no extant need for the skills we offer. For instance, as an adolescent, I dreamed of being a professional musician. However, the music industry does not need my talents, so no label is compelled to offer me a record deal simply because I enjoy composing and performing music. However, this is not the case with adjunct instruction. My experience at multiple institutions has taught me that, unless a given program enjoys a surplus of graduate teaching assistants, department chairs are chronically

scrambling to find part-time instructors—often up to and including the week before classes resume. They need me.

Second, it is never wise to refer to any part of the workforce that drives one's institution as "beggars." For we, too, can play that game, and the obvious response is, "Well, you get what you pay for." However, this second point forces me to concede one backhanded compliment. The perpetrators of adjunct instruction can (and do) call our bluff because we all know who would be caught in the crossfire of such a stand-off: the students. And just as adjuncts realize that we have no leverage because we epitomize expendability, college leaders know just as well that our students are our inspiration, so we will either yield or resign nearly every time in this institutional game of chicken. And if we do not, it is all the same to our superiors—namely, because we are all the same to them. As early as 1993, Gappa and Leslie recognized this attitude:

Most institutions treat all part-time faculty alike. They see part-timers as marginal, temporary employees with no past and no future beyond the immediate term and give them no incentive to stay and make a commitment....Part-timers are treated as an invisible, indistinguishable mass and dealt with arbitrarily. (63-64)

Consequently, any institution that employs adjunct instructors under the typical working conditions described in my first chapter implicitly holds the position that an adjunct is an adjunct and that the quality of its core curriculum is not contingent upon its faculty.

Yet, in all fairness, my own transparency most likely does not accurately represent most adjuncts' approach. In fact, the C.F.H.E. survey suggests that, for the sake of their students, many adjuncts very intentionally maintain the façade of serving as just another professor—a practice known as "shielding" (Street et al. 13). The study reports, "A key

theme in the responses to the survey's open-ended questions was the expression of an ethic of sacrifice and commitment, a conscientious effort to maintain educational quality in the face of daunting obstacles and to protect students from their adverse effects" (13). Such efforts always entail that an adjunct carry out "additional work to meet their students' needs even though they are inadequately supported (and compensated) by their campuses" (12-13).

Some critics may contend that such seemingly altruistic efforts actually derive from self-interest. To an extent, this observation is plausible and worthy of consideration. Even the C.F.H.E. report concedes,

A desire to keep insufficient working conditions invisible to students is understandable. If students are unhappy with class resources, the faculty member is punished by poor student evaluations, which could lead to job loss. Additionally, as contingent faculty already contend with the stigma that is attached to contingency by some tenure stream faculty and administrators, they have no wish for students to adopt those same attitudes. (Street et al. 13)

Yet "saving face" seems unlikely as a sole or even primary motive for shielding given the lengths to which some adjuncts will go in order to keep their students in the dark. The C.F.H.E. survey found that "respondents also reported spending their own money—on copies, on personal computers, software, and more—to provide and ensure their students receive a quality educational experience" (13). And while a healthy self-esteem certainly benefits any instructor, the claim just stated or desperation to maintain employment seem far more likely incentives to pay for teaching materials out of one's own pocket than does the vain fear of being thought of as a "second-class citizen" in the academic community (13).



Yet, while I consider shielding more a gesture of sacrifice than of self-interest, I will readily acknowledge, without finding any fault in such a motive, that it can communicate an instructor's degree of self-respect. For some adjuncts, shielding constitutes almost a point of honor. That is to say, they seek to offer an educational experience comparable to one offered in a full-time professor's course because, regardless of their moral conclusions regarding institutional hiring practices, they bend over backward because they believe that doing so for the sake of their students is simply the right thing to do. One such respondent asserted, "I do not bring personal or employment issues into the classroom. I work hard, and my students know it. Securing a permanent position would not impact the quality of my teaching, it would impact the quality of my life" (Street et al. 13). While this attitude closely resembles my own in the face of pedagogical challenges proceeding from my working conditions, I have come to consider it somewhat naïve. It makes the same false assumption as does the position that working conditions are beside the point—namely, that one's life circumstances have no bearing on one's quality of work<sup>62</sup>. Yes, I wholeheartedly concur that job security and truly fair compensation would improve the average adjunct's standard of living. But to isolate the benefits of improved working conditions and compensation exclusively to lifestyle presents a compartmentalized rather than a holistic image of the instructor and perhaps even jeopardizes the integrity of the vocation itself<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> A 2014 study found that nontenure-track faculty "who would prefer a permanent position and those with lower family incomes were more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and stress" due to the contingent nature of their employment (Reevy and Deason 13). If one's working conditions can so harm one's psychological well-being, it would seem credulous to maintain that one's teaching would not likewise suffer as a result.

<sup>63</sup> For decades, part-time instructors have recognized that institutional exploitation proceeds from "an academic career system that does not adequately address the interrelationship between the personal and professional lives of faculty and that takes advantage of their training and talent without providing rewards and incentives" (Gappa and Leslie 58).

Furthermore, as admirable a display as such a disposition may present, it only bolsters the likelihood of exploitation. For if adjuncts will not teach any better should their working conditions improve, why should administration even consider improving those conditions? Therefore, such an attitude not only is overly idealistic but also relies too heavily on the assumption that college leaders even care about the quality of their instructors' lives in the first place. Essentially, it plays directly into the hands of the exploiters. The answer, of course, is not to slack off on instruction simply to make a point but, rather, in all humility to acknowledge that, despite our current efforts, we would all, indeed, be better teachers if we were reasonably rewarded.

That being said, while I question the ethics of shielding, I do not consider it immoral. That is to say, although I personally prefer transparency, I do not necessarily think that shielding is wrong<sup>64</sup>. Truth be told, I practice it myself in the sense that, after informing my students of my employment status on the first day, I never mention it again unless a student brings it up. Thereafter, I do everything in my power to ensure that my students undergo the absolute best quality of instruction I can offer them, regardless of how it compares to that of a full-time professor. And the only selfish motivation I can honestly confess is that I do so for my own peace of mind. Assuming that I am not alone in this incentive, one could legitimately argue that college leaders use the quality of students' education to leverage the consciences of their part-time instructors into either exploitation or resignation, making the students unknowingly complicit in their adjunct's dilemma.

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<sup>64</sup> Most adjuncts who practice shielding do so with the commendable intentions of protecting their students, which I consider to be a good and, therefore, not immoral. However, because of shielding's implicitly deceptive potential, it constitutes a lesser good than transparency. For this reason, I consider shielding unethical but not immoral.

At some institutions, shielding verges on being a moot point anyway. Regardless of many adjuncts' efforts to shield their students, part-time instructors can do only so much. On any given day, the shield may fall and unveil the adjunct's compromised ethos for the most arbitrary of reasons. For example, one surefire revealer for me is snowfall. Since I currently work a second job as a groundskeeper at a nearby seminary, I must report to the physical plant as early as 5:00AM the day of or following a snowstorm. After spending the morning shoveling and salting sidewalks, I must go directly to the 8:00AM literature course I teach at the university without having the opportunity to shower or change clothes. And even though my students are aware of my double-duty from the beginning of the semester, the chemistry of the class is always a bit awkward whenever I stand before them in my work shirt, cargo pants, and steel-toe boots. For when I dress "like a professor," my students seem to forget about (or at least bar from their minds) their knowledge of my second job. To their credit, my students have never treated me like a "second-class citizen" of academia. Yet on such days, a look of near bewilderment comes over their faces as they try to reconcile how their exorbitant tuition fees can afford only a mere groundskeeper to lead a discussion regarding how Dante's conflict between *pietas* and *pietà* can lead to the pilgrim's misled compassion in *Inferno*.

And while this scenario is incredibly rare, it reveals not only the reality of my working conditions but also the true nature of the conflict. For what is in question here is not so much the ethics of shielding as is the primary cause of the exigency to which shielding responds—the legitimacy of the administrative claim on professionalism. In my case, neither institution for which I work can afford to offer me either a full-time position or benefits. Consequently, neither institution can place any obligations upon me as my

primary occupation. Nevertheless, I must demonstrate that I am a dependable worker at both institutions because, at present, I quite desperately need both sources of income in order to meet my family's monthly budget. So, for the university administrators to regard my work attire on such days as "unprofessional" would constitute a contradiction because they would first have to admit to the pretense that they do not pay me enough money for my services so as to prevent me from having to take on another job. Granted, one could argue that for me to show up at the physical plant in teaching attire would be no more unprofessional, to which I would respond, it would be considerably more hazardous, and safety trumps fashion in my book. Regardless, the point here is that higher education's dubious claim on adjunct professionalism ultimately results in part-time instructors serving the two (or more) proverbial "masters"<sup>65</sup>.

A much more common instance of the futility of shielding involves the tendency of colleges to list their adjuncts as "Staff" in the course offerings for upcoming semesters. In addition to exacerbating the deprofessionalization or "casualization of the entire academic profession" I discuss earlier in this chapter, such "anonymity and interchangeability" can lead to confusion and frustration for students as they arrange their schedules (Street et al. 2). The confusion occurs for students who are unaware of the tiered structure of faculty employment. It does not make any sense to them why they know which instructors will be teaching some of the courses they have selected but do not know which instructors will be teaching others. The "Staff" listing that has become a necessary designation due to employing part-time instructors arguably reflects poorly upon the value of even the course

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<sup>65</sup> Although the Great Recession has certainly contributed to this conflict, the dilemma is by no means a new one. Consider Tuckman's remarks in 1978: "Two jobs under different employers often place conflicting demands on a person's time. The multiple job-holder serves several masters and must sometimes choose among jobs when the demands conflict" (306).

itself. A particularly skeptical student, for example, may conclude that, if the content of an academic subject—especially one that falls within the college’s core curriculum—were really so important, the institution would have hired someone to teach the section before students enroll.

