

# Academic Labor: Research and Artistry

---

Volume 3

Article 1

---

2019

## CSAL: Volume 3, Issue 1

Center for the Study of Academic Labor CSAL

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/alra>

---

### Recommended Citation

Center for the Study of Academic Labor CSAL (2019) "CSAL: Volume 3, Issue 1," *Academic Labor: Research and Artistry*. Vol. 3 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/alra/vol3/iss1/1>

This Full Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Academic Labor: Research and Artistry by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University. For more information, please contact [kyle.morgan@humboldt.edu](mailto:kyle.morgan@humboldt.edu).

# Academic Labor: *Research & Artistry*

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

### ***From the Editors***

In this third issue of *Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* you will find discussions of invisible labor in the academy. The contributors here are calling back the constellation (Powell) of basement graders, hushed conversations, and back-room decision-making. In the process, they are helping to make the invisible visible (Warner) and reclaim spaces where academic laborers belong and insist upon being seen and heard. This issue's articles examine academic labor's effects on the identities of tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty, as well as graduate student employees and staff. The articles consider the lived realities of these many laboring parties and, in the process, reveal much about the unrecognized inner workings of higher education. Faculty, staff, and students regularly undertake activities that are not visible for awards, stipends, tenure and promotion, or grants—tangible accolades that are valued in higher education. This issue illuminates behind-the-scenes efforts that so many in academe tackle without recognition, and sometimes without consent, in the hopes that we will first understand and then do better.

**Natalie Selden Barnes'** art installation and artist's statement, "Honor the Precariat," depicting her celebrated 2017 Campus Equity Week (CEW) exhibit, begins the collection. Barnes' installation, which took place in the Directions Gallery in the Art and Art History Department of Colorado State University, participated in a national emphasis on arts activism for that year's CEW and was comprised of dangling plexiglass figures representing the over 700 contingent faculty on Barnes' home campus. In her artist's statement Barnes explains how the installation reflects her 20+ year struggle to come to terms with the value of a career in which she has been viewed as a second-class faculty citizen.

Following Barnes' piece is **Annah Krieg's** review of Barnes' installation in which she points out the exhibit's juxtaposition of data and image that creates an immersive experience for viewers who are invited to walk through and among the adjunct figures. Krieg writes that the project was designed to call attention to the significant contributions of non-tenure-track faculty while literally casting shadows on the walls of the academic exhibit space.

**Rachel O'Donnell's** essay "Care and University Scapegoating: Making Social Reproduction Visible in the Teaching of Writing" takes up the normalization of unpaid labor on which universities depend, positing that university economies connect to global political and economic systems that render too many people and too much of their labor invisible. Most insidiously, she suggests, is the fact that marginalized employees are then blamed (and sometimes blame themselves) for problems that are structural, with such characterizations of inferiority and scapegoating offering comfort and excuse to those who derive benefit from the marginalized labor of others.

In what might be seen as a particular example of the kind of high-demand, low-visibility instruction that O'Donnell talks about, **Jessica Rose Corey and Barbara George** take up the labor demands of various types of high-impact teaching and learning practices, which fall increasingly to contingent faculty and include such things as service learning and community-engaged projects. While these approaches are widely touted as valuable or even essential in today's college and university learning environments, they exact untold amounts of uncompensated and thus invisible labor from the most vulnerable of employees.

Furthering the examination of service learning, **Charisse S. Iglesias** takes up the contradictions between community-based, service-learning work and the social-justice commitment of institutions, pointing out the absence of real-world modeling of ethical community building among colleges and universities. Utilizing critical discourse analysis and content analysis to ground her theorization, Iglesias locates all-too-common institutional undermining of reciprocity despite a professed social-justice agenda.

The next two essays, by **Megan McIntyre** and **Zach Marburger**, explore the contexts of two distinct laboring groups in higher education who may be particularly susceptible to invisibility—writing program administrators and graduate workers. Importantly, however, these authors also offer suggestions for addressing and correcting the problems for the groups they discuss. McIntyre addresses writing program administration as a distinct and important form of work for many scholars of rhetoric and composition yet points out that this work often remains invisible to institutions and even to the home departments of composition's scholars. Demonstrating the complex political and communicative work of the WPA, McIntyre examines the use of a Twitter-based campaign that not only makes WPA work more visible but makes it possible for the WPA to be a better advocate for equity and anti-racist practices and pedagogy. Meanwhile, Zach Marburger points out the low degree to which graduate workers and their rights have been part of the national discourse on worker rights in higher education, perhaps due to longstanding perceptions of graduate workers as students and apprentices first and employees second. Marburger considers a case study of promise, discussing a recent effort to redefine graduate workers at the University of Colorado-Boulder.

Widening the net, **Daniel Scott and Adrianna Kezar** consider the historic divisions and hierarchies among employees in the higher education setting. These divisions and status differences, they argue, have enabled and contributed to the difficulty of organizing academic employees across employment types despite shared interests and concerns. Tracing the history of the splintering of organized labor alongside employment trends in higher education, Scott and Kezar recommend the advantages that would be afforded by the creation of alliances and collectives across various types of employment.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

Following this treatment is an essay by **Daniel J. Julius and Nicholas DiGiovanni**, a former provost and labor attorney, respectively, who discuss the past, present, and future of faculty unions through the lens of craft unionism. Beginning with academic unionization in the 1960s, Julius and DiGiovanni discuss the challenges of today's negotiation context in academic settings and offer insight into the management strategies that remain the most and least effective in organized environments.

And finally, **Steven Shulman's** paper analyzes data from every public and private non-profit college and university in the U.S. and discovers variations in instructional spending that resist easy explanation. Shulman finds that budgetary priorities explain some of the variation but not all. Reliance on non-tenure-track faculty, prevalence of students from low-income backgrounds, and tuition as a fraction of total revenue account for some decreases in instructional spending, but these factors do not account for all of the variation in instructional spending even among similar institutions.

As you will find, the articles in this issue range from art to data, but throughout we confront the difficult realities of invisible labor in our varied academic spaces. We hope that you find food for thought in these articles and learn from contexts different than your own. We deeply thank our contributors for sharing their knowledge and insight from their wide-ranging vantage points.

With that, we proudly present Issue 3 of *Academic Labor: Research and Artistry*. Please watch for two new issues in 2020, both of which will be guest edited. But don't let that be a discouragement! If you have an article to share or a special issue to propose, please send it in. We hope to share your work and *make it visible*. Never doubt that the world needs it, and that the world needs you.

*ALRA* Editors

Sue Doe  
Colorado State University

Sarah Austin  
Air Force Academy Preparatory School

Mary Hickey  
Colorado State University

Catherine Ratliff  
Colorado State University

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

iii



## *Honor the Precariat: An Art Installation*

Natalie Selden Barnes  
*Colorado State University*

---

**I** am an adjunct

I exist in the margins

I am part of the new faculty majority

I am the precariat

Like my colleagues, I work with students at every undergraduate level providing a service essential to the mission of the university. There is but one word that distinguishes me as faculty on the margins. The big “non” word. I am a non-tenure track faculty member, one of the precariat, seen and often treated as adjunct to the purposes of education.

---

Natalie Barnes is the Key Academic Advisor and an instructor holding a Senior Teaching Appointment in the Department of Art & Art History. She earned her undergraduate and graduate degrees at Boise State University and has been teaching at the university level for more than 20 years. In addition to her studio practice, her professional academic interest focuses on writing-integration. Ms. Barnes is active in faculty governance, currently serving on the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) Adjunct Faculty Committee and represents the CLA on the University Committee on Non-Tenure Track Faculty. She has received the Jack E. Cermack Advising Award, is a writing fellow for CSU’s Institute of Learning and Teaching, and has been awarded a course-redesign grant for ART100. She also serves as NTTF director for the Center for the Study of Academic Labor at CSU.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

*Honor the Precariat* was born from this philosophical approach to the world of academia. A cadre of colleagues that fly under the radar. Stealthily trying to go with the flow and simply exist because teaching is not just a job for us. It is a vocation. It must be. We certainly aren't in it for the money or academic prestige.

As a visual artist I bring to fruition artworks that capture the essence of what my world is about. To give form to the internal exploration of what defines me. By way of marrying my academic identification as an adjunct, to my internal definition as educator, the concept of marginalia seems to best define the essence of my academic world.

*Honor the Precariat*, while a huge technological step from my current interest in fiber arts, aligns with the idea of marginalia I first uncovered while researching The Bayeux Tapestry. The text on the edges of the tapestry, in a sense "adjunct" to the images themselves, not only reinforces the story of the Norman Conquest inherent in the embroidered dialogue but adds another dimension to the visual narrative itself. Viewers are first informed by the meticulously embroidered images that vividly capture the action of the storyline. The marginalia, crafted with less drama and adjunct to the story, confirms to the viewer there is indeed more here than meets the eye.

For me, the connection between this story, woven onto fabric, and the complexities of the university system is clear. Tenured faculty typically reside in the spotlight, but there are scores of adjuncts populating the academic margins that flesh out the story of the university. And, like the tedious work of the fiber artist building a narrative one silent stitch at a time, the work of finding equity for all faculty at this university is a tedious process, wrought with frustration. But the work is essential to the precariat which is to say we members of the new faculty majority resolve to prove that we are not, indeed, adjunct to the process of education.

For the past decade I've served on college and university level committees representing non-tenure track faculty. Like "regular faculty," the scope of my committee work involved not only the everyday grievance sharing that serves as a pressure valve allowing us to burn off steam but also requires involvement with faculty governance, conferences, workshops, and a multitude of related activities. Without the commensurate faculty mentoring gifted to my tenure track colleagues as they entered the system, I, being adjunct to the system itself, forged a self-taught journey to mine the university political system and Institutional Research site in search of data supporting whatever the particular adjunct cause of the day might be. Data mining, while not exciting, is essential. Beginning with a particular depth of knowledge about my home department, exploration beyond the home field was enlightening.

As an artist, full-understanding of the big picture required development on my part of a visual response. "...artists can serve as creative role models who identify themselves not just as makers but as learners, thinkers, engaged citizens, and the 'critical eye' of society"

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

(Hamlin 8). With nearly two decades of ‘adjuncting’ under my belt, and ten years as an advocate working on adjunct issues, I felt the need to express my experiences artistically. Art educator Michael Parks has raised a question about how student artists handle the abstract movement past a literal interpretation of concept or theme and into a more abstract aesthetic (Parks 55-61). This is a challenge not limited to students and which soon became my personal mission.

Over time in my role as an adjunct representing my department within the College of Liberal Arts, and later as a representative serving on the University Committee on Non-Tenure Faculty, I gathered a significant chunk of statistical information. Evidence of how department by department and college by college, the university depended on the precariat to shoulder the financial burden of an institution clearly moving from an academic model to a business model. Unfortunately, this is a model where the individual becomes ever more secondary to the financial bottom line.

Data mining not only reinforced the social justice side of the issue but opened my eyes to the feminist nature of the situation as well. In a very “can’t see the forest for the trees” scenario, it wasn’t until I compiled the data that the abstract fact that nearly 60% of the 765 adjuncts at my institution are women became concrete (“Infact”). Many women academics, like myself, get trapped in the adjunct lifestyle simply because of “...a combination of work-life reasons they were often not at liberty to relocate” (Burns 3).

My main artistic interest lay in translation of statistical data into a visual that would evoke feeling. And so began my journey to forge an aesthetic path, starting with the abstraction of intellect and feelings and ending with the concrete creation of a visual that encourages the viewer to understand the dynamic of the individual as separate from the morass of the institution.

My way of working is wholly organic. I get an idea, then tuck it away to stew. The physical act of sketching lies dormant until form and content coalesce with a flash of insight. That particular flash occurred while passing through the department’s digital fabrication studio and came in the form of discarded scraps of acrylic. These were individual, generic scraps, insignificant in solitude that took on new life when viewed as a whole.

And thus my precariat was born. With this spark of inspiration, the mundane task of data mining took on a more relevant role. Data became the embodiment of living beings, and the form of the work dovetailed seamlessly into the story I wanted to tell. I admit to being a bit obsessed with the fact that my figures need to exactly represent the correct gender ratio of 453 female and 338 male adjuncts. It was crucial that the visual representation presented the truth of the situation, thus allowing the image itself to coax the viewer to the conclusion that of the total 791 figures, the women far outnumbered the men.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*



Earlier frustrations—such as lack of a listserv through which to contact adjuncts, the inability to identify adjuncts through HR because of inconsistent job titles, and the lack of uniform treatment across departments and colleges—reinforced the transparent nature of the individual. The transparency of the figures themselves represents the work of adjuncts that is clearly visible. There is a notable irony to the university administration claiming their own transparency in the “clear and straightforward” way in which it deals with people and politics. Each symptom of abuse, while often seen as a minor slight, adds up. Each infringement fortifies the weakness of the individual highlighting that no matter how large our numbers, we, as adjuncts, are easily invisible when viewed in solitude. And yet when hung in a gallery, collecting and refracting light, the impact and importance are undeniable.

The voice of the installation grew from the external processing of data, the internal processing of my own feelings, and a wide variety of anecdotal experiences (both my own and those of colleagues) gathered over many years. In the end, the piece needed to represent individuals, most of whom I’d never met. So, while I would have liked to create a likeness of each adjunct, practicality, like life, demanded compromise. Each adjunct is represented by a transparent figure—one of several generic representations of both female and male figures. Perhaps, in the end, the anonymity of the figures speaks most poignantly to larger issues.

Over the course of nine days I was joined by other adjuncts and adjunct allies who carefully strung each figure on fishing line and hung them from an open metal grid installed in the ceiling. Execution of the installation relied on representation of each and every individual. Figures ranged from four to thirty-six inches in size, their stature representing the varying presence of our colleagues—an acknowledgment that while our individual obligations ranged from a handful of students taught in a single class, to hundreds of students taught across a full-time schedule, we all contribute to the united mission. Each hour the ranks of adjuncts grew as installation continued. Hour after hour, day after day until the tedium of the process itself became a statement to the volume of our numbers. Until, in the end, hundreds of transparent figures, and specifically 791, melded into a rising army of generic academics. Interchangeable, yet indispensable—individuals lost in the crowd. Numbers that grow with each subsequent semester, and this installation simply marking a point in time.

Straightforward text identifying the colleges within the university that employ adjuncts (all of them) is displayed on the floor beneath the figures. Simple text is sized appropriately to reflect the degree to which each college perpetuates the problem. Colleges with larger numbers of adjuncts are easy to distinguish simply by the size of the text. Larger NTTF percentages equated to larger text.

The floor text creates the institutional foundation upon which the figures rise. Juxtaposition of text and figures is an intentional dynamic, a dynamic that subtly represents institutional issues and serves as a silent

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

judgment about how the precariat exists across the university. The floor text uses the university's own public data to make concrete the abstraction of the figures that are suspended above:

- College of Business NTTF teach 58% of undergraduate credit hours.
- Walter Scott Jr. College of Engineering NTTF teach 20% of undergraduate credit hours.
- College of Natural Sciences NTTF teach 33% of undergraduate credit hours.
- Warner College of Natural Resources NTTF teach 31% of undergraduate credit hours.
- Intra-university programs NTTF teach 29% of undergraduate credit hours.
- College of Agricultural Sciences NTTF teach 20% of undergraduate credit hours.
- Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences NTTF teach 16% of undergraduate credit hours.
- College of Liberal Arts NTTF teach 60% of undergraduate credit hours.

The single doorway leading into the small gallery allowed a dual intellectual access point. It offered a portal, setting up the viewer at a prime viewpoint from which to observe the distinctive separation between the individual and the institution. But it was essential that the figures were accessible, encouraging the viewer to engage with the work on a personal level—not just walking around the proximity, but leaning in for a closer look, much like Rodin intended for viewers of his Burgers of Calais to walk up to his figures, look into their faces, and feel the angst and terror they felt as they walked towards death. I wanted my viewers to be intimate enough to distinguish the figures as individuals, but to also realize that while there was a nod to individualization, the figures were necessarily institutionalized and thus generic representations. Recognizing the ambiguity that their individuality is lost amidst their numbers, lending an awkward anonymity to the statement, making each individual ever easier to overlook.

Finally, around the perimeter wall a separate army stands quietly at attention. Dozens of additional faceless adjuncts await. These figures were installed to provide a silent response to criticism that historically reinforces the precariat's silence. Words from the uninformed: "if you're not happy with your situation there are plenty of wanna-be adjuncts ready to take your place," offer an ominous warning to those adjuncts who dare to think about rocking the boat. To those adjuncts who dare to think that they themselves might not actually bear the blame for the problem. Rather, this is a social, academic, and humanitarian problem.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

We are adjuncts

We exist in the margins

We are part of the new faculty majority

We are the precariat



### Works Cited

- Burns, Margie, et al. *The Female Precariat*. Universitas Press, 2019.
- Hamlin, Jessica, and Joe Fusaro. "Contemporary Strategies for Creative and Critical Teaching in the 21st Century." *Art Education*, vol. 71, no. 2, Mar. 2018, pp. 8–15.
- "Infact 2018-2019 Colorado State University by the Numbers." *Colorado State University Institutional Research*, 2018, <http://irpe-reports.colostate.edu/pdf/infact/InFact-2018-2019.pdf>.
- Parks, Michael E. "How Does the Work Mean?" *Art Education*, vol. 41, no. 3, Dec. 2015, pp. 55-61.
- Rodin, Auguste. *The Burghers of Calais*. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.



*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*





*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*



*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*





*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*



*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*





Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)



*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

## Review of Natalie Selden Barnes's *Honor the Precariat*

Annah Krieg  
Colorado State University

### Abstract

This review details the fall 2017 exhibition of Natalie Selden Barnes's installation, *Honor the Precariat*, which took place in the Directions Gallery in the Department of Art and Art History at Colorado State University. By combining data with plexiglass figures in an immersive artwork, Selden Barnes compels the viewer to engage with the complex reality of the majority of university educators, those who are adjunct instructors.

When discussing the position of adjunct faculty (a position that she and I share) in the university, Natalie Selden Barnes relates the precarious nature of our professional identity--feeling compelled to teach as one's life's calling yet existing in a liminal space of the institution--to the marginalia found in medieval art. From the subsidiary figures embroidered along the edge of the *Bayeaux Tapestry* to the often raucous scenes of debauchery in the margins of illuminated prayer books and psalters (imagery that would make even many 21st-century viewers blush), these motifs confound any rational, ordered understanding of medieval history. So too do the non-tenure track faculty who teach the majority of courses at most colleges and universities upend the conventional view of the academy, one in which educators are afforded a comfortable life of the mind.

Annah Krieg earned her Ph.D. in the History of Art and Architecture from the University of Pittsburgh. She is an instructor of Art History in the Department of Art and Art History at Colorado State University.

Just as scholars like Michael Camille and others have shown us that medieval marginalia is often where the subversive power lies to transform the center without completely undermining it, so too does Selden Barnes's installation *Honor the Precariat* confront the viewer with a nuanced, complex reality of university teaching. Ultimately, her work demands that we all, regardless of rank, take meaningful action to make our institutions of higher learning more just and equitable places.

Unlike a figurative sculpture placed on a pedestal, or a painting, print, or photograph framed neatly on the white wall of a gallery, Selden Barnes's work functions as all installation art does: invading the lived space of the gallery visitor and breaking down the artificial barriers between art and life. This choice of multi-media installation to tackle a topic that tends to be overlooked and repressed in public discourse is particularly powerful. It leaves us no space to avoid the painful truth: non-tenure track faculty are the invisible and underpaid yet crucial and valuable members of the teaching core of most university departments and schools. Furthermore, in the relatively small, low-ceilinged space of the Directions Gallery, with its single entrance, we immediately enter into the immersive space of the installation. It exists above and beyond us, in front of us, and behind us. Selden Barnes uses all surfaces to present a potent combination of data and imagery to rally her cry.

Plexiglass silhouettes suspended from the ceiling and mounted on the walls comprise the bulk of the installation. Representing the silent majority of the precariat itself, these figures express their marginalized position by their very transparency and unsecure dangling. There is an impersonal nature to these figures, as there is not enough individual detail for the viewer to forge an emotional connection--as is often a possibility with photographs or paintings. I found myself feeling lost in a sea of dense plexiglass refracting the light and making it impossible to see visitors on the other side of the gallery. The transparency of the material does not withstand this critical mass, perhaps suggesting to us that the illusion of transparency in our institutions belies the lived reality of the most vulnerable and neglected members.

I have one of those plexiglass figures hanging from my desk in the office I share with six other non-tenure track faculty members. I don't mind sharing the space, and I enjoy working with students in those cramped quarters, fine-tuning a research topic, discussing test strategies, or just connecting and hearing about their lives. Sometimes, after those meetings, I think about my students, all majors in art and art history, and how they will soon enter this brave new world of the gig economy, continued wage gaps, and increasing socio-economic stratification. These are the critical labor issues of our time. However, like most of the faculty precariat, I know I am meant to be a teacher. Like the figures on the margins, I navigate the contradictions and complexities of my profession and strive for the transformational, institutional change that *Honor the Precariat* reveals as a moral imperative.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)



# 'Care Work' and University Scapegoating: Making Social Reproduction Visible in the Teaching of Writing

Rachel O'Donnell  
*University of Rochester*

**A**t the end of the spring semester this year, another faculty member stopped by my office and asked if I would be willing to take a break. We got up from our grading, walked around our blooming campus in early spring with cups of coffee as students lounged on green spaces with open laptops. We discussed the difficulty of getting into tenure-track jobs, moving around the country because of the lack of these jobs, former miscarriages, current child care responsibilities, and how all of these things intertwine. Indeed, it seems like 'everyone' goes through multiple events like these, and yet, somehow, the narrative is that our contingent positions and heavy teaching loads are the fault of no one but ourselves. It certainly feels like we are carrying the weight of the world on our shoulders sometimes: in this one conversation, as we walked around our pristine university campus with old brick buildings and sweeping lawns, we mentioned anxiety, lack of sleep, lack of publications, and wondering if we at all fit in. The strange thing, or perhaps not unexpected thing, is that I have had many conversations like this with colleagues, especially other female faculty, especially other mothers, and especially other contingent faculty.

Rachel O'Donnell is an Assistant Professor (non-tenure) in the Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program at the University of Rochester. She holds a B.A. in English and Political Science from Moravian College and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science from York University. She also holds a Graduate Diploma in Latin American and Caribbean Studies. Her research is on the history and political economy of bioprospecting in the Americas, and she has also written about the revolutionary forces during the Guatemalan civil war, as well as the legacy of the Central American civil wars on development and policy in the region. She previously served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Guatemala and worked as a researcher with the Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean (CERLAC) in Toronto.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

In the literature on these topics, and the burden we take on as academic laborers, we often use the words ‘care work’ or ‘emotional labor’ to demonstrate the ways in which much of our work is outside the classroom or outside the intellectual piece of our jobs, the many ways in which we care for students.

A more useful concept for explaining this work is social reproduction theory (SRT) which “interrogates the complex network of social processes and human relations that produces the conditions of existence for that entity,” (Bhattacharya 2) meaning that as academic workers are constantly produced and reproduced in society, more particularly in universities, we can find certain aspects of their social reproduction highlighted precisely at the university itself and noted in ‘skills-based’ programs, such as writing programs. Social reproduction theory often recognizes the importance of public facilities that create the possibility of a worker who can come to work: from Marxian thinkers, this means a more specific reading of the word ‘economy’ that recognizes that capitalism is not just made up of workers and owners, but also generational reproductive labor that occurs in households, schools, and hospitals, which, according to Marx, in turn sustains the drive for accumulation (qtd. in Bhattacharya 2). A feminist perspective that highlights social reproduction is able to explain the contradictions ingrained in the systemic reproduction of capitalism; it serves to expand the understanding of labor, especially relevant to academic labor where we frequently overlook its application through talk of ‘fulfilling our passions’ or the privilege of intellectual labor. Social reproduction as a concept can remind us that some forms of labor cannot exist without others, that capitalism exists precisely because of these forms of reproductive labor, and that laborers reproduce labor in specific embodied ways.

This social reproductive feminism has been useful to understanding the raising of children and forms of work outside of a traditional laboring body. Certainly, many readers will likely identify with those two faculty members walking around a beautiful campus and yet feeling outside of it. We may think “oh, I do that ‘care work’ too” or “the emotional labor of my interactions with students and colleagues and service work goes unrecognized.” And that is certainly true. But the concept of ‘care work’ implies that it is natural for women to take on a variety of forms of (mostly) unpaid labor, while social reproduction recognizes the importance of the ways in which this work falls to individuals likely be seen as ‘natural’ caring laborers, and the ways in which their labor contributes to the ongoing function of capitalism. Teaching work is often seen as a natural extension of a woman’s role in the domestic sphere and maps onto the ways in which the neoliberal university operates: removing social supports for students and faculty, relying more heavily on contingent faculty to do this ‘care work,’ and consistently looking for ways to scapegoat the larger social and political structures to the individual.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

A close look at how reproductive labor works can help us identify the ways in which it is not only ‘care work’ and emotional labor. Social reproduction as a category of analysis allows us to consider the role of the writing program in the larger neoliberal university within a global political framework, which in turn urges us to consider the ongoing feminization of work, particularly in the academy, and where it intersects with other social-institutional structures. Sharon Crowley wrote eloquently on the status of these writing programs, which have historically taught mainly first-year composition courses, and the ways in which these courses were ‘supplemented’ in English departments by part-time teachers in the 1950s and 1960s. The first-year composition course is still rarely taught by permanent faculty, which Crowley argued has always been irrelevant to the quality of teaching in such a course (4-5). Rather, the precarious position of both the first-year writing course and the faculty who teach it has more to do with the disciplinary status of writing studies in general and the nature of a first-year course, meaning that those who teach these courses are more likely to be “undervalued, overworked, and underpaid” (5). Writing studies itself is still not recognized as a discipline or a field of study itself, but rather a practice or a skill, and writing programs themselves are often seen as in service to other pieces of the university.

In Marxism or materialist feminism, we posit that the relations of production determine the relations of social reproduction and link the effects of class exploitation and location to forms of oppression predominantly theorized in terms of identity. Materialist feminists have examined the relationship between class, reproduction, and the oppression of women in different contexts, such as the reproduction of labor power, domestic labor, and the feminization of poverty and certain forms of work. A Marxist feminist critique highlights the power of private institutions, like the university in which I work, to exploit the labor of women as a free or inexpensive method of supporting a work force for the continued production of capital. A materialist socially reproductive view of the ‘disciplinization’ of writing programs would allow room to understand this low status as situated in the struggle of writing program intellectuals for recognition and status, but in the objective conditions of labor created by university officials. Indeed, the control over the campus by upper administration, legislatures, and trustees continues, and we are able to locate the decline of the status of writing programs in the late twentieth century to a time in which the expansion of undergraduate admissions occurred while full-time faculty were reduced by ten percent, and while the number of graduate student employees was increased by forty percent (Crowley qtd. in Bousquet 500).

This story of the precarity of writing programs and the people in them ultimately requires no separation from the larger story of the academy, but the question is why we say that contingent faculty are to blame for their working conditions. The university creates a clear path to these conditions by strategically limiting tenure-track faculty

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

appointments and creating and enforcing a tiered system in which some instructors (and often all in university writing programs) are ‘instructional’ or contract. Through low teaching-track salaries, no university child care, and the consistent elimination of jobs with longer contracts (let alone the security of tenure), the university shifts this responsibility to students, parents, and faculty. Social reproduction theory aligns with this blame as a way to combat this scapegoating. Indeed, as the ‘American Dream’ has become more impossible for more people, universities use scapegoating to deflect blame away from the economic system, the highly paid administrators, and the reduction in tenure-track faculty in order to channel anger in other directions. Even labels like ‘full-time faculty’ and ‘university teachers’ (who are never at the same salary level as those who are tenure-track but appear to be) mask undermining and impoverishing economics in the university system. Scapegoating makes it easier to place blame on students themselves or faculty for not giving enough time or energy to individual students or classes, or not making time to do better-compensated research. It makes it easier to divide students from faculty and tier faculty into hierarchical positions, who should be working together to transform academic social and economic policies. The university’s answer to this, of course, is to highlight the ways in which there are ‘not enough opportunities for everyone’ and makes it easier to write off more faculty as not good enough, not smart or talented, and leave unjust economic practices in the university untouched.

The invisibility of this precarity in the university system allows this self-blame, where we complain to each other only when we take much-needed breaks with other faculty in these walks around beautiful campuses. The more people who are in the contingent workforce, the easier it is to blame their poverty on personal failings rather than systemic failings. Recall that universities are not considering low wages, the scarcity of jobs, discrimination in the workplace, or a male model university system that assumes that one can work all day every day and have a full-time caregiver at home, as part of their economic responsibility. Still, these are the major forces driving the increase in contingent faculty with low wages and few benefits. Scapegoating also places the blame on women and helps mask their social reproductive labor, whether at the university or not, by stereotyping parents with added family responsibility who make ‘choices’ for more flexible labor practices.

The ultimate contradiction is that social reproduction is most evident in education itself, where a variety of teachers and parents and administrators remake the workforce continually. Yet, under capitalism, we view education as an attempt at meritocracy, allowing us to get ahead through education, leveling the playing field by allowing those who are born to lower classes a chance to move up. Of course, this fails in many obvious ways, such as access, cost, and class discrimination in language and culture, but social reproduction theory gives us room to demonstrate

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*



that institutions like universities do not create equal opportunity but are actual mechanisms by which social inequalities are perpetuated.

