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### Five Tips on Contingency

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and tenured positions are skeptical of this concept. It burdens them with representation on countless committees at considerable personal and professional cost (Htun and Tungohan 2018). Yet, “diversity”—a mixed blessing—at least acknowledges that a certain category of people exists. If contingent faculty joins its ranks, it will help to delegitimize treating “contingent” as “disposable” colleagues. This more capacious understanding of diversity could be deployed on campuses where a majority of faculty may not support unionization—or even oppose it—but endorses “equity and diversity.” The U of MN Office for Equity and Diversity (OED) asserts its “special responsibility... to serve, support, and partner with people...facing social, cultural, and economic barriers to education and jobs, to promotion and advancement, and to the highest level of achievement and success” (OED 2012). Undoubtedly, contingent faculty fits this definition.

The issue of inequality of salary and benefits within departments does not concern only contingent faculty, which is like the canary in the coal mine. Tenured faculty—tacitly if not always explicitly—has endorsed a market-based rhetoric, which justifies enormous differences of treatment within its own ranks, with the paradoxical result that it has become “disenchanted” (Kaufman-Osborn 2017, 102).<sup>3</sup> Faculty fears rightly for the future of its doctoral students. Rethinking the concept of diversity and its practices to include the interests of under-recognized academics also will serve the privileged, according to OED: “Transformed by diversity, our University will be looked to...around the world for its commitment to social justice; its equitable and transparent recruitment, hiring, and promotion policies and practices” (OED 2012, 2). In 2019, in its eighth symposium, “Keeping our Faculty,” the U of MN Institute on Diversity (which works for OED) is including a break-out session entitled “Contingent Faculty as the Canary in the Coal Mine: Market versus Ethical Aspirations in Academia” (Institute on Diversity, U of MN 2019). This is one step in the right direction. ■

## NOTES

1. In 1989, Minnesota funded 38.8% of the state’s land-grant university’s costs; in 2017, it funded 14%. Available at [www.mndaily.com/article/2017/04/university-of-minnesota-higher-education-state-funding](http://www.mndaily.com/article/2017/04/university-of-minnesota-higher-education-state-funding) (accessed January 27, 2019).
2. For more information, see [www.mndaily.com/article/2018/03/n-this-is-not-over-umn-faculty-reflect-on-the-failed-union-movement](http://www.mndaily.com/article/2018/03/n-this-is-not-over-umn-faculty-reflect-on-the-failed-union-movement) (accessed October 14, 2018).
3. U of MN incoming president Joan Gabel explained her large salary by “the market,” which values “things based on what supply and demand dictate” (Koumpilova 2018). Already in the 1990s, the chair of the U of MN department of political science was concerned about the growing inequality in compensation among his colleagues: a matter of shrinking state allocation but also of a change in faculty mindset, which became increasingly “competitive” (Interview with Edwin Fogelman 2018). Because it is a state institution, all U of MN salaries are posted for public knowledge.

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## FIVE TIPS ON CONTINGENCY

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Most job-market advice received by political scientists begins by acknowledging the perils of un- and under-employment, then proceeds as if intensified professionalization and a more skillful approach to the job market is enough to avoid this unfortunate outcome (Carter and Scott 1998; Miller and Gentry 2011; Saiya 2014). However, as demonstrated by many authors in this spotlight, contingency is now a reality experienced by many political scientists, no matter how hardworking or savvy. As such, it becomes important to develop strategies for navigating the all-too-common realities of academic contingency. Doing so helps cultivate networks of self-help and mutual solidarity, while publicly exposing and resisting the many indignities reproduced and normalized within an academy heavily dependent on contingent labor.

I entered the academic job market in 2008. After the financial crisis, half of the jobs I applied for ceased to exist after I submitted the applications. This dire economic situation—from which the academy has not recovered—meant that my partner and I set out on a multiyear circuit of postdocs and unemployed “visiting-scholar” positions. We lived in five cities in five years; one year, we filed taxes in four different states. We got really good at packing and unpacking an apartment. Over time, I developed a list of practical advice to pass along to fellow travelers who were just entering the unsettling postgraduate world of applying for jobs, teaching in new and random places, and imagining a thousand possible (but unlikely) futures. I developed these five tips during our years of vagabondage:

1. **Set your own wage.** I decided not to work for less than \$20 an hour. One school paid me \$3,200 per course, which meant I could spend only 160 hours on that class. I used an Excel spreadsheet to track the time spent teaching, preparing, grading, holding office hours, and responding to email. By the end of the semester, I had only enough hours to either prepare for class or grade final papers, so I taught the last classes without prepping them. The school got what it paid for—and I earned \$20 an hour.
2. **CVs are editable documents.** Given that many employers consciously or unconsciously discriminate against those in contingent positions, avoiding full disclosure is often advantageous. Because no crime of omission exists with CVs, when teaching at multiple institutions, I find it perfectly reasonable to list only one school per year. List only the more prestigious school, and/or the job title most easily misinterpreted as a full-time position.