Meanwhile, the frustration resulting from this practice can be experienced by virtually any student. While some students’ majors bind them to a strict schedule that allows for little to no room for adjustment, many students enjoy some flexibility and appreciate the ability to drop or change classes within the first week or two of the semester. For instance, on the first day of every semester, I actively encourage my students to “ask around” or to seek advice from upper-class students who have taken the course regarding instructors’—mine as well as my colleagues’—reputations so that they can arrange for the “best fit” for their particular learning styles. Such a recommendation becomes an exercise in futility when students learn of an instructor they may wish to take but cannot locate his or her course section due to the anonymous “Staff” listing on the course offerings.

Students undergo similar consternation when they have enjoyed a part-time instructor’s course and wish to take another section with that same instructor in the future (Street et al. 7). What may come as a complete surprise to some college leaders is that, although adjuncts may be interchangeable in their eyes, the impressions we part-time instructors make on our students are every bit as meaningful (for better or worse) as those made by our full-time colleagues. For example, without fail, during the final weeks of each fall semester in particular, a handful of my students ask, “Which classes are you teaching next semester?” Interestingly, they never ask if I know which classes I will teach, indicating their persistent assumption that the institution itself has planned that far ahead. This

expectation seems entirely reasonable since their advisors are impressing upon them the urgency of enrolling as soon as possible in order to put together an optimal schedule given the first-come, first-serve basis of enrollment at most colleges. No matter how gratifying or reasonable the question, however, my response is always the same: “That’s a good question; I’ll email you if and when I receive my contracts.”

## 2.2. “Just-in-Time” Hiring Practices

In addition to the “Staff” listing, adjuncts’ efforts, no matter how strenuous, to shield their students from their working conditions’ negative effects are further constrained in other ways that are not as immediately apparent to the students. The C.F.H.E. study identifies two of the most common causes: “‘Just-in-Time’ management of classroom instruction and inadequate resources to provide the students with the education they deserve” (Street et al. 4). The first cause is an issue of “timing” and consists of “the managerial practice of...[hiring] contingent faculty immediately before classes start” (4), which I discuss at greater length in my first chapter. The C.F.H.E. survey found that this practice “is alive and well in higher education to the detriment of students and faculty” (5). The all too common “lack of opportunity for contingent faculty to prepare for the classes they are teaching” bears negative “implications for their students” (6). Specifically, “late assignment of classes translates into contingent faculty unable to be as prepared for the early part of the semester as they otherwise would be. It also compromises the chance for contingent faculty to put together the sorts of materials they would like to present to their students” (6). This lack of preparation time prohibits instructors from updating their readings and discussion notes with current information and often results in mistakes on

syllabus course schedules—an annoying and even discouraging instance for both teacher and students (6).

Again, as I describe in my first chapter, some adjuncts attempt to avoid or at least mitigate the stress deriving from this structured uncertainty via “just in case” preparation *gratis*. However, given that even assigned course sections might either be “bumped” or not “make,” more disenchanted adjuncts “hesitate to participate fully in the self-exploitation of undertaking instructional work for free,” which, again, may lead to a less than satisfactory first week of class for the students (8). The C.F.H.E. survey concludes that “institutional reliance on contingent faculty, without compensating them for preparing materials ‘just in case’ classes are assigned to them, amounts to an underinvestment in and lack of commitment to the quality of students’ education” (8).

Another adverse effect of the “just-in-time” hiring practice concerns course readings (Street et al. 6-7). Often, adjuncts must teach a prescribed curriculum comprised of pre-selected texts. In this case, last-minute instructors teaching a course for the first time can only peruse the assigned text when creating their course schedules. As the course unfolds, the assigned readings may not fall as intuitively in the course design as the instructors had hoped they would. Furthermore, the insufficient time to conduct research I discuss in the first section of this chapter inhibits adjuncts from supplementing the assigned text with related readings that often add greater dimension to the course topics. Finally, these assigned texts can be rather expensive. If adjuncts have more time to prepare their syllabuses, they could be able to select alternative—in some cases, free—readings in order to save students money. And even when adjuncts are granted the privilege of selecting their own texts, if they are not hired in time to place an order with the bookstore, their students

will not be able to purchase the text until it arrives. Consequently, the instructor must fill the first week or two of the course with other assignments and activities that may be less pertinent than those derived from their desired text. Moreover, from the students' perspective, it is the instructor, rather than the institution, who appears disorganized and unprepared, especially if the instructor practices shielding.

Because “insufficient notice of assignment translates into insufficient preparation time, insufficient time to incorporate and update meaningful materials for students, and insufficient time to explore pedagogical methods and materials” (Street et al. 7), adjuncts often must resort to teaching the much decried “cookie-cutter” course. Students are thus exposed to a rigid or, at the very least, less than dynamic educational experience in which the instructor must choose between awkwardly adhering to a template or deviating from the established syllabus—essentially an exercise in distinguishing the lesser of two evils.

### 2.3. Inadequate Access to Instructional Resources

In addition to “just-in-time” hiring practices, the second cause of shielding limitations reveals a “pattern of structural underinvestment” (Street et al. 11) that “involves access to instructional tools, specifically late and/or limited access to important materials and resources necessary for quality instruction” (5). Such resources often include “orientation to campus cultures and resources, syllabi, curriculum guides, libraries, and office spaces” (5) as well as instructional technology. Such deficiencies “constitute real structural barriers many contingent faculty confront in trying to provide their students with a quality educational experience” (5)<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> Gappa and Leslie agree: “Where part-time faculty do not have the proper tools to do their jobs, and we found that they often do not have any support at all, it is usually because the institution has failed in some significant way to provide what is needed” (13).



Most adjuncts are provided “overcrowded, limited, [or] shared office space” and, it is not uncommon for some institutions to provide part-time instructors with no office space at all (Street et al. 11). At first glance, this complaint appears minor, perhaps even petty, especially to those who wrongly believe that teaching occurs only in the classroom. Thus, I feel compelled to spell out the ramifications. Most obviously, it becomes rather difficult (not to mention, ironic) to hold office hours without an office. So let us consider some of the potential uses of office hours.

Without personal office space, instructors must find an alternative location in order to have private conversations with students. What would require instructors to hold such conversations? The most common instance occurs when a student is either failing or in danger of failing the course. In this case, the privacy of a conversation is a matter of not only tact but also legality. Since F.E.R.P.A. prohibits instructors from discussing a student’s academic standing with anyone other than the student and the instructor’s institutional superiors, holding such a conversation in public could technically constitute a federal offense should anyone overhear its content. And while this scenario applies to any academic subject, the privacy of conversations pertaining to specific assignments may be more necessary for certain disciplines than for others.

For example, for the essays I assign my composition students, I often challenge their critical thinking by encouraging them to engage topics or larger debates that conflict with their personal values. Students who take this advice often undergo the types of minor “crises” of belief that often create exactly the kind of conceptual space conducive to intellectual growth. And while such conflict is precisely the type of experience I hope that my courses foster, it nevertheless can be distressing for a student honestly to analyze the

deeply rooted, long-held convictions that have comprised his or her worldview up to that point. Thus, students may be hesitant to process their thoughts before even their instructors—in whom they have invested a certain degree of trust—much less complete strangers in a student center or a coffee shop.

Furthermore, an instructor without an office further contributes to the part-time instructor's compromised ethos because, again, it contradicts some students' preconceived notions of the types of conditions under which their professors work. Granted, I am not arguing that adjuncts should be supplied quaint dens lined with mahogany bookshelves filled with leather-bound tomes. But when students discern (which the attentive ones always do) that their instructors lug their offices around campus in their briefcases or satchels, this discovery lends a sort of vagrancy to the profession, which in turn, undermines the legitimacy of not only the extent of our knowledge but also our ability to convey that knowledge.

And even when part-time instructors are granted office space, at times, the provision can be counterproductive. The best-case scenario in which I have personally taught afforded me an office that I shared with a few other adjuncts whose schedules fortunately did not conflict with my own. Therefore, each adjunct in that situation was able, for all intents and purposes, to enjoy a personal office in which to meet with students<sup>67</sup>. However, I have taught also at institutions that crammed as many adjuncts and teaching assistants into one space as possible, resulting in the sharing of not only the room but also

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<sup>67</sup> Of course, literally one week after I wrote this concession, all the part-time instructors in my department received an email from the chair, informing us that our shared office had been given to a professor filling a newly created full-time position in another department. The four of us now share two desks in a single office with the three sociology adjuncts.

our desks<sup>68</sup>. After dropping in during office hours once and trying to discuss the compositional process in cramped quarters with other instructors (whom they have never met) hovering nearby, most of my students are hesitant to return later in the semester when they typically require even more guidance from me.

Also, inadequate access to instructional resources has become particularly urgent given the increasingly prominent role technology has come to play in higher education.

The C.F.H.E. report states what should be, yet sadly does not seem to be, the obvious:

Limited access to basic instructional resources in a high tech world clearly undermines quality. Indeed, it appears, ironically, that the expansion of high technology resources in instruction makes for yet another divide between contingent faculty and students on one side and higher education institutions on the other, as students and contingent faculty end up paying for their institutions' unwillingness to provide faculty with timely access to resources. (Street et al. 10)

Examples of such resources include everything “from phones to computers to access to software and information systems that have become a central part of undergraduate education” (11). More and more institutions “have simply offloaded the burden of providing these resources” upon their faculty (11). For example, rather than a campus extension number directing students to an office phone, personal cell phone numbers appear under the “Contact Information” heading on many adjuncts’ syllabuses. Desktop computers have become increasingly nonessential because adjuncts are expected to own laptops. Access to printers and copiers is obviated in the name of “going green.” And for those lucky adjuncts who still teach evening courses, when classroom technology malfunctions, the information technology service office has often closed up shop for the day.