### **Political Economy of ‘Care Work’ of the Academy**

‘Care work’ has been a useful term for describing work that is unpaid in our economy, especially in terms of family and home labor. Parents are certainly no stranger to this concept, nor are teachers, who often care for students both inside and outside of the classroom. This is not limited to these natural extensions of our home and parenting lives, where we do much of our unpaid labor. Rather, reproductive labor is part of a capitalism that prioritizes certain people in certain ways. Indeed, we often call the home and family work ‘care work’ in a perhaps feminized phrase that describes things we do in response to one another in a loving way. However, social reproduction refers to the structures and activities that transmit ongoing social inequality, in particular, from one generation from the next. This isn’t just ‘care work,’ but in fact offers a larger understanding of who does this reproductive labor that fuels capitalism.

Theories of social reproduction allow us more room to examine the ways in which sets of relations which seem independent, such as teaching in the classroom and ‘caring’ for students outside of it, are acts of interacting labor that play out in particularly gendered ways. Capitalism works well to constrain and continually impact our capacity to meet our needs, from basic subsistence to physical, emotional, and intellectual needs, and this is highlighted particularly well in recent changes made to the university system. As many of us do increasingly more ‘care work’ for the university, this is particularly noticeable for certain pieces of the working population, notably those populated with a majority of female professors in ‘service’ departments, such as writing. When we examine labor as a living, concrete relation that is situated in actual bodies and actual lives in academic spaces, we find that our labor is increasingly becoming more alienated labor. In universities across the country, teaching staff make every effort to push back against the dehumanizing dynamic that is part of these relations; for example, every day we work and labor and are alienated from it, we feel helpful to a particular student and glad to advocate or teach in both intellectual and emotional ways and are often, in fact, fully invested in this labor as part of our unalienating and more human labor, including intellectual (conversations, course design, engagement with course material), practical (teaching), and the extraordinary ‘care work’ we do outside of the classroom (such as conversations with students, letter writing, planning of academic careers and career support, and even the collegial conversation that started this piece). Without this ‘care work,’ we couldn’t create space for the other labor to be done, the labor that these students will come to perform in the global marketplace, and the more ‘intellectual’ labor done in other places in the university. Instead of increased care of students, female faculty in service programs are increasingly making up for what is lacking in society

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

and its microcosm at the university—close, personal attention, mental health care, and emotional and writing support.

A recent academic blog post referred to the university as an MLM (Multi-Level Marketing scheme) (Peterson), meaning the overproduction of Ph.D.s has left us all lower paid, more responsible, and increasingly responsible for increased labor time. At my university, professors outside of the writing program have even been known to demand to faculty inside it: “I have a student who can’t write; who taught this person?” One even reprimanded a writing professor for a student’s grade. Another colleague said that when she conveyed that she was taking a position as a writing instructor, she was met with: “Don’t you want to be one of us? You know, an academic.” Indeed, writing programs throughout the country have historically struggled with this divide, and university administration seeing it as a ‘skills-based’ approach.

The consistent use of graduate student labor in writing programs is particularly noteworthy. My university is guilty of this: most of the teaching in the writing program is done by Ph.D. students in English. Undergraduates are expected to stand on their own two feet, and if they are unable to, on the backs of increasingly low-paid careers. This ‘care work’ at my university is actually called “CARE,” and writing instructors, many of whom teach first-year students have been asked to pay attention to student absences and behavior more than other instructors. We file more ‘CARE referrals,’ where we send names of students who might be in crisis to mental health offices, than any other program or department at the university because of our small classes and close attention to students and student writing. We are told in multiple ways that this work doesn’t really ‘count’ to the university (we are a department that services the college, and yet it is expected that we will do the bulk of the labor in the service of other programs). It is expected because we are told that students have more trouble than ever, and that our promotions and contract renewals often rely on course evaluations.

With too many people coming through grad school (more than double the numbers of 30 years ago, with fewer and fewer tenure-track jobs), there are too few sustainable academic jobs. This means the market is saturated with many more qualified applicants than jobs, and existing jobs can demand more of applicants (more qualifications, less money, or even unpaid jobs that are part of ‘pool’ positions without any promise of future employment) while instructors and applicants consistently lower their own expectations. We don’t often complain about the compensation, missing benefits, increased erosion of job security, or increase to course load, service, and we sacrifice desired location or family. In writing programs, where the majority of faculty are female, this often looks like increased ‘care work’ in order to try to receive excellent course evaluations, which in turn have been shown to be skewed against women and people of color. Indeed, my own course evaluations are often high when ‘care work’ is mentioned, such as “she is very nice and really cares

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

about our writing,” or lower when comments are framed along the lines of not being very caring: “her comments are unhelpful” and only caring about course content (intellectual labor), not student writing (‘care work’), in addition to gendered biases they distinctively show. The current attacks on tenure signal major shifts in academic employment. The downsizing of higher education has resulted in a continuing crisis of employment for Ph.D.s, and this is often scapegoated to graduate students themselves. This can be seen in the recent complaint by Columbia English Ph.D. students who felt both “a sense of futility” and “a sense of outrage” that the department was admitting more students than would possibly have a tenure-track job at the end of it, while also criticizing the program for not preparing them for alternative careers (Cassuto). The university responded with a plan to offer professional development, but without an analysis of social reproduction or larger political-economic structures, this is futile theorizing and, again, scapegoating.

Here we divide the writing work as non-intellectual labor, which seems to the university and the academic system as a whole as lower tier work, and non-academic labor that focuses only on the practicality of writing, signaling that no one else at this university wants to do this work, and it is consistently undervalued. In fact, one instructor in the writing program where I teach works exclusively with graduate writing groups, or the ways that the university is not assisting graduate students in the production of (unpaid) academic writing, and therefore takes on additional socially reproductive labor in the form of managing the alienated feelings of graduate students who have higher rates of mental illness than the rest of the population and yet need to write consistently and produce research findings for the university.

Over 20 years ago, in *Gypsy Academics and Mother-Teachers*, Eileen Schell provided a critical examination from which to understand the status of non-tenure-track faculty, especially in the field of writing. She articulated a clear goal of providing contingent faculty with an understanding of this university scapegoating, urging us to see the larger political economic structure of the university, and the university’s role in attempting to explain this status as individual choice or circumstance, or perhaps even poor life choice (14). Schell also urged composition’s rhetorics of liberation, empowerment, and democracy to consider their complicity in the exploitation of part-time faculty--privilege rests on the backs of a large underclass of contingent faculty--and explicitly names “contingent labor” to describe part-time and non-tenure-track faculty because it more precisely names their labor conditions. Still, the socially reproductive labor is not named. Like Crowley, Schell reminds us that these low-status and low-paid workers often teach the most demanding courses (grading writing work closely is not the same cognitive load as counting students responsible for material, but read multiple drafts, conference with students, and hold the burden of helping them become stronger writers and academics) often teach 3-4 classes per semester,

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

which is double that of tenure-track faculty at my institution, for example, and is often accompanied by missing benefits and low wages (67-69).

As writers like Susan Miller and others have also argued, the exploitation of non-tenure-track faculty must be viewed within the context of both the academy, women's labor, and the history and status of writing programs themselves. A broader perspective by Schell has foregrounded the educational and professional history of women in higher education, and we can further illuminate the political and economic context surrounding women's work as teachers with Schell's analysis of the interrelationship between the industrial capitalism emerging in the nineteenth century and the prescribed female roles those economic changes required. This layer of Marxist social reproduction allows us to point to the historical factors combined to create the political shift in which the professionalization of women meant entering the workforce as teachers, which was viewed as the proper role for the natural motherhood. Teaching was morally appropriate 'care work' for women, seen as an outgrowth of home work, and also cheap labor that allowed women to continue their roles as maternal figures. This 'care work' is more fully formed by social reproduction, which allows us to see the multiple ways we reproduce labor for the academy through care-driven ways.

The history of higher education would seem to contradict this, but, of course, women had a difficult time entering higher education as students or teachers, and still struggle with fitting in and moving up in ranks (Rotolo 84). Other scholars have noted that the 20<sup>th</sup> century has dual stories of the decline of rhetoric and composition as fields, at the same time that women were not able to attend college and hardly any were admitted to Ph.D. programs. Labor constraints on women coincided with this history, meaning that as female employees are seen as offering a more nurturing, self-sacrificing nature, and it is this maternal 'nature' that led them to low-level work in the first place. This 'natural' fit for women's labor then carried over into early twentieth-century labor practices where women were expected to do ongoing and often full-time 'care work' as an extension of their work at home. As a result, writing programs both began with and continue with a majority female faculty, who were simply thought to be well fitted for teaching writing. The perpetuation of these stereotypes about women's motivations in seeking careers in teaching has continued to keep women in contingent status and scapegoated as making other 'life choices' such as family constraints or leaves. Women are still concentrated in a few disciplines in the academy itself; the higher the academic rank and more prestigious the department or institution, the fewer the numbers of women. Women at every rank in every field still earn less than male counterparts, and women are still tenured less frequently than males, especially in writing. Still, the university, as well as academic publications, continue to perpetuate a reductionist representation of non-tenure-track faculty whose difficulty attaining the

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

rank and status of the tenure-track can be blamed on no one but themselves.

### **Feminization of the Academic Workforce**

Schell's argument above that the continuing feminization of writing itself is a major factor in the exploitation of non-tenure-track faculty means that women's authority is often still relegated to the home or domestic or personal sphere. The university continues to reproduce traditional gender hierarchies in which women are still positioned as caregivers for writing programs and university students themselves. These understandings of a woman's role in 'care work' reinforces the lower status of writing programs themselves and the people in them. At the university where I teach writing, writing program faculty do work that other instructors are unwilling to do in number of ways: I read student work closely, I read multiple drafts, comment on the writing and the argument, and how it is shaped or not. Barbara Ehrenreich has referred to the increase in female service workforce as its own concept in the economy, or 'pink-collar' workers, and feminist political economists have noticed the ongoing feminization of labor that comes with the increase of women in positions that previously belonged to men. Indeed, universities across the country are employing disproportionate numbers of women in low-paid, mostly non-tenured positions, that have significantly less job security, lower status within the university, and no path to move into ranks that might allow them to be paid better.

Many public policies and universities themselves still assume a masculine model in standard employment relationships and perpetuate norms of female caregiving, both paid and unpaid (Vosko 27). Feminist political economists have connected this scramble to the increased feminization and commodification of labor, noting the "gendered precariousness" (Vosko 14) that exists in many workplaces. Indeed, scholars who happen to be women, and especially women who happen to be mothers, fill precarious, part-time temporary positions in universities throughout the country. This "world of the invisible" (Ennis 177) relies on hidden, temporary faculty, the majority of whom are women, many of whom who have taken 'breaks' for motherhood. Indeed, certain events, such as the birth of a child, can increase all workers' exposure to forms of employment characterized by insecurity (Stanford and Vosko 86).

The market is such that many Ph.D.s do semester-to-semester work by contract for a few thousand dollars a course and no benefits. Feminists have made an effort to understand why this choice is made more often by women in the academy (often mothers) working as contract laborers or "hidden academics" (Ennis 177) who try to combine motherhood and scholarship. In labor studies, this situation is referred to as *flexibility*, a euphemism for the increased disappearance of income support and social security, the relaxation of labor market regulations, and the rising power of private actors—such as universities—to determine and

Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)

control the terms of the working relationship. These strategies have been increasingly employed over the past thirty years and have had marked effects on academic workers, especially teaching faculty, leading to greater vulnerability and polarization. In my university, there is a stark divide among contingent ‘teaching’ faculty and tenured or tenure-track ‘research’ faculty, which serves well to allow the ‘care work’ to be on the backs of a mostly female workforce with similar degrees and qualifications. This results from the fact that in universities across the country, flexibility has meant fewer teaching jobs in all fields and a drastic reduction in positions that come with job security and protections.

Marked increases in the rates of precarious employment in the United States impacts the job market in particular ways: wages, working time, vacations and leave, termination and severance, as well as health and safety (Vosko, Grundy, and Thomas 63). This is acutely highlighted in the labor market in the academy, which employs a workforce of ‘privileged’ people with advanced degrees and is culturally expected to be on par with the top levels of the U.S. workforce. Using David Harvey’s analysis, Jesse Priest highlights the creation of labor and value in the academy, and as particularly evident in the writing program. Students are viewed by university administrations as in need of skills in order to allow them further opportunity and ability in other courses; again, work others may see as not having room or time for in classes. Disciplinary professors attempt in many ways to make time for writing but are unable to, and of course someone has to offer student support in this way, especially students who feel intimidated by academic writing and have struggled to communicate their ideas in writing. University practice continues to create greater need for this unpaid and undervalued socially reproductive labor, and the contradiction is that it makes it more and more difficult for instructors who do this work to do it successfully. There are no day care facilities at my campus, for example, or parking with accessible ways to bring a stroller or small child.

The nature of this work is seen as inherently less valuable than work done by research professors, who often articulate their frustration with teaching and their particular frustration with teaching writing and reading student writing. More specific ways to eliminate ‘writing instruction’ from the core university mission can be seen in university practices of excluding writing faculty from grant-eligibility, meaning that the universities themselves “engage in a constant institutional re-affirmation of this devalued commodification of their [teaching] labor” (Priest 43). This commodification process means that the faculty labor, for universities, exists only on the market and is seen only as a consumer product. Composition studies often highlights this. A recent poor review of my own classes from a current student on the infamous Rate My Professor website scorned my work and attitude toward my own class as something I have been taking “too seriously” for “only a writing course.” This is of course an opinion perhaps partially adopted from university

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*



faculty and administrators who see the nature of writing as something to be devalued in terms of practicality instead of intellectual pursuit; again, from our social structures that prioritize intellectual labor over manual labor. We also note that the student does not take the course seriously and the expectation is that it shouldn't be taken 'seriously,' meaning it's not for a major, it's not a serious course, such as perhaps something more useful for math or engineering. Here, writing at the university is among manual labor, or for those who don't think writing is worthwhile to pursue.

As Priest points out with assistance from other materialist interpretations of the university labor market, courses themselves become commodities to be marketed and sold on the university marketplace, and, in fact, I have heard my own course marketed to prospective students on tour with parents outside my office. Tour guides often say, "We have one required course, which is the writing course, but there are many varieties and 20 different topics, even one on Contemporary Social Movements." This advertising of my course with a topic that may appeal to young prospective students solidifies its commodification and mirrors the global marketplace. It is required and therefore less important than one you might choose, but students are able to 'choose' on the marketplace of courses. Of course, the ultimate paradox here is the course is based on materialist theory and radical politics, while remaining on the market for 'choice' among many.

However, as it stands, the invisibility of this process increases the divide between tenure-track and contingent faculty, reinforcing the gendered devaluation and the socially reproductive labor at the bottom of the ranks. This distinction between intellectual (research grants, research projects) and non-intellectual (writing course design, writing group design, support for students) eliminates the actual real-world marketplace of the larger academy and our labor, whether intellectual or not. An April 2019 tweet by Ross Daniel Bullen outlines what actually happened in the past few decades in higher education: they increased tuition, cut mental health support for students, rely mostly on contingent, non-tenure-track faculty, and work to beautify the campus for donors and parents paying tuition instead of increasing education access, like library resources, or, in Bullen's words, "razed the library to build an on-campus lazy river" (@BullenRoss) and use scapegoating on the backs of students and contingent faculty, blaming them, or perhaps even social media itself, for student struggles.

There is some related discussion about what belongs to writing (skill-building) and what belongs to other, more 'intellectual' departments. There is also a gender bias present here ; for example, women who serve as full-time employees are more likely to be in non-tenure-track positions than men (Mitchell and Martin 648), and find that students require women to offer more interpersonal support than instructors who are men, including needing female professors to be warmer and offer a more personality-based evaluation, with lower perceptions of intelligence, and

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

more emphasis on both personality and appearance. Another recent report notes how much more often female faculty are required to do not only emotional labor for students but also respond more often to favor requests (Flaherty).

We have to hear more from these writing instructors, not only those who make sacrifices for the benefit of the academy and give close attention to students who will become talented workers in the global political economy, but highlight this process and the university's role in it, instead of allowing the scapegoating of the economic problems and larger contradictions of capitalism onto individuals. Using the framework of socially reproductive labor to understand the crisis of the university is not just to thank the people who do 'care work' or compensate or value them, but to see their 'care' as an extension of their natural unpaid labor. It can also be used to anger ourselves enough to make visible these practices throughout the university, highlighting their relationship to the global political economic system that works to support these labor practices, while at the same time making both the people and their labor more visible.

### Works Cited

- Bhattacharya, Tithi. *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*. Pluto Press, 2017.
- Bousquet, Marc. "Composition as Management Science: Toward a University without a WPA." *JAC*, vol. 22, no. 3, Summer 2002, pp. 493-526.
- Bullen, Ross Daniel. @Bullen Ross. *Twitter*. Tweet: "universities: we hiked tuition, cut mental health support, stopped hiring full-time faculty, and razed the library to build an on-campus lazy river. also universities: we just don't know why today's students are struggling, it must be all the social media." 22 April 2019.
- Cassuto, Leonard. "Anatomy of a Polite Revolt in Columbia's English Department." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 19 September 2019.
- Crowley, Sharon. *Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream*. Holt, 2006.
- Ennis, Linda. "Contract Faculty Mothers: On the Track to Nowhere." *Academic Motherhood in a Post-Second Wave Context: Challenges, Strategies, and Possibilities*, edited by Lynn O'Brien Hallstein and Andrea O'Reilly, Demeter Press, 2012, pp. 177-194.
- Flaherty, Colleen. "Dancing Backwards in High Heels: Study finds female professors experience more work demands and special favor requests, particularly from academically 'entitled' students." *Inside Higher Ed.*, 10 January 2018.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)



- Kang, Kelly. "Doctorates awarded, by broad field of study and Carnegie category: 2008–17." *Doctorate Recipients from US Universities*. Human Resources Statistics Program, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) National Science Foundation, 4 December 2018, <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf19301/data>.
- Mitchell, Kristina M. W., and Jonathan Martin. "Gender Bias in Student Evaluations." *Political Science and Politics*, vol. 51, no. 3, July 2018, pp. 648-652.
- Peterson, Anne Helen. "Is everything an MLM?" *The Collected AHP*, 14 April 2019, <https://annehelen.substack.com/p/is-everything-an-mlm>.
- Priest, Jesse. "Terms of Time for Composition: A Materialist Examination of Contingent Faculty Labor." *Academic Labor: Research and Artistry*, vol. 3, no.1, 2018, pp. 40-62, <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/alra/vol2/iss1/5/>.
- Rotolo, Susan. "Next, the Campus Interview: An Elegy for Graduate Student Mothers." *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2015, pp. 81-92.
- Schell, Eileen. *Gypsy Academics and Mother-Teachers: Gender, Contingent Labor, and Writing Instruction*. Boynton Press, 1998.
- Stanford, Jim, and Leah F. Vosko. "Challenging the Market: The Struggle to Regulate Work and Income (Introduction)." *Challenging the Market: The Struggle to Regulate Work and Income*, edited by Jim Stanford and Leah F. Vosko, McGill-Queen's, 2004, pp. 3-30.
- Vosko, Leah F. *Temporary Work: The Gendered Rise of a Precarious Employment Relationship*. University of Toronto Press, 2000.
- Vosko, Leah F., John Grundy, and Mark P. Thomas. "Beyond New Governance: Improving Employment Standards Enforcement in Liberal Market Economies." *Regulating for Equitable and Job-Rich Growth*, edited by Colin Fenwick and Valerie Van Goethem, ILO, 2017.

# Sustaining Community-Engaged Projects: Making Visible the Invisible Labor of Composition Faculty

Jessica Rose Corey, *Duke University*  
Barbara George, *Kent State University, Salem*

---

## Abstract

Increasingly, service-learning, community-engaged projects, or community-engaged learning are encouraged in higher education across disciplines (Leon et al. 40). While community-engaged learning is hailed as an effective pedagogical practice, we have questions about the way in which community-engaged projects might be facilitated in composition classrooms, which have increasingly been fraught with labor concerns, particularly those concerns that routinely result in the “exploitation of part-time workers and graduate employees” (Bousquet 159). This article, then, exposes the often unspoken and invisible labor involved in designing and facilitating community-engaged projects in the composition classroom. Here, we note the challenges inherent in sustaining community-engaged projects in the composition classroom and call for more sustainable systems to meet those constraints.

---

Jessica Rose Corey currently teaches writing at Duke University. Her research interests involve feminist rhetorics and feminist activist literacies, rhetorics of silence, multimodal composition, and composition pedagogy. She has taught a variety of lower- and upper-division courses in expository, research, business, argumentative, public, and creative writing, as well as multimodal composing.

Barbara George teaches English Composition at Kent State-Salem. Her composition research interests include developmental reading and writing, writing across the disciplines, professional and technical writing, and digital media. Her research interests also include environmental communication, rhetorical and discourse analysis of environmental movements and texts, and environmental literacies.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

In their most ideal form, community-involved projects in composition classrooms have been framed as a means for students to understand and create rhetorical, audience-driven writing and designing, rather than ‘artificial’ composing for which the professor is consistently the sole audience (Deans 2). Linda Adler-Kassner’s scholarship offers examples of possibilities for composition-community partnerships to engage students in discussion of the ethical implications of their composing practices as social practices. Beyond composition, higher education institutions as a whole see the value of community-engaged projects. The Association of American Colleges and Universities considers service-learning as a high impact practice (HIP), and the outcomes of such practices favorable (“High-Impact Educational Practices”). For example, the AACU points out that “educational research suggests increased rates of student retention and student engagement” when students are involved in HIP courses (“High-Impact Educational Practices”). Despite these documented benefits, however, *sustaining* community-engaged learning projects in composition classrooms remains a challenge.

In fact, our own experiences with service-learning or community-engaged learning have led us to question the ways in which neoliberal influences frame “high impact” practices as a kind of product with a “market value” (Raddon and Harrison 137). Our concern with neoliberal ideologies will be expanded later in this article, but here we acknowledge neoliberalism in higher education by referring to Lisa Duggan’s scholarship, which notes the rise of neoliberalism in many institutions since the 1970s. According to Duggan, neoliberalism is marked by creating new systems of resource distribution. Duggan describes a system of “consent for the upward distribution of wealth and power” constructed for an often unwitting public who accepts an ideology of free and unregulated markets and support for “global corporate interests” rather than investing in local supports such as supporting a local workforce (181). Neoliberalism has thus resulted in new forms of invisible labor for faculty. More specifically, within the neoliberal framework, our observation is that HIPs are often represented in HIP literature as being carried out by an anonymous faculty member, thus leaving the realities of the faculty member facilitating such practices out of the transactional equation. In most promotional literature touting HIPs, the student engages in the “high impact” practice, and the university maintains high retention rates. The faculty is, curiously and notably, absent. There is often little mention of the work needed to facilitate an effective community-engaged project, including researching, networking, organizing, leading, mediating, and teaching. This lack of recognition, and therefore lack of support, for the work expended by these faculty members ultimately depletes faculty members’ emotional, cognitive, and in some cases, financial resources, making both community-engaged projects and the faculty position itself unsustainable.

Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)

Because of changing structures in higher education caused by neoliberalism, composition programs in particular face labor repercussions (e.g., a move from TT to NTT and contingent faculty). As such, we need to expose the hidden labor of faculty and articulate the support necessary for intensive teaching practices, given that the labor on which HIPs rely is often under-researched. Jane Halonen and Dana Dunn state, "...what frustrates many faculty members is that, when these efforts [in carrying out HIPs] are successful, praise tends to go to the high-impact practice itself. The faculty member, whose teaching style may have been the deciding factor, goes unrecognized and unrewarded" ("Does 'High-Impact' Teaching Cause High-Impact Fatigue?"). Considering the hidden work of a successful project as facilitated by a faculty member is important, we argue not for individual recognition, but for acknowledging best practices that allow faculty to implement effective teaching strategies. This issue of demands on faculty is particularly salient at the crossroads between labor and identity in composition and in the university in general—a result, as Steven Shulman argues, of the rise of contingent labor in higher education (2).

We contend that we must make visible and challenge the unsustainable expectations of instructors to deliver HIP practices, such as service learning, or, more recently, community-engaged projects,<sup>1</sup> without appropriate supports. By keeping invisible the theoretical frameworks that perpetuate, or even attempt to justify, invisible labor, we fail to protect ourselves and our discipline from harmful narratives that have real and detrimental consequences. For example, narratives about the need for graduate students, NTT faculty, and TT faculty to 'prove themselves' in such ways that lead to overwhelming amounts of work, contribute to a system that does not *work* for them and has led to the modification of the structure of higher education altogether. That said, the notion of large-scale changes at the level of the university is daunting, and most likely requires more of the invisible (and unrewarded) labor we write about here. To focus on the more local level of composition studies, however, provides a manageable (or sustainable) means through which faculty can use their own narratives in empowering ways.

Our focus on the local level, then, allows us to clarify the links between neoliberal critiques and leads to a call for recognition of invisible

---

<sup>1</sup> Given that language evolves to align with social constructs, some sources throughout this piece refer to "service learning" (Hesford 185; Pompa 189) "community-engaged projects" ("CCCC Statement..."), "community service learning" (Hesford 189), "community engagement" (Dolgan, Corey, et al. 527), or "community-engaged learning" (such as the name of the office that exists at Barbara's institution). The move from 'service' to 'engagement' (and its derivatives) stems from awareness of the hierarchal connotations of providing services to a person or organization that is somehow lacking (Pompa 176).

labor in composition studies. The narratives we share in this article show how we, as faculty members who see value in service-learning or community-engaged projects in our composition classes, have experienced the consequences of invisible labor and, therefore, have found community-engaged learning unsustainable. Our narratives are informed by the several subject positions we have held—graduate student, high school teacher, adjunct faculty, non-tenure-track faculty, and tenure-track faculty—in our facilitation of community-engaged projects in rhetoric and composition. These narratives, then, serve the purpose of using ‘local’ experiences to speak to potential changes at the ‘local-level’ of the university.

### **Narratives: Complicating Community**

#### *Faculty Status in Community-Engaged Learning: The Authors’ Stake*

Within the overarching purpose of contextualizing assertions and operating on a more manageable, local level, Jessica’s and Barbara’s narratives each show the pervasiveness of invisible labor across positions within the university, and, therefore, the fractures in the higher education system that make HIPs and the successful fulfillment of faculty duties unsustainable.

Having filled roles as graduate student faculty, short-term faculty, writing program administrator, and non-tenure-track, regular-rank faculty member, Jessica has remained aware of, and at times been angered by, the varying labor conditions within higher education. While she has managed to both lead students in community-engaged projects and continue, to some degree, her own commitment to working with non-profit organizations, these endeavors have been filled with personal and practical complexities and have not been without consequences. While she has wanted to engage students in service-learning projects, these projects require a great deal of mediation and oversight on her part—locating a community partner, organizing students, providing feedback to students on their work, ensuring ethical practices throughout the process of the project, and ensuring that the needs of the community partner are met in such a way that her ethos, and the ethos of the university at which she is employed, remain intact. In the past, this labor also intersected with pressures to publish and, often, a high teaching load. Finally, given her status as a graduate student or NTT faculty member, she often faced the lack of resources provided to people in these positions (reduced salary, lack of opportunities to receive monetary assistance for projects, or TAs). Because of the limited salary—and despite an already-high teaching load—she was often forced to take on additional work to supplement her income. These circumstances only speak to professional hardships and neglect the personal hardships that existed outside of, or sometimes related to, such working conditions. After all this, her community-engaged projects could be included in annual review documents, but none of the work led to promotions or merit pay. These experiences, then, led her to examine the

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

conceptualization of community-engaged projects within the composition discipline, and how those notions make problematic her understanding of her own identity as an individual, professional, and activist.

Moreover, Barbara's shifting positions, from a high school teacher, to an adjunct at two institutions, to a tenure-track faculty member, show complications in the ways she felt she could 'engage' with community at various institutions in various identity positions. For example, while a high school teacher, Barbara participated in community-engaged projects within a high school that offered robust support for community-learning in terms of a fair wage (not just for Barbara, but for her colleagues), training, and time to facilitate projects. In this position, Barbara was intimately engaged with a community of teachers and a broader public community, and she met with students, students' siblings, and their parents (sometimes over the course of years) in order to understand long-term community concerns. Upon entering into higher education positions, this engagement was somewhat fractured, largely through hierarchies that resulted in different labor conditions across faculty. Barbara found some respite, in terms of being able to focus on one community, after obtaining a tenure-track position; however, the reality of her tenure expectations, such as publishing, did not always lend itself to making community projects a priority. Barbara found she had to actively advocate for time to nurture community programs, as these kinds of practices were not explicitly valued as part of the tenure process. In a sense, then, Barbara's engagement with community projects became 'invisible' in that if she wanted to nurture these community collaborations, she would do so in addition to, and not necessarily as part of, tenure expectations.

*How Did We End up Here? The Status of Community-Engaged Learning in Composition Studies*

Despite the challenges experienced by both Jessica and Barbara, they continue to see much potential in the transformative power of community-engaged projects, which has also been well-documented in composition scholarship. Once primarily referred to as service-learning, community-engaged projects have a long history in the composition classroom. In 1997, the turn towards service-learning in composition was noted in the volume *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition*, as part of the American Association for Higher Education's Series on Service-Learning in the Disciplines. The chapters reveal a variety of responses to service learning: creating "radical transformations" (1), increasing student "motivation" (2), and making connections in the academy and in communities beyond the academy (3-4). In 2000, Thomas Deans echoed similar themes as he pointed to the reasons why composition faculty would want to engage in such pedagogies:

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)



Most service-learning practitioners who experiment with community-based pedagogies do so because they see them as a way to improve their teaching, to motivate students, to advance disciplinary learning, to facilitate student agency, or to enact values they hold dear, such as expanding public consciousness of social injustice or connecting cognitive learning to grounded social action. (7)

This follows a turn in composition more broadly to understand the socially situated nature of writing, and writing that exists in communities and publics, later pursued by scholars such as Linda Flower and Paula Mathieu.