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After all, the many academics working in restaurants to pay the bills do not list “Food Service” as their current position.

3. **The job market is a cartel. Don’t let it consume you.** No greater waste of time exists than the academic job market. (Actually, let’s refrain from calling it a “market”; it is a buyer’s cartel with purchasers of labor enjoying a near monopoly.) Yet, it remains seductive to imagine that pouring countless hours into tweaking the minutia of an application will make the difference in landing that dream job. I once spent a whole day tinkering an application for a job I later learned was an inside hire, one that needed a national search only for window dressing.

Because the cartel wants only publications, maximizing writing time is imperative. This requires limiting the hours sacrificed to the application-process abyss. For me, I limited my job applications to Mondays, when I would scour recent job postings, download relevant ads, update spreadsheets, tweak cover letters, modify materials, upload documents, and make the occasional mad dash to the post office. On Monday evening, I set it all aside until the following week. Also, avoid the gossip blogs; nothing good comes from that nonsense.

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4. **Not all tenure-track jobs are worth taking.** The sense of desperation that accompanies applying for academic jobs often culminates in a reflexive impulse to accept any full-time job that comes along, no matter how poorly paid, overworked, or dislocating. However, depending on the circumstance, *not* taking a job might open more possibilities than accepting one that would prove personally, emotionally, and economically debilitating. Some tenure-track positions actually create fewer openings and possibilities than, say, staying another year in your graduate program or picking up a few classes in a location where your research will be supported by proximity to talks, libraries, mentors, and friends. Sometimes simply rolling the dice again makes the most sense.
5. **Don’t make life wait.** The normalization of academic contingency means that we often put major life decisions—forming meaningful romantic relationships, getting married, and having children—on hold. If hard work actually guaranteed secure, lasting employment, then delaying such decisions for one’s career might make sense. However, in this industry, no such guarantees exist. I recommend having an academic plan but also cultivating a “Plan B”—one in which things other than the academy take priority. Use this Plan B to measure what is being sacrificed and whether those sacrifices are actually worth it.

Self-care and survival tips, of course, take us only so far. Faculty caught navigating contingency should receive solidarity from all faculty, including those in tenured and tenure-track positions. Our profession needs frank and public conversations about academic labor and the sacrifices we, our friends,

and our colleagues are required to make. We should organize against the hierarchies and indignities that have become the grinding norm in securing academic employment. Departments, disciplines, and professional organizations should take the lead in making the training and hiring process more humane. Moreover, seizing the problem at its root, we must organize and unionize to resist those underlying economic trends driving expanded contingency.

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### FOREIGN FACULTY IN JAPAN

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Japan is perhaps a unique case when considering the situation of adjunct university faculty. The robust economy and relatively high educational standards have ensured a strong academic presence; however, long-held notions of ethnic and cultural homogeneity historically have limited long-term employment prospects for non-Japanese faculty to short-term, contract-based work. Yet, with one of the world’s most rapidly aging societies, Japan must confront a gamut of issues including university education. The shrinking pool of domestic students and faculty has forced universities to diversify, aiming to broaden their academic specializations, as well as expanding outreach and recruitment outside of Japan. As a result, doors appear to be slowly but increasingly opening to foreign faculty in Japan—a situation perhaps at odds with that of contingent faculty in the United States. Although the range of adjunct positions and arrangements is broad and exceptions at individual institutions abound, this article focuses on the employment of non-Japanese faculty in national (*kokuritsu*) universities, highlighting some of the issues adjunct and foreign faculty in Japan are facing.

The Japanese government began allowing foreign faculty to teach in national and public universities in 1982; by 2004, 1,474 foreign faculty were dispersed throughout 92 national universities. Suh (2003, 275) estimated that 57.3% worked under limited-term contracts. Because visa regulations require having a full-time employer, most faculty admitted under the “professor” category are tied to a single university full-time in a fixed contract, usually lasting two to five years. New academics in Japan often