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<sup>68</sup> This scenario is neither new nor uncommon (Baldwin and Chronister 133; Gappa and Leslie 166).

Additionally, some adjuncts are not offered “access to appropriate training and related resources that will enable faculty to optimize the potential benefits of new technologies” (Street et al. 12). And despite all the insistence that today’s college students are more tech-savvy than any of us ever were, that familiarity does not automatically translate to navigating learning management systems. And when students struggle with the technological logistics of trying to complete their assignments, the first resource they often turn to is not the IT helpdesk but the instructor. Thus, if the instructor is not well versed in the operation of the system, he or she can offer no assistance in such situations.

Finally, accreditation reports also number among the examples of resources to which adjuncts have limited access (if any at all). In this case, restriction results in our embarrassing ignorance of and consequent inability to apply our institutions’ assessment results to our teaching methods, a practice referred to as “closing the loop” (Scott and Danley-Scott 30). In their 2015 *Journal of General Education* article, English professor Gray Scott and history and government professor Jennifer Danley-Scott report the findings from a survey they disseminated three years earlier among nontenure-track faculty teaching at postsecondary institutions in California (34). Their overarching research question sought to determine to what extent these instructors were involved in or even aware of their respective institutions’ accreditation procedures and how consciously they worked to close the loop. Although largely neglected, this question is rather pertinent to student learning because “contingent faculty teach the bulk of general education courses,” upon which “assessment pressures fall most squarely” (30). And while this circumstance certainly concerns institutions, I choose to include it in this section because, as the authors rightly

point out, improving student learning is (or at least should be) “the driving purpose of assessment” (40).

The responses to the survey “indicated that the narrow administrative focus on accreditation may indeed be blinding non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty to larger assessment expectations, with respondents indicating that they had heard a lot about providing assessment data to accreditation agencies but less about using assessment data to improve pedagogical technique and thereby student learning” (31). Thus, adjunct instruction hurts students because several institutions neglect to apprise nontenure-track faculty of assessment results, which would ideally improve their teaching and, as a result, their students’ learning. In short, we cannot close the loop because we are largely left out of the loop.

#### 2.4. “Just in the Classroom” Compensation

The final aspect of adjunct instruction that potentially threatens the quality of student learning that I will address consists of the reasoning behind our payment. The poor compensation most adjuncts receive is often defended via the embarrassingly impractical “just in the classroom” rationale—“an erroneous administrative notion that instruction takes place solely in the classroom, a mistaken view that overlooks important instructional activities and interactions that take place before classes start and outside the classroom” (Street et al. 5)<sup>69</sup>. To be fair, at most of the institutions where I have taught, the calculations of invested time are slightly more realistic, anticipating that instructors will spend

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<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, this view corresponds to how tenured faculty are perceived in the eyes of the public, which believes that college professors are “ridiculously overpaid” because “they have one of the ‘least stressful’ jobs in the United States” (Barnshaw and Dunietz 10) and work less than 500 hours annually (11).

approximately seven hours working outside the classroom for every three hours in class<sup>70</sup>. Even then, such justifications reflect poorly upon the dominant institutional staffing model for part-time instructors, indicating that administrators either are largely oblivious to the logistics of classroom instruction, simply do not care that they are exploiting adjuncts and shortchanging students, or both.

Even more astonishing, even some faculty members share this perspective. For example, New Faculty Majority board member Maria Maisto experienced such nonsense firsthand during a demonstration in the student union at Ohio's Cuyahoga Community College (CCC), where she works as an adjunct instructor. A tenured business professor at the college contested Maisto's claim that CCC adjuncts earned "about \$8 an hour," insisting instead that "adjuncts make \$22 to \$23 an hour, and if you do the math, adjuncts are paid fairly" (Sanchez, "Part-Time Professors"). While such ignorance may be expected to come from administrators who have neither faculty experience nor powers of deduction, it is absolutely inexcusable in the case of a fellow faculty member. For any experienced professor should realize that "real instructional work entails more than just being in class: it also involves preparation, interacting with students outside of the class, grading, interacting with other faculty members in the department about curricular and quality issues, and other out of classroom work that is fundamental to educational and instructional performance and educational quality" (Street et al. 8-9). "Just in the classroom" reasoning "so narrowly constructs the faculty role that it overlooks what we know is important for faculty and for students to ensure a quality education. Current hiring practices treat contingent faculty members as individual contractors who are being hired simply to go to

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<sup>70</sup> Interestingly, even the I.R.S. weighed in on this topic, suggesting that "part-time faculty should be credited with an additional 1.25 hours for every hour or credit taught" (Barnshaw and Dunietz 17).

a classroom and deliver a prepackaged course” (9). It strongly suggests a yawning gap in administrative mentality between the highly praised course goals and student learning outcomes on the one hand and the necessary measures that must be taken in order to meet these objectives on the other hand.

Just imagine, for a moment, the ludicrous nature that a typical day in class would assume were adjuncts to apply such “logic” to their teaching. Upon greeting his or her students on the first day of the semester, an adjunct would devote the first period or two to updating the syllabus and course schedule. (For instructors teaching a course for the first time, this task could last well into the second week). Next would come revising assignment sheets and formatting the course modules on the learning management system. Veteran instructors may be able even to deliver a lecture or lead a class discussion by the end of the term’s second week. Upon receiving major assignments, adjuncts could grade student projects beneath the ELMO projector for up to two consecutive weeks (longer if the cap has been raised). After midterms, instructors could dismiss class as much as an half-hour early so that concerned students could discuss their standing in private. From a market perspective, carrying out this “just in the classroom” attitude would essentially refashion general education courses on the *Teppanyaki* model, in which the preparation becomes part of the “consumer experience.”

Obviously, no reasonable adjunct would resort to *Teppanyaki* teaching because, unlike the denizens of these restaurants, their students demand that all preparatory work occur both before and beyond the class period and be completed punctually. The true threat to students’ education lies in the extent to which this administrative attitude begins to erode adjuncts’ work ethic. As semesters turn into academic years and burn-out begins to set in,

the “just in the classroom” mentality actually discourages faculty from going the extra mile. Once vibrant instructors may begin to buy into the false equation between corner-cutting and efficiency. As vocation devolves into “just a job,” that which is not worth being compensated for will not be worth doing. And whatever tasks absolutely must be done will be executed with the bare minimum of effort. Thus, it is by way of long-term exposure to the “just in the classroom” disposition toward compensation that, little by little, part-time instructors may become less effective in the classroom, thereby inhibiting optimal student learning over time.

Moreover, “just in the classroom” reasoning conceptualizes part-time faculty in such a way that “fail[s] to engage professors as professionals whose work extends beyond an isolated class to include interaction and relationships with other faculty as well as with students,” which, again, amounts to a failure “to engage the students in ways that clearly have a significant impact on their learning” (Street et al. 10). Personally, I have most often experienced this in the form of my institutions’ conscious exclusion of part-time instructors from faculty activities and events. Such gestures not only reinforce the faculty division I discuss earlier in this chapter but also prohibit adjuncts from familiarizing themselves with institutional policy to the extent that they can serve as resources for their students.

For example, some adjuncts report fielding questions from students about academic advising, which they cannot answer due to a lack of information. Fortunately, we can always refer such students to their assigned advisors, yet many off-campus, online, or “part-time students...rely on their professors as the principal point of contact with and as a major source of information about the larger institution” (Street et al. 9-10). Granted, this is another instance in which we could easily shift the blame to student responsibility. On



the other hand, institutions could do more to share in that responsibility for the sake of our students' educational success.

While the four points analyzed above comprise some of the most salient specific adverse effects on students, the adjunct problem falls also within Giroux's broader category of institutional failings that illustrate neoliberal culture's violation of its implicit social contract with the successive generation. He reflects upon a longstanding tradition in the United States, "in which adult responsibility was mediated through a willingness to...provide the educational conditions necessary for [its youth] to make use of the freedoms they have while learning how to be critical citizens" (141). Whereas John Dewey asserts that "society determines its own future in determining that of the young" (49), Giroux goes a step further, insisting that, once upon a time, higher education "often defined and addressed its highest ideals through the recognition that how it educated youth was connected to both the democratic future it hoped for and its claim as an important public sphere" (142). Essentially, the priorities and practices of a college or university indicate its attitude toward not only young adults but also the future of society in general. Therefore, any policies that negatively impact an institution's faculty, staff, or students will leave that institution vulnerable to criticism from the public sector.

### 3. Adverse Effects on Institutions

Arguably, any and all of the points I have explored thus far adversely affect institutions. For example, the "Staff" listing I describe in the second section not only confuses and frustrates students but also suggests poor planning and coordination on the part of the institution. Also, I have acknowledged that adjuncts' inability to close the loop

potentially inhibits not only student learning but also improved institutional accreditation ratings. Moreover, “just in case” preparation combined with vague contractual language (or the lack of a contract altogether) has led to legal issues such as “detrimental reliance” (Gappa and Leslie 67-68). Thus, some topics in my final section will overlap with other previously addressed subjects. However, this bolsters the title’s suggestion that colleges are integrated institutions, the successful operation of which depends upon optimal working conditions for all its employees.