Both Jessica and Barbara were aware of, and valued, best practices within community-engaged teaching. For example, they endeavored to create meaningful community-engaged projects such as those outlined in the current “Position Statement” of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, which describes community-engaged projects as those that “build and reflect disciplinary knowledge, produce new,[sic] hybrid forms of theoretical and applied knowledge, and promote connections among universities and different communities;” these projects, “when done well...blen[d] traditional divisions of academic labor: namely, teaching, research, and service” (“CCCC Statement...”). Jessica’s projects, for instance, have involved students conducting marketing research and co-creating marketing materials for non-profit organizations, co-developing high school curricula that incorporates non-profit organizations, and composing creative non-fiction narratives of clients using resources such as the Campus Kitchens Project. Barbara’s projects have included work with the university environmental sustainability office. Her students designed, researched, collected data, and analyzed surveys to more clearly understand students’ perceptions of campus transportation, campus energy use, and knowledge of green spaces on campus. In different semesters, students co-designed with their partner alternate transportation maps for campus, posters displaying campus energy saving options, and maps to identify green spaces on campus. Both Jessica and Barbara were mindful of incorporating best practices within projects outlined in each course through design and facilitation. For example, descriptions of community-based projects outside of the composition scholarship involve analysis, application, reflection (“High-Impact Educational Practices”), social change (Pompa 189), and reciprocity (Dolgon et al. 532; Eatman et al. 365-366; Pompa 178). In addition to reciprocity, Eatman et al. identify agency, innovation, rigor, and artifacts as elements of such work (355-366). However, these many considerations of meaningful community engagement as a pedagogical practice have raised larger questions for Jessica and Barbara about the role of higher education as a whole, particularly sustainable support for instructors doing the often invisible work in the university.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

*From Faculty to Composition Studies to the University: Tracing the Problematic Narratives Behind Service-Learning and Invisible, Unsustainable Labor*

Traditional understandings of the purpose of higher education involved transforming students into informed citizens with the desire and ability to “giv[e] back to the community” (“High-Impact Educational Practices”). As noted earlier in this paper, however, several researchers outline a turn towards neoliberalism that has ultimately become part of the university and, by extension, changed the ways instructors position themselves to work with communities. Various scholars place the neoliberal phenomena as either an ideology, policy, or government system, or a combination of all three (Raddon and Harrison 137). Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades extend the definition of neoliberalism by investigating ways by which neoliberalism is pervasive in the university, in that the university “support[s] corporate competitiveness through their major role in the global, knowledge-based economy;” here, university goals have shifted from humanitarian ideals to management in order to pursue capital or market gain (73). Similarly, Marc Bousquet outlines the rise of the corporate university, and its attendant growth in profits, at the expense of the often unaccounted labor that supports such a system (5).

A turn towards neoliberalism has left some wondering about the commitment to, and the dynamics of, these historical humanitarian notions of college outcomes (Fishwick 336; Hesford 189). But it is scholars Mary Beth Raddon and Barbara Harrison who make an explicit connection between the neoliberal university and service learning, suggesting that service-learning models often embrace tenants of the neoliberal ideology of the university (137). More specifically, Raddon and Harrison investigate service learning as policy, describing it as the “kinder” face of the corporate university that downplays the actual capitalist underpinnings; those underpinnings are masked by what the authors term as “moral legitimacy” offering the *appearance* of a humanitarian university (141). Raddon and Harrison see community engagement as a possible competition tool for universities to vie for students by branding (and measuring) “student engagement,” and by attracting donors through what they refer to as “good washing” (142). “Good washing,” according to the authors, is a way for universities to forefront community-engagement projects as the “humanitarian” work a university does while obscuring the capitalist work of the university. Interestingly, according to Raddon and Harrison, instructors themselves become complicit in “good washing” when they mistakenly view their efforts as “counter” to the corporate university (143). The authors critique the assumption that social-justice service learning counters the neoliberal university by challenging instructors to “acknowledge their lack of control in service-learning;” for example, service-learning partners were often teaching subtle (or not so subtle) job placement skills, rather than providing an inquiry into

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)



philosophical considerations of social-justice concerns (143-144). Raddon and Harrison suggest that more complicated discussions of how we might be framing labor could be had with students. In other words, teaching students to be aware of *how* labor is framed is an important part of consciousness raising for students.

While the political upheaval over the last three years, and an increase in student activism (Jason), may motivate a reassessment of what we aim to achieve in the institution of higher education, we hope the outcomes of our pedagogies surpass our most basic and most profound intentions. HIPs, such as community-engaged projects, offer promise for returning to the humanitarian goals of higher education but must undergo productive interrogation as begun by Raddon and Harrison. Other researchers, such as Hesford, ask, “Is service-learning functioning as a mere alibi for the corporate university?” (185), and further question how such work “may challenge, alter, or be complicit with inequitable labor relations within and outside the university” (189). Though universities are corporate (perhaps to varying degrees), as long as faculty are unsupported, or supported unequally, in spearheading community-engaged projects, these projects may be carried out within the same unjust system the project is designed to address.

As a matter of fact, as alluded to by Jessica’s and Barbara’s earlier narratives, professors<sup>2</sup> leading these projects may occupy subject positions similar to those of the clients and community partners involved in the project. Professors may find they need the very ‘services’ that service-learning or community-engaged projects are trying to offer. This dynamic allows the university free publicity, so to speak, portraying the university as a source of humanitarian efforts and a site of responsible and ethical decision making, while the very structures of the university undermine this image.

For example, Jessica remembers teaching a community-engaged project addressing food scarcity during a time when she had just received Medicaid and found herself struggling to buy groceries on a graduate teaching fellowship income. Barbara, meanwhile, found difficulty expanding community partnerships when she taught composition as a graduate student teaching fellow and as an adjunct, having to divide her time between two communities over an hour apart; her teaching assignments did not allow her to fully investigate possible partnerships in either community. Richer, authentic teaching experiences could not be linked as in her previous positions. Ironically, even the partnership she was able to pursue—helping students to showcase more sustainable

---

<sup>2</sup> In this article, “professor” encompasses all positions in which someone is teaching a class at an institution of higher education, remotely or face-to-face.

transportation practices through the environmental sustainability office at one higher education institution—was undermined by her own unsustainable transit practices as necessitated by two commutes. Certainly, a point of contention arises when universities, in theory, espouse education as an endeavor into social responsibility while simultaneously failing to create social infrastructures and policies that would practically and ethically support its faculty. In other words, we must begin to question practices of actual and perceived hierarchies. We must challenge the assumption that community-engaged projects somehow exempt actors from the neoliberal leanings of the university, regardless of position. Faculty at any level, given unemployment rates and varying salaries, may occupy privilege in some ways but not in others, just as the community partners with whom we work have agency in some ways but not in others. Teachers, students, and community partners are, indeed, benefactors of the work carried out in community-engaged projects; therefore, overly simplified perceptions of privilege and agency, and assumptions about who helps and who receives help, are problematic. After all, in our collaboration, “community partners and residents *are* teaching our students” (Dolgon et al. 532).

Similarly, we must, when warranted, challenge the tendency to label community- engaged projects as opportunities for students to engage in “real” writing (Hesford 190) in the ‘real world.’ After all, teachers and students did not live in a ‘fake world’ prior to entering higher education, nor did they leave a ‘real world’ to enter the ‘fake world’ of a university. In other words, teachers and students live, work, study, build relationships, and communicate in a variety of spaces and in a variety of forms, none of which are less authentic than others. The work they do in the university does not negate their personal (perhaps traumatic, perhaps empowering) experiences that occurred outside of the university. Therefore, for all those involved, interactions should embody the empathetic and rhetorical purpose of “being with” rather than “doing for” (Pompa 178). Moreover, a separation of “real,” or “public writing” from “unreal” or “academic writing” (Hesford 190) is problematic, given that we teach students how to employ critical skills even in ‘non-academic’ writing; researching, analyzing, problematizing, and creating rhetorically effective work based on audience and purpose are skills that can be employed when composing tweets, essays, or Instagram photos, for example.

Finally, we must actively interrogate intersectional concerns of subject positions when considering who is often engaged in the work of service-learning or community-engaged learning. Kimberlé William Crenshaw explains “intersectionality” in terms of overlapping marginalized identities that must be understood as a “sum” to more effectively alter existing power structures (140). Deans hints at the intersectional labor concerns inherent in some service-learning programs by discussing the historic ways in which gender expectations play out in projects. Specifically, he argues that “Use of the word service evokes not

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

only the specter of unequal server-served relations ...but also a gendered history in which women, both within and outside the academy, have been enculturated to submerge their selves in service to others (see JoAnn Campbell, "Vexation")" (23).

### **Back to the Professor: Labor in Community-Engaged Projects**

Oversimplifying differences among people and their work makes invisible much of the labor that goes into community-engaged projects. Again, material and emotional labor often coincides with researching, networking, organizing, leading, mediating, and teaching while facilitating community-engaged projects. Professors choosing to take on these projects not only often face the emotional task of helping students confront injustices but also face pressure to meet expectations of community partners, which reflects on the professor, the students, and the institution. Likewise, professors may experience stress over how to yield results that they can argue fit within their tenure, promotion, or other evaluation criteria.

Therefore, while we work within the position statement on community-engaged projects in rhetoric and composition, as articulated by CCCC, we urge more focus on the support a faculty member needs to facilitate such projects. For example, the current statement offers "Principles for Evaluating Quality, Rigor and Success," which mentions "sustainability" as a consideration but follows with a focus on the *project* rather than on the *people* facilitating the project:

- To what extent is the project built to be sustainable?
- Does it have sufficient infrastructure and scaffolding?
- What resources provided by the university and/or community stakeholders are available in the short and long term?
- What resources will be needed, when, and by what mechanism(s) will they be sought?

We understand that some questions in the quote above might assume the professor is included in these questions, but we argue that each of these questions should more explicitly account for the faculty member, and the labor that will be exerted by that *person*. As such, we propose the statement ask:

- *Is the format of faculty labor facilitating the project equitable and sustainable?*
- *Do faculty have sufficient infrastructural support, resources, and training to facilitate such a project in a sustainable manner? If the answer is 'no,' by what mechanisms can faculty find additional resources?*

Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)

In other words, we make an active call for inclusion of those *doing* the composition labor to be more clearly highlighted in service-learning and community-engagement best practices. Raddon and Harrison further suggest that faculty might challenge the idea of service-learning as framed in terms of a kind of exchange of services by attending to the *role* faculty can play in promoting more just service-learning programs within higher education systems that are increasingly driven by market forces:

Most importantly, what does the conjuncture of neo-liberalism and the growth of service-learning mean for faculty seeking to design critical service-learning programs and pedagogies, on the one hand, and for faculty seeking to challenge the shaping of ‘academic capitalism,’ on the other? (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) (135).

By extension, the culture of higher education also makes problematic how scholars are recognized for this work (Eatman et al. 360). Hesford goes so far as to assert that universities “sell out faculty who engage in service learning,” as many tenure and promotion criteria do not account for community-engaged projects, perhaps because institutions have yet to figure out how to do so (189). Eatman et al. also point out that “traditional secondary artifacts” used for tenure, promotion, and evaluation purposes (such as books, articles, and syllabi) fail to acknowledge equally valuable “emerging primary artifacts” that may come from community-engaged projects (such as technical/policy reports, web resources, site plans, and curriculum plans) (362). Some may argue that while institutions might overlook community-engaged work, they also, in most cases, do not require such work. This argument, however, perpetuates the practice of “composition faculty [being] defined by what they are *not* expected to do...by the ways in which they are not expected to contribute” (Penrose 122).<sup>3</sup> This practice, then, perpetuates the creation of working conditions in which faculty are unable to pursue the work they desire, required or not.

Indeed, labor expectations create unfair divisions among positions within the academy, confining some faculty to ‘lofty’ positions as researchers and others to more “caring” roles as primarily teachers (Cardozo 409). Often, these divides come in the form of TT or NTT designations, which also usually create divides in teaching loads, monetary compensation, and access to resources (such as research funds). Cardozo writes:

---

<sup>3</sup> For NTTs, evaluation criteria may not only assess their professional performance based on what they are not expected to do, but their designation actually labels them according to what they are not.

...many tenure system faculty [,] as well as those in research roles also engage in aspects of caring labor, just as some NTT faculty may not actually care about students. Moreover, college teaching is also ‘productive’ work in increasing the value of human resources, just as research can be socially reproductive (witness the care literature itself). Nonetheless, the creation of a new teaching *segment* reveals a familiar hierarchical division of labor (even if the kinds of work faculty members do across sectors is [*sic*] mixed in practice). The framework of care remains instructive when we consider a feminized work sector charged exclusively with developing human capabilities and placed outside the spheres of knowledge generation and governance, with little control over the relations of re/production. (409)

As Cardozo suggests, rigorous publication expectations for TT faculty may not permit taking on the additional work involved in leading community-engaged projects. NTT faculty with fewer publication expectations may have teaching loads that limit their ability to take on community-based work. TT faculty, depending on the position, may also have heavy teaching loads, while NTT faculty may supplement their salaries with overloads or positions spread across multiple institutions—all of which limit the ability of professors to engage in meaningful work not accounted for in reviews. In essence, institutions limit the degree to which, and the ways in which, faculty contribute to the profession and their university. Divisions within systems where faculty work, in which institutions both misconstrue the work of faculty and privilege certain work (such as publishing) over other work (such as community-engaged projects), also send an implicit message to students that the work of contributing to a community is less valuable than the work they do in the lab or in creating competitive résumés.

In relation to implicit messages communicated to students, Hesford points out that opportunities for community-based projects may vary across departments, as schools increasingly vie for student engagement opportunities, potentially creating “a cockfight over resources, credit hours, and enrollments” (190). However, as of yet, little thought has been put into making these classes a consistent part of scheduling. Additionally, too little thought has been given to equitable labor practices of these more intensive courses. Who is scheduled to teach these courses? Are these instructors given adequate time to prepare and facilitate these courses? Are these instructors given equitable compensation for these more intense courses? Given the influx of students pursuing STEM fields, humanities departments may feel that they are competing to attract students, even if their departments are adequately resourced. While some students might flock to community-engagement courses, others may be turned off by the additional work or simply feel restrained by their major requirements. This, then, may further exacerbate

Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)



enrollment issues in community-based writing courses and, therefore, add to the emotional stress of contingent faculty.

### **What About the Professor as a Person? Labor in Community-Engaged Projects and Identity**

As noted in the previous section, the invisible material and emotional labor created or perpetuated by barriers to community-engaged projects have implications regarding personal and professional identity.

For Jessica, her previous NTT position limited her ability to take on the community- engaged work she had committed to as an individual and as a professional. This inability to pursue the work she loved depleted her passion for her role as a professor. Her limited ability to engage in activist work outside of her professional role, moreover, also affected her on an emotional level. She felt unfulfilled, shut out of being an effective teacher, a scholar, and an activist. In addition, without *doing* what she wished to *teach*, she felt her ethos diminish. Whereas she once spoke enthusiastically about her work in rhetorical spaces outside of the classroom, and used those experiences to teach students how to engage in similar rhetorical spaces, she eventually felt compelled to shy away from such opportunities.

Barbara felt a similar disconnect when attempting to balance activist work with her scholarship expectations at the academy. She had come from high school experiences that supported long-term community engagements through equitable faculty pay, faculty health care, and reasonable security of tenure for most colleagues. Additionally, a level of reciprocity often existed among the faculty and with the community. In higher education, however, Barbara was surprised to navigate communities that often did not acknowledge the inequalities among faculty, and ‘siloes’ knowledge making. This fragmentation had consequences in terms of resource distribution. What was most distressing to Barbara was learning of the number of her faculty colleagues (often graduate students and adjuncts) whose pay rendered them food insecure, who did not have the means for reliable transportation, and who might be navigating medical or emotional issues without supports that Barbara had taken for granted at the high school level. As Barbara navigates a tenure-track position, the message is very clear: publication trumps all other activity. Because of the tenure structure, and the rewards inherent for particular activity in such a structure, Barbara’s work with environmental activists is sometimes relegated, not by choice, to “writing *about* the community” vs. “writing *with* the community,” simply due to time constraints (Deans 17). Despite her best intentions to stay involved and offer reciprocity, there has been a loss of reciprocity and solidarity with community groups.

In theory, then, as argued earlier in this article, institutions want teacher-scholars, but workloads and review criteria often fail to offer ways in which this work can be taken on practically and sustainably. Heavy

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

teaching loads, inadequate salaries, lack of merit pay that might allow professors to forego overloads, lack of promotions that might allow them to engage more rigorously with fewer classes, lack of teaching and research funds to financially support projects, and a lack of mentoring to ease some of the emotional labor all create barriers to community-based work. These issues may take a toll on one's quality of life. Furthermore, as Cardozo points out in the slogan of the New Faculty Majority: "faculty working conditions are student learning conditions," adding that "those working conditions are also *faculty* learning conditions" (420). In other words, any condition that stunts a faculty member's personal and professional growth also stunts the growth of the university and its students. When contingent faculty do manage to go beyond their job descriptions, it speaks to "their extraordinary personal commitment, not the professional structure of their position" (Penrose 118); of course, the same can be said for non-contingent faculty.

### **Future (and Sustainable) Approaches to Community-Engaged Projects**

Our intention is to make the invisible work of professors facilitating community-engaged projects visible. Our aim is not to represent professors as people without agency; indeed, professors advocate for themselves, their students, and their communities in a variety of ways and spaces, as exemplified in this article. As such, we argue that faculty are best positioned to advocate for doing this important work of community building in a sustainable manner. We do this by making clear the support that we need. We turn to scholars such as Cardozo, who asserts:

We should not 'shield' students or the public from the costs of consequences of devaluing care work [such as teaching and community-engaged learning] in higher education, but expose them. At least two political responses follow from this: we can urge people to care less, or we can organize so that care work is valued more. More likely, both approaches are required: people must necessarily limit the amount of work they will do for free while at the same time they should be able to honor a deeply felt and socially beneficial ethic of caring. We must reclaim the value of caring while recognizing that working 'for love' renders us vulnerable to exploitation. (415)

Advocating for the time necessary to do the care work that Cardozo writes about remains a challenge for many professors who have committed to their professional roles and to social causes for deeply personal reasons, using their intellect to make strides toward social change. Like any relationship, the connections forged among people, ideas, and resources in community-engaged projects are messy. Cardozo's statement also puts

the onus on professors, rather than on the culture of higher education to recognize and value this work

Dolgon et al., on the other hand, attempt to address issues inherent in higher education systems more broadly, suggesting “five sets of theories, practices, and principles” that should guide community-based projects across disciplines and, potentially, be adopted systemically in higher education (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Five Theories, Practices, and Principles for Community-Based Projects**

1. “Revisit feminist pragmatism and the infusion of theory, practice, and politics from grassroots practice through institutional transformation and large-scale movement building” (530).
2. “Restore anticolonialism and antiracism (not diversity and inclusion) as foundational principles” (530).
3. “Recast class and the fundamental role of productive relations and economic power in all of our work on campus and in communities” (531).
4. “Embrace arts and humanities as fundamental to the practice of freedom” (531).
5. “Recognize a legacy of suffering and struggle, without falling victim to fatalism or cynicism” (531).

These suggestions seem to reach far into the future, however, perhaps leaving teachers and administrators alike wondering how to go about implementing such change.

Therefore, we offer suggestions for a more immediate approach to augment the recommendations of Dolgon et al. Specifically, we provide the following practical suggestions, inspired by Donna Stickland’s call for critical managerial approaches to labor in composition, not to promote or manage a neoliberal university, but to disrupt an unsustainable status quo, and ‘manage’ the material realities of such projects in practical ways to make visible otherwise invisible labor. Our suggestions also circle back to our earlier discussion of the “CCCC Statement on Community-Engaged Projects in Rhetoric and Composition,” which acknowledges the labor of “...teaching, research, and service” (par. 4). We use this as a starting point to make sustainable approaches to academic labor in community-engaged projects in composition more apparent (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Suggestion for Sustainable Best Practices for Community-Engaged Projects in Composition**

<p><u>1. Support Before a Project: Professional Access</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Professors should be provided funding to attend workshops and conferences that outline emerging best practices in community-engaged projects;</li><li>● New professors and graduate students should be assigned a mentor to help with the planning and implementation of service-learning or community-engaged projects;</li><li>● Professors and graduate students should be provided adequate (and compensated) time to meet with community members and to develop classroom resources (which often change as engagement with community members evolves);</li><li>● The specific roles expected of a community-engaged project should be defined and assessed; teaching assignments should be strategized in terms of other teaching, service, and publication obligations of a professor;</li><li>● Grant opportunities to develop innovative community partnerships and composition projects should be offered, including time and support to develop and maintain grants.</li></ul> <p><u>2. During a Project: Facilitation Support</u></p> <p>Professors take on various roles when facilitating projects. These roles should be acknowledged through compensation, course loads, and course releases (when applicable) in order to allow professors the time to serve as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Mediator between students and community;</li><li>● Writing faculty member.</li></ul> <p><u>3. After a Project: Research and Reporting Support</u></p> <p>Because community-engaged projects are cited as having high-impacts on students, professors should be able to engage in and dialogue with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Active research (qualitative studies, empirical studies);</li><li>● Reporting opportunities for formal and informal evaluations.</li></ul> <p><u>4. Throughout a Project: Acknowledgement of Community-Engaged Service as Part of TT &amp; NT Promotion</u></p> <p>Given the variety of roles professors take on, and the amount of time required, throughout community-based projects, professors should be given credit in review and promotion materials for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Professional development;</li><li>● Service to the university or the department.</li></ul>
---

These practical suggestions are, as noted earlier, a starting point in making explicit the hidden labor of the intersecting threads of “...teaching, research, and service” that are necessary for effective community projects in composition (“CCCC Statement on Community-Engaged Projects” par. 4). By making labor practices explicit, we can theorize and, just as importantly, practice a more equitable and sustainable approach to community-engaged projects in composition. Doing so allows faculty members an opportunity to live a life of greater quality than current labor structures often allow and greater space in which they can create more hopeful narratives for themselves and others. Subsequently, implementing more equitable and sustainable practices for community-engaged projects allows the university to align its missions and its theories with the lives of the people the university ultimately does and should serve—within the institution and beyond.

### Works Cited

- Adler-Kassner, Linda, et al. *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition*. Stylus, 2006.
- Bousquet, Marc. *How the University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation*. New York University Press, 2008.
- Cardozo, Karen M. “Academic Labor: Who Cares?” *Critical Sociology*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2016, pp. 405–428., doi:10.1177/0896920516641733.
- “CCCC Statement on Community-Engaged Projects in Rhetoric and Composition.” *Conference On College Composition and Communication*, 14 Aug. 2018, <https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/community-engaged>.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Sex and Race.” *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, no. 1, 1989, pp. 139-167.
- Deans, Thomas. *Writing Partnerships: Service-Learning in Composition*. National Council of Teachers of English, 2000.
- Dolgon, Corey, et al. “The Devil at the Crossroads: Service Learning and Community Engagement from Here on Out.” *The Cambridge Handbook of Service Learning and Community Engagement*, edited by Corey Dolgon et al., Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 527–533.
- Duggan, Lisa. “Neoliberalism.” *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, edited by Bruce Burgett, Holder, NYU Press, 2014, *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, <https://keywords.nyupress.org/american-cultural-studies/essay/neoliberalism/>.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)



- Eatman, Timothy K, et al. “Real Rewards: Publicly Engaged Scholarship, Faculty Agency, and Institutional Aspirations.” *The Cambridge Handbook of Service Learning and Community Engagement*, edited by Corey Dolgon et al., Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 359–369.
- Flower, Linda. *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Public Engagement*. Southern Illinois University Press, 2008.
- Fishwick, Marshall W. “Radical Relevance: Toward a Scholarship of the Whole Left.” *The Journal of American Culture*, vol. 28, no. 3, Sept. 2005, pp. 335–336.
- Halonon, Jane S, and Dana S Dunn. “Does ‘High-Impact’ Teaching Cause High-Impact Fatigue?” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 27 Nov. 2018, [www.chronicle.com/article/Does-High-Impact-/245159](http://www.chronicle.com/article/Does-High-Impact-/245159).
- Hesford, Wendy S. “Global/Local Labor Politics and the Promise of Service Learning.” *Radical Relevance: Toward a Scholarship of the Whole Left*, edited by Laura Gray-Rosendale and Steven Rosendale, State University of New York Press, 2005, pp. 183–204.
- “High-Impact Educational Practices.” *Association of American Colleges & Universities*, 26 July 2018, [www.aacu.org/leap/hips](http://www.aacu.org/leap/hips).
- Jason, Zachary. “Student Activism 2.0.” *Harvard Graduate School of Education*, Fall 2018, [www.gse.harvard.edu/news/ed/18/08/student-activism-20](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/ed/18/08/student-activism-20).
- Leon, Kendall, et al. “Developing Accounts of Instructor Learning: Recognizing the Impacts of Service-Learning Pedagogies on Writing Teachers.” *Composition Studies*, vol. 45, no. 1, Spring 2017, pp. 39–58.
- Mathieu, Paula. *Tactics of Hope: The Public Turn in English Composition*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 2005.
- McLeod, Aida Koci. “Service Learning and Community Engagement for English Classes.” *English Teaching Forum*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2017, pp. 20–27.
- Raddon, Mary-Beth and Harrison, Barbara. “Is Service-Learning the Kind Face of the Neoliberal University?” *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2015, pp. 134-153.
- Penrose, Ann M. “Professional Identity in a Contingent-Labor Profession: Expertise, Autonomy, Community in Composition Teaching.” *WPA*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2012, pp. 108–126.
- Pompa, Lori. “Service-Learning as Crucible: Reflections on Immersion, Context, Power, and Transformation.” *Service-Learning in Higher Education: Critical Issues and Directions*, edited by Dan W. Butin, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 173–192.
- Slaughter, Sheila and Gary Rhoades. “The Neoliberal University.” *New Labor Forum*, no. 6, Spring/Summer, 2000, pp. 73-79.

- Shulman, Steven. "Contingency in Higher Education: Evidence and Explanation." *Academic Labor: Research and Artistry*: vol. 1, issue 1, Fall 2017, <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/alra/vol1/iss1/3>.
- Strickland, Donna. "The Managerial Unconscious of Composition Studies." *Tenured Bosses and Disposable Teachers: Writing Instruction in the Managed University*, edited by Bousquet, Mark, Tony Scott, and Leo Parascondola. Southern Illinois UP, 2004, p. 46- 56.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

## (Mis)Alignments Between Institutional Mission Statements and Service-Learning Handbooks

Charisse S. Iglesias  
*University of Arizona*

The ongoing labor that (in)experienced service-learning practitioners put into practice is further intensified by the ongoing and persistent turn from traditional service learning to critical service learning (Mitchell 50). This turn shifts the misconception that communities are served, and universities are saviors and positions community-university partners as viable reciprocal partners that productively contribute to knowledge creation. To fully actualize the turn to critical service learning, however, practitioners must be supported on all fronts: institutional, training, programmatic, collaborative, etc. This study explores institutional framing as representative of institutional practice.

Considering my labor as a fairly new service-learning practitioner and researcher, I often question the tools given to me as I navigate community engagement. My personal background has been filled with trial and error. From the savior mindset I sported as a Peace Corps volunteer serving with wholehearted enthusiasm to my shaky community partnerships that ultimately take a backseat to my graduate research and writing, I have learned that community partnerships negotiate labor conditions. The emotional, physical, and intellectual labor necessary to manage expectations, intentions, designs, etc. is necessary for achieving reciprocal community-university partnerships. Regardless if that labor is explicitly negotiated, service-learning labor practices are intricate, delicate, and time consuming.

Charisse S. Iglesias is a Ph.D. student at the University of Arizona studying Rhetoric, Composition, and the Teaching of English. Her research interests include: critical service learning, community literacy, prison studies, comics studies, and program assessment and design. She was selected as one of ten first-time presenter recipients of the 2019 Conference on College Composition and Communication Scholars for the Dream Travel Awards.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

While there are institutions of higher education that have explicit service-learning initiatives that train and support instructors—such as Berea College and Calvin College—I question whether institutional support is indeed necessary to succeed in the complex abstraction of service learning. Institutional makeup undoubtedly frames the proliferation of certain policies and practices, and absence in support could conceivably contribute to an absence in practice. Consequently, I wondered how institutions are framing their service-learning initiatives, and how intent is reflected in representation. This study is framed by the premise that institutions that self-identify as advocates for social justice, combatting the “hit and run” dynamic that runs rampant in community-university partnerships, are expected to perform social justice roles through their disciplines, policies, and actions (Bickford and Reynolds 234).

In this article, I examine the (mis)alignments between institutional mission statements and their institutional service-learning handbooks. Mission statements serve as the communicative act, promising to reflect an institution’s values and goals. Communicative acts rely on perception to achieve their goals whereas service-learning handbooks—the counterpart to mission statements—serve as the performative act of an institution. The communicative act of institutional mission statements is to present an idea to the public whereas performative acts embody the idea.