### 3.1. Questionable Institutional Accountability

To the careful observer, the current model of adjunct employment suggests a lack of institutional accountability from without as well as within. For instance, the C.F.H.E. report insightfully points out,

Much of the policy and managerial discourse regarding the working conditions of contingent faculty can be reduced to invocations about the need for flexibility (to meet fluctuating enrollments) and about financial constraints (larger proportions of tenure-track faculty would be too costly). Yet these claims are longstanding, during dramatically better economic times and throughout decades-long, systematic, and substantial increases in the level of contingency. (Street et al. 15)

The report continues,

Not only is there scarce campus or system level data to support the claims, little or no effort is being made by college administrators or policy makers to gather such data. Moreover, there is little consideration of any linkage between contingent faculty working conditions and students’ learning conditions, and to student outcomes, despite considerable scholarly evidence of such effects. (15)

The New Faculty Majority Foundation felt that such records were so important that it offers an online “survey instrument to clarify the educational costs of contingency” and “to benchmark and improve the time of hiring as well as faculty members’ access to the resources and tools that are fundamental to quality education” (5). Without such a

measurement, institutional lack of accountability regarding hiring practices and resource accessibility “represent[s] negligible, false economies and a level of ‘flexibility’ that is unnecessary and counterproductive” (5).

Furthermore, it suggests that such claims amount to poor excuses for perpetuating a potentially exploitive policy. Specifically, “failure to redress these working conditions would send a clear message of inattention to and unconcern for the students and the larger community” (Street et al. 17). The American public is already picking up on these messages “of disdain for and disinvestment in...learning conditions and the students” as evidenced by the growing skepticism regarding the value of higher education (17). And I fear that the growing awareness of the adjunct problem will merely give prospective students, parents, politicians, and taxpayers just one more reason to resist paying so much to institutions that seem to care so little.

### 3.2. Institutional Loss of Control

Baldwin and Chronister’s findings confirm the C.F.H.E.’s assertion. During their study, they discovered that the most significant motivations for employing nontenure-track instructors include “the need for flexibility in staffing and the ability to respond to financial fluctuations” (115). At first glance, this model seems like a bargain because it allows institutions either to “acquire more faculty positions from the same amount of total compensation or realize significant savings” while maintaining the same number of faculty (118). However, as Thelin insightfully observes, applying this rationale to college administration “may help balance the books financially, but it does so by neglecting the books that are written and read.” (57). For what initially seems like fiscal responsibility can actually indicate that an institution has lost control of its budget when financial

constraints rather than a guiding educational mission determine the staffing plan (Gappa and Leslie 105, 130, 216).

Such circumstances often arise when colleges hire an influx of adjuncts as an immediate, temporary response to external pressures yet become dependent upon the staffing pattern over time. Gappa and Leslie explain how easily an institution can find itself in this situation: “Once part-timers are employed to absorb new enrollment without commensurate budget increments, it becomes more difficult in future budget cycles to recoup the lost funding—while pressure to accommodate more new students with less expensive faculty continues to build” (105-06). Gappa and Leslie call such colleges “reactive institutions” (233), which “operate in a decision-by-default mode; they have no sense of direction, no set of rules to follow, and no accountability” (236).

Specific ramifications emerge from these general shortcomings. For instance, the faculty attrition resulting from hiring adjuncts to replace rather than to supplement full-time instructors has led, in some cases, to “aging cohorts of senior professors who have no apprentices” (Gappa and Leslie 94), which compromises not only the current but also the future integrity of the programs an institution offers (95). One example of such a deficiency includes department chairs’ observation that some recently hired adjuncts tend to be out of sync with the rest of the faculty. Gappa and Leslie explain, “Sections of their courses may be taught at a different pace, with a different emphasis, and with different overall results than are other sections of the same courses” (126), which may undermine the consistency of an institution’s curriculum. Also, just-in-time hiring often amounts to “‘putting warm bodies right off the street’ into the classroom,” which “inevitably results in a few catastrophic failures every year” that can “take on the flavor of...legend” (126). Such

debacles can seriously damage an institution's public image, suggesting that it fails to take "responsibility for the people [it puts] in the classroom and for the consequences of what those people do" (232-33). Other negative consequences include institutions losing skilled part-time instructors to competing schools offering superior compensation (160) as well as institutions' greater vulnerability to accusations of systematic "discrimination," "exploitation" (Baldwin and Chronister 119), "capriciousness," and "inequity" (Gappa and Leslie 145). From this perspective, subordinating educational objectives to budget restrictions seems more like a calculated risk than fiscal responsibility.

### 3.3. False Economies of the Adjunct Staffing Model

In addition to suggesting institutional loss of control, the claim of financial savings achieved through labor flexibility often falters also due to its dubious nature. Gappa and Leslie identify significant "hidden costs" of employing large numbers of part-time instructors that arguably negate the legitimacy of this defense (102). Likewise, Baldwin and Chronister confirm that, while nontenure-track instructors may assume heavier teaching loads, "simple comparisons based on the costs of tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty overstate the compensation savings that accompany the use of lower-salaried" instructors because the respective expectations placed upon these different positions greatly vary (118). Full-time faculty attrition, for instance, increases "the burdens that accrue to full-time faculty as more part-timers take on teaching assignments" (Gappa and Leslie 13) because "many noninstructional responsibilities must be performed by comparatively few full-time faculty or may be neglected altogether" (102). Examples of such responsibilities include "advising, curriculum development, and program

coordination” (Gappa and Leslie 102), governance (102-03; Baldwin and Chronister 118), “scholarship, and professional service” (Baldwin and Chronister 118).

Furthermore, hiring adjuncts on a term-by-term basis<sup>71</sup> imposes “time-consuming bureaucratic burdens” on departments (Gappa and Leslie 102) in order “to continuously reappoint them” (103). Gappa and Leslie elaborate, “There is more paperwork, more time needed for recruiting and interviewing, more mentoring and supervising, and more counseling of both faculty and students” (102) because “the part-timer has to be hired, oriented, supervised, and evaluated to a greater extent than the full-timer” (103). The related high turnover rate that is not uncommon to adjunct employment “bears little return on the investment as it would in the case of a full-timer, who becomes more valuable with years of experience” (103-04). Gappa and Leslie encountered piqued irritation from some department chairs concerning this tendency. One respondent remonstrated, “I don’t like this cycle of people coming and being here a year or two and leaving. It *kills* the program” and “requires enormous effort from the tenure-track people” (119). Another chairperson observed, “We are eating our seed corn by degrading this part of our profession,” especially when an institution cannot match the compensation rates and benefits offered by competing colleges (180)<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup> This practice could imply institutional ineptitude as well. Gappa and Leslie attest that “part-timers are frequently appointed over and over again and often become quasi-permanent members of the department faculty, but they are only offered term-by-term appointments as though their employment were truly based on a temporary contingency” (249). Policies promoting such recurrent assignments may suggest that colleges lack either the wherewithal to identify staffing needs according to consistent enrollment patterns or the integrity to hire full-time instructors to meet those needs in return for ever escalating tuition costs.

<sup>72</sup> In extremely rare cases, institutions that actually care enough to retain skilled instructors resort to offering incentives, usually in the forms of “salary premiums and paid sabbatical leaves,” in order to compensate for the lack of tenure (Baldwin and Chronister 119). While such gestures are impressively refreshing, they obviously defeat the purpose of hiring nontenure-track instructors in order to save money.

And these drawbacks say nothing of less quantifiable factors as the questionable educational quality resulting from institutions straining their infrastructures in order to accommodate more students with fewer full-time faculty (Gappa and Leslie 103, 240) or the effects of “low morale and conflict” that part-time instructors often endure as a result of their working conditions (279). In light of these considerations, the ultimate cost efficiency of the present adjunct model becomes debatable at best.

### 3.4. Dysfunctional Reputation

I mentioned earlier that the faculty deprofessionalization resulting from overreliance upon adjunct instruction hurts the academic profiles of institutions as a whole. Additionally, it weakens institutions’ public image by presenting American higher education as a sort of “house divided.” By now, many observers have assumed that the typical American college is a place where lines are drawn in the sand, with exploited or, at the very least, disgruntled faculty on one side and “neoliberal,” businesslike administrators on the other. And while this may sadly be the case in far too many circumstances, traditional postsecondary institutions must collaborate on all levels to disprove this reputation—not only in word but also in deed—due to the increasing public scrutiny and competitive alternatives that threaten our vitality and consequent ability to impact society positively.

Yet while some faculty attitudes certainly exacerbate this harmful myth, the undeniable and often overwhelming presence of adjuncts on campus serves as living, breathing evidence of continued deprofessionalization. Kezar and Holcombe assert that “strong agreement about ensuring equitable status across faculty ranks often is not reflected in the current conditions experienced by non-tenure-track faculty, particularly part-time or

adjunct faculty.” And as much as our tenured colleagues may sympathize with and support us, the very existence of our positions evoke “genuine concern about higher education’s growing reliance on contingent labor and its implications for institutions, the ability of all faculty members to do their jobs, and the future of academic professionalism.” Thus, no matter how hard and well we work, adjuncts nevertheless linger as signifiers of institutional inequity that ominously looms over the entire teaching vocation in higher education.

Therefore, the casualization of the faculty resulting from the persistent model of adjunct employment contributes to schismatic attitudes because the practice breeds distrust. Kezar and Holcombe report that “faculty members are concerned about what future changes to faculty roles might mean for them, having thus far witnessed only the steady degradation of the academic profession....[They] are open to new models but are cautious, skeptical, and sometimes cynical about whether administrators will make choices that will improve conditions rather than continue to degrade them.” Kezar and Holcombe proceed to explain that faculty wariness of administration inhibits cooperation, thereby exacerbating higher education’s notoriety as a fractured system. It is my hope that the solution I propose in the following chapter will encourage the mitigation of this distrust and promote cooperation between faculty and administration.

### 3.5. Faculty Unionization

Another related consideration that may reflect poorly on postsecondary institutions is the growing trend among not only full-time but also part-time faculty seeking union representation. For the record, I have tried to remain objective and intentionally assume a neutral stance in my review of unionization because my initial exposure to (and lasting impression of) unions consisted of my father’s and grandfather’s anecdotes regarding union



“involvement” in their road construction jobs in Michiana. I mention this only because, for me and perhaps others, faculty unionization may constitute a red flag indicating that higher education as a whole is not functioning well. Therefore, as more and more faculty seek outside representation in order to protect their professional rights, the image of internal institutional division and dissention among the ranks of academia may become indelibly ingrained upon the public consciousness.

Granted, I realize that not all unions operate according to the same methods and that times certainly have changed. I will also be the first to admit that no beefy henchmen have emerged in pinstripe suits from black sedans to “shut down” my classroom, nor have I been spat upon and called a “scab” while maneuvering through picket lines outside the buildings where I teach. Yet such dramatic scenarios need not transpire in order for unionization to harm higher education’s reputation. From an outside perspective, increased faculty unionization could be negatively perceived in at least two ways. First, it further evidences the faculty distrust I have just addressed, and second, Kezar and Holcombe point out that some administrators consider unionization as a hindrance to negotiations. And although “the views of faculty members who are in collective bargaining agreements are not appreciably different from their nonunionized peers,” Kezar and Holcombe concede that “the collective bargaining process might add a layer of complexity to making decisions about faculty employment and contracts<sup>73</sup>.” So while, on the one hand, I am not necessarily denouncing unionization, on the other hand, I contend that such measures should constitute a last resort because they do not bode well for higher education’s already precarious public relations and may complicate future progress.

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<sup>73</sup> Gappa and Leslie also acknowledge that efforts at collective bargaining can unintentionally obstruct smooth operation, especially at the department level (115-16).

### 3.6. Unsatisfactory Service

I close my discussion of the harm with which excessive adjunct employment may afflict institutions with one final point—the *de facto* “good enough” teaching philosophy it effects. While more difficult to support with research, it has nonetheless consistently harried me over the past five years. Furthermore, it seems to capture the institutional *zeitgeist* that has not only maintained but also metastasized this staffing model.

Consider, for example, a common scenario. Upon reviewing my students’ course evaluations with my department chairs at semester’s end, I have often undergone variations of the same bittersweet experience. As an instructor, I have been fortunate enough to have received consistently positive feedback, typically meeting if not exceeding the benchmarks for not only the departments but also the colleges for which I have worked. No matter how well I teach, however, I am never completely satisfied with my performance. Reflecting on each term, I can always identify some aspect of the curriculum or my own pedagogy that requires further refining if not replacement. Frequently, the greatest barrier to such adjustments lies in the utter lack of time necessary to conduct research, revise lesson plans, and consult my colleagues. When I express such concerns before my department chairpersons, they have all responded that they are more than pleased with my work as it is, so I need not fret.

Such reassurance is concomitantly gratifying and perplexing. On the one hand, I derive great satisfaction from serving my students and my program well. On the other hand, however, I strongly believe that my students deserve the quality of education for which they pay rather than that for which I am paid. In other words, I am greatly rankled by the fact that I impose higher standards upon myself for my students’ sake than do my

employers. Gappa and Leslie rightly infer, “An academic community that relegates to the margins of its institutional life those who teach important parts of the curriculum is sending a message about what it values and about what is important. It is also abdicating responsibility for the coherence and outcomes of undergraduate education” (280). Presently, that message seems to convey that colleges employing disproportionately large numbers of adjuncts feel no obligation to provide a return commensurate to any stakeholder’s investment.

“Good-enough” teaching proceeding from inadequate working conditions betrays higher education’s purpose from any perspective. As a public service, it violates the public trust by diluting the curriculum that purports to foster not only skilled workers but also engaged citizens. As a commodity, it is a mediocre product proffered at a premium. And as college spending and costs escalate with each passing year while adjunct compensation continues to stagnate, higher education has become an increasingly raw deal for not only part-time faculty but also students, parents, taxpayers, and society at large. Thus, if postsecondary institutions do not soon acknowledge the correlation between their entire faculty’s working conditions and the comprehensive quality of education they offer, many may well realize the true cost of oversight.

#### 4. Conclusion

If the problematic model of adjunct employment harmed adjuncts alone, I might be willing to concede that part-time instructors simply need to continue making sacrifices for the greater good. Perhaps there was once a time when such self-denial led to such ends. By now, however, adjunct sacrifice has led to the ironic result of the greater detriment for most colleges and universities. Dissention has divided not only institutional structure but also

faculty solidarity, for which students are paying a high price in every sense of the phrase. The time has come for American higher education to consider an improved, sustainable model of faculty employment that will ameliorate the quality of education without increasing the cost of spending or tuition. For if we do not buttress the breaches in our line of defense, we risk being overrun by the impending threats that seem to beset us on all sides.

## Chapter Three

### Proposed Solution

*Little constructive advice was available to institutions struggling to meet their obligations by relying on part-time faculty. We became more concerned because of the growing gap between the reality of the inexorably increasing use of part-time faculty and the rhetoric of those who deplored the impact of such use. (Gappa and Leslie 7)*

Having offered a detailed portrait of typical adjunct working conditions as well as an overview of how they adversely affect multiple levels of American postsecondary institutions, what do I propose that we do about it? I agree with Michaels' and McFarland's insistence that "the solution...is obvious: pay the instructors better, offer them multiyear contracts, and provide them a path to promotion." Despite the simplicity of the answer, however, the necessary steps toward ethical working conditions for all faculty will most certainly be complex. And while untangling the intricate institutional knots that higher education has tied for itself will prove to be not only a painstaking but also, in some cases, a painful procedure, as I claim in my introduction, the complexity of solving the adjunct problem will require improvements that may benefit other, seemingly unrelated, higher-education problems that stem from the same root causes.

Therefore, in this chapter, I offer a detailed job description of a faculty position that would replace the adjunct paradigm. Also, I explain the potential benefits that this new instructor could offer, including improved remediation, academic advising, and participation in shared governance. Taken as a flexible template rather than as a rigid, one-size-fits-all structural readjustment, my proposal illustrates a feasible answer to the

lingering adjunct problem that, if wisely executed, would improve the quality of higher education.

### 1. The Core-Survey Professor

I propose that institutions of higher learning work toward replacing most of their adjunct appointments with full-time nontenure-track positions that offer “living salaries” and at least minimal benefits. While this solution is certainly bold and would probably strike some college leaders as unfathomable, it is not without precedent<sup>74</sup>. In fact, I model this hypothetical position on one that already exists in the form of “contingency faculty.” While this phrase is often used as an interchangeable synonym for adjuncts or as a “catch-all” reference to all nontenured instructors, Blumenstyk more specifically defines contingency faculty as full-time “professors who work under annual or multi-year contracts, earning salaries that average about \$45,000 a year” (90). And while these professors probably comprise the smallest proportion of higher-education faculty, as recently as 2011, fifteen percent of all college instructors consisted of contingency faculty (Blumenstyk 90).

Despite the existing precedent, however, I prefer to call my proposed position “core-survey” faculty for a few reasons. First, while it closely resembles the conditions of contingency faculty, I conceive of core-survey faculty serving distinct purposes that may differ from current contingency assignments and job descriptions. For example, Baldwin and Chronister explain that full-time nontenure-track faculty have commonly filled “bridge appointments” (179), which constitute hybrid positions combining teaching with other

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<sup>74</sup> In 1993, Gappa and Leslie observed, “The use of part-time faculty in disciplines such as English and mathematics at some of our institutions has become so extensive that a new genre of faculty position has emerged: the full-time temporary position” (156). We may safely assume that the type of position I propose rose in prominence during the late 1980s or early 1990s.

obligations such as “technical activities (e.g., programmer, technician, chemist, engineer), clinical service, community or public service, sabbatical leave, and performers and artists-in-residence” (86) as well as even “administrative duties” (180). And while my job title implies that teaching would preoccupy such instructors, institutions may obviously employ them according to their distinct needs.

Second, as I just mentioned, many writers partaking in the adjunct debate have not applied the term “contingency faculty” consistently, often employing it as a synonym for adjunct faculty even though these phrases often refer to remarkably different working conditions. So I have concocted this neologism in order to avoid ambiguity.

Finally, I consider “core-survey” to be a more accurate and less condescending modifier than either “adjunct” or “contingency.” It legitimizes the position, indicating that, in the case of the former, it is the professor’s primary if not exclusive vocation rather than a supplement to his or her day-job and that, in the latter case, the professor is fully qualified to teach a course rather than standing in as a “fallback” or “last resort.” And while I am not one to insist upon political correctness, a new name may nonetheless do much to demonstrate that colleges are making such positions available in good faith, sincerely acknowledging the significant role that such instructors will play in accomplishing their institutional missions.

So what would a core-survey faculty position look like? First and foremost, it would be a full-time position at one institution. By “full-time,” I mean that these instructors would teach in the range of six to ten course-sections during one academic year (including summer sessions). Granted, the upper end of that range still makes for a very heavy teaching load, which I have listed in my first chapter as one of the problems plaguing the

current state of adjunct instruction. However, as I mention also in the same chapter, teaching at one institution would allow the core-survey instructor to eliminate wasted commuting time, which would increase productivity.