The linguistic contact zone (Pratt 34) where mission statements and service-learning handbooks meet is the focus of this article. This study reveals institutional framing of those handbooks and considers how that framing could undermine the development of reciprocal partnerships in service-learning practice. The linguistic identities revealed in both communicative and performative acts are analyzed for their support toward community engagement, and the task of negotiating those linguistic identities, unfortunately, falls on the service-learning practitioner.

This study also measures the linguistic contact zone between mission statements and handbooks by uncovering their alignment levels. The purpose then is to expose the (in)consistencies between the communicative and performative acts, which facilitate discussion on labor conditions. If institutions fail to support their community engaged practices—despite communicating that they do—the labor of offsetting the lack of support falls on the practitioners. To identify points of unnecessary labor spent, an examination of what is expected and who fails to deliver leads this important conversation.

My research question: How aligned are service-learning handbooks with their institutional mission statements in terms of valuing community engagement?

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

### Literature Review

Discussion on service-learning practitioner training reveals that institutional support is integral to implementing successful community-university partnerships. Labor-intensive practices like service learning rely on labor-intensive support to succeed and sustain. Many scholars argue that while service learning is a worthy endeavor, faculty do not receive the necessary training to execute independently (Boerngen et al. 177; Miller-Young 33; Kropp et al. 46). More specifically, Boerngen et al. noted that effort and time commitment are not explicitly acknowledged by many universities' faculty evaluation forms, indirectly disincentivizing service-learning endeavors (175). When the labor of initiating and maintaining community-university partnerships is not incentivized, practitioners struggle to justify the work.

To further disincentivize, the invisible labor of service-learning practitioners is "much more time consuming and emotionally draining than conventional teaching" (Correia et al. 10). Being flexible to accommodate unforeseen community partner relations is emotionally taxing, especially when "students rely on the instructors to close the gap between the textbook and real-world application of course concepts" (Davis et al. 65). Not all service-learning practitioners have backgrounds in community engagement, and those with good intentions and limited experience may be tackling ongoing and persistent problems with the wrong tools. Practitioners are not being supported to implement service learning in healthy and sustainable ways, and this leads to ineffective community partnerships.

A significant consequence of a lack of institutional support is the framing of community partners. Training influences the way service-learning practitioners use classroom pedagogy rhetorically. Inappropriate linguistic framing of the dynamics between community and university partners could potentially lead to what Eby calls "McService" or "quick fix service," which short-term, one semester service-learning projects naturally produce (2). Sustaining projects and community partnerships are also labor-intensive practices that need appropriate training to bring about. In particular, Eby illustrates how the use of the word *need* structures most service-learning projects "as a deficiency or as the lack of something a client needs or wants" (3). This linguistic framing points to the concrete consequences of not establishing training, supervision, and reflection practices that "give careful attention to sensitize students to see factors beyond those residing in individuals" (Eby 7). Unhealthy linguistic framing of the community partnership promotes the savior position of university partners, isolating the ivory tower and marginalizing community partners.

To support practitioners, Miller-Young explains that a community of practice allows practitioners to understand concepts like reciprocity through discourse, an admirable venture since the definition of reciprocity is disputed in the literature on service learning and community



engagement (Dostilio et al. 18). Establishing a starting point through which to define and teach reciprocity in service-learning classrooms “through discourse with others” helps alleviate inconsistencies (Miller-Young 34). Moreover, Kropp et al. attempt to reduce the onus on faculty to implement service learning independently by training student leaders to collaborate with faculty mentors (45). This practice shares the workload while also building leadership skills in students and evenly distributing knowledge creation with other stakeholders. However, not all institutions build mentoring models for effective practice. In other words, not all institutions do the work to make certain practices accessible. Therefore, the labor to create these programs and initiatives falls on the practitioners, the instructors, and the faculty that are not appropriately compensated for their work. The invisible labor that falls on practitioners makes it difficult for service learning to be a viable, sustainable practice that is recreated and shared by practitioners in manageable ways.

There is immense value in institutional support to incorporate service learning “into budgets and into faculty and staff loads” (Eby 6). Threading support through everyday practices builds capacity for practitioners and makes their labor visible and validated. Through institutional resources, training, mentorship, and ongoing assessment, service learning has the potential to navigate reciprocal community-university partnerships and break down bridges between the ivory tower and community. Unfortunately, practitioners cannot bear the burden of their disincentivized and emotionally draining labor without consequences. To investigate why labor conditions are inconsistent and unevenly distributed among institutional leadership, this study hopes to shed light on specific institutional resources that may indicate reasons for unfair labor conditions.

### **Methods: Data Collection**

This study addresses the following research question: How aligned are service-learning handbooks with their institutional mission statements in terms of valuing community engagement? Unfair labor conditions exist when communicative and performative acts are not aligned; therefore, this study considers the (in)consistencies between institutional mission statements and service-learning handbooks.

To address the research question, I collected two sets of open access documents. First, I collected open ended documents called service-learning handbooks. They are lengthy documents that are locally authored and institution-sponsored; they are essentially how-to manuals on service-learning development. The handbooks range from 15-70 pages and describe best practices, complete with vignettes and sample lesson plans. They are PDFs, open access, and from four different types of institutions: Community College (CC), Private Research University (PRR), Private Liberal Arts College (PRLA), and Public Research University (PUR). This corpus was a convenience sample of the first handbook that appeared from

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

a Google search of “Community College Service-Learning Handbook.” I chose to find two handbooks from four different types of institutions for greater variety, and all are from the continental U.S. The convenience sample models the process that inexperienced service-learning practitioners would use to find open access resources online.

Inside the handbooks, I located two key sections that holistically contribute to reciprocity in the service-learning classroom: sample reflective questions (implicit expressions of reciprocity) and the community partner’s role (explicit expressions of reciprocity). The term implicit is used to denote indirect instruction to the service-learning practitioner. Sample reflective questions serve as implicit expressions of reciprocity due to their modeling function. Sample reflective questions are meant to guide practitioners to ask questions included or to model after them. Handbooks are catered to inexperienced practitioners, and sample reflective questions model length, linguistic framing, amount, and depth. Implicit could also refer to its interpretive value. Sample reflective questions merely model and do not provide specific instructions. Each set of reflective questions is contextualized, and the practitioner is meant to draw inspiration from the reflective questions, not copy directly. On the other hand, the section detailing the community partner’s role serves as explicit expressions of reciprocity due to their straightforward instruction. These sections are direct instructions on how to engage in reciprocal behavior and include clear steps to achieve reciprocity.

Second, I concurrently collected the institutional mission statements of each institution represented in the handbooks, two from each type of institution: CC, PRR, PRLA, and PUR. Mission statements are the values and promises reflective of the institution of higher education and are typically found on the home page or about page of the institution’s website. Mission statements vary in length but typically range from a few sentences to a few paragraphs. These are also open access, and none are labeled in this study by name. Mission statements were collected due to their reflective nature of the institution’s policies and values.

### **Methods: Data Analysis**

This study contains three phases to address the research question: critical discourse analysis of handbooks, content analysis of mission statements, and alignment rating of mission statements and handbooks.

First, I conducted a critical discourse analysis on sample reflective practices and community partner roles from eight service-learning handbooks (from four types of institutions) to measure the expression of reciprocity. Critical discourse analysis of a corpus unveils the inconsistencies and injustices about language on a wider scale (Wodak and Meyer 157), which best serves this study’s purpose of locating the discrepancies of expressions of reciprocity, an agent of cultivating co-creating partnerships.

Second, I conducted a content analysis on the corresponding institutional mission statements to ascertain the strength of community engagement and social justice values. Mission statements were coded based on: inclusivity, diversity, communities, local/global issues. These codes refer to a values mindset to include diverse meaning-making processes and to demonstrate explicit attention to surrounding issues of the local and global community. I conducted a content analysis instead of a critical discourse analysis to account for the limited representation that mission statements may carry. Being poorly written or assigned to a junior staff member does not take away from the reflective component of mission statements.

Last, I compared the reciprocity rating from handbooks to institutional mission statements and revealed the levels of alignments. Alignment levels are calculated after rating both handbooks and mission statements. Final alignment levels are calculated by looking at the difference between each institution's handbook and mission statement. If the difference is large, that means the institution is widely misaligned. If the difference is small, that means the institution is aligned. The institutional mission statement-handbook alignments convey the communication between intent and implementation. If an institution receives a lower rating, this suggests there is severe misalignment between the communicative and the performative act.

### **Results: Critical Reflective Practices in Service-Learning Handbooks**

The following results reveal the three data analysis phases to address the research question: critical discourse analysis of handbooks, content analysis of mission statements, and alignment ratings of mission statements and handbooks.

The following two examples are sample reflective questions outlined by two handbooks. They are from higher rated and lower rated handbooks, respectively. When evaluating reflective practices, those that are higher rated stimulate critical thought on the social, reciprocal, and logistical challenges working with an underrepresented community through open-ended and follow-up questions. This section keeps an eye toward the (in)experienced service-learning practitioner by modeling specific language patterns conducive to reciprocal community-university partnerships. When worded effectively, practitioners may find creating their own reflective questions manageable. Reflective questions, for example, that veer toward savior positionality help construct inequitable partnerships. However, reflective questions that encourage co-constructed meaning making help produce reciprocal partnerships.

PUR2 Handbook:

- What were your initial expectations?
- Have these expectations changed?

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

- Describe a person you've encountered in the community who made a strong impression on you, positive or negative.
- Has your view of the **population** with whom you have been working changed? How?
- What **institutional structures** are in place at your site or in the community? How do they affect the people you work with?
- What did you do that seemed to be **effective or ineffective** in the community?
- How can you **continue your involvement** with this group or social issue? [my emphasis]

PUR2 is rated first out of the eight handbooks and takes a relatively critical approach to reflective practices. Word choice, for instance, can be an important contributor to an inexperienced practitioner. These sample questions remark on *population* and *community*, rather than *people served*. Reflective practices model how practitioners frame inquiry and discussion.

PRR1 Handbook:

- What do you expect to experience at the service site?
- What do you expect **will be the impact** on the **service recipients** of this service activity?
- What do you think about the **problem** you will address through this service activity?
- What do you think about the **population being served** by this activity?
- Was the community problem addressed **through your service**?
- Did **you benefit** from participation in this service activity? What were the benefits? [my emphasis]

PRR1 is rated fourth out of the eight handbooks and takes a more savior approach to reflective practices. Again, with word choice, PRR1 chose to use phrases like *service recipients* and *problem* and *did you benefit*. These choices can contribute to practitioners developing a savior mentality while framing their own reflective questions to their students.

This section implicitly expresses a way to achieve reciprocity through modeling. Institutions that use effective wording—prompting practitioners to frame reflective questions that support community expertise and labor—rate higher in this small corpus. Additionally, labor that falls on service-learning practitioners decreases if institutional resources are straightforward and specific. In other words, if practitioners receive sufficient institutional support through training and resources, then labor demands are achievable.

### **Results: Community Partner's Role in Service-Learning Handbooks**

The following two examples are sections highlighting the community partner's role in service-learning practice. They are from higher and lower rated handbooks. When evaluating these sections, those that are higher rated demonstrate explicit parameters of what constitutes equitable partnerships. Unlike reflective practices—which are implicit—these sections are explicit in (not) promoting reciprocity. This section explicitly instructs practitioners to manage the labor required to achieve reciprocal community-university partnerships. Appropriately wording and positioning this section also works toward making practitioner labor manageable.

#### PRLA1 Handbook:

- Community agencies are colleagues in service learning who assist the instructor and students in co-creating new knowledge while addressing critical issues in the community.
- Instructors meet **prior to the course** to explore possible partnerships. A partnership embodies **collaboration and reciprocity** to **articulate roles, responsibilities, and communication plans** . . . to ensure **rigor and accountability**. [original emphasis]

PRLA1 is rated third of the eight handbooks and approaches the community partner's role inclusively. Meeting *prior to the course* suggests that the university and community partner will identify an authentic community need together. It also suggests, both implicitly and explicitly, that community expertise is valued.

#### CC2 Handbook:

- **Once you have decided** on a project and you know where you would like to go for your project it is time to contact the agency.
- Talk in person [with your community partner] about the requirements and **give them a copy** of the assignments.
- Please **check in** with the agency coordinator throughout the semester to make sure your students are doing what you expect them to.
- At the **end of the semester** please have the agency coordinator fill out the evaluation form. [my emphasis]

CC2 is rated fifth of the eight handbooks and is less inclusive when it comes to the community partner taking a co-creating role. Identifying the authentic need comes before working with a community partner, suggesting that community input is not valued. Also, community partners are merely given a copy of the assignments, rather than creating them with the university partner to meet needs on both sides.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*



The sections on reflective practices and a community partner's role are effective in managing labor expectations when worded appropriately. The following table rates handbooks based on these two sections expressing reciprocity. The ratings are from 1-8, with 1 being the highest rated, and 8 being the lowest rated. The higher rated handbooks express reciprocity more successfully than lower rated handbooks.

**Table 1: Service-Learning Handbook Ratings**

Service-Learning Handbook Ratings	
Institution	Handbook Rating
CC1	8
CC2	5
PRR1	4
PRR2	2
PRLA1	3
PRLA2	6
PUR1	7
PUR2	1

Table 1 illustrates service-learning handbook rating by institution. Based on the analysis above, PUR2 rates highest in expressing reciprocity, which is meant to decrease the labor on service-learning practitioners to achieve reciprocal community-university partnerships. CC1, on the other hand, received the lowest rating, shifting unfair, disincentivized labor conditions to practitioners. If instructional resources are detailed, explicit, and comprehensive, practitioners can more easily achieve what they are meant to achieve. In other words, labor is significantly more manageable when practitioners know how to conduct the work they do. The next section on institutional mission statements rates the mission statements in this small corpus.

### **Results: Institutional Mission Statements**

The sections above highlighted the performative acts of service learning. Performative acts are meant to reflect the intentions of what's communicated. As the performative act's counterpart, the communicative act lays the groundwork for the performative act to build upon.

The following are three snippets of the mission statements that correspond to the service-learning handbooks. What's emphasized is coded according to: inclusivity, diversity, communities, local/global issues. These codes refer to a values mindset to include diverse meaning making processes and demonstrate explicit attention to surrounding issues of the local and global community. Since these communicative acts represent the values of the institution, service-learning practitioners may expect the institution to follow through on these promises of valuing



The following table shows each institution, the percentage of each mission statement coded, and the rating based on the percentage coded. Again, the ratings are from 1-8, with 1 being the highest rated, and 8 being the lowest rated. The higher rated mission statements have higher coded percentages than lower rated mission statements.

**Table 2: Mission Statement Ratings**

Mission Statement Ratings		
Institution	% Coded	Statement Rating
CC1	9.68%	4
CC2	2.56%	7
PRR1	11.87%	3
PRR2	14.97%	1
PRLA1	4.99%	6
PRLA2	0.33%	8
PUR1	8.99%	5
PUR2	13.33%	2

Table 2 depicts the percentage of each mission statement that meets the codes: inclusivity, diversity, communities, local/global issues. Percentages were calculated due to the varying lengths of mission statements. From these ratings, service-learning practitioners can be exposed to the varying levels of labor that institutions take on to communicate their commitment to community engagement. From just these ratings, a practitioner serving at PRLA2 institution, for example, would likely need to take on much more labor than a practitioner at PRR2. However, rating only mission statements may not be enough to estimate how labor is taken on and by whom.

The following table is a summative evaluation of institutional mission statements and their respective handbooks. The table shows handbook ratings based on how robust and extensive their sections of reflective practices and a community partner's role are. When handbook rating and mission statement rating are used to calculate a handbook-mission statement rating, the smaller differences receive a higher rating, and the larger differences receive a lower overall rating. The ratings are from 1-8, with 1 being the highest rated, and 8 being the lowest rated.

**Table 3: Overall Ratings and Alignments**

Overall Ratings and Alignments			
Institution	Handbook Rating	Mission Statement Rating	Handbook-Mission Statement Rating
CC1	8	4	8
CC2	5	7	5
PRR1	4	3	3
PRR2	2	1	2
PRLA1	3	6	7
PRLA2	6	8	6
PUR1	7	5	4
PUR2	1	2	1

Table 3 illustrates the summative ratings of handbooks, mission statements, and the final ratings. To receive an overall higher rating, the difference between the handbook rating and the mission statement rating needs to be lower. To receive an overall lower rating, the difference between the handbook rating and the mission statement rating needs to be higher. For example, the lowest overall rating belongs to CC1, which has a handbook rating of 8 and a mission statement rating of 4. The difference is 4, which is the highest difference between handbooks and mission statements of all institutions included in this small corpus. This means the CC1 handbook and mission statement are the most unaligned in the entire corpus of eight institutions. The highest overall rating belongs to PUR2, which has a handbook rating of 1 and a mission statement rating of 2. The difference is 1; therefore, the PUR2 handbook and mission statement are the most aligned. As you can see in Table 3, one other institution has a difference of 1: PRR2. However, after a more holistic review of the handbooks, PUR2 proved to be the more aligned institution in terms of promoting community engagement.

### **Discussion: Institutional Framing of Handbooks**

In determining ratings, a commitment to community engagement and social justice served as the investigative lens. Institutions that communicate certain values must adhere to initiatives, policies, and practices that reflect those values. As such, the top-rated institution in this study that best aligns its communicative and performative act is PUR2. PUR2 earns that rating due to comparable commitments to community engagement in both the mission statement and handbook. PUR2 reveals a transparency to its stakeholders, faculty, students, and surrounding community. The lowest rated institution in this study that is most misaligned in the communicative and performative act is CC1. CC1 earns that rating due to unbalanced portrayals of an engaged institution. CC1

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

may claim values of service to the community and dialogue of tolerance but falls short of delivering on those promises.

### **Discussion: Institutional Framing Undermines Reciprocity**

Seeing alignment ratings helps practitioners question how to conduct ethical community work without institutions modeling ethical behavior. If an institution contradicts itself to the community, its faculty, and its students, then service-learning—already described as an “ethically tenuous” practice—suffers (Jagla 74). If practitioners do not have access to support that enables certain key concepts (i.e., reciprocity, asset-based, co-knowledge creation), what will service-learning practice look like? The invisible labor practitioners are obligated to perform on top of existing labor conditions puts them at a disadvantage. Effectively collaborating and co-creating knowledge with community partners is essential to combating privilege and power struggles, and the labor to breach those initial discussions of students merely acknowledging systemic power conditions is made more difficult with ineffective or absent service-learning training.

### **Discussion: Evaluating Perception and Performance**

Do institutions practice what they preach? Mission statements are symbolic. Even if mission statements are outdated or poorly written, they still exist to symbolize the promises of an institution. Based on these alignment levels, it is safe to assume that the more unaligned institutions suffer a disconnect between what is said and what is done, what is perceived and what is performed. Due to administrative neglect, we cannot trust how institutions portray themselves, which results in furthering the isolation of the ivory tower and miscommunication between the institution and the community. Isolation further clouds the institution’s attempts at transparency and follow through and weakens an institution by hiding its exploitative practices. An environment of mistrust completely upends the words of inclusion and diversity the mission statement proclaims to value.

### **Implications and Further Research**

It is important to note the factors that limit the implementation of reciprocal partnerships may reside outside the scope of this study. Institutional mission statements may not necessarily contribute to the limitation of effective community-university partnerships. Additionally, exemplary expressions of reciprocity in service-learning handbooks may not directly cause instructors to teach reciprocal partnerships. However, when examined together, the linguistic contact zone may give pause to service-learning practitioners who are hoping to instill habits of self-reflection and critical consciousness but are coming up short. Practitioners may harbor intentions for practicing reciprocal community-university partnerships but lack the training and institutional support. This study takes a change-oriented research perspective and calls for further action in

the development of reciprocal partnerships between community and university members in service-learning practice.

### Action Items

Support manifests in different ways. If service-learning practitioners do not have access to support that enables certain key concepts (i.e., reciprocity, co-creation of knowledge, asset-based community-university partnerships), then intentions for successful practice are not meaningful, as expressed in Ivan Illich's address for the *Conference on InterAmerican Student Projects*. The following action items from this research on institutional framing are intended for (in)experienced service-learning practitioners:

- Commit to co-creating knowledge with your community partners:
  - Commit to identifying authentic needs of a community *with* your community partner. Schedule ongoing assessment meetings with your partner and defer to community expertise.
- Seek as many resources as you can:
  - Talk to people, do the research, assess constantly, and collaborate as much as you can.
- Compile best practices from the literature:
  - There is a breadth of research on critical service learning that can help structure your curriculum and ensure you're on the right track.
- Model after existing service-learning programs:
  - Service-learning programs like the one at Berea College require an Active Learning Experience (ALE) component of the General Education Program, which could be fulfilled through a service-learning course ("Courses and Projects").
- Consider if service learning is right for you:
  - Service learning is not for everyone. It may add a line on your CV, but you must consider the negative consequences of implementing service learning haphazardly. Your intentions of incorporating service learning will transfer to your students' intentions of practicing service learning.

### Future Research

From this research on institutional framing of service-learning handbooks, I will continue investigating service-learning design using quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods following these research questions:

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*



- What is the relationship between high occurrences of keywords that indicate reciprocity used in syllabi and practicing reciprocal community-university partnerships in service-learning practice?
- What are the factors that influence reciprocal community-university partnerships in colleges and universities that have a structured service-learning program or department?
- To what extent do pre-existing notions of reciprocity influence the practice of reciprocal community-university partnerships in training new service-learning practitioners?

### **Conclusion: Misaligned Promises of Institutional Labor**

Exposing the linguistic contact zone of institutional mission statements and handbooks reveals the deep (mis)connections between the communicative act and the performative act. This could reveal institutional voice that is removed, irrelevant, lacking effective leadership, and, frankly, written only as a social justice performance. An absence in institutional support leads to labor in uncharted territory for (in)experienced service-learning practitioners, invalidating healthy and sustainable approaches to community engagement. This could lead to dangerous missteps and a devolving mentality toward working with communities (i.e., deficit-based, savior-saved thinking).

This study seeks to give a voice to the unbalanced representations of reciprocity in service-learning classrooms and seeks to situate the often-paradoxical outcomes of service learning in the broader institutional space that fails to embody a collaboration between values and action.

### **Works Cited**

- Bickford, Donna, and Nedra Reynolds. "Activism and Service Learning: Reframing Volunteerism as Acts of Dissent." *Pedagogy*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2002, pp. 229-252.
- Boerngen, Maria et al. "Faculty Perceptions of Incorporating Service Learning into Landscape Horticulture Courses." *NACTA Journal*, vol. 62, no. 2, 2018, pp. 175-180.
- Correia, Ana-Paula et al. "A Comparative Case Study of Approaches to Authentic Learning in Instructional Design at Two Universities." Paper presented at the *American Educational Research Association 2010 Annual Meeting*, Denver, CO, April 30 - May 4, 2010.
- "Courses and Projects." *Berea College*, <https://www.berea.edu/celts/service-learning/courses-and-projects/>. Accessed 5 May 2019.
- Davis, Dannielle et al. "Women Educational Leaders' Narratives: The Dynamics of Service-Learning on Training and Transformation." *International Journal of Progressive Education*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2015, pp. 64-76.



# Snapshots of #WPALife: Invisible Labor and Writing Program Administration

Megan McIntyre  
*Sonoma State University*

---

## Abstract

Writing program administration work is a significant reality for many within the field of rhetoric and composition, and though such work has long been part of our disciplinary fabric, it often remains invisible to departments and institutions. In this article, I offer two brief snapshots of how writing program administration work is often obscured by seemingly brief documents or interactions, which elide the complex communicative and political work at the heart of program administration. I then offer a hashtag-based Twitter community, #WPALife, as one potential way of making this work more visible and of building the capacity to create more just, equitable, and anti-racist writing programs. Visibility can't be an end in and of itself; rather, making this work visible allows me to be a more effective advocate for equitable and anti-racist practices in my program, institution, university system, and discipline.

---

Megan McIntyre is an Assistant Professor of English and Writing Program Director at Sonoma State University. She was formerly the Assistant Director of Dartmouth College's Institute for Writing and Rhetoric and director of the University of South Florida's Writing Studio. She received her PhD from the University of South Florida in 2015, and her research interests include digital rhetoric and writing, writing program administration, and post-pedagogy. You can find her recent work in *The Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics*, *Prompt: A Journal of Academic Writing Assignments*, and *Composition Forum*.

**M**Y first experience as a writing program administrator (WPA) was during the second year of my master’s degree program in an English department at a large, research-intensive public university in the south. After teaching in the first-year writing program for a year, I joined the summer “curriculum developer” team. I had very little experience in theorizing or teaching writing, but I was interested in how the writing program worked and invested in my teaching. And I got incredibly lucky: the team I joined that first summer was mostly made up of advanced graduate students who were patient and kind mentors and teachers. They taught me about pedagogy, scaffolding, teaching and learning processes, and giving effective feedback. In short, that first summer was a master class in writing instruction.

There hasn’t been a single year—in the twelve years since that first formative experience—that I haven’t done some kind of administrative work in a writing program. I’ve served as a curriculum developer, textbook editor, mentor to new graduate teaching assistants, coordinator of the mentoring program, orientation leader, assessment coordinator, portfolio developer, writing center assistant director, writing center director, junior writing program administrator, assistant director of an independent writing program, and now writing program director. I’ve worked in writing programs at a large, public, research-intensive institution; a small, elite, private liberal arts college; and a midsized, regionally-serving, comprehensive university. These experiences were as different as they were influential, but they share something that feels close to universal for those of us who work as WPAs: so much of the work that I have done and still do was mostly invisible to my colleagues and to larger university structures.

This is no new state of affairs; nearly twenty years ago, Laura Micciche argued in the pages of *College English* (one of the flagship journals of the field of English studies) that “WPA work is largely invisible to many readers of *College English*, who may not even know what a WPA does, let alone why this position is so riddled with emotional angst” (234). According to most histories of writing program administration work, WPA positions date back at least to the 1940s (Charlton et al. 63). Yet, even in our own departments, our work as WPAs may go largely unnoticed except by those of us who do this or similar work. As the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the national organization of WPAs, says in the preamble to their resolution on evaluating the intellectual labor of WPAs, “administration—including leadership of first-year writing courses, WAC<sup>4</sup> programs, writing centers, and the many other manifestations of writing administration—has for the most part been treated as a management activity that does not produce new

---

<sup>4</sup> WAC is an acronym for “Writing Across the Curriculum,” and it refers to the systematic inclusion of writing instruction in courses across departments and disciplines.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

knowledge and that neither requires nor demonstrates scholarly expertise and disciplinary knowledge” (“Evaluating the Intellectual Work”).

This lack of attention is all the more galling because of the breadth of the work and the variety of relationships necessary to effectively do WPA work (see McLeod, for example) The list of issues that a WPA must respond to is long and complex: “curriculum and pedagogy, assessment and accountability, staffing and staff development, and professional and personal issues of various stripes, including tenure and promotion” (McLeod 4). On a nearly weekly basis, I’m asked to craft policies, articulate programmatic positions, respond to crises, defend practices, and participate in the shared governance of my institution. The outcomes of these requests range from a two-paragraph email to a two-page FAQ page, from a twenty-minute phone call to a one-hour meeting. Sometimes, the deliverable is as deceptively simple as a single form and its appendices. What’s obscured by these often-brief documents is the hours spent researching, crafting, and intervening in processes that impact the program I lead.

During my first year in my current position, for example, I’ve:

- developed and shared policies governing how advisors should direct students who fail one of our courses,
- recreated our directed self-placement (DSP) because of a campus-wide Learning Management System (LMS) change,
- attended a half dozen meetings on how to bridge the gap between directed self-placement and pre-enrollment and helped craft language about directed self-placement for admissions, advising, and academic programs,
- navigated our two tracks (a one-semester, accelerated reading/writing course and a two-semester, stretch model reading/writing course) through recertification in response to system-level requirements and campus-level general education reform,
- created what I hope is a cohesive professional development program for our composition faculty, most of whom are lecturers,
- crafted and implemented a more specific hiring process for new teaching associates,
- taught a TA practicum and a graduate-level introduction to the field of writing studies, which is a prerequisite for working as a TA.

Each of these tasks involved research, message crafting/discipline, and an innumerable number of meetings and emails. And this list doesn’t account for the crisis moments or emergent challenges that come with working with a half dozen teaching associates, two dozen lecturers, and a dozen other tenure-line faculty members, all of whose experiences and

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

impressions are vital to the success of our writing program. Our composition faculty are dedicated and experienced; they are also underpaid and overworked.<sup>5</sup> Our students are bright and thoughtful; they are also navigating a set of systems that are working hard to interpellate them into very specific subject positions at the same time that these students are negotiating emergent and sometimes conflicting identities. Many of them are also working hard to support themselves and/or their families. I feel a strong sense of responsibility to both these groups, to make their working and learning conditions better and more equitable in whatever ways I can. This work, too, is mostly invisible. But it shouldn't be.

This article, then, has two related goals: first, to make the work of faculty-administrators like myself visible to those outside my small community and second, to advocate for a digital community of writing program administrators that exists outside official institutional and organizational channels and, therefore, may be able to respond more quickly and advocate more radically for our students, our colleagues, and our programs. Visibility cannot be an end in and of itself; rather, making this work visible allows me to be a more effective advocate for equitable and anti-racist<sup>6</sup> practices in my program,<sup>7</sup> institution, university system, and discipline.

---

<sup>5</sup> This is, of course, not a new or unique situation; twenty years ago, in her history of the field, Sharon Crowley noted that, “teachers of the universally required [first-year writing] course are underpaid, overworked, and treated with disdain” (120).