Another factor that would increase efficiency derives from the core-survey instructor's job description. Since I propose core-survey faculty as a potential solution to the adjunct problem in particular, these instructors would serve practically the same function as adjuncts currently do. That is to say that core-survey faculty would teach just that—core curriculum or general education courses as well as some survey courses according to their departments' needs. Of course, depending on each institution and individual instructor, core-survey faculty could certainly teach upper-level seminars as they are qualified. Likewise, I acknowledge the merits of some of my tenured colleagues' perspective that teaching one core course every semester or academic year keeps them in touch with the general student population as well as with the developing conventions of our field. Furthermore, I personally advocate the application of Hutchins' theory that "the best education for the best is the best education for all" (qtd. in Adler 6), insofar as senior faculty interact with underclassmen who do not necessarily major in the professor's specific discipline.

However, the model I conceive responds to the reality of the situation—namely, that with the exception of a few very small institutions, teaching general education course-sections would bog down tenured faculty to the point that they would no longer be able to offer their services to the institution nor to conduct their own research. Additionally, it would likely deprive students of "the opportunity to study with and learn from a senior, established scholar in the field" (Thelin 56). Moreover, given the spate of graduate degrees



flooding the market, core-survey faculty would be—as most adjuncts currently are—fully qualified to offer “the best education.” Consequently, I conceive of core-survey faculty teaching primarily general-education courses and tenured faculty teaching advanced seminars. Under this design, core-survey faculty would teach several sections of the same course, which would not only enable them to streamline their work outside of the classroom but also improve their skills as instructors due to the overlap.

Although the teaching duties of the core-survey instructor would not greatly differ from those of the typical adjunct, perhaps the greatest distinction (and most likely, the most intense point of contention) would consist in their compensation<sup>75</sup>. Core-survey instructors holding a master’s degree deserve to earn approximately \$1,700 per credit hour; those having earned their doctorates should earn between \$2,000-\$2,500 per credit hour. I base these rough figures on the standards of living where I work in Kentucky. Since the commonwealth ranks rather low on the national cost of living index (“Cost of Living”), I propose these estimates as bare minimum salaries. Therefore, in states such as Hawai’i, New York, California, and Alaska as well as in the District of Columbia—all of which rank toward the top of the index—core-survey faculty should be paid as much as 30%-40% more<sup>76</sup>. Some institutional leaders may scoff at the very idea of paying an instructor upwards of \$50,000 per year for teaching mere general-education courses. In such cases, I would cordially invite any such critic to teach five freshman composition course-sections

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<sup>75</sup> At the turn of the century, Baldwin and Chronister discovered that full-time nontenure-track faculty typically earned less than their full-time colleagues at “research and doctoral institutions” and received comparable salaries at “master’s and baccalaureate institutions” (50). At most of the selected institutions, full-time nontenure-track faculty qualified also for “merit salary increases” after a predetermined number of years (51).

<sup>76</sup> These suggested figures are consistent with the current “regional variation” of “full-time faculty salaries” (Shulman et al., “Visualizing Change” 8).

during one semester and afterward argue that an instructor who dutifully attends to that task does not earn every red cent of such a salary.

Additionally, institutions would offer core-survey faculty not only better pay but also job security. As I have described in my first two chapters, adjuncts typically work on a semester-by-semester basis and seldom know with any certainty if and when (not to mention where) they will receive their next teaching assignments under the current model. While a tenure-track core-survey position would be ideal, a more realistic yet still reasonable compromise would take the form of three- to five-year contracts that are subject to renewal.<sup>77</sup> Such institutional investment in its workforce would promote broader socioeconomic benefits, encouraging more employees, in turn, to invest in their respective communities by purchasing homes, raising families, and participating in local events and organizations. However, such commitment requires the peace of mind and affirmation that one's career is assured for the foreseeable future<sup>78</sup>.

In addition to higher salaries and job security, institutions should offer core-survey faculty a basic benefits package, and by "benefits," I mean primarily medical insurance. Granted, retirement, vision, dental, and disability sure would be nice, but medical insurance has become imperative<sup>79</sup>. Consequently, institutions should offer, at the very least, a "bare

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<sup>77</sup> Even one-year probationary contracts may be appropriate for new hires, yet I hesitate to suggest this policy due to its vulnerability to abuse. Despite my personal wariness, however, the progression of one-year probationary contracts leading to three- to five-year renewable contracts has served as the standard staffing pattern at many institutions that have adopted this model. Baldwin and Chronister offer a detailed description and illustrative examples of this practice (42-46, 147-53).

<sup>78</sup> Admittedly, core-survey faculty would only exacerbate "the consistent upward trend in full-time non-tenure-track hiring" that Baldwin and Chronister noted in 2001 (3). However, they also predict that full-time non-tenure track appointments have become a permanent fixture in American higher education (7), which, if true, would render the point moot. In order to review the benefits and challenges associated with non-tenure-track faculty, see Baldwin and Chronister's *Teaching without Tenure* and Kezar and Sam's *Understanding the New Majority of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty in Higher Education*.

<sup>79</sup> Historically, full-time nontenure-track faculty have enjoyed "essentially the same access to fringe benefits such as life insurance, health coverage, and pension plans as do tenure-track faculty at the vast majority of institutions" (Baldwin and Chronister 52).

minimum” medical insurance package so that core-survey faculty who cannot afford healthcare do not have to pay a penalty tax. Perhaps proactive institutions could coordinate with legislators and insurance companies in order to devise a truly affordable healthcare plan that would allow core-survey instructors to acquire prescriptions for antibiotics and the like for reasonable co-pays at the very least.

The points discussed above constitute the basic framework of the staffing model to which postsecondary institutions should default in hiring instructors off the tenure track. However, other considerations are worthy of note as well. For example, Baldwin and Chronister explain how nontenure-track faculty have benefitted from purposeful orientation. Successful programs familiarize new faculty with the distinct “culture and mission of the institution” and their department (165), their role within that environment, and available resources, including “library services, teaching resource centers, technology support services, and how to acquire necessary supplies and materials” (166). Some colleges even assign a “senior faculty mentor” to each new hire in order to “ease the transition to [his or her] new situation by supplementing a formal orientation program and tailoring it to the individual” (181). Such efforts have improved nontenure-track faculty integration into several academic communities (165).

Another institutional gesture that could optimize core-survey appointments involves professional development, which “should be consistent with the faculty member’s role and period of service to the institution” (Baldwin and Chronister 68). Examples of common professional development opportunities include “support for professional travel, association dues, and conference fees” (66), access to “campus teaching centers” (67) and technology workshops (68), and even “provision of sabbatical leaves” (65). Such

institutional investment can help to stave off faculty “burnout” (67) and encourage faculty “to remain current in their disciplinary fields and continue contributing to the academic vitality of their institutions” (65).

In addition to student evaluations, departmental reviews have improved teaching proficiency as well. The most effective evaluation policies ensure that faculty are aware of the criteria by which they will be assessed before they begin teaching and that the rubric will accurately reflect their specific job descriptions as opposed to those of their tenure-track colleagues (Baldwin and Chronister 62, 65, 149-50). Such criteria tend to emphasize “teaching effectiveness” (89), typically including “numbers of students served, student achievement measures, number of courses designed and delivered, [and] professional portfolios” (149). And although certainly time-consuming for departments, such evaluation has nonetheless proven to be “an important component of quality control in higher education” (65).

Furthermore, evaluations offer useful metrics for determining “salary increases, reappointment, and promotion” for nontenure-track faculty (Baldwin and Chronister 65), which comprise other potential elements of the core-survey model. While neither a regular nor a consistently applied practice within the full-time nontenure-track precedent, “a system of sequential ranks” (155) reflects well upon institutions employing large numbers of instructors off the tenure track. It indicates “the availability of a career ladder” (47), the lack of which some faculty have considered “discriminatory, demeaning, and demoralizing” in that it only exacerbates bifurcation (48). A path to promotion “acknowledges continuing service, professional achievements, and contributions to one or more institutions” (155), “signifies career advancement and increased professional status

within the institution,” “provides an incentive for professional growth and high-quality performance over time,” and “helps to minimize the negative status differences that distinguish tenure-class from non-tenure-track faculty and that can prevent them from working together effectively as team members in program planning, curriculum development, and other professional activities” (156).

Some institutions have applied the traditional tenure-track titles of assistant, associate, and full professor to their nontenure-track instructors while others have developed a similar rank-structure reserved for specifically nontenure-track faculty (Baldwin and Chronister 48). Texas A&M – Corpus Christi offers a perfect example of the latter. According to the institution’s 2012 Faculty Handbook, these positions consist of three “Professional Track Faculty” appointments, all of which are designated as full-time, non-tenure-track teaching or research positions (1-2). And while, from one perspective, such a system signals an attempt to undermine traditional tenure<sup>80</sup>, from another viewpoint, it could indicate that the institution is making strides toward offering nontenure-track appointments as legitimate career alternatives.

One final option that could contribute to the viability of the core-survey model concerns institutional recognition of nontenure-track faculty achievement. Examples of such recognition include “teaching awards, research citations, and named professorships” (Baldwin and Chronister 160). At some institutions, full-time nontenure-track faculty have been eligible for the same awards as are their tenured peers while other institutions have created awards specifically for instructors off the tenure track (182). In either instance, Baldwin and Chronister explain that, “by recognizing and rewarding the contributions of

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<sup>80</sup> See associate library director and public history lecturer Thomas H. Kreneck’s critique of Texas A&M’s policy in “A&M-CC Move Means No Tenure for Some Educators.”

all the academic staff members who perform instructional, scholarly, and service roles in some capacity, institutions will be building an integrated, healthier, and more effective academic community” (179).