<sup>6</sup> I'm working here from Asao B. Inoue's work on anti-racism (2009, 2015, 2016, 2019) in writing programs as well as work on culturally sustaining pedagogies from Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995, 2014) and Django Paris (2012, 2014). In particular, Inoue's (2016, 2019) argument for expansive, asset-based notions of literacy and labor-based grading in writing courses and Ladson-Billings' (2014) and Paris's (2012) calls for an evolving notion of cultural practice and a sense of the classroom as a space for students to build on existing literacies and practices as they develop additional classroom-based knowledge inform my sense of what an anti-racist writing program would look like.

<sup>7</sup> Anti-racist writing programs should have particular concrete classroom, program, and labor practices. In the classroom, these include labor-based grading, diverse reading lists, and classroom community standards that foreground equity. Programmatically, anti-racism shows up in the content of TA training and faculty professional development, in outcomes and statements of programmatic identity that emphasize culturally sustaining practices, and in keen attention to equity gaps. In terms of labor, an anti-racist writing program attends to diversity in hiring, as well as equity and dignity in working conditions and workloads.



### **A Brief Note on Methodology: Counternarratives and Microhistories**

Let me pause for a moment to note why I've elected to tell stories as a way of talking about invisible WPA labor. The history of the field of composition/writing studies/rhetoric and composition has sometimes been cast as a battle between lore on the one hand and theory/research on the other. Jeff Rice, in his counterhistory of composition in *The Rhetoric of Cool*, points to Peter North as the progenitor of this grand narrative of composition history. 1963, North argued, marked the year that Composition got its capital 'C': "We can therefore date the birth of modern Composition, capital C, to 1963. And what marks its emergence as a nascent academic field more than anything else is this need to replace practice as the field's dominant mode of inquiry" (15). Rice argues, however, that this tidy grand narrative heralding a shift from lore/practice on the one hand to theory/research on the other obscures a whole lot of messiness. And it misses the ways that microhistories (of 1963 and beyond) offer us a richer understanding of the field. Microhistory as a methodology (see Craig et al., for example), then, offers us all opportunities to consider our theory-in-practice and how that theory-in-practice complicates and/or affirms histories and current conceptions of rhetoric and composition/writing studies as a discipline.

More so even than this disciplinary desire for microhistories and counternarratives, though, the nature of storytelling as an activist methodology, rooted in critical race studies (Boylorn; Kybuto; Yosso) and feminist theory (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner; Ettorre), makes it a particularly useful approach for this project. For scholars, artists, and activists, storytelling is both a way of intervening in socio-political issues and problematic power structures and a way of claiming and/or making knowledge (Rice & Mündel); as Blair, Brown, and Baxter argue, autoethnography and feminist methods more broadly share a keen interest in "transformative or interventionist" work (386). Autoethnography offers vital ways of contextualizing institutional practices and humanizing resistance to such practices (Adams; Adams & Jones; Ellis & Bochner).

To make my WPA work more visible, following calls for microhistories (McComiskey) and counternarratives (Rice) and indebted to the history of narrative and ethnographic methods in critical race studies and feminist theory, I offer two brief vignettes from my first year as Writing Program Director at my current institution—a midsized, regionally-serving, comprehensive university on the West Coast. I think these two brief stories might be useful in helping to clarify what I mean when I say much of my labor as a WPA is invisible, so let me tell you the story of "moving" our directed self-placement from Moodle to Canvas and of recertifying our two first-year writing tracks/courses. Each one begins with an email from someone outside my department. The projects were framed as fairly straightforward: copy a course from one LMS to another; fill out a form. Neither was straightforward in application, though. Each one was politically delicate, time sensitive, and work intensive.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

**“Hi, Megan. We need to get DSP over into Canvas.”**

Early in my first year, my department chair emailed to suggest we meet to discuss the specifics surrounding a few of the things I was responsible for in my position as writing program director. Throughout the interview and hiring process, the department had (thankfully!) been clear about the major things the writing program director would do: provide a vision for the program and draft policies/documents to support that vision, host professional development, supervise teaching associates, run directed self-placement (DSP), and consult on program hiring decisions. My chair, who was in his last year in that role, wanted to make sure I had a hand in crafting a document that more specifically enumerated expectations in each of these areas. I was very grateful, and since we agreed on so much about the future and character of our writing program, the document was fairly easy to draft. But as any WPA can tell you (and probably any administrator of any stripe), bullet points tend to obscure the hardest and/or most complicated parts of what we do.

Among the bullet points we crafted in that meeting was “Responsibility for Directed Self-Placement: administration, communication with other campus offices, modification (as necessary), and assessment.” I was happy to be responsible for DSP; in my previous position at a small, elite, private liberal arts college in the Northeast, I hadn’t been the one primarily responsible for DSP, but I’d watched admiringly as the administrators who were responsible for its revision made it more thoughtful and accessible. I’d done research on DSP to help support that revision, and I was excited to work more directly with an approach to DSP that had already been fairly successful in supplanting problematic placement tests<sup>8</sup> and in eliminating barriers to success for students of color<sup>9</sup> (Inoue; Inoue & Poe).

---

<sup>8</sup> According to the Legislative Analyst Office’s report on the 2012 first-year class, for students who took the California State University (CSU) system’s English Placement Test, there was a stark racial disparity for students of color: 57% of those deemed non-college ready (and therefore required to participate in the remedial “Early Start” program) were Latino, compared to 41% of the first-year class that year. 8% of those deemed non-college ready were Black, though only 5% of the incoming class was Black. And 65% of the non-college ready students qualified for need-based financial aid, compared to 51% of the class as a whole. The CSU moved from EPT to multiple measures, which combines high school GPA, test scores, and high school difficulty measures in 2018, but many campuses (like mine) have elected to stick with directed self-placement.

<sup>9</sup> As Welton and Martinez note, structural barriers for students of color include lack of access to college preparatory courses and programs at the secondary level (p. 198), which leaves students with a “college readiness debt” (p. 208). But even before that, during their elementary and middle school years, students of color are less likely to be encouraged to build aspirations for college (p. 199).

What I didn't know at that time was that a seemingly unrelated change on campus was going to make my work with DSP much more challenging. The year before I arrived, the information technology services on our campus advocated for and won a change in learning management systems. Despite a somewhat contentious debate among faculty, the campus voted to move from Moodle to Canvas. The 2018-2019 academic year would be a year of transition, and support for Moodle would officially end in May 2019. All courses would be copied into Canvas, and by the beginning of the Spring 2019 semester, faculty began preparing to run their courses exclusively through Canvas.

That January, I got an email: the previous coordinator for DSP (one of my amazing English department colleagues who had been acting as an unofficial but wonderful mentor to me) wanted to let me know that what was billed as an easy copy from Moodle to Canvas had not been easy on DSP. The copied course simply didn't work. All the linkages and the progression necessary to get students through the various activities that comprise our directed-self placement approach were broken by the incompatibility of the two LMS formats. I quickly logged into Canvas to find that she was exactly right, and I decided fairly quickly that I was better off starting over. And so began a months long process of creating and recreating DSP in Canvas. By the first week of April 2019, when we were supposed to be ready to enroll the first newly admitted and matriculated students into the Canvas course, we were still doing accessibility checks and fixing bugs.

All told, I have dedicated more than 100 hours to "moving" DSP to Canvas. I spent ten or so hours creating the first draft of the course, twenty or more hours in the Canvas forums and with staff from our center for teaching and learning trying to understand how to address usability and accessibility problems, and at least thirty or forty hours in meetings and on email participating in conversations about how to ensure that (1) DSP works, (2) it's accessible, (3) the content of communications to students are clear and precise, (4) we all agree on the process for communication and enrollment, (5) academic programs (the office responsible for pre-enrollment, admissions, and campus-wide curricular policies) and I are on the same page about how we get the information from DSP to the campus

---

However, as Yosso notes, students of color are also often adept at finding and building social networks to support their academic achievement, so any attempt at address structural barriers should attend, too, to supporting the social networks students of color build to "survive and resist macro and micro forms of oppression" in their pursuit of higher education (Yosso 77). As Ladson-Billings, Paris, and Inoue note, however, the monolingual and monocultural approaches to teaching and learning in most educational institutions also present significant barriers to success for multilingual students and students from diverse backgrounds.

offices responsible for advising and enrolling first-year students, and (6) I've allayed fears about whether DSP is compatible with system-level requirements about how placement works for first-year writing and math courses.

I'm not complaining; I'm pretty proud of the DSP process that our newly matriculated students are engaging with for the 2019-2020 academic year. Rather, I'm detailing the time spent to make visible all the labor hidden by a seemingly simple request. Any WPA who has implemented or supported DSP can tell you that it's more complicated than simply building the questionnaire or the instrument. Integrating DSP into a set of already complex conversations and systems around enrollment and placement is difficult and time consuming. The technical challenges are complex and challenging. So are the political ones. And all of them take time.

**“Hi Megan. It's time to recertify the stretch courses. We'll need the ENGL 101 materials, too.”**

The complex challenges of WPA work are further complicated by university- and system-level changes that have profound impacts on the writing program. In the summer of 2017, the California State University System, Office of the Chancellor handed down two new executive orders. EO 1100 governed the transferability of general education (GE) courses and laid out specific requirements related to unit hours, content criteria, and recertification processes for all CSU campuses. EO 1110 governed placement and remediation processes for first-year writing and math courses and effectively ended the practice of requiring non-credit-bearing courses as prerequisites for first-year writing or math courses. Both EOs had a significant impact on first-year writing programs across the CSU system, but on my campus (because we'd long ago moved from the placement test to DSP and from a remedial model to a stretch composition model<sup>10</sup>), our program was fairly well positioned to implement EO 1110; in fact, we were already largely in compliance with the EO.

---

<sup>10</sup> Remedial models of composition require students to complete non-college-credit bearing courses before they are allowed to enroll in a college-credit bearing writing course. Stretch models of composition, on the other hand, include multiple classes that all confer college credit. In most cases, stretch models run parallel to one-term courses, and the stretch courses have the same outcomes and requirements as their single-term counterparts but “stretch” those outcomes and requirements across two terms instead of one. For example, my campus's one-semester writing course requires four major projects and 4,500 written words. (Students receive three units of college credit, which count toward student's general education requirements.) Our stretch courses have the same requirements, but students have two semesters to complete those requirements. Students in the stretch courses receive six units of college credit (three units of these count toward student's general education requirements and three count as elective credit).

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

EO 1100, on the other hand, had some surprisingly earthshaking consequences for us. Since the creation of our stretch composition program, around 2010, we had also been running a 4-unit, one-semester composition course that fulfilled the written communication general education requirement. Though one semester of writing is insufficient to help students develop transferable writing and reading abilities, the composition faculty on my campus had done a great job of building courses that served students well by using the additional hour (most GE courses were 3 hours instead of 4) as a way to give students additional practice, time for revision, and individualized attention. According to EO 1100, though, these 4-hour courses were no longer permissible.

The writing program response to the EO was further complicated by large-scale, campus-level changes to GE. The EO had caused our campus to rethink the entirety of our GE program, and so a special working group assembled at the end of the 2017-18 academic year to draft an entirely new GE sequence. The new GE proposal did little to articulate a new vision for the written communication requirement, but it did integrate the Chancellor's Office 3-unit requirement for GE classes. There would be no special dispensation for our writing courses; our 4-unit writing course was dead.

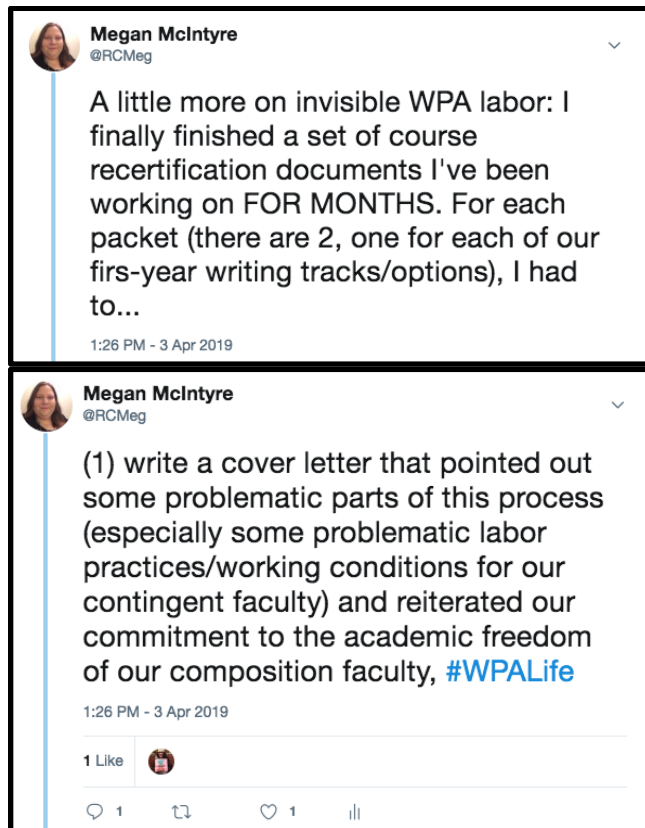
This required change would, of course, have an effect on our students; as I made clear in the documents I crafted related to this process, the loss of one hour per week of instructional time means that students are likely to get less specific feedback and less one-on-one time with their instructors. But the bigger impact was on our composition faculty: with caps of 25 (which represents a reduction of two students from our previous caps) for ENGL 101, composition faculty teaching a full 12-unit load of ENGL 101 courses will see an increase of one course and 19 students, which is the equivalent of approximately 1,500 extra pages of student writing to respond to over the course of the semester. Our faculty are being tasked with significantly more work with no increase in compensation.

For the most part, my approach to this process has been to note, loudly and frequently, what is being required of writing program faculty and to ensure that affected faculty are invited to every meeting I'm in regarding these changes. My department chair has been similarly committed to ensuring that composition faculty have a voice and a seat at the table as these decisions get made by faculty committees outside our department. And the composition faculty have responded with thoughtfulness and care, but all of these changes ask for something they have very, very little of: time. As Jesse Priest convincingly argues in his examination of how time factors into material working conditions for writing teachers, "time is inseparably connected to labor in a variety of ways: we spend time, we engage in work while also engaging in time, and our institutions, our students, and ourselves put pressure on us to mediate our time in certain and specific ways" (42). And for those in contingent positions, time is in quite short supply. This process has taught me a lot

about myself and my institution. Among the most important lessons is this: it's not enough to make space for our contingent faculty; I also have to find ways to center their voices and facilitate their participation in ways that don't require time they simply don't have.

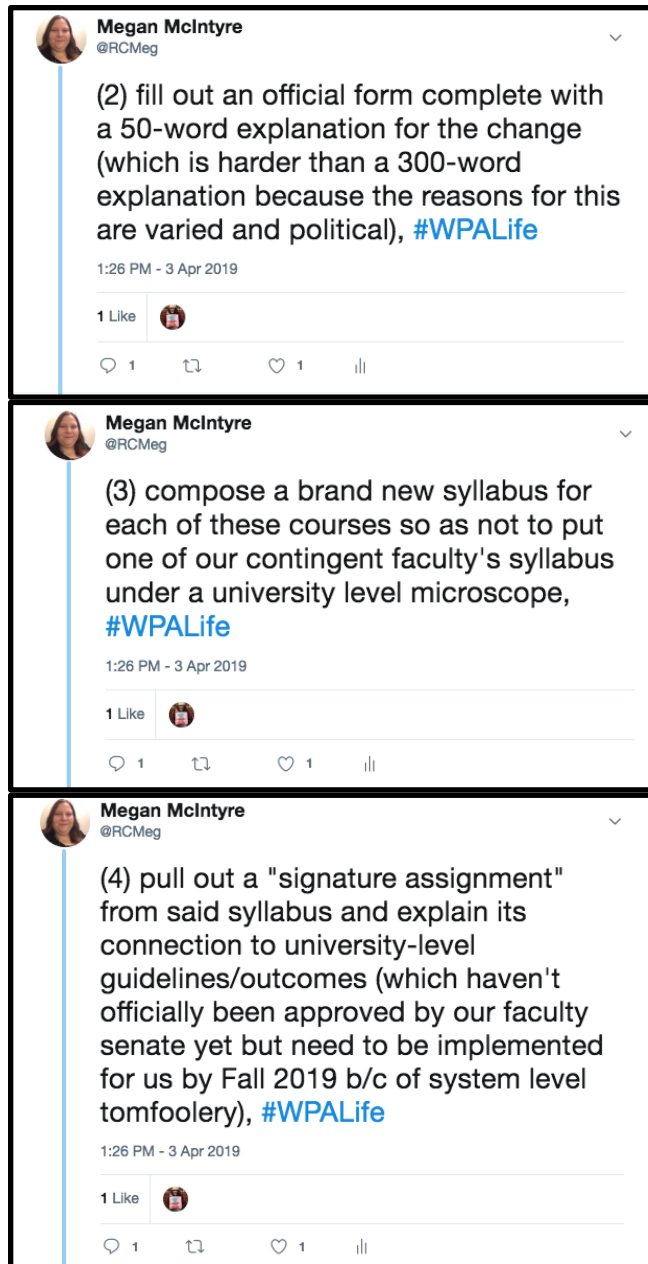
Ultimately, our department was faced with the choice to refuse to participate in the recertification of our courses within the new framework, and put our contingent faculty in an even more uncertain position with regard to their course assignments for the academic year, or participate in what we saw as a flawed process so we could make good-faith offers of work. We've chosen the latter course, for better or for worse. But I've taken every opportunity in the recertification documents I've crafted to reiterate the labor and pedagogical concerns that the process is largely ignoring.

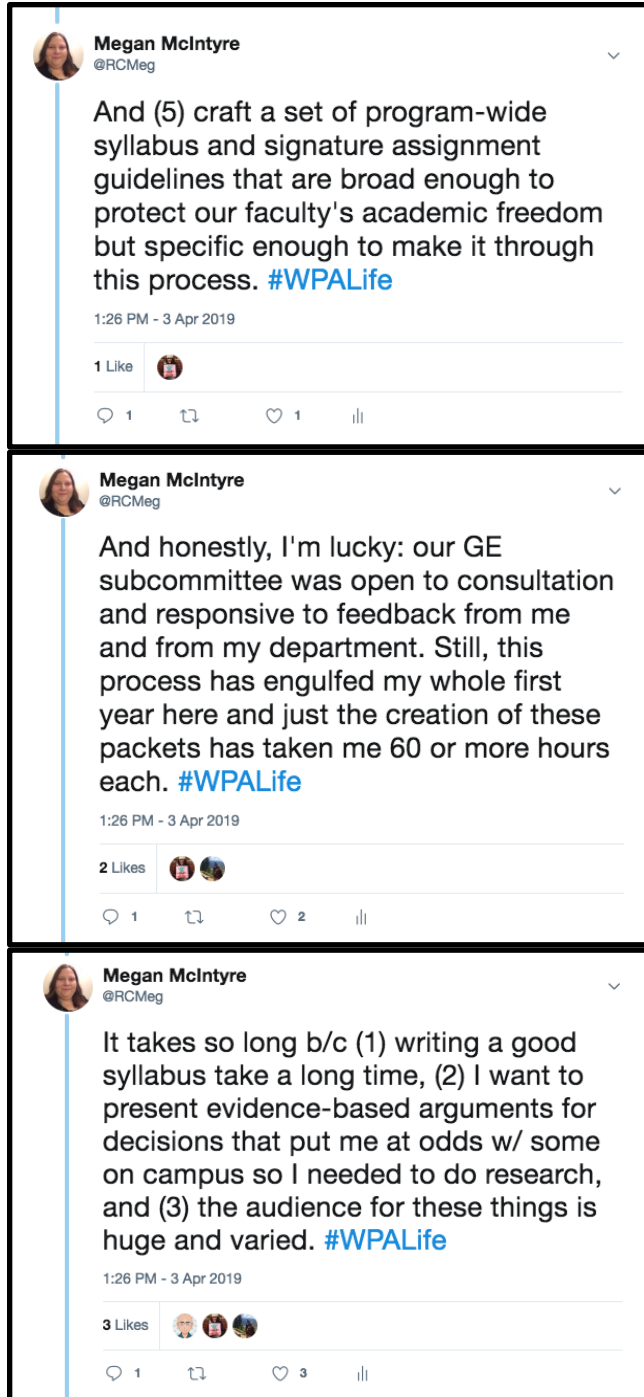
Here's how I recently described this process on Twitter:



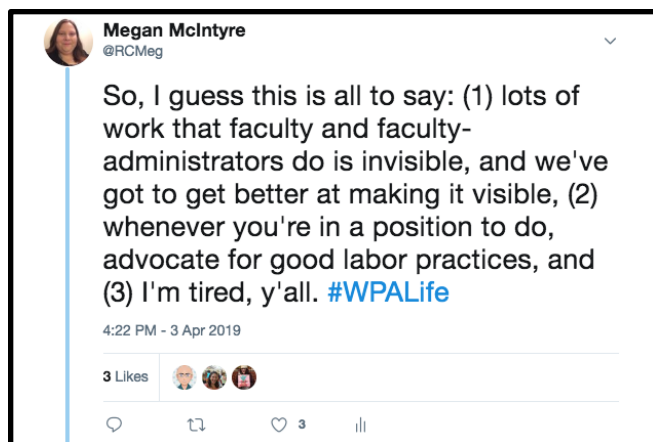
*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*







*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*



**Figures 1-9: Tweeting on My Experience with the Course Recertification Process**

It's not lost on me that, as both a woman and a junior faculty member, I'm putting myself in a somewhat precarious position by working through these situations so publicly (both on Twitter and in this article). The work I'm discussing at length here often stays invisible because it feels politically dangerous to call too much attention to it, to spotlight the delicate work at the center of these negotiations. But I also recognize my privilege: at my institution, my administrative time is part of my teaching load. In the tenure process, I narrate that administrative work as part of my yearly self-reflection and (try to) enumerate it on my CV. I get credit in the tenure process for WPA work.

I also recognize the privilege of having a department and a set of a university-level committees that were open to my input and recognized my expertise. Throughout both the DSP and the recertification processes, my colleagues in the English department and on faculty senate committees and subcommittees have been open to questions, asked for feedback, respected my disciplinary expertise, and generally done what they could to support my work. I'm in a supportive environment during a complicated moment on my campus.

Not everyone is so lucky: as long as there have been WPA positions, there have been warnings about when/how/who should occupy them. In 1991, Ed White cautioned against untenured faculty accepting WPA positions since the job comes with "large, unmanageable responsibilities and very little authority" (8). Michael Pemberton, writing two years after White, called the expectations for administrative work that come with many tenure-track positions in rhetoric and composition "the tale too terrible to tell" (156). Thousands of posts on the WPA-L, the listserv frequented by writing studies scholars and teachers of all stripes (but initially created as space for isolated WPAs to ask questions and build community), confirm the myriad challenges and controversies that come

with WPA work. Even in more official spaces, including journals and books in the field, there's a sense that our working conditions are consistently unhealthy: "We all feel overwhelmed and in unfamiliar territory on any given day" (Charlton et al. 62). The history and narratives of WPA work that pervade disciplinary spaces are most frequently bound up with "reluctance," "defeat," and exploitation (Charlton et al. 172).

And it's even more difficult for WPAs of color. Many of the narratives of WPA work (from Susan Miller's *Textual Carnivals* to Theresa Enos' and Shane Borrowman's *The Promise and Perils of Writing Program Administration*) fail to acknowledge the work of WPAs of color, let alone, as Sherri Craig, notes "fully encapsulate the complexities of identity, power, politics, and socialized histories for people of color in (and entering) administrative positions, especially at predominantly white institutions" (16). Further, Collin Lamont Craig and Staci Maree Perryman-Clark note that race and gender are "intersecting paradigms" that inform one another and shape the "investitures around identity that align relations of power to representation" within institutions (39). All of this puts WPAs of color in increasingly precarious positions, as Craig and Perryman-Clark note in a follow-up to their 2011 piece. Even when engaging in seemingly standard WPA work (mentoring graduate TAs, advocating for students, mediating grade disputes), Perryman-Clark found herself forced into a "balancing act of advocating for racial and other marginalized minorities while ensuring a commitment to faculty and students across racial and gender lines," noting that the predicament "can be a tricky one" made trickier by her intersectional identity as a woman of color (21).

As Asao B. Inoue reminds us, we're not just talking about racism at the level of interaction but at the level of institution and of language itself: "I'm talking about our programs and organization being racist" (135). A recent survey confirms Inoue's argument: Genevieve García de Müller and Iris Ruiz's survey-based study of perceptions of race in WPA work suggests that WPAs of color find themselves more isolated than their white peers: "When it comes to the consideration of race and writing program administration, participants argued that scholars of color often work in isolation, recognizing that programs lack effective strategies to systematically implement race-based pedagogy or examine specific institutional resources to help combat racism on campuses" (36). Anti-racism, then, seems particularly vital for WPA work, which requires relationships with faculty, students, and staff across universities. As Craig and Perryman-Clark note in their introduction to *Black Perspectives in Writing Program Administration*, "WPA discourse, [is] an amalgamation of experiences, bodies, labor, policies, rules, departments, and documents, is always and already race work" (10).

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

### Making WPA Work Visible Online via #WPALife

Even under the very best and most privileged of circumstances, WPA work can be lonely. I found my answer to that loneliness online. And in the process, I found a community of WPAs dedicated to making their work visible, at least to their Twitter followers. #WPALife, whose exact origin is a bit of a mystery to me, but which was popularized by Bradley Dilger's sustained use of the tag, has offered an outlet and a community.

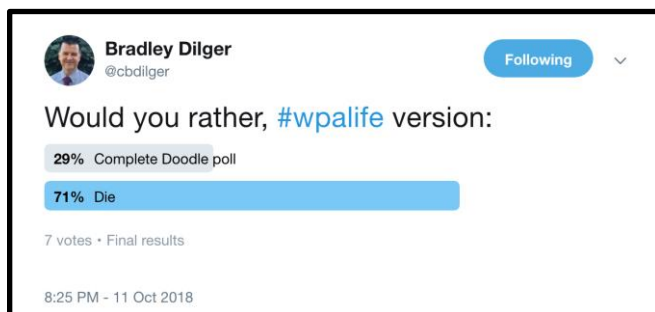


Figure 2: Example #1 of a #WPALife Tweet

The hashtag is home to a few WPAs who, like me, are doing the hard and often invisible work of running writing programs and advocating for best practices on their campuses. We talk about class sizes:

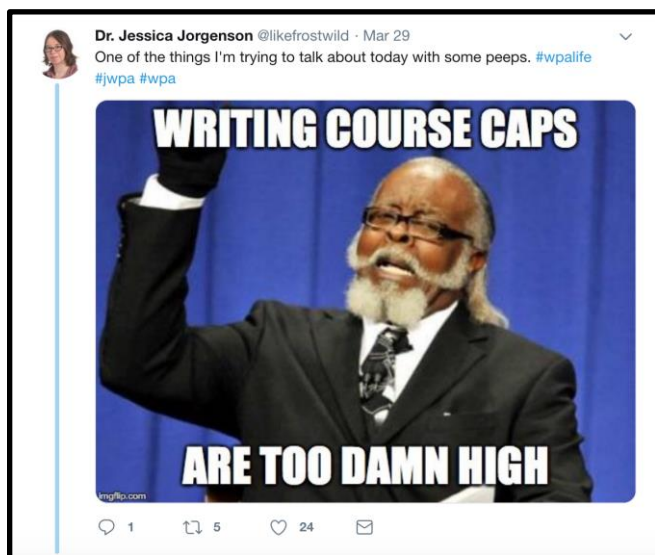


Figure 3: Example of a #WPALife Tweet About Class Sizes

We talk about labor practices:



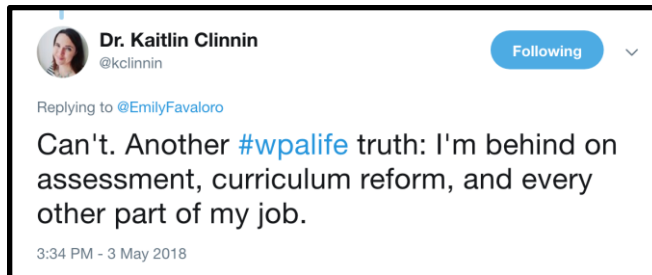
**Figure 4: Example of a #WPALife Tweet About Labor Practices**

We talk about the big events that we're responsible for:



**Figure 5: Example of #WPALife Tweet about Orientation, One of the Significant Events that Many WPAs Plan and Execute Each Year**

And how the various parts of our jobs impact one another:



**Figure 6: Example of a #WPALife Tweet about How Big Projects with Overlapping Deadlines Make it Difficult to Keep Up or Catch Up**



We also share our mundane experiences, which take as much time and require as much labor as the more sustained endeavors that make up the majority of the discussion in the first half of this article. Members of this hashtag community tweet about office drop-ins from publisher reps:



**Figure 7: Example of #WPALife Tweet about Speaking to Publishers' Book Reps**

And meetings:



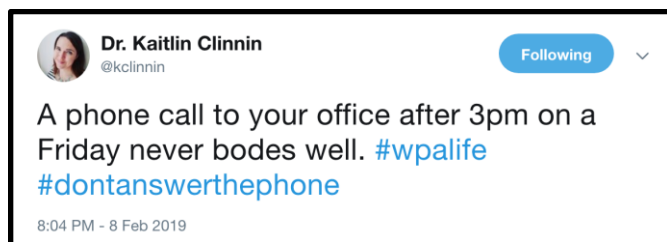
**Figure 8: Example of #WPALife Tweet about Meetings and Time**

And email inboxes:



**Figure 9 Example of a #WPALife Tweet about the Volume of Email WPAs Wade through Each Day**

And phone calls:



**Figure 10: Example of a #WPALife Tweet about Dealing with Phone Calls and Crises**

Basically, on a regular basis we articulate our labor in a public, semi-permanent space. We “heart” and share and respond to one another and in the process, for me at least, feel a little less isolated in our work.