Granted, the previous five features are not as crucial as are teaching responsibilities, compensation, job security, and fringe benefits to the establishment of an improved staffing plan. Nevertheless, they could certainly mitigate the sense of faculty bifurcation and redress some of adjunct employment’s adverse institutional effects upon which I expound in my second chapter. And of equal importance, they demonstrate that not only do precedents for my proposal already exist but also the solution is flexible and therefore given to variation according to each institution’s distinct needs.

## 2. Potential Benefits of the Core-Survey Model

Having devoted my second chapter to outlining the present detriments of the adjunct model, I now wish to explain how prudently conceived core-survey faculty could contribute to institutional success even more than part-time instructors currently do. For the shift in staffing philosophies will improve higher education through not only negation but also position. That is to say, more ethical hiring practices appeal to the institutional desire not only to avoid adverse effects but also to promote additional benefits.

### 2.1. Improved Remediation

One exigency to which core-survey faculty could respond (as many adjuncts already do) concerns the growing need for quality remedial courses and even remediation reform. In 2012, the national nonprofit organization Complete College America (C.C.A.) conducted a study showing that, on average, colleges relegate between 20%-50% (depending on institutional type) of their undergraduates—totaling approximately “1.7

million beginning students each year”—to such classes (“Remediation” 2). These courses are designed to introduce the standards of college-level work to students who show potential yet, for one reason or another, have arrived on campus poorly prepared for this transition. Studies have shown that, among those least prepared to succeed academically at postsecondary institutions, the most common consist of first-generation college students and graduates from high schools that do not offer a “rigorous core curriculum” to the high percentage of low-income and/or minority students enrolled therein (Blumenstyk 40).

Despite the best of intentions, however, these courses have proven disappointing overall. C.C.A. identifies several deficiencies to the current system of remediation, including the assignment of too many students to remedial courses, the failure of these courses to achieve their objectives, and obstructed avenues to graduation (“Remediation” 2-3). The most alarming statistic this research has produced regards the “deplorable” graduation rate of students enrolling in remedial courses. The study found that “fewer than 1 in 10 graduate from community colleges within three years and little more than a third complete bachelor’s degrees in six years” (3). Ironically, the current practice of remediation seems to contribute to rather than to mitigate college attrition rates.

If the need for effective remediation has not already risen on most institutions’ priority lists, it most likely will soon. Blumenstyk reports that, for nearly two decades, the number of American high-school graduates increased each year until 2011. Analysts predict that the United States will not see similar high-school graduation rates again until 2023. Therefore, competition among colleges for the wealthiest and highest performing students has increased as the number of prospective students has decreased. Institutions hoping at least to maintain their current enrollment numbers have accordingly admitted

more low-income, low-performing students. Since these students tend to show the greatest need for remediation, colleges can anticipate a larger percentage of their student body to enroll in such courses (80-81).

Core-survey faculty would be ideal candidates to respond to this need for a few reasons. First, many tenure-track professors have historically lacked the interest, preparation, and/or the time required to offer quality remedial education (Gappa and Leslie 100, 224-25). Consequently, part-time faculty (especially those teaching English and math) have already been bearing this burden at some institutions for at least two decades (195). So promoting such adjuncts to core-survey professors would automatically recruit instructors with prior experience working with students in need of remediation. Second, part-time instructors have proven to be particularly adept at teaching remedial course-sections because they often invest “far more time and energy into a single course and into working with individual students than a full-time faculty member would” (224) and therefore tend to be “more student-centered than subject- or theory-centered in their approach to teaching” (121) due to “the intrinsic satisfaction of close contact and involvement with their students [that] is at the heart of their motivation to teach” (122)<sup>81</sup>. Finally, core-survey faculty would likely offer superior remedial instruction to that of adjuncts because the one criticism that has emerged regarding part-timers instructing remedial courses concerns their lack of availability outside the classroom (224), which would no longer apply under the working conditions I recommend. Thus, in light of the growing need for remediation, coupled with the poor results of the current system, core-

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<sup>81</sup> Gappa and Leslie infer that, for the same reasons, part-time faculty have been particularly effective teaching nontraditional students as well (121, 224, 273).



survey faculty could provide not only the personnel but also the necessary attention required for even effective reform.

Considering the current model of college-level remediation to be a “classic case of system failure” (“Remediation” 2), C.C.A. presents a bold vision of such restructuring, in which core-survey instructors could play a crucial role. Specifically, core-survey faculty could assist in or even spearhead the development of co-requisite courses and alignment of local high-school curriculum with entry-level college courses. In either case, C.C.A. proposes doing away with non-credit remedial courses altogether, insisting that “college students come to campus for college, not more high school” (3).

With the objective of clearing the poorly-prepared incoming student’s path to graduation, C.C.A. contends that a co-requisite (rather than a prerequisite) structure should become the new “default” for general education courses (“Remediation” 12). This approach could take on a few different forms. For example, a 100-level core-curriculum course could meet “five days a week instead of just three times. Three days a week the students receive the regular instruction and the other two they get embedded tutoring” (3). Another strategy entails extending “redesigned full-credit courses...providing built-in, co-requisite support for two semesters instead of one. Students get the same content but more time on task” (9). C.C.A. cites specific examples of institutions that have successfully experimented with such methods, including “companion courses” that reinforce content from “the mainstream course,” workshops based on “initial assessments” that identify specific “knowledge gaps,” and additional tutoring for which students earn credit (9). Such institutions “have seen their unprepared students succeed at the same rates as their college-ready peers. And best practices have demonstrated that as many as half of all current

remedial students can succeed this way” (3). Core-survey faculty could provide the needed personnel not only to instruct but also to design and adapt such courses in order to encourage students requiring remediation to commit to a “program of study” by expediting their time to completion, which would, in turn, optimize institutions’ budgets by eliminating prerequisite courses that are not offered for credit.

Along with facilitating co-requisite courses, core-survey faculty could improve remediation by collaborating with high-school teachers working in their institution’s surrounding area in order to correlate secondary curriculum with expectations for first-year college students. While C.C.A. acknowledges that, ideally, “students should be college ready upon graduating high school” (“Remediation” 7), the report nonetheless identifies that colleges have the opportunity to “reduce the need for college remediation altogether” via proactive intervention at the high-school level (12). For example, the California State University system has been “helping high school teachers work with unprepared students and is developing a 12<sup>th</sup> grade transitional curriculum” (7). Some of the high schools in the area of Kentucky where I teach have already developed such transitional and even dual-credit courses with nearby colleges for their advanced students. So the framework and institutional relationships already exist at some institutions as a precedent for such opportunities to be offered for high-school students who would potentially require remediation as well. Some skeptics may object that, since not all high school graduates matriculate to local colleges, such preemptive efforts could possibly amount to investments in other, perhaps competing, institutions or even no postsecondary institution at all. While I concede that this is a valid concern, especially in light of my own insistence on fiduciary responsibility, I would suggest that such a gesture could also be perceived as a means of

community outreach in which colleges of any stripe could legitimately claim to be promoting the public good. In this context, core-survey professors could serve as liaisons who help bridge the gap between secondary and postsecondary learning.

## 2.2. Academic Advising

One of the detriments to student learning I list in my second chapter includes adjuncts' inability to serve as advisors for their students. Therefore, in addition to offering higher quality instruction, core-survey professors could take on advisees in an official capacity. This new role for junior faculty could benefit institutions in a number of ways. First, it would lighten the load of advisees that full-time faculty would have to assume every academic year<sup>82</sup>. Second, core-survey faculty could make a greater impact on campus by personally meeting with students who are not necessarily assigned to their course rosters. Third, core-survey professors would become more familiar with their institutions' operations and policies, which would better prepare them to respond to their own students' in-class informal advising questions. Finally, it would deepen junior-faculty integration and investment in campus life by granting them not only greater knowledge of broader academic processes but also a greater sense of belonging via the positive contributions they could make to the educational experience outside their personal classrooms.

## 2.3. Participation in Shared Governance

Another reason that the core-survey professor would be a preferable hiring model is that full-time nontenure-track instructors tend to have significantly more opportunities

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<sup>82</sup> Baldwin and Chronister confirm that a precedent exists for this practice. Some institutions have assigned undergraduates to full-time nontenure-track faculty advisors, especially when tenure-track faculty complain about heavy advisee loads or show no interest in advising at all (55-56).

to participate in shared governance<sup>83</sup> than do part-time instructors (Kezar and Sam 70), who “hardly have [any] voice in governance” (Schultz). Such a potential benefit comes at a time when strong faculty governance is needed more than ever. For the traditional model that dominated most of the twentieth century has been overthrown by administrative practices transposed from the business world as part of the “corporatization” of higher education I discuss in my introduction.

Prior to the 1980s, the majority of colleges observed the A.A.U.P.’s principles prescribing a concerted effort between the governing board, administration, and faculty in determining institutional operations in pursuit of the “common good” rather than of self-interest or profit (Blumenstyk 99-100). This paradigm shifted, however, when the 1980 *Yeshiva* ruling I discuss in my second chapter facilitated corporatization by “empower[ing] administrators to restructure institutions from the top down without worrying that a union or a threat of unionization would serve as a countervailing force” (Schultz). Unilateral administrative authority replaced shared governance while the faculty’s institutional role more and more resembled that of employees in the business world (Schultz)—a particularly striking analogy in light of the influx of “academic temps” (i.e., nontenure-track instructors) during the same period<sup>84</sup> (Kamenetz 53). In the name of “expediency and

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<sup>83</sup> Even so, Baldwin and Chronister concede that, at the turn of the century, full-time nontenure-track faculty involvement in governance remained inconsistent across institutions (57). They attribute this variation to unclear policies regarding nontenure-track faculty participation, which resulted in a range of reactions, including “uncertainty and confusion” (58) to disfranchisement to relief (58-59). The one pattern that seemed to emerge was that “where institutions or academic units depend heavily on full-time non-tenure-eligible faculty, these faculty play a more substantial role in the governance and decision-making process” (59). However, at institutions that did not regularly involve nontenure-track faculty in governance, concerns arose about the instructors’ academic freedom (69-70), their “impact...on campus culture” (128), and overall faculty collegiality and bifurcation (128, 130-31, 159-60).

<sup>84</sup> Two years prior to the *Yeshiva* ruling, Tuckman noted, “At a time when the market for full-timers languished, that for part-timers flourished” (307). The uncanny relevance of this observation gives us good reason to suspect that such a trend may be an inherent quality of this staffing model.

efficiency” (Schoorman and Acker-Hocevar 312), impatient college leaders deemed the faculty’s “methodical approach to problem solving” (Deboy 16) aggravatingly burdensome or “ill-equipped to handle complex issues of diversity or financial stress” (Schoorman and Acker-Hocevar 313). Many administrations centralized power by creating new positions within their own ranks while diluting those of the faculty with contingent or part-time instructors, who are largely excluded from any form of governance<sup>85</sup> (Schultz). Disfranchising faculty via this deprofessionalization, the corporate model now prioritizes “short-term profits over long-term investments and decision-making outcomes over process (re-framing students as products, faculty and their intellectual property as commodities, and administrators as managers or corporate CEOs)” (Schoorman and Acker-Hocevar 312). In recent years, some college leaders have taken advantage of the fiscal exigencies brought on by the Great Recession as an excuse to consolidate their institutional power even further (312), essentially governing by fiat (Eastman and Boyles 17-18).

Admittedly, the presence of core-survey professors on campus would by no means automatically solve the persistent problems surrounding shared governance. Nevertheless, creating such positions could be a step in that direction. First, if institutions replace adjunct instructors with core-survey faculty, they would essentially “reprofessionalize” the academic workforce. Rather than perceiving adjuncts as “cheap labor” that threatens their

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<sup>85</sup> While the corporatization of higher education certainly exacerbated this problem, to be fair, evidence indicates that adjunct exclusion, again, predated the *Yeshiva* ruling. For example, as early as 1978, Tuckman observes, “The typical part-timer has little voice in departmental affairs, a limited awareness of departmental objectives and goals, and only a passing relationship to the institution that employs him or her. Thus, the part-timer is likely to have only a limited sense of participation in the academic environment” (306). Such longstanding institutional ostracism, however, only heightens suspicion that, all along, administrators sought to put a damper on “the collective voice of tenured and tenure track full-time professors” via the increased hiring of part-time instructors in order to replace shared governance with a “management versus labor” arrangement” (Thelin 135).

job security, tenured faculty may be more inclined to view core-survey professors as colleagues given their full-time status. A greater number of full-time faculty on the college payroll would effectively reverse the “casualization” I discuss in my second chapter and thereby strengthen the constituency of the existing faculty representatives.

Furthermore, more full-time faculty could solve a related problem: faculty’s perceived futility of and apathy regarding shared governance. The nearly pervasive corporate governance model has resulted in, among other corollaries, the widespread attitude among faculty—nontenured and tenured alike—that participating in nominal shared governance amounts to little more than a pointless waste of time (Kezar and Sam 69; Schoorman and Acker-Hocevar 311) because administrative negligence and diversion inhibit faculty from influencing “substantive issues” (Schoorman and Acker-Hocevar 311). In fact, some even express relief at being excused from the duty (Kezar and Sam 69). In addition to feeling as though their efforts would be made in vain, many instructors observe that participation in shared governance would require even more work without any additional compensation (Kezar and Sam 104; Schoorman and Acker-Hocevar 313, 321).

In response to this problem, I suggest that core-survey professors would increase the number of not only faculty represented but also faculty representing. Such eligibility would not only, again, lighten tenured professors’ workload but also diversify the types of voices contributing to shared governance. Moreover, if a fresh infusion of core-survey professors would bring the “true believer” mentality I describe in my first chapter, such optimism may prove to be precisely the “shot in the arm” that faculty governance needs to overcome the jaded indifference and disillusionment into which the corporate model has precipitated it.

Additionally, core-survey professors strengthening faculty voice would not only benefit the professoriate but also reflect well upon the institution overall. For the greater the influence of faculty governance, the greater the overall institutional accountability. And such a gesture would do much to improve the concerns with which I conclude my second chapter.

Yet the tradition of shared governance illustrates that its purpose does not end with resisting the relatively recent phenomenon of businesslike administrative autocracy. Rather, the whole point involves maintaining solidarity across all levels of the institution. Deliberative decision-making acknowledges that “good ideas are likely to emerge from disparate sources” (Deboy 16). So an institution boasting strong faculty governance recognizes that no one—faculty included—has “all the answers.” Such an institution can legitimately claim to act on behalf of everyone’s best interest because it actually takes the time sincerely to consult everyone. It considers “debate, argument, skepticism, and criticism...as vehicles to promote institutional development” (16) rather than as inefficient, time-worn encumbrances or as challenges to authority. True shared governance enacts an institutional form of justice, recognizing that “more voices...yield more viewpoints, which...support more robust decision-making that [is] representative of broad-based faculty concerns” (Schoorman and Acker-Hocevar 314). It redefines institutional roles in terms of “partnership power” (322), in which all stakeholders act as “collaborators and consensus builders across diverse perspectives” (315). Such diversity includes the perspectives of not only the faculty but also the governing board, administration, staff, and even the students.

Moreover, shared governance yields other benefits as well. For example, although more time-consuming, multilateral deliberation is actually more efficient than unilateral decision-making in that it “avail[s] itself to the entirety of [its] knowledge, skill, and competency resources—experiences and expertise located with the faculty and staff” rather than allowing “this human repository of information and insight” to sit idle or go to waste (Deboy 16). Furthermore, Kezar and Sam list shared governance among the factors that boost a sense of “trust, security, and morale” (68) within the faculty ranks by affirming that they are “valued and respected” (86) contributors to the institutional community.

Yet if these benefits are insufficient to persuade institutions to return to the twentieth-century precedent of shared governance, recent developments on the legal front may prove more compelling. For in the wake of the N.L.R.B.’s 2014 *Pacific Lutheran* ruling, postsecondary institutions may be required either to prove that faculty hold positions of genuine authority by regularly enacting policies formulated via shared governance without administrative interference or to acknowledge publicly that they treat their faculty like business employees by allowing them to unionize (Schultz). Therefore, reprofessionalizing the faculty by hiring core-survey professors and restoring the faculty constituency’s authority in shared governance would indicate that postsecondary institutions can and do take the initiative to resolve their own conflicts internally and preemptively without requiring an external union to force their hands.

### 3. Conclusion

Devoting my first two chapters to illustrating the problems of the current adjunct staffing model, I have offered a superior alternative in this chapter. I have outlined a detailed yet flexible job description based on existing precedents. Furthermore, I have



demonstrated that the position I describe would not only mitigate the adverse effects on faculty, students, and institutions I analyze in my second chapter but also provide the added benefits of improved remediation, academic advising, and shared governance.

Nevertheless, I anticipate that college leaders would most likely contend that such a solution is simply unrealistic given that most postsecondary institutions claim to be operating on strict budgets. At the same time, however, this insistence exists alongside a strain of adjunct activism that would criticize my proposal as being far too modest—perhaps even condescending (Flaherty, “Union Sets ‘Aspirational Goal’”). As a result, department chairpersons wishing to advocate for the kind of reasonable working conditions all their faculty not only need but also deserve face a seemingly unresolvable dilemma.

Perhaps the most compelling argument presents itself in the form of a question. Gappa and Leslie challenge college administrators to ask themselves, “What kind of employer are we?” (245). Reasoning that “the kind of faculty an institution chooses to hire directly reflects that institution’s educational mission” (233), they pose a related question: “What kind of faculty [does it take] to be a particular kind of institution?” (234). If the answer is, “A large percentage of involuntary adjuncts,” the resulting institution will be the kind that values profit and platitude over delivering on its promises. However, if the answer is, “A strong core of tenure-track faculty supported largely by full-time instructors who are equitably awarded according to their merits,” the resulting institution will be the kind that truly values purpose, principle, and proficiency. The time has come for American higher education to cease making excuses in the name of “sustainability” that it may thrive via the execution of integrity.

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EDUCATION

Master of Arts in English, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA, May 2011.

Bachelor of Arts in Music, Asbury College, Wilmore, KY, May 2005.

PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS

Part-time Faculty, Asbury University, Wilmore, KY, August 2012 – December 2017.

Adjunct Instructor, Bluegrass Community & Technical College, Lexington, KY, January – May 2015.

Part-time Instructor, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, August – December 2014.

Teaching Assistant, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, August 2011 – May 2014.

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, Blacksburg, VA, August 2009 – May 2011.

HONORS

Hoffman Award for Best M.A. G.T.A. Nominee, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, Blacksburg, VA, May 2011.

Favorite Faculty Reception Nominee, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, Blacksburg, VA, August 2010.