Hashtag-based Twitter communities like this one are built around a set of shared interests represented by a specific hashtag; the shared interest is often but not always identified by the content of the hashtag. In her discussion of the #YouOkaySis hashtag, Paige Johnson argues that hashtags can serve as both a “rallying cry and gathering place” (57). Hashtags are also, as linguist Vyvyan Evans notes, a “linguistic marker of emphasis” (“#Language: Evolution in the Digital Age”). In the case of #WPALife, we can see all these traits at work simultaneously: the messages shared using the hashtag call for attention to invisible but necessary work, emphasize those parts of our jobs that feel most important or least likely to be seen/understood, and offer a space for commiseration, support, and advice from others in similar circumstances.

There are, of course, limitations to a community like this and to this community in particular. There a number of pre-tenure women participating in the hashtag community, but so far as I can tell, all but one of the WPAs tweeting using the #WPALife hashtag are white. This speaks, to return to an earlier refrain, to the precarious position of faculty and WPAs of color, especially those who are pre-tenure. Public conversations in social media spaces can be dangerous, especially to women and people of color. For this to be a community dedicated to equity, we must find ways to center those voices here as well.

As one of the more prolific users of the tag (a title I share with Brad Dilger, I think), there are concrete steps I can take to promote more diverse voices among this community of administrators. First, and most basically, I can start by tweeting the work of scholars and WPAs of color into the tag. Recognizing the foundational contributions of women, BIPOC, disabled, and LGBTQ+ scholars to rhetoric and composition as a field and to my work as a faculty-administrator is quite literally the very

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

least I can do. Secondly, I can begin using additional hashtags (alongside #WPALife) to connect to ongoing conversations around equity and diversity, especially hashtags celebrating achievements of diverse scholars. There's danger here, though: hashtag spamming (the practice of using many popular tags as a way to draw attention to your own tweet) is widely seen as manipulative and, for folks within the community represented by the hashtag, exploitative.

Thirdly, it feels important to acknowledge, in the #WPALife space and elsewhere, the continuing lack of diversity in WPA positions. As a WPA who has significantly benefitted from the amazing work of scholars, teachers, and WPAs of color as I work to build an anti-racist practice and program, I owe an enormous debt to scholars like Asao Inoue, Christina Cedillo, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Django Paris, Staci M. Perryman-Clark, Collin Lamont Craig, and so many more. Finally, members of this community should specifically invite WPAs of color into the community. This final action, though, must be preceded by the others. Before I ask scholars of color to do the work of participating and strengthening #WPALife, #WPALife must become a space that is proactively welcoming to those scholars.

### **Conclusion: So What Do You Want?**

What is it, then, that I want? Following Paula Patch, I want a revolution. I want a program built on empathy and equity, recognizing that “equity is generous and does not look like withholding things from people who are doing good work just because the way they do it or the way they arrived at it looks different” (“Academic Fragility/Academic Imagination”). I want better ways of advocating for the contingent faculty that make up the vast majority of faculty in our program. And I want their work (and mine) to be visible and rewarded by institutions. I want to be, as Inoue has called us to, anti-racist in my teaching and administration practices. I want to decenter whiteness and center marginalized voices. I want to make space in our program for polyvocality, equity, and multiliteracies. This is the better writing program—and the better world—I’m fighting for in these small skirmishes marked by course change forms and learning management systems.

I also want accessible communities for those of us sometimes overwhelmed by the enormity and mundanity of our work. In one of the recent kerfuffles on the WPA-L,<sup>11</sup> a few long-standing members of the list

---

<sup>11</sup> WPA-L is a listserv that began as a way to connect writing program administrators from across the U.S. At that point in the history of the discipline, many WPAs were the only writing faculty in literature-focused English departments. Additionally, most faculty in WPA positions at the advent of the WPA-L were not specifically trained for WPA work, so the listserv allowed faculty to request and share resources and knowledge and forge much-needed relationships with others in similar positions. As Craig notes, though, faculty of



- Boylorn, Robin. M. "A Story & A Stereotype: An Angry and Strong Auto/Ethnography of Race, Class, and Gender." *Critical Autoethnography: Intersecting Cultural Identities in Everyday Life*, edited by Robin M. Boylorn and Mark P. Orbe, Leftcoast Press, 2014, pp. 129–143.
- Charlton, Colin, Jonikka Charlton, Tarez Samra Graban, Kathleen J. Ryan, and Amy Ferdidandt Stolley. *GenAdmin: Theorizing WPA Identities in the Twenty-First Century*. Parlor Press, 2011.
- Council of Writing Program Administrators. "Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration." 1998, <http://wpacouncil.org/positions/intellectualwork.html>.
- Craig, Jacob, Matthew Davis, Christine Martorana, Josh Mehler, Kendra Mitchell, Antony N. Ricks, Bret Zawilski, and Kathleen B. Yancey. "Against the Rhetoric and Composition Grain: a Microhistorical View." *Microhistories of Composition*, edited by Bruce McComiskey, Utah State University Press, 2016, pp. 284-307.
- Craig, Sherri. "A Story-less Generation: Emergent WPAs of Color and the Loss of Identity through Absent Narratives." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 39, no.2, Spring 2016, pp. 16-20.
- Craig, Collin L., and Staci Maree Perryman-Clark. "Troubling the Boundaries: (De)Constructing WPA Identities at the Intersections of Race and Gender." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 34, no. 2, Spring 2011, pp. 37–58.
- Craig, Collin L., and Staci Maree Perryman-Clark. "Troubling the Boundaries Revisited: Moving Towards Change as Things Stay the Same." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 39, no.2, Spring 2016, pp. 20-26.
- Crowley, Sharon. *Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998.
- Ellis, Carolyn, and Arthur P. Bochner. "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity." *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, SAGE Publications, 2000, pp. 733-768.
- Ettorre, Elizabeth. *Autoethnography as Feminist Method: Sensitising the Feminist 'I'*. Routledge, 2017.
- Evans, Vyvyan. "#Language: Evolution in the Digital Age." *The Guardian*, 26 June 2015, [www.theguardian.com/media-network/2015/jun/26/hashtag-language-evolution-digital-age](http://www.theguardian.com/media-network/2015/jun/26/hashtag-language-evolution-digital-age).
- Garcia de Mueller, Genevieve, and Iris Ruiz. "Race, Silence, and Writing Program Administration: A Qualitative Study of US College Writing Programs." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 40, no. 2, Spring 2017, pp. 19-39.

- Inoue, Asao B. "How do we language so people stop killing each other, or what do we do about white language supremacy?" 2019 Conference on College Composition and Communication, Pittsburgh, PA, 14 March 2019.
- Inoue, Asao B. "Racism in Writing Programs and the CWPA." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 40, no. 1, Fall 2016, pp. 134-154.
- Inoue, Asao B. "The Technology of Writing Assessment and Racial Validity." *Handbook of Research on Assessment Technologies, Methods, and Applications in Higher Education*, edited by Christopher S. Schreiner, IGI Global, 2009, pp. 97-120.
- Inoue, Asao B., and Mya Poe. "Racial Formations in Two Writing Assessments: Revisiting White and Thomas' findings on the English Placement Test after 30 Years." *Writing Assessment in the 21st century: Essays in Honor of Edward M. White*, edited by Norbert Elliot and Les Perelman, Hampton Press, 2012, pp. 343-361.
- Legislative Analyst's Office. *Initial Review of CSU's Early Start Program*. Legislative Analyst's Office, 2014, <https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2014/education/early-start/CSU-Early-Start-011414.pdf>.
- McLeod, Susan H. *Writing Program Administration*. Parlor Press, 2007.
- Micciche, Laura.R. "More than a Feeling: Disappointment and WPA Work." *College English*, vol. 64, no. 4, March 2002, pp. 432-458.
- North, Stephen M. *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*. Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1987.
- Paris, Django. "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice." *Educational Researcher*, no. 41, vol. 3, August/September 2012, pp. 93-97.
- Paris, Django, and Samy H. Alim. "What are We Seeking to Sustain through Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy? A Loving Critique Forward." *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 84, no. 1, April 2014, pp. 85-100.
- Patch, Paula. "Academic Fragility/Academic Imagination." *Inside Higher Ed*, 4 April 2019, <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/just-visiting/guest-post-academic-fragilityacademic-imagination>.
- Pemberton, Michael. "Tales Too Terrible to Tell: Unstated Truths and Underpreparation in Graduate Composition Programs." *Writing Ourselves into the Story: Unheard Voices from Composition Studies*, edited by Sheryl I. Fontaine and Susan Hunter, Southern Illinois University Press, 1993, pp. 154-73.
- Perryman-Clark, Staci Maree, and Collin Lamont Craig. "Introduction." *Black Perspectives in Writing Program Administration*, edited by Staci Maree Perryman-Clark and Collin Lamont Craig, National Council of Teachers of English, 2019, pp. 1-27.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)



- Priest, Jesse. "Terms of Time for Composition: A Materialist Examination of Contingent Faculty Labor." *Academic Labor: Research and Artistry*, vol. 2, no.1, 2018, pp. 41-62.
- Rice, Jeff. *The Rhetoric of Cool*. Southern Illinois UP, 2007.
- Welton, Anjalé D., and Melissa Martinez. "Coloring the College Pathway: A More Culturally Responsive Approach to College Readiness and Access for Students of Color in Secondary Schools." *Urban Review*, vol. 46, June 2014, pp 197-223.
- White, Edward. "Use it or Lose It: Power and the WPA." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol 15, no. 1-2, Fall/Winter 1991, pp. 3-12.
- Yosso, Tara J. *Critical Race Counterstories Along the Chicana/o Educational Pipeline*. Routledge, 2006.
- Yosso, Tara J. "Whose Culture has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth." *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 8, no. 1, Winter 2005, pp. 69–91.



“Then I started to realize: No, I am. I then realized that unions are something really important for graduate students” (Niedringhaus).

Protests like the one that took place at CU Boulder are becoming increasingly common at universities across the United States (for a round-up of recent protests and organization efforts, see Flaherty), as more and more graduate students seek to take advantage of a 2016 ruling by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) at Columbia University, which stated that graduate workers at private universities are employees under the National Labor Relations Act and have the right to organize (Kroeger, et al). The movement has gained even more urgency in recent months after the NLRB announced in the summer of 2019 that it was “revisiting” the 2016 ruling around whether certain “services” graduate workers provide the university should be classified as “work” (Douglas-Gabriel). Though the NLRB ruling addressed private universities only, it provided a kairotic<sup>12</sup> moment for advocacy groups at public universities to make their voices heard—a window that, for graduate workers and other stakeholders interested in affecting change, might be closing quickly, given the historically anti-union status of the current Republican administration that controls the NLRB (Saltzman).

If changes like the ones sought by the CRC are going to happen, the first step for those stakeholders lies not in vast administrative or policy shifts, but in redirecting the attitudes of graduate workers themselves in a way that mirrors that of the protestor from the CRC. The doctoral student referenced above is typical of the current graduate worker in higher education in that they struggle to articulate a clear definition of their identity as both student and laborer. Graduate students who also work within the university—as research and teaching assistants, administrators, tutors, instructors, program directors, etc.—must navigate a dual-identity unique to their position in higher education. As both students seeking expertise and further development opportunities in their chosen field and workers laboring in said field, graduate students work with, and directly for, the administrators and professors who supervise their success professionally and academically (a distinction that becomes significantly muddled when discussing graduate workers).

This article addresses that dual-positionality, and the rhetoric that organizers and activists with the CRC at CU Boulder used to negotiate their marginalized status. I begin by acknowledging the ongoing issues around the employment status of contingent faculty in higher education, highlighting the similarities and contrasting the differences between their status and that of graduate workers. As a student in a program centered within rhetoric and writing, I focus on position statements from groups focused in English and Writing Studies, which are uniquely affected by the use of contingent faculty. Following that, I discuss how the dual-

---

<sup>12</sup> Kairotic, or kairos, in rhetorical tradition refers to an opportune time, place, or setting.

positionality of the graduate worker manifests itself in a self-identifying and limiting rhetoric of the apprentice, which obscures their identity as a laborer and which no longer meets the needs of graduate workers. Next, using Edward Schiappa's work on how definitions are formed and circulated, I analyze the public literature of the CRC to discover how the group is addressing previously held assumptions of graduate workers by adopting the language, and some of the issues, of a more privileged worker class. By attempting to identify the rhetorical moves that graduate workers at the CRC are using to inch their way up the metaphorical ladder (from apprentice to professional), my hope is that graduate workers, and other contingent groups, can better self-represent their stated goals and the value they provide to agents inside the universities, as well as the greater public.

My intent is not to delve into the efficiencies of a collective bargaining agreement or come to some determination as to the effectiveness of graduate worker unions. It is also not to deeply engage with any of the legal hurdles to unionization efforts in private or public universities (for a detailed summary of pertinent law around unionization efforts amongst graduate students in higher education, see Saltzman). Instead, I am forwarding the case that the CRC, in accordance with their desire to be recognized and collectively bargain with administrators at CU Boulder, engages in rhetorical arguments that a) indicate what they perceive as their value, b) indicate the gap that they believe exists between the value they perceive and how they are currently valued, and c) preemptively counter or directly engage with disagreements about said value gap. By looking more closely at those rhetorical appeals, techniques may emerge that uncover new ways of thinking about how graduate workers should present their identity as both student and professional.

### **Contingent Faculty and Graduate Workers**

It is no secret, nor is it a new revelation, that there is concern amongst faculty and administrators about the growing dependence of contingent faculty in higher education. According to the 2012 survey report *A Portrait of Part-time Faculty Members*, conducted by the Coalition on the Academic Workforce, the contingent academic workforce—made up of adjunct, NTTF, part-time instructors, and graduate workers—now represents close to seventy percent of all faculty in higher education (2). Those numbers, while startling, perhaps undersell the effect of contingent faculty on teachers and workers in the field of composition and writing. Again, according to the Coalition on the Academic Workforce, 16.4 percent of all part-time faculty are employed teaching courses in English language and literature—including first-year composition course sections that make up the bulk of the English Department's offerings to non-liberal arts students (8). The makeup of most universities is such that educators and students in the liberal arts, and composition programs in particular, are most clearly affected by a part-time designation.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

As I alluded to in the introduction, by highlighting the difference in concerns amongst graduate workers and NTTF at CU Boulder and CSU respectively, there are important distinctions between member groups that fall under the umbrella of what we label contingent faculty. In looking briefly at the position statements on the use of NTTF from the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), and the use of part-time or adjunct faculty by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)—both of which outline the problem as decades old and present a list of suggestions for how to support NTTF professionally and financially—the need for making those distinctions should become apparent. Because while both groups share a marginalized status and similar concerns, the rhetoric they express to achieve their shared goals, and the rhetoric used towards them in opposition, are markedly different.

As their part-time status indicates, NTTF and graduate workers share similar concerns relating to their vulnerable employment status in higher education. The action recommendations from the CCCC's 2016 statement "Working Conditions for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty" illustrate this overlap. The authors' recommendations on what to do about the continued overreliance on NTTF can be broken down into broad categories such as workload, resources, hiring, evaluation, and compensation—issues that also concern graduate workers, particularly instructors. However, despite acknowledging how dependent writing programs are on contingent faculty, absent from their recommendations are concerns relating specifically to the dual-positionality of graduate workers. Indeed, the only mention of graduate work is a suggestion that NTTF be eligible for low- or no-cost graduate courses if they contribute to "professional development or lead toward improved credentials for the teaching of writing" ("CCCC Statement on Working Conditions").

The 1997 "Statement from the Conference on the Growing Use of Part-Time and Adjunct Faculty" by the NCTE does express concern about how graduate programs are filled, and whether universities are doing enough to prepare graduate students for careers outside the academy. In their suggested action items, the authors of the position statement ask, "Whether there is an overproduction of Ph.D.'s. And if so, what are the responsibilities of academic departments and professional associations to deal with this overproduction in a rational and ethical manner" ("Statement...on the Growing Use")? Leaving aside the question of whether there are too many graduate students being produced, the rhetorical framing used by the NCTE leaves out questions of graduate worker compensation and concerns itself wholly with worker development, and their place within the department. The assumption, perhaps unintentional, is that the concern of graduate workers should be how, or if, they will enter into a worker class that is, in and of itself, marginalized enough to warrant said position statement. Amongst the list of concerns about benefits, classroom resources, and voting rights,

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

graduate workers are portrayed as workers in transit. The concerns of administrators and instructors—even while sympathetic towards the working conditions, compensation, etc. of NTTF—extend to the graduate worker only in terms of continued development, not of the resources that graduate workers receive from and contribute back to the university. It assumes that graduate workers should focus on their future employment status, not their current one, and on the value they will produce in the future, instead of the value they are currently producing.

I point out the absence of graduate workers issues in these two positions statements not to be critical of their content or intent—the two position statements do not set out to directly address graduate labor. And to be fair, the two groups are hardly synonymous. NTTF may be older, have more personal responsibilities, and have run out of runway in a career in higher education. NTT and adjunct faculty may have limited options available for advancement in higher education other than to achieve a tenure-track position. So, while there is room for advancement—though NTTF may argue not enough opportunity—the concerns expressed in the above position statements focus primarily on professional development and representation (mentorship, conducting research, manageable course loads, service and voting opportunities, etc.). Graduate workers face these same professional hurdles, while at the same time are categorized as developmental professionals and academics. Graduate workers are constantly in the process of professionalizing, a process that does not stop when they become a faculty member or even a worker in the private sector. But their status as a student subsumes their connection with other contingent faculty. Graduate workers need to be defined differently for their specific concerns to be addressed and for their labor to be acknowledged and properly valued.

Of course, if the notion that graduate students are walking a tightrope, constantly navigating between two identities in the eyes of other university stakeholders, has yet to truly permeate into the consciousness of graduate workers themselves, faculty and administrators can hardly be blamed for not providing a safety net. Timothy Reese Cain, in his history of faculty unions in the United States, traces the beginning of the formal graduate student collective bargaining to the late 1960s, though he notes that historically, assistants and other non-faculty were involved in organizing efforts long before then (56-58). Despite this long history of activism, there is certainly still work to be done in bringing the hidden, professional half of the graduate worker to the forefront and in “(a)dvancing definitions of themselves as more than students or apprentices” (Rhoades and Rhoads 163).

As activists and NTTF unionization efforts push for wage improvements, benefits, and other concessions from university administrations, the first step for graduate workers with similar goals is to address the rhetoric of apprenticeship and build towards a new definition of the graduate student worker as a professional and an employee. Before

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*



that can happen, however, graduate workers and other university stakeholders must come to recognize how the dual-positionality of graduate workers as both student and worker suppresses their identity as a laborer providing critical resources to the university. By looking more closely at the rhetoric expressed by graduate workers, faculty, and administrators, the under-discoursed rhetoric of graduate work can be more fully expressed.

### **The Apprentice: How Graduate Workers Perceive and are Perceived**

As is the case with the CRC at CU Boulder, the arguments unions or advocacy groups forward offer the clearest articulation of how graduate workers self-identify and represent their dual-positionality. In a review of the public rhetoric of ten unionization efforts at different levels of administrative recognition, Rhoades and Rhoads found that graduate unions present their concerns as “multifaceted, based not only on the class position of employees as workers, but on their status as graduate students and future professionals” (175). Other studies on the cultural barriers to graduate worker unionization efforts have recognized that the demands of graduate workers are based on that duality. Graduate workers have mirrored efforts amongst NTTU by demanding better access to material resources and compensation, while at the same time also making demands unique to their position as both student and worker, such as asking faculty to take on larger mentorship roles both academically and professionally (Davis). Thomas Discenna, in his review of the rhetoric of the 1995 Yale University graduate worker strike, forwards a hegemonic logic of the apprentice as a way to frame how graduate workers straddle this line: “According to this hegemonic rhetoric, graduate employees serve as apprentices to the academy, learning the life of the mind from more senior faculty, with the expectation of assuming the responsibilities of a scholar at the completion of their training...while graduate students themselves worked to challenge the logic of apprenticeship, the underlying rhetoric of a life of the mind remained powerful enough to present an obstacle....” (24).

This hegemonic rhetoric of the apprentice might be expected from administrators and even some faculty members. While faculty and administrative attitudes towards the idea of a graduate worker rights movement are multifaceted and evolving, it has proven difficult for faculty to challenge their work-models and freedom for experimentation (Kezar and Maxey 19). Once beneficiaries of the system that employs graduate workers, it is hard for more privileged members of the faculty to challenge the notion of graduate workers as apprentices and of faculty as mentors instilling disciplinary mastery (Davis et al. 353). Although occasionally supportive, administrators have been found to display a sense of paternalism towards graduate worker unionization efforts. Administrators have also been shown to closely identify with their institution in ways not found amongst faculty and graduate workers. This close association

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

identifies “the university” with the administrative level, and necessarily positions the graduate worker as “not the university”—both attitudes that are perhaps instructive, given that even graduate workers view their position as a jumping-off point for other professional opportunities (Davis et al. 354).

Regardless of the language used by other university stakeholders, it is when the language of the apprentice is internalized and adopted by graduate workers themselves that their advocacy movements are undermined. Jennifer Sano-Franchini’s work on the emotional labor of the academic job market in rhetoric and composition paints a compelling portrait of the toll that being a graduate worker can take (and serves as another reminder of how prevalent the use of contingent faculty is in composition programs). Sano-Franchini uses Lauren Berlant’s concept of “cruel optimism” to frame how it feels for graduate workers to exist simultaneously as always on the job market and working in the same field. The “profound attachments” associated with the tenure track encourages candidates to “persist in a system wherein employment is not always available for all, where tenure does not always promise job security, and where working hard does not always result in a living wage” (104). This “emotional roller coaster” that graduate workers looking to advance their careers undergo is not limited to the time between applying for a position and receiving a rejecting letter or interview request. Sano-Franchini finds that graduate workers feel like they are always “on” and must perform professionalism and “participate in various professional development opportunities, maintain a professional website, and remain active on several social media sites.” (113). That this work is seen as performed or enacted, and not embodied within the identity of the graduate worker, is itself an acknowledgement that even graduate workers hoping to advance their careers view their current labor and professionalization efforts as a production—dressing up as a faculty member instead of pointing out that they also labor within the same department, field, university, and discourse community.

Graduate workers needs are different than other contingent faculty, and there is conflicting rhetoric found in how graduate workers express their identities, even as they seek to disrupt hiring practices and normative working conditions. By moving away from the rhetoric of apprenticeship and adopting language being used by the NTTF movement, graduate workers can more closely associate themselves with already working “professionals” in their field and position their dual-identity as a uniqueness that warrants distinct attention to that of other contingent faculty. The rhetoric of the apprentice is no longer (if it ever has) correctly applied to such a simultaneous position. A shift in the definition of who a graduate worker is, and what a graduate worker does, must begin to circulate amongst universities if the dual-positionality of the graduate worker is to be fully recognized.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

### Redefining the Graduate Worker

Edward Schiappa of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in his book *Defining Reality*, calls these seemingly intractable perceptions—the conception of the graduate worker as an apprentice—*mundane definitions*. Schiappa writes, “A definition is mundane when it is used unproblematically by a particular discourse community” (29). *Novel definitions*, on the other hand, are “introduced when a person feels that the dominant mundane definition (formal or informal) is wrong or unhelpful. Thus, someone introducing a novel definition wants to change other people’s understanding and linguistic behavior away from the conventional patterns and toward new behaviors and understanding” (31). Key to our understanding of mundane and novel definitions is that defining something is a persuasive act, and while definitions can be scientific or clinical, they are also socially constructed and circulate because of an agreed-upon consensus. Schiappa writes:

Definitions represent claims about how certain portions of the world are. They are conventional and depend on the adherence of language users. Definitions function to induce denotative conformity, which is another way of saying that definitions are introduced or contended when one wants to alter others’ linguistic behavior...A successful new definition changes not only recognizable patterns of linguistic behavior but also our understanding of the world and the attitudes and behaviors we adopt toward various parts of that world. (32)

Definitions, in other words, are patterns of linguistic behavior that shape our behavior—but only when they are acceptable to a network of language users and reinforced through stakeholders. Definitions are, therefore, as Schiappa states, “tiny slices of reality...” that “are better understood as persuasive efforts that encourage intersubjective agreement about how to see the world. For a description to be accepted, people must be willing to “see” the similarity between the current phenomenon and a prototypical exemplar” (128-129). The only way to challenge that “thin slice of reality,” then, is to open a discourse community’s eyes to other novel definitions.

Mundane definitions become novel definitions when they enter what Schiappa terms a state of *definitional rupture*, a period that calls “our natural attitudes into question” (90). As the national and local attention to the use of NTTF makes clear, universities and colleges have already entered that period. Trish Jenkins, in a forum on organizing hosted by the National Council of Teachers of English, uses Schiappa’s framework to complicate the “at-will” status of NTTF while arguing for unionization as a means to more effectively question that designation.

In the case of the contingent faculty at my own university, the mundane definition of at-will employee affects their status. Although a novel definition has yet to be negotiated to replace this term, their chief negotiator believes that collective bargaining has led to refinements and limitations of the all-inclusive at-will definition, which has allowed an opportunity for the union to question—sometimes even test—assertions of at-will authority... Ideally, novel definitions will emerge, allowing us to work toward social realities that better serve contingent faculty. I believe that being organized provides the opportunity for these things to happen. (Jenkins et al. 455-56)

Inherent in Jenkins' critique of the "at-will" label is that the term implies a balance of power that does not exist in the dynamic between an "at-will" faculty member and their university. Notice too Jenkins' particular use of the phrase "emerge," which implies that other definitions are hidden and must be unearthed. While Jenkins was speaking live at a forum, and it would be unfair to parse her words too closely, her language, like that of the graduate student quoted during the CRC protest, is itself revealing, in that a different model of labor in higher education must be conceived and presented in order to disrupt the status quo.

The emergence I am suggesting, in the case of graduate workers in the U.S., is that of the worker and professional. In order to render themselves as a distinct category of worker, with concerns that are in some ways aligned with other contingent faculty but also distinct, graduate workers must reject the label of themselves as apprentices, and the conventions that come with it, and emerge instead as fully formed professionals with their dual status as student and worker supporting—not undercutting—the other. By looking at the rhetorical moves in the CRC's public literature that both acknowledges the graduate worker's dual-positionality and forwards new, novel definitions centered around professionalism, a pattern of similar definitional rupture emerges.

### **The CRC and Novel Definitions of the Graduate Worker**

This is, of course, not to say the CRC comes out and states that their goal is to create a period of definitional rupture. However, taking a similar tact as earlier examinations of graduate worker unions, it is possible to see how the CRC is introducing a new definition of what it means to be a graduate worker. It is worth exploring the entirety of the CRC's website; however, for the purposes of looking at how the CRC's literature is pushing back against the mundane definition of apprenticeship, the section of their website entitled "Scope of our Labor" provides the best examples of their attempts to alter patterns of linguistic behavior. There, the CRC directly addresses some of the barriers to graduate unions. For example, one argument forwarded by administrators is that unions could cause interdepartmental and interdisciplinary friction. In countering this claim,

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

the CRC writes, “You may think that a graduate employee union introduces antagonism between graduate employees and others within the university. This claim is a common talking point from administrators who seek to bust unions. It holds no water” (*Labor*). This direct call to solidarity is not surprising from a pro-union group like the CRC, but it does indirectly introduce a challenge to the student-first (or apprentice-first) definition of graduate workers, in that navigating within the university is part of professionalization. The CRC posits that this is no greater a concern for unions than it is for other members of the professional class, as there are unions, as well as other professional groups, available to faculty. By pointing out the assumed result of unionization, the CRC is directly addressing a barrier to collective organizing while connecting graduate workers to symbolized language and practices used by a group with higher status within higher education.

The vast majority of the CRC’s language speaks to the financial or quality of life issues of being a graduate student in an area with an increasingly high cost of living. The CRC frames this as an issue of social justice: “...a worker deserves a living wage for full-time work without reservation. Rewards beyond that may be appropriate for excellence, but all who work must be paid enough to live with dignity and security” (“*Labor*”).<sup>13</sup> The effect of this language positions the CRC as fighting for the right to a living wage—a position also embraced by advocates for NTTF and other contingent faculty, as well as, in the words of the CRC, a great labor movement involving “the school teacher, the construction worker, the nurse, or the plumber” (“*Labor*”). By orienting themselves as professionals and laborers, primarily concerned with wages and benefits, the CRC places graduate workers under the umbrella of the professional class and complicates perceptions of graduate workers as apprentices. Their language also brings issues outside the academy into the definition of graduate worker that other faculty and workers in higher education contend with.

Most effectively, the CRC further connects graduate workers with other faculty through their introduction of a novel definition of who and what a graduate worker is and does. They offer a definition of graduate workers as employees pursuing *expertise development*. “The primary work of a teaching assistant is the same as the primary work of a research assistant: expertise development. Expertise development is the core of our employment, not an afterthought! Through research, teaching, and study,

---

<sup>13</sup> See also their ending call to action: “If economics force your colleagues to exceed statutory occupancy limits on homes and therefore risk eviction; if the varying and mysterious dates of our pay cause them to incur late fees on rent and other bills; if the cost of daycare delays their graduation; if they need an expensive medical procedure that forces a choice between shelter and health... consider the benefits a union can bring and stand with us in the push for a better university” (“*Labor*”).

we are actively transforming ourselves into experts in our fields” (“Labor”). Reframing the dual-positionality of graduate student labor (studying and teaching, for example) as equal in importance, and all towards the overall goal of expertise development, aligns the interests of graduate workers with that of more established faculty (recall the position statements from the CCCC and NCTE). Expertise development in teaching and research is the goal of all faculty members, as well as university administration. As the CRC states: “We must reject the perspective that our labor is half time. That perspective diminishes the goal of our academic institution, namely expertise development, and promotes a situation which enables our abuse” (“Labor”). Benefits, housing, pay, mentorship, research opportunities, academic freedom—all of these concerns, whether expressed by NTTF, graduate workers, tenured faculty, or all three, fall under the umbrella of expertise development. To be sure, graduate workers are learning within and about their chosen field but are also simultaneously involved in a professional workforce.

### **Conclusion**

On August 20 of this year, six months after the CRC’s initial walkout, the group announced via tweet that a CU Boulder task force had recommended to the university that student fees for graduate workers be waived. (At the time of this writing, it is unclear whether or not that policy will be implemented.) Despite not being formally recognized as a union by CU Boulder, there is no doubt that the CRC, through their initial protest and other work, brought this issue of fee waivers to the forefront. In connecting their labor and value to what is considered a more privileged class of worker in the discourse community of U.S. higher education, the CRC offers a concrete example of a new, novel definition of the graduate worker other than that of apprentice. Their focus on an issue specific to the concerns of the graduate worker, through adopting the rhetorical framing of professionalism, only highlights how graduate workers can more effectively represent their labor and value by steering into, not away from, their dual-positionality. Graduate workers occupy a unique position within higher education, but neither identity— that of student and worker— should be considered, in the words of the CRC, “half-time.” Workers seeking expertise (“Labor”) sounds like an apt definition of NTTF, adjuncts, tenure-track faculty, graduate workers, administrators, etc. With continued reflection on how graduate workers represent themselves and the rhetoric they use when advocating, even more novel definitions may appear, to the benefit of all.

### **Works Cited**

Davis, Tracy M., et al. “Tangles in the Tapestry.” *Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 75, no. 3, May 2004, pp. 340–361. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1353/jhe.2004.0013.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)



- Discenna, Thomas A. "The Rhetoric of Graduate Employee Unionization: Critical Rhetoric and the Yale Grade Strike." *Communication Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 1, Jan. 2010, pp. 19–35.
- Douglas-Gabriel, Danielle. "NLRB to Revisit Ruling That Granted Graduate Students the Right to Organize as Employees." *The Washington Post*, 23 May 2019.
- Cain, Timothy Resse. "A Long History of Activism and Organizing: Contingent Faculty, Graduate Students, and Unionization" *Professors in the Gig Economy: Unionizing Adjunct Faculty in America*, John Hopkins University Press, 2018, pp. 46–68.
- "CCCC Statement on Working Conditions for Non-Tenure-Track Writing Faculty." *Conference on Composition and Communication*, Apr. 2016,  
<https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/working-conditions-ntt>.
- Coalition on the Academic Workforce. "A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members." (2012): 52. *CU Boulder-CRC*, Committee on Rights Compensation, [boulderCRC.org](http://boulderCRC.org).
- Flaherty, Colleen. "Grad Students 'Fight for \$15.'" *Inside Higher Education*, 26 Oct. 2018,  
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/10/26/graduate-student-assistants-campus-across-us-are-pushing-15-hour-what-they-call>.
- Jenkins, Trish et al. "Forum on Organizing." *College English*, vol. 73, no. 4, Mar. 2011, pp. 450–465.
- Kezar, Adrianna, and Daniel Maxey. "Understanding Key Stakeholder Belief Systems or Institutional Logics Related to Non-Tenure-Track Faculty and the Changing Professoriate." *Teachers College Record*, vol. 116, no. 10, Oct. 2014, pp. 1–42.
- Kroeger, Teresa, et al. "The State of Graduate Student Employee Unions." *The State of Graduate Student Employee Unions*, Economic Policy Institute,  
<https://www.epi.org/publication/graduate-student-employee-unions/>.
- "Labor." *BoulderCRC.org*. Committee on Rights and Compensation. Web. 28 March 2019.
- Niedringhaus, Cassa. "CU Boulder Grad Student Workers' Push for Union Comes amid National Movement." *Daily Camera*, 9 Feb. 2019.
- Ragan, Kelly. "Colorado State University Instructors Launch Petition for Higher Pay." *Coloradoan*, 1 May 2019,  
[www.coloradoan.com/story/news/education/2019/05/01/colorado-state-university-faculty-instructors-petition-higher-pay/3633933002/](http://www.coloradoan.com/story/news/education/2019/05/01/colorado-state-university-faculty-instructors-petition-higher-pay/3633933002/).

- Rhoades, Gary, and Robert A. Rhoads. "The public discourse of US graduate employee unions: Social movement identities, ideologies, and strategies." *The Review of Higher Education*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2003, pp. 163-186.
- Saltzman, Gregory M. "Union Organizing and the Law: Contingent Faculty and Graduate Teaching Assistants." *Professors in the Gig Economy: Unionizing Adjunct Faculty in America*, John Hopkins University Press, 2018, pp. 69-84.
- Sano-Franchini, J. "'It's Like Writing Yourself into a Codependent Relationship with Someone Who Doesn't Even Want You!' Emotional Labor, Intimacy, and the Academic Job Market in Rhetoric and Composition." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 68, no. 1, 2016, pp. 98-124.
- Schiappa, Edward. *Defining reality: Definitions and the politics of meaning*. SIU Press, 2003.
- "Statement from the Conference on the Growing Use of Part-Time and Adjunct Faculty." *Position Statements*, National Council of Teachers of English, 26 Sept. 1997, <http://www2.ncte.org/statement/useofparttimefaculty/>.

# Intergroup Solidarity and Collaboration in Higher Education Organizing and Bargaining in the United States

Daniel Scott & Adrianna Kezar  
*University of Southern California*

## Abstract

For too long in higher education, different worker groups have conceived of themselves as separated by distinct, even competing interests. The isolation between groups reduces communication, fosters unawareness of common interests, and hinders their ability to effectively collaborate in solidarity, as does the divided and largely independent structure of the unions and bargaining units representing them. Without greater collaboration and solidarity, members of the higher education community are less able to resist the harmful trends that have been transforming the sector over the previous decades, subjecting them to increasingly similar working conditions and distancing higher education from its student learning, community service, and research missions.

Daniel Scott is a research assistant at the Pullias Center for Higher Education and a Rossier Dean's Fellow in the Urban Education Policy Ph.D. program at USC Rossier School of Education. Daniel's research interests include work, workers, and organizing in higher education and the intersections between higher education and the criminal justice system.

Adrianna Kezar is a professor of higher education at the University of Southern California and co-director of the Pullias Center for Higher Education. A national expert on change, governance and leadership in higher education, Kezar is regularly quoted in the media, including The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today, The Atlantic, Boston Globe, Washington Post, PBS, and NPR (national and local stations), among others. At the Pullias Center, Kezar directs the [Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success](#) and is an international expert on the changing faculty. She also regularly consults for campuses and national organizations related to her work on non-tenure track faculty, STEM reform, change, collaboration, leadership development, and change.

Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)

**Abstract, cont.**

We propose a combination of elements from anarcho-syndicalist and social justice organizing approaches, centering intergroup solidarity and a flexible commitment to shared missions, as ways for higher education workers to build greater power and have a greater influence on the transformations occurring across higher education.

---

**F**aculty on a college campus show up for a rally of custodial workers trying to obtain health benefits. Staff sign a petition that adjunct workers at their university should be provided a living wage and more job security. Administrative and clerical staff form an alliance with faculty to block a move by the administration to outsource residence halls and its staff to a hotel operation.

For too long in higher education, different worker groups have conceived of themselves as separated by distinct, even competing interests and priorities. For unionized higher education workers, this division has manifested most visibly in union and bargaining unit structures. The isolation of different types of higher education workers reduces communication, fosters unawareness of common interests, and hinders the ability to effectively collaborate in solidarity, as does the divided and largely independent structure of the unions and bargaining units representing these different worker groups. Existing unions can play a crucial part in breaking down these silos by creating spaces of conversation across historically separated groups of unionized workers and engaging openly and inclusively with those workers who have not considered unionization or who have been disinterested in unionization for various reasons. Higher education workers themselves can break down these silos by developing communication channels between them and devising strategies for action that will serve their mutual interests and the missions of the higher education enterprise. The more various groups of higher education workers perceive their aligned interests as increasingly exploited workers, and the more unions and their membership develop organizing structures that foster inter-group communication, mutual awareness, and the flexibility to mobilize collaboratively, the more power they will build.

In this article we explore the need for the various members of campus communities and organized labor to both see themselves and organize as allies. Although broad dimensions of our argument are certainly relevant to international organized labor and the higher education sectors of other countries, we focus on the United States context due to national history, cultural factors, and the legal environment that have contributed to present conditions in the United States. Without collaborating in solidarity across different worker and other constituent groups, members of the higher education community may not be able to

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

resist the harmful trends that have been transforming the sector over the previous decades. Neo-liberal trends like shifting towards increasingly exploitative employment and labor management practices, eroding worker involvement in governance, and lowering the quality of working conditions have been undermining the ability of higher education to serve its students, perform community service, and achieve its research missions (Kezar et al. 76). Today, workers across different groups in higher education face more similar conditions than in past times. Most workers at non-executive levels face job insecurity, shrinking wages, a lack of benefits, de-skilling and de-professionalization, as well as mounting accountability pressures. With these shared conditions in mind, we hope to encourage increased dialogue and action toward more intentionally collaborative approaches to organizing and bargaining that center intergroup solidarity and a flexible commitment to shared missions that contribute to collective wellbeing and efficacy.

Our overarching argument is that a combination of factors within and outside of the higher education sector has resulted in many higher education worker groups conceptualizing of their interests as distinct from one another, which has contributed to an isolation between them that has undermined their interests. Instead, we argue for, and highlight the advantages of, solidarity and collaboration across different unions and groups of workers, borrowing from anarcho-syndicalist organizing approaches and social-justice unionism values. We first review some key historical guideposts that illustrate how workers have tended to be divided in the United States due to a combination of external forces and internal biases and errors of strategy. We then center the bureaucratic paradigm of unionism that has been most influential in the United States since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and describe some dimensions of the culture of higher education that have contributed to divisions between higher education workers. Following that, we outline some of the employment trends in higher education that necessitate approaches to organizing that center intergroup solidarity and social-justice values. We then introduce anarcho-syndicalism and social-justice unionism as a framework for organizing higher education workers in the future, and, following that, we highlight some important examples of organizing practices in higher education that embody the advantages of anarcho-syndicalist solidarity and social-justice values. We conclude with a call for unions and higher education workers to follow these examples of intergroup solidarity and centering social justice, lest they suffer losses similar to those that have befallen the United States union movement in decades past.

### **A Selected History of External Influences and Internal Decisions That Gave Undermined the Power of Organized Labor in the United States**

If unions and higher education workers are to continue regaining power in the future, they must overcome the external influences and internal divisions of the past that have weakened them. The history of United States

unionism includes a series of fissures that have prevented greater collaboration between different groups of workers. At the same time, it includes great efforts to counteract such division that have yet to be fully actualized. Some of these fissures have been brought on by external forces that have an interest in minimizing the power of workers, such as influences from government entities like states and the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), as well as influences from employers.

#### *The National Labor Relations Act*

Catalyzed by the extreme economic conditions of the Great Depression, the 1930s saw a period of robust activism and organizing that brought about the 1935 National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and a significant expansion in union membership (Turner and Hurd 13). The NLRA established the NLRB, a federal entity established to oversee, protect and encourage organizing for most union members. However, the NLRA also contained provisions excluding agricultural and domestic workers—groups largely made up of people of color—from protections around fair working conditions and the right to unionize (Rosenfeld 101). This provision represents one among many significant instances of concession between the federal government and industries interested in preventing unionization that have weakened worker power overall.

The NLRB also has the authority to determine whether workers in industries still allowed to unionize share in the same community of interest and are allowed to unionize together. The concept of community of interest refers to whether a group of workers share similar interests as a result of factors related to their specific work roles, such that they are members of a community. NLRB rulings on community of interest has determined whether a particular group of workers would be allowed to form a union or bargaining unit together. Community of interest rulings have often divided different groups, even groups who have self-identified as being in community together. The NLRB, functioning in a paternalistic way, has thus undermined the power of workers by making decisions they are entirely capable of making themselves. For example, the NLRB in 1973 ruled that part-time and full-time faculty at private institutions did not share a community of interest, barring them from organizing together at that time despite their efforts and desire to do so (DeCew 82).

The NLRA, in an effort to prevent unions from becoming dominated by the very employers and managers they organized to build collective power against, also reduced the number of union members by excluding workers categorized as managers or supervisors (Lichtenstein, *State of the Union* 118). Similar to determinations related to community of interest, the exclusion of supervisors and managers from union membership was done in paternalistic and loosely-defined ways that allowed for the exclusion of workers from union membership who would not necessarily have been harmful to union efforts, including those whose functions were barely managerial or who were not really operating in a

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)



supervisory manner at all. This meant that employers were able to exclude workers from collective bargaining by persuading the NLRB that they were supervisors (Shelton 19).

In some ways the designation of supervisors can be viewed as a precursor to the strategy of misclassifying workers as independent contractors, a common practice today, because both strategies define specific groups of workers in ways that exclude them from the protections of union membership. Beyond excluding workers from the right to unionize, the definition of the supervisor role also created a conceptual differentiation between workers that many internalized, coming to view themselves as supervisors with interests aligned with the employer and against others who remained defined as workers, despite their similar conditions in actuality. In higher education, this manifested problematically with the *Yeshiva* ruling in 1980 that defined faculty as managers who were thus unable to unionize (Lichtenstein, *State of the Union* 176).

Defining and excluding supervisors and managers created a hierarchy, positioning the workers defined as supervisors above the workers who remained defined solely as workers. This division allowed employers to increase the number of workers who would be more likely to support the employer in the event of a dispute and diminish the number of workers who could organize against the employer. Employers and workers continue to battle over whether certain roles are considered “supervisor” roles. A few private universities have contended that even contingent faculty are supervisors and therefore cannot form unions despite their will and effort to do so. In 2014, in the case of Pacific Lutheran University, the NLRB ruled that non-tenure-track faculty were not managerial employees because they did not have a majority influence on university governance, and therefore had the right to form a union (Jaschik). The NLRB ruled similarly in 2017 when University of Southern California (USC) made the same argument in refusal to negotiate with a union of contingent faculty, ordering the university to negotiate with the union (Flaherty, “NLRB Orders USC to Negotiate with Adjunct Union”). However, USC appealed the decision, and in 2019 the D.C. appeals court ruled that contingent faculty at USC were managerial workers because they were included in governance alongside tenured and tenure-track faculty, despite making up a minority of faculty (Flaherty, “Federal Appellate Court Decision Could Make It Harder for Adjuncts to Form Unions”).

Union rules for workers at public sector organizations, including public colleges and universities, are governed by the individual states instead of the NLRB as a result of the 1947 revision of the NLRA, named the Taft-Hartley Act. States are thus able to undermine union power and inclusivity in a few ways. Some states have passed right-to-work legislation that undermines the ability of unions to collect dues from their members and from non-union workers who benefit from union-negotiated

working conditions (Shelton 19). Right-to-work legislation also allows individual workers in unionized fields and at unionized employers to opt out of belonging to a union at all, even as they benefit from the union's negotiations with the employer, which makes it more likely for union numbers to shrink (Shelton 19). Right-to-work legislation is passed with anti-union, partisan intentions, and thus right-to-work laws are typically accompanied by marketing campaigns that attempt to persuade workers that union membership is against their interests.

### *Social Biases and Discrimination*

Unions and other participants in the labor movement have also undermined labor power themselves by holding widespread social prejudices that lead them to discriminate. Many research projects chronicled in books and articles have detailed how unions did not organize all workers, and often these choices were made along the lines of traditional power differences that divided society (Rosenfeld 134). For example, Rosenfeld notes that “the history of the American labor movement is at once a story of inclusion and upward assimilation of previously marginalized groups, and of virulent racism and xenophobic tendencies” (134). Sexism and classism have also undermined organizing and labor power in the United States.

American unions were shaped by socially-influenced divides that would have lasting consequences. Many unions sought to preserve a commitment to their existing white, male rank-and-file. For example, around the turn of the century some industrial unions enacted violence against black workers because they (wrongly) perceived black workers to be strikebreakers (Rosenfeld 101). Later, to control access to the labor market, others resisted desegregation and affirmative action orders (Isaac and Christiansen 722) or discriminated against women<sup>14</sup> (Cunnison and Stageman 87). At first, unions argued against women working at all, and later unions were resistant to organizing in labor sectors largely comprised of women (Turner and Hurd 15). Once they included women in earnest, they failed to prioritize women's issues. Union leaders have even exhibited attitudes against the worker groups that have been traditionally lower-paid and less empowered yet make up a substantial part of their own bargaining units, reflecting a class bias regarding different worker groups (Ahlquist and Levi 77).

---

<sup>14</sup> Women still hold fewer leadership roles within unions and remain largely unorganized in entire sectors like finance and retail (Bronfenbrenner 445), though there is more proportionality in academic women union membership. Academia already leads other industries in terms of women in union roles.

### *Bureaucratic Unionism*

With the weakening of labor power and anti-leftist, pressures in the political context of anticommunism (Turner et al. 15), many unions shifted their strategies in a more conservative direction that led to fragmentation. Some union leaders, such as reformists in the AFL, felt threatened by the increasing socialist sentiments among the working class and sought to protect themselves by focusing instead on cultivating their relationships with the federal government through the NLRB and with employers (Ness 260). Bureaucratic unionism, also referred to as business unionism, eschewed the more socially-oriented priorities centered around class solidarity and pursuing the public good, arguing that unions should only focus on the economic dimensions of the employer-employee relationship (Turner et al. 22). Bargaining units eroded from comprising entire industries, to particular companies, to particular facilities within companies, to particular worker groups within facilities (Moody 92). These shrinkages weakened the bargaining positions of workers and resulted in a change in the character of union membership, and the loss of cohesion between workers (Katz 11).

Bureaucratic unions shifted their organizational structures and procedures to be more formal, pursuing survival through efficiency as they became more organizationally similar to the employers they negotiated with. They narrowed the scope of issues they organized around, limiting themselves to negotiating contracts, benefits, grievance procedures, and the inclusion of union voice in employer decision-making (Clawson and Clawson 110). Bureaucratic unions hired additional administrative staff, and many adopted rigid procedures for addressing grievances that effectively muted the voices of members by limiting the types of grievances that could be brought forth and limiting the range of options for how to deal with grievances available to union members (Clawson and Clawson 110). They required that members pursue grievances in a quasi-judicial and individualistic process so that the union could evaluate and respond to grievance issues one-by-one. This trend had the effect of strengthening the union's position as mediator between employer and employee, while limiting the individual worker's ability to collaborate with others and take other forms of active involvement in addressing their concerns (Clawson and Clawson 100).

Bureaucratic unionism had a more conservative character and encouraged members to distance themselves from the broader labor struggles and other social struggles taking place among their peers within the union, outside the union but within the same industry, or among those outside one's industry but impacted by similar challenges due to commonalities of race, gender, class, etc. (Turner and Hurd 22). Instead, bureaucratic unions committed to deepening the competitive dimensions of the capitalist economy preferred by the federal government and employers (Lichtenstein, *A Contest of Ideas: Capital, Politics, and Labor* 85). Under bureaucratic union culture, groups that could have been allies

instead competed with one another for the same scarce resources—helping employers cheapen the value of labor. With divided bargaining units decreasing in power, bargaining took on a markedly concessionary character that resulted in reductions in material conditions over time (Moody 17).

Divisions in bargaining units and divisions in who is represented by unions contributed to inequities in compensation and working conditions, further weakening workers overall. Rosenfeld notes gender disparities in changes to private sector union and nonunion worker pay, explained by shifts in the sectors where union women were employed versus stability in the primarily blue-collar jobs held by union men (81). While the compensation gap between union and non-union men remained relatively stable from 1973 to 2009, the compensation gap between union and non-union women increased significantly over that time (Rosenfeld 81). Non-union women in particular industries were more vulnerable to shifts in the nature of work due to the generally reduced presence of unions in those fields, including as one dimension a reduction in connections with other unions and units. Bureaucratic unionism functioned to undermine union power by not acting in accordance with the strategic interests of workers or society more broadly, which ultimately weakened the labor movement.

### **Characteristics of the Culture of Higher Education in the United States That Have Undermined Worker Power**

Labor power in the higher education sector has been hindered not only by external influences from labor more broadly, but also from characteristics of the structure of higher education that have played out over its history. Higher education workers face divisions due to the hierarchical nature of the structure of higher education, both in hierarchies between different groups of workers and in the stratification of different types of higher education institutions. For example, the ideology of professionalism among many faculty informs a view that they are inherently a more important part of the institution than clerical staff or custodial staff and were not in need of unions (Hutcheson 14). In labor organizing in academia, this has manifested in many faculty choosing to opt out of joining unions at all (DeCew 189). In terms of different kinds of institutions, the members of many self-identified elite institutions view themselves and their institutions as inherently better than other types of institutions that do not conceptualize of themselves as elite. In this case, the elitist views of members of those institutions lead them to choose not to view themselves as in solidarity with workers at other institutions.

Relatedly, workers have also been divided in higher education due to their own perceived conflicts of interest. Historically, the influence of trade unionism has weakened worker power on campus by constructing higher education workers as though they cannot truly unionize. Broadly speaking, the trade union elements of the United States labor movement

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

believed that only “craft, industrial, and transportation workers can be real unionists” (DeCew 175). Many higher education faculty were hostile to the idea of unionization due to an association between unions and radicalism, fearing their identification as enemies of their employers, the government, or both. This was particularly an issue for members of the newly-developed AAUP during the 1910s who hoped to be identified as professionals, intellectuals, and elites rather than workers (Cain, “The First Attempts to Unionize the Faculty” 884). Opposed to organizing faculty as workers, the AAUP instead emphasized the professionalism of faculty. In response to the high-profile firings of two faculty members due to their institution’s disagreement with the nature of their scholarship, the AAUP developed the concept of academic freedom to advocate for the independence of faculty scholarship from control by their employing universities (Schrecker 21). The fear of being identified with left orientations was particularly heightened as a result of McCarthyism (Schrecker 9) and influenced attitudes towards involvement with organized labor.

Higher education workers are also stratified into different positions across identity factors like race, gender, and class. For those workers represented by unions, each group tends to be represented by different unions and different bargaining units because unionization options are limited by community of interest, as previously discussed. This translates into different pay, benefits, and working conditions for each group, in correspondence with their social positions. For example, tenured and tenure-track faculty are largely white men from affluent backgrounds; professional staff members and contingent faculty are typically women and people of color due to the historical feminization and racialization of clerical, instructional, and lower-level administrative roles; and custodial and service staff have largely been men and women of color due to the racialization of custodial and service roles (Kezar et al. 31–33).

Labor power has also been weakened by the decreasing presence of full-time and tenured faculty on campus. In the last three decades, percentages of faculty on and off the tenure-track have inverted; while 70% of faculty were ‘tenurable’ in 1975, forty years later 70% were non-tenure track, contingent appointments without job stability. Since many of the contingent faculty are part-time, or else full-time carrying very heavy workloads (often twice that of tenure-track faculty), organizing and collective identity construction is challenging as they often also have other jobs outside academe or work at multiple institutions. One of the biggest side effects of these divisions is the invisibility of more marginalized worker groups, like non-tenure-track faculty and custodial staff, compared to more empowered workers.

For graduate employees, power dynamics and the nature of graduate-worker mentoring also have undermined their power as a worker group and the solidarity they would benefit from with other worker groups such as faculty. The power dynamics between faculty and graduate

employees can have a divisive effect on solidarity between the two groups, despite the collaborative nature of their working relationships (Kezar et al. 60–67). The informal nature of graduate-worker mentoring also means that graduate workers may have wildly varying experiences with their faculty supervisors (Kezar et al. 60–67). The fact that graduate employees are often accountable to a single faculty member means their faculty mentors may have absolute control over their work. The informal nature of graduate-worker mentoring combined with their lower status in the hierarchy of workers means that graduate workers often do not have predictable principles to rely on when self-advocating, which can make it easier for them to be exploited (Cain, “Campus Unions” 129).

While the above discussion articulates challenges the culture of faculty has posed for unionization efforts in the higher education sector, faculty and academic worker activity has not been without efforts to resist anti-union culture and build worker power. The first faculty union was organized at Howard University in 1918 (Cain, “The First Attempts to Unionize the Faculty” 886; Cain, “Campus Unions” 8). From the first unionization efforts in higher education during the late 1910s and 1920s, which were associated with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), higher education faculty have had contested discussions about the nature of their work, how they should be characterized in the context of labor, and whether or not they should unionize (Cain, “The First Attempts to Unionize the Faculty” 883). Universities had developed into modern organizational forms by 1920, and it was amidst this transformation that faculty had increasingly taken interest in forming union power (Cain, “The First Attempts to Unionize the Faculty” 880). The association between shifting demands on workers, organizational transformations, and efforts by workers to challenge and influence these developments through union power should sound familiar to those who have been paying attention to activism among higher education workers over the previous few decades. The next section outlines some of the recent shifts in working conditions that contribute to the increased awareness and need for unionization among workers in higher education.

### **How All Higher Education Workers are Much More Alike Today**

As noted earlier, higher education workers have organized into separate groups (e.g., tenured faculty, contingent faculty, professional staff, classified staff) that create and reinforce divisions between workers in the same way that worker groups have fragmented in the broader union movement in the United States (Rosenfeld 29). Yet working conditions have declined for the vast majority of higher education workers such that their shared interests are more visible than at any previous point (Kezar et al. 36). This shared experience provides an opportunity for greater inter-group solidarity and collaboration. Higher education has experienced significant employment changes over the previous decades with working conditions becoming more similar across positions. While shifts in faculty

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*



labor conditions have garnered the most attention, all labor in higher education is changing due to similar trends (Kezar et al. 36). Postdocs, graduate students, and all staff (including groundskeepers, custodians, facilities managers, executive assistants, and all other types of staff) have seen shifts in their working conditions as a result of the spread of neoliberal ideology and principles under academic capitalism (Bader; Camacho and Rhoads 296; Jaeger and Dinin 205; L. K. Johnsrud 112; L. K. Johnsrud 115; Kezar et al. 36; Kezar and DePaola 74; Magolda 128; Rosser 118).

Neoliberalism is a way of thinking that privileges individual responsibility over collective wellbeing and private enterprises over public goods. According to neoliberal ideology, workers are entrepreneurs who compete for resources in a market, rather than human beings interacting in public spaces governed by shared values. The import of neoliberal ideology into higher education has brought about a paradigm of academic capitalism, which converts the products of research and scholarship into commodities to be monetized; students into consumers; and colleges into corporations (Slaughter and Rhoades 13). Neoliberalism has thus replaced an emphasis on collectivism and the public good with an emphasis on individual competition and entrepreneurialism, converting higher education workers from people with shared interests to a motley collection of individuals who compete with one another for scarce resources. Thus, it is no wonder that union organizing in higher education has been undermined and worker power and solidarity suppressed.

As a result of the current paradigm of academic capitalism, all workers in higher education increasingly share the same conditions. Universities reduce their obligation to employees and make them easier to shed during lean times by rendering them increasingly contingent, stop providing benefits to workers while they are employed. Thus, they avoid concerns and planning over the sustainability of their operations by removing staffing concerns from the equation. Workers are then increasingly pushed to be entrepreneurial as they are made responsible for reproducing their own jobs, for example, by securing funding to pay their own salaries while the university takes a portion of grants and other sources of funding they secure. And while employees are responsible for generating revenue to justify their own employment, the compensation and benefits they receive have been reduced or stagnated, failing to keep up with inflation. Additionally, workers in all parts of higher education have seen increases in their workload and pressure to produce more than what is possible within the boundaries of a normal workday, leading to workers consistently spending additional, uncompensated hours working.

Advancement and promotion processes and norms have also shifted in a negative direction, with fewer roles leading through natural patterns of advancement—instead we see a growing number of dead-end jobs where the only opportunities for advancement and promotion come at the expense of workers changing jobs or changing employers. Many

areas of work, including work done by faculty, educational support professionals, professional staff, and contingent staff, have been outsourced completely to private institutions that typically provide lower wages and little or none of the traditional benefits that higher education institutions historically provided in terms of sick pay or vacation. For example, this has occurred as higher education institutions have outsourced the functions of teaching and grading, food service, bookstores, groundskeeping, admissions, financial aid, housing, information technology, and human resources (Kezar et al. 20–22).

Outsourcing leaves more and more college workers at a further distance from the university, where the university can conveniently compensate them like temps while demanding higher levels of productivity. While the role of professor used to involve multiple activities, including advising, teaching, grading, and research, contemporary faculty roles have been de-professionalized through an “unbundling” such that different functions are performed by different types of workers, assembly-line style (Baldwin and Chronister 32; Gehrke and Kezar 94). The “unbundling” of faculty roles has been well-documented, but de-professionalization and “unbundling” have affected other types of college workers as well. For faculty, as well as other de-professionalized college workers, the simplification of their work has resulted in their inhabiting lower-status social positions within academia, doing work that does not require professional-level skills or training, with reduced compensation and benefits to match (Baldwin and Chronister 32; Gehrke and Kezar 94).

Trends that one might believe unthinkable begin to pop up. For example, 20 years ago no one could imagine that faculty would be outsourced and hired by a temporary agency, but that is exactly what has occurred at several community colleges in the state of Michigan (Flaherty, “Colleges Assign Adjunct Hiring to a Third Party”). Outsourcing contingent faculty hiring to private temporary agencies allows the public institutions to avoid contributing to retirement funds, salary increases, and paying for other benefits, given that private companies are governed by different rules than public institutions (Flaherty, “Colleges Assign Adjunct Hiring to a Third Party”). More and more, previously unthinkable employment approaches such as this are gaining traction, and, without swift action, more and more workers are likely to find themselves in similar situations. Existing unions seeking to preserve benefits for their existing members will not succeed in preventing broader shifts from impacting their fields, and narrow efforts at self-preservation will not stem the tide of transformation being wrought on higher education, and the broad network of industries that interact with colleges and universities.

Amidst these changes, higher education workers face the choice of building collective power and using it to bring about fairer and more sustainable employment practices or reconciling to navigate the landscape as individuals, with each one hoping they are lucky enough to gain a

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

position less vulnerable than those of their peers. With the former, higher education workers stand a chance of not only regaining fairer employment conditions for themselves, but also restoring the democratic values of the public good on which higher education was once predicated, with effects extending far beyond their own contracts and benefits packages. With the latter, higher education workers stand to see the working conditions in all positions slowly erode as they are pushed harder and harder to compete with one another for an ever-shrinking pool of resources increasingly appropriated by executive leaders and others who increasingly view themselves as college shareholders.

### **Anarcho-Syndicalism and Social Movement Unionism: A Flexible Model for Collective Regard, Organization, and Action Across Heterogeneous Groups of Higher Education Workers**

#### *Anarcho-Syndicalism*

The above section outlines some of the ways that workers in higher education face increasingly problematic conditions that both interfere with their ability to perform their job duties and reduce their quality of life. While each group of workers is distinct, higher education labor needs a model that can simultaneously honor the uniqueness of different groups of workers, allowing them to convene around micro-level affinities and interests, while maintaining a broader collective regard for and responsiveness to all workers. While the term ‘faction’ is often employed to designate divisive subgroupings of people, anarcho-syndicalism structures factions of workers strategically and unites them in syndicates such that they are able to function both as subgroups and a larger unit (Rocker 68). Strategies that pull worker groups together in solidarity serve to counterbalance the structures of work in higher education that separate and weaken worker groups (Rhoades and Torres-Olave 411). The inclusion of factions is particularly useful in a higher education context where not only have various groups of workers organized around functional commonalities, such as custodial staff and groundskeeping staff, but communities across groups have also organized around identity-based affinities such as race, gender, sexuality, national origin, language, disability, and other dimensions. In an anarcho-syndicalist framework, these micro-level factions are able to come together under more collectively-focused, macro-level syndicates in ways that enrich the lives of higher education constituents by attending to the specificities of their lives while also maintaining broad collective power to fight against the sources of their exploitation which, despite the variety of workers in higher education, come from the same source (Rocker 69).

Anarcho-syndicalism refers to a framework for organizing groups of workers that develops without the requirement of government support or the goodwill of employers (Rocker 76). The independence of worker organization from government and employer support in this model makes

it particularly advantageous in the context of the history outlined above, which is rife with examples of government and employer interference in the development of worker power. The weakened state of labor in the United States stands as evidence that governmental interventions such as the establishment of the NLRB and employer actions, like refusing to negotiate a contract, have prevented organized workers in different contexts from achieving their goals.

Anarcho-syndicalism offers redress to this situation. It is a flexible framework that allows for the structures in which workers organize themselves to change in response to changing conditions. This flexibility is strategically useful because building labor power entails a struggle between workers and the state and employers. Implicit in this struggle is the fact that the tactics employed by the state and by employers are constantly shifting as conditions change. Thus, labor strategies shift with shifting conditions as well. Anarcho-syndicalism is a realist framework for organizing because it doesn't postulate an "absolute truth, or in definite finite goals for human development, but in an unlimited perfectibility of social arrangements and human living conditions, which are always straining after higher forms of expression" (Rocker 30).

#### *Social-Justice Unionism*

Social-justice unionism and anarcho-syndicalism are compatible organizing philosophies, and it is this combination that we propose as a framework for addressing the challenges facing higher education workers today. Social-justice unionism is an organizing philosophy that goes beyond the narrow concerns of business unionism. Where business unionism is focused on the wellbeing of the individual members of a bargaining unit, social-justice unionism is concerned with the wellbeing of all workers, as well as the broader impact that the employer has in the community in which it is situated (Ikebe and Holstrom-Smith 42–43). While many unions in the U.S. followed business unionism values in a way that weakened their position overall, some unions in the U.S. have a history of social activism, expanding the bounds of their concern to encompass a wider community. This is reflected in the slogan shared by the International Longshore Workers Union (ILWU) and Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and often quoted by organizers in higher education: "an injury to one is an injury to all" (Ahlquist and Levi 92).

Social-justice unionism not only contributes to the social good by influencing positive social change but also strengthens the unions against existential threats from employers. San Francisco-based ILWU and New York-based International Longshoremen's Association and Teamsters collaborated in a campaign to form a wall-to-wall contract by organizing port drivers who were being grossly underpaid at several ports (Ahlquist and Levi 97). The ILWU history also includes organizing collaboration with warehouse and cannery workers, and workers in Hawai'i in general trades, the production of sugar and pineapple, as well as the hospitality and

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

tourism industry (Ahlquist and Levi 97). Workers in these industries were well-aware of the racialized nature of inequality and saw similarities with the ways workers in Hawai'i were exploited compared to their white peers on the West Coast (Jung 178). The 1905 founding of the IWW was specifically purposed with "organizing immigrants, laborers, and migrants in whom the AFL had little interest" (Ganz 27). The ILWU and IWW expressed a commitment to racial justice, activated members by providing a vehicle for member activism, and fortified the union's purpose and relevance along the way.

Though the history is complicated, social-justice priorities were exemplified by elements of the Council of Industrial Organizations (CIO) (Zieger 184). In particular, the CIO used social-justice unionism to oppose the bureaucratic unionism reflected by the AFL. The CIO explicitly rejected racism, although they failed to participate actively in the civil rights movement. The CIO encouraged civic participation and encouraged members to educate themselves about politics and those running for various offices. Not only that, but the CIO was interested in addressing broad issues associated with the distribution of wealth and the nature of work in our economic system and thus directly concerned with economic policy (Zieger 184). Social-justice priorities are also exemplified, although imperfectly, in some of the priorities of the United Auto Workers (UAW) under Walter Reuther who sought to limit the power of corporations and increase the power of workers as it pertains to the nexus between industry and society (Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit* 144). For example, Reuther supported pay equity for women during the Second World War, although his negotiating efforts failed to overcome the gendered nature of worker compensation (Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit* 200). The AFT also embodied social-justice elements in their opposition to military recruitment in schools and in their collaborations with international peace organizations (Murphy 155).

Because social-justice unionism is concerned with ethics and justice, in addition to compensation, it involves more democratic internal structures compared to the hierarchical internal structures associated with bureaucratic unionism (Ikebe and Holstrom-Smith 42). Anarcho-syndicalism provides an intelligible multi-level structure to organize multiple groups and also provides a broad emphasis on autonomous organizing and self-government among workers. Social-justice unionism explicitly states key values that can inform the activities of higher education workers. Additionally, social-justice unionism enables workers to organize alongside other groups that may not be explicitly conceptualized as workers but are organized activist groups nonetheless such as including tenant unions. The combination of social-justice unionism principles and the expansive and autonomous organizing practices of anarcho-syndicalism offers strategies for higher education organizers to address the exploitation of workers, as well as the broader relationship of workers to social issues.

More collaborative approaches to organizing breed advantages like formalized rules protecting different types of workers, a wider array of alliances within the political space, and a cohesive and multifaceted voice (Johnston 78-79). Unions gain bargaining power when representing a more complete set of workers at a particular site (Moody 17). Collaborative strategy presents the key to smaller and less well-resourced unions continuing to achieve their goals (Ganz 10). Collaborating with workers in other units and unions is a key strategic innovation. Working with different groups to pursue particular goals also creates a more diverse array of strategies and tactics available to deploy from a wider range of positions with different abilities. Collective bargaining that involves multiple groups on campus means groups can amplify each other's voices, and the unity of different groups gives them greater leverage (Rathke and Rogers 44-47). The critical mass developed by pooling resources allows unions to take on larger-scale challenges that extend beyond the bounds of narrow self-interests (Rogers 377). Larger bargaining units have been associated with union members having larger cost-of-living adjustments, indicating better compensation and working conditions (Hendricks and Kahn 459). Academic unions can take advantage of non-competitive university conditions to organize all workers across campus. Organizing comprehensively across campuses improves union power to take on new organizing strategies (Lafer 29).

If workers in higher education are to counteract the aforementioned trends—shifts that continue to erode their job security and positions—then they will need to take organizing approaches that incorporate a greater collective regard and that are inclusive of higher education workers at all levels. Higher education workers and organizers will need to move beyond the narrow boundaries that have often divided different worker groups and pitted them against one another. They will need to eschew individualist and narrow, interest-based concerns in favor of a broader sense of community and a deeper commitment to establishing democracy in the workplace. Luckily, there are some key examples of intergroup solidarity in organizing that we can learn from. In fact, contemporary organizers in higher education have been pursuing principles and strategies that center social justice and this broader commitment.

### **Illustrative Examples of Intergroup Solidarity Among Higher Education Workers**

Academic unions are in particularly strong positions to grow bargaining units and union strength through organizing due to the non-competitive nature of the higher education industry. Despite continued contestation by some universities, faculty, administrators, and the NLRB, increasing unionization among graduate students at private universities points to this fact. Their ability to organize successfully may be partially explained by their lack of threat by competition, in addition to their broad embracing of

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*



a wider collective and social activism focus. Other higher education workers have also exhibited success as a result of employing strategies compatible with anarcho-syndicalism and embodying values compatible with the social-justice unionism paradigm. In the following section we outline some examples of intergroup solidarity and collaboration between groups of higher education workers that also embody social-justice values.

*Solidarity Between Clerical and Library Workers and Faculty*

In 1979, tenured and tenure-track faculty went on strike in alliance with clerical workers at Boston University (BU) (Zabel 690). John Silber was president of BU at the time and pursued a stream of actions that were informed on the one hand by a right-wing political ideology (Zabel 690) and on the other by the desire to financially enrich himself and his friends (692). Politically, he pursued the ouster of left-leaning faculty (or simply faculty who disagreed with him), instigating sit-down, anti-war protests and then inviting the Boston police to use excessive force in breaking them up, while also using university funds to mount an aggressive, anti-union legal campaign. In an effort to ransack the university, Silber and his board made problematic real estate deals using university funds, pushed university contracts that enriched himself and his friends who held stock in those companies, and increased his compensation such that he was the highest-paid university president at the time of his retirement.

These political and financial moves were particularly problematic in the context of worker compensation at BU, which was exceedingly low. These local conditions, combined with a broader atmosphere of education on worker activism, led to unionization among faculty with the AAUP and among clerical workers and librarians with District 65 of the Distributive Workers of America. Yet when the Silber administration refused to negotiate with the faculty union, the clerical and library workers joined the strike as well. Working together, the two groups were able to force the administration to recognize their respective unions and negotiate with them. However, it is important to note that the faculty union accepted a provision against sympathy strikes before their contract was ratified. Thus, the clause against sympathy strikes pushed “all but a handful” (Zabel 696) of faculty to return to work before the clerical and library workers ratified their contract, which was a failure of complete solidarity between the two groups. This example shows the power of solidarity between worker groups while cautioning us to consider and protect against the multitudinous ways that leadership of higher education institutions can introduce rifts between groups that limit worker power.

*Social-Justice Unionism and Intergroup Solidarity among Workers in the University of California System*

Graduate workers at UC Berkeley, as members of UAW Local 2865, provide an example of the intergroup solidarity that characterizes the reemergence of social-justice unionism in higher education organizing.

Their example also demonstrates the kinds of wins and successes that communication and collaboration between worker groups make possible, even during this period in union history where unions have been weakened.

UAW local 2865 made an explicit shift in strategy from business unionism and its focus on narrow economic demands to a social-justice unionism approach focused on “anti-oppression demands” and direct action instead of “closed-door negotiations with management” (Ikebe and Holstrom-Smith 47). They provided an excellent example of effective cross-unit organizing and broader action as they went on strike with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 3299 service workers over intimidation practices in the University of California (UC) system (Wen). They were also joined by the California Nurses Association and UC Santa Cruz’s Skilled Crafts Unit (Burns). The graduate students cancelled their classes and turned out to protest in solidarity, which sent a message to the UC that intimidation practices leveraged against the service workers, or any workers, would not be tolerated (Burns; Wen). In keeping with their social-justice focus, the graduate students were also clear that they intended to send a message to the undergraduate students in their classes about the importance of the work done by service workers at the university (Wen). Indeed, service workers are a part of the campus community just as faculty and students are, though they are increasingly treated as unimportant as their jobs are outsourced and working conditions diminished in an attempt at cost savings (Magolda 47).

UAW Local 2865 pursued democratic union values instead of business ones, not only forming a different type of union organization that extends radically beyond business unionism but has also paid off in terms of contracts. Under their previous (2011-13) contract, UAW Local 2865 members were only able to negotiate a 6 percent wage increase over 3 years (which is less than the rate of inflation) and slight increases in childcare reimbursement. But after shifting to a more social movement strategy prior to negotiating the (2014-18) contract, they were able to win a 16 percent wage increase over 4 years, more teaching opportunities for undocumented students, all-gender bathrooms, reduced class sizes, and more family leave (Ikebe and Holstrom-Smith 47). The strike also addressed unsafe labor conditions for service workers (Guzman), and successfully gained better working conditions for UCSW workers by threatening an escalation to a system-wide strike (Burns; The AFSCME 3299 Bargaining Team).

Through information-sharing, organizing, solidarity, and advocacy, these service workers, graduate students, and medical workers have demonstrated the importance of cross-group solidarity for the future of academic organizing and organizing more broadly. These recent expressions of intergroup solidarity between AFSCME and UAW members in higher education are continuations of the history of social-

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

justice unionism pursued by both unions. Both unions were influential advocates during the civil rights era (Turner and Hurd 15).

*Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty Solidarity with Contingent Faculty*

The faculty unions at the State University of New York system and the City University of New York system provide another example of intergroup solidarity that increases impact through collaborative action. In this case, unions made up largely of tenured and tenure-track faculty have made it an explicit goal to improve working conditions for their contingent faculty colleagues, a group rendered deeply vulnerable due to the contingent nature of their employment. NEA New York affiliates, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), and United University Professions (UUP) are pursuing minimum per-course pay for contingent faculty because they recognize that the interests of all faculty are tied to the interests of contingent faculty (NYSUT Communications). Tenured and tenure-track faculty members of United Faculty, the AFT, and the AAUP-affiliated faculty union at the University of Illinois at Chicago, also expressed intergroup solidarity by striking after 18 months of failed negotiations. Similar to the strike in New York, tenured and tenure-track faculty joined non-tenure-track faculty in striking to increase minimum salaries for full-time, non-tenure-track faculty (Flaherty, “U. of Illinois at Chicago Faculty Strike for First Contract”). They cited the discrepancies between the amount of money each course offering brings to the university and the amount of pay each lecturer received to explain why they are asking for higher non-tenure-track faculty salaries (Rajwani). As contingency expands in other higher education work roles as well, extending this logic to other classes of contingent workers would further bolster equity on campus.

*Professional Association Solidarity with Organized Labor*

Professional associations are another type of organization that represents the interests of workers, although they have historically functioned somewhat differently than unions. Collaboration between unions and professional associations could empower workers and allow unions and professional associations to have magnified influence in pursuing goals they share, such as ensuring that higher education operates as a force for equity in society and serves the public good. As workers become increasingly exploited in higher education, contemporary professional associations are increasingly concerning themselves with the issues of working conditions and compensation that have been the traditional purview of unions—not only for the employee groups that professional associations represent, like faculty, but also for workers like custodial staff who the professional associations have not traditionally represented.

The California Conference of the AAUP represents one recent example of this broader regard. The AAUP has long been an advocate for university faculty as one of the longest-standing professional associations

in the country. But recently, the California Conference of the AAUP issued a statement in full support of union members in the Union of Professional and Technical Employees (UPTE) and the AFSCME as they engaged in a contentious bargaining process with the UC system (Private Email Communication, May 27, 2019). They further stated that they stand in solidarity with all university workers at all levels, noting that all university workers contribute to making the university function.

#### *Wall-to-Wall at University of Mississippi*

Education workers at the University of Mississippi have not only formed the first higher education union in the state of Mississippi but also have succeeded at following a wall-to-wall strategy to be inclusive of all workers, not only workers of particular types (Pratt). Not only are they going wall-to-wall, but they also explicitly state that their goal is to pursue social and economic justice not only for union members but also in the communities in which the university is situated and the communities to which the wide range of workers belong (Pratt). Committed to social-justice values, these new union members are explicitly concerned with counteracting the ways that social problems like racism, sexism, and classism in the broader society create inequalities between union members.

#### *The Metro Strategy*

This is a cross-institutional organizing strategy that identifies the community of workers as all faculty within a particular metropolitan area (Miller; Rhoades, “Bargaining Quality in Part-Time Faculty Working Conditions: Beyond Just-in-Time Employment and Just-at-Will Non-Renewal” 11). This strategy is particularly effective for contingent faculty and other types of contingent workers because it follows the distribution and flows of contingent workers, rather than starting with the individual university and inevitably leaving many workers at other institutions out (Berry and Worthen 436–38). A metro strategy defines the community of workers in a broader sense and thus relies on the development of a stronger sense of group identity than organizing approaches that focus on organizing workers of a particular group at a particular workplace (Worthen 422–23). The metro strategy increases the mass of workers who are organized, so they can negotiate with multiple employers and have an impact that goes beyond an individual site. Organizers following a metro strategy have made big gains in Boston, Los Angeles, Oakland, Seattle, St. Louis, and Washington D.C. For example, in the last decade SEIU has unionized 38 new bargaining units of contingent faculty and graduate workers (Rhoades, “Bread and Roses, and Quality Too?” 646). These contracts have brought about stronger contract provisions compared to contracts negotiated by unions that have followed a different organizing strategy (Rhoades, “Bread and Roses, and Quality Too?” 664). Following a metro strategy involves organizing beyond the boundaries of individual

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

workplaces to achieve a critical mass of members, so that workers will have the power to make conditions and practices more worker-friendly at multiple sites. This strategy disrupts efforts to divide workers into weaker, smaller groups, and holds the promise of having a much broader impact on the higher education enterprise than business unionism.

### Conclusion

In the context of attacks on progressive policies and a keen focus on undermining unions through state-level political action, unions must take broader local action if they are to stand a chance of transforming in order to survive the onslaught (Lafer 29). With growing globalization comes increased potential divisions between corporations and universities, whose partnerships have grown significantly with time and whose interests are increasingly separated from people living in the U.S. as their own structures globalize (Lafer 29). In the context of growing disinvestment in higher education, taking control is an important response, and unions are at the forefront of bringing such responses into action. Organizing under principles that conceptualize the worker community across units, work roles, and the entire university stands as a strong way to meet the demand for new strategies presented by the contemporary problems facing academic labor. Higher education workers will need to take approaches to organizing and collective bargaining that center intergroup solidarity and collaboration if they are to counteract the trends that lead to increasingly exploited workers and that are transforming higher education into an unrecognizable enterprise focused on generating profit rather than ensuring the public good.

The changes that have taken place in higher education increasingly suggest there is a very common interest across different workers. We want to suggest that unions identify, document, and make visible these common interests—increasing job insecurity, outsourcing, reduction or stagnation in wages, eradication of benefits, and other key areas that connect different working groups. Groups that see their aligned interests and support each other will create much more pressure on administrations. Currently, with different unions representing different workers, too many institutions of higher education have the advantage of academic workers by making isolated deals, not sharing information widely, and acting with little transparency. If unions communicated more fully with varied academic labor stakeholders, they could share data, push for similar strategies, and devise more complex strategies involving members from multiple different positions.

### Works Cited

Ahlquist, John S., and Margaret Levi. *In the Interest of Others: Organizations and Social Activism*. Princeton University Press, 2013.





- . "NLRB Orders USC to Negotiate with Adjunct Union." *Inside Higher Ed*, 2017, <https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2017/06/09/nlrb-orders-usc-negotiate-adjunct-union>
- . "U. of Illinois at Chicago Faculty Strike for First Contract." *Inside Higher Ed*, 2014, <https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2014/02/19/u-illinois-chicago-faculty-strike-first-contract>.
- Ganz, Marshall. *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement*. Reprint edition, Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Gehrke, Sean, and Adrianna Kezar. "Unbundling the Faculty Role in Higher Education: Utilizing Historical, Theoretical, and Empirical Frameworks to Inform Future Research." *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, edited by Michael B. Paulsen, vol. 30, Springer International Publishing, 2015, pp. 93–150. *Crossref*, doi:10.1007/978-3-319-12835-1\_3.
- Guzman, Kara. "UCSC Service Workers, Grad Students Strike." *AFSCME 3299*, 20 Nov. 2013, <https://afscme3299.org/2013/11/20/ucsc-service-workers-grad-students-strike/>.
- Hendricks, Wallace E., and Lawrence M. Kahn. "Cost-of-Living Clauses in Union Contracts: Determinants and Effects." *Ind. Labor Relat. Rev.*, vol. 36, no. 3, 1983, pp. 447–60.
- Hutcheson, Philo A. *A Professional Professoriate: Unionization, Bureaucratization, and the AAUP*. 1st ed., Vanderbilt University Press, 2000.
- Ikebe, Shannon, and Alexandra Holstrom-Smith. "Union Democracy, Student Labor, and the Fight for Public Education." *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, vol. 58, 2014, pp. 42–50.
- Isaac, Larry, and Lars Christiansen. "How the Civil Rights Movement Revitalized Labor Militancy." *Am. Sociol. Rev.*, vol. 67, no. 5, 2002, pp. 722–46.
- Jaeger, Audrey J., and Alessandra J. Dinin, editors. *The Postdoc Landscape: The Invisible Scholars*. Academic Press, an imprint of Elsevier, 2018.
- Jaschik, Scott. "NLRB Ruling Shifts Legal Ground on Faculty Unions at Private Colleges." *Inside Higher Ed*, 2015, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/01/02/nlrb-ruling-shifts-legal-ground-faculty-unions-private-colleges>.
- Johnsrud, Linda K. "Higher Education Support Professionals: Demographics and Worklife Issues." *The NEA 2004 Almanac of Higher Education*, 2004, pp. 105–26.
- . "Higher Education Support Professionals: The Fear of Speaking Out." *The NEA 2003 Almanac of Higher Education*, 2003, pp. 109–18.
- Johnston, Paul. *Success While Others Fail: Social Movement Unionism and the Public Workplace*. Ithaca, N.Y. : ILR Press, 1994.

- Jung, Moon-Kie. *Reworking Race: The Making of Hawaii's Interracial Labor Movement*. Columbia University Press, 2006.
- Katz, Harry C. "The Decentralization of Collective Bargaining: A Literature Review and Comparative Analysis." *ILR Review*, vol. 47, no. 1, Oct. 1993, pp. 3–22.
- Kezar, Adrianna, et al. *The Gig Academy: Mapping Labor in the Neoliberal University*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019.
- Kezar, Adrianna, and Tom DePaola. "Understanding the Need for Unions: Contingent Faculty Working Conditions and the Relationship to Student Learning." *Professors in the Gig Economy: Unionizing Adjunct Faculty in America*, by Kim Tolley, JHU Press, 2018.
- Lafer, Gordon. "The Corporate Assault on Higher Education and Union Responses." *Thought & Action*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2017, pp. 11–36.
- Lichtenstein, Nelson. *A Contest of Ideas: Capital, Politics, and Labor*. University of Illinois Press, 2013, doi:10.5406/illinois/9780252037856.001.0001.
- . *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor*. Princeton University Press, 2002.
- . *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor*. Basic Books, 1995.
- Magolda, Peter. *The Lives of Campus Custodians: Insights into Corporatization and Civic Disengagement in the Academy*. Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2016.
- Miller, Justin. "When Adjuncts Go Union." *The American Prospect*, 2015. *American Prospect*, <https://prospect.org/labor/adjuncts-go-union/>.
- Moody, Kim. *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism*. Verso, 1988, <https://books.google.com/books?id=EZSy4IDOmXAC>.
- Murphy, Marjorie. *Blackboard Unions the AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980*. Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Ness, Immanuel. "Against Bureaucratic Unions: U.S. Working-Class Insurgency and Capital's Counteroffensive." *New Forms of Worker Organization: The Syndicalist and Autonomist Restoration of Class-Struggle Unionism*, edited by Immanuel Ness, PM Press, 2014, pp. 258–78.
- NYSUT Communications. *Adjunct Pay an Urgent Issue for Unions*. 2017, <https://www.nysut.org/news/2017/april/ra/adjunct-pay-an-urgent-issue-for-unions>.
- Pratt, Minnie Bruce. "Historic 'Wall-to-Wall' Education Worker Union Forms." *Workers World*, 25 Apr. 2019, <https://www.workers.org/2019/04/42056/>.
- Rajwani, Naheed. "Many UIC Classes Canceled as Faculty Strikes." *Chicagotribune.Com*, 2014, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2014-02-19-ct-uic-strike-met-0219-20140219-story.html>.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

- Rathke, Wade, and Joel Rogers. “‘Everything That Moves’: Union Leverage and Critical Mass.” *Central Labor Councils and the Revival of American Unionism: Organizing for Justice in Our Communities*, edited by Immanuel Ness and Stuart Eimer, Routledge, 2015.
- Rhoades, Gary. “Bargaining Quality in Part-Time Faculty Working Conditions: Beyond Just-in-Time Employment and Just-at-Will Non-Renewal.” *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy*, vol. 4, 2013, p. 15.
- . “Bread and Roses, and Quality Too? A New Faculty Majority Negotiating the New Academy.” *The Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 88, no. 5, Sept. 2017, pp. 645–71. *Taylor and Francis+NEJM*, doi:10.1080/00221546.2016.1257310.
- Rhoades, Gary, and Blanca M. Torres-Olave. “Academic Capitalism and (Secondary) Academic Labor Markets: Negotiating a New Academy and Research Agenda.” *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, edited by Michael B. Paulsen, vol. 30, Springer International Publishing, 2015, pp. 383–430. *Crossref*, doi:10.1007/978-3-319-12835-1\_9.
- Rocker, Rudolf. *Anarcho-Syndicalism*. Pluto, 1998.
- Rogers, Joel. “A Strategy for Labor.” *Ind. Relat.*, vol. 34, no. 3, July 1995, pp. 367–81, doi:10.1111/j.1468-232X.1995.tb00378.x.
- Rosenfeld, Jake. *What Unions No Longer Do*. Harvard University Press, 2014.
- Rosser, Vicki J. “Education Support Professionals: Employment Status and Financial Exigency.” *2011 NEA Almanac of Higher Education*, NEA, 2011, p. 12.
- Schrecker, Ellen. *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities*. Copyright 1986 edition, Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Shelton, Jon. *Teacher Strike!: Public Education and the Making of a New American Political Order*. University of Illinois Press, 2017.
- Slaughter, Sheila, and Gary Rhoades. *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.
- The AFSCME 3299 Bargaining Team. *UC Caves under AFSCME Strike Threat*. 27 Feb. 2014.
- Turner, Lowell, et al., editors. *Rekindling the Movement: Labor’s Quest for Relevance in the 21st Century*. Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Turner, Lowell, and Richard W. Hurd. “Building Social Movement Unionism: The Transformation of the American Labor Movement.” *Rekindling the Movement*, edited by Lowell Turner et al., Cornell University Press, 2001, pp. 9–26. JSTOR, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctv1nhnnp.5.

- Wen, Melissa. *UC Service Workers and Graduate Students Go on Strike*. 20 Nov. 2013, <https://www.dailycal.org/2013/11/20/uc-service-workers-graduate-students-go-strike/>.
- Worthen, Helena. "Organizing as Learning: The Metro Strategy and a Community of Practice for Faculty." *WorkingUSA*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2015, pp. 421–33. *Wiley Online Library*.
- Zabel, Gary. "The Boston University Strike of 1979." *The Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History*, edited by Aaron Brenner et al., M.E. Sharpe, 2009.
- Zieger, Robert H. *The CIO, 1935-1955*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

# Academic Collective Bargaining: Status, Process, and Prospects\*

Daniel J. Julius, *Yale University*  
Nicholas DiGiovanni Jr., *Morgan, Brown & Joy*

---

## Abstract

The authors provide a perspective, as scholars and practitioners, of the organizational, demographic, legal and contextual variables that inform the past and the future of faculty unions in U.S. colleges and universities. They ask how to best conceptualize and evaluate the impact of faculty unions; from the inception of academic unionization in the 1960's to the present, and further, what is known and not known about collective bargaining.

---

Daniel J. Julius is a Visiting Fellow at the School of Management at Yale University. He is a former Provost and Senior Vice President at New Jersey City University and adjunct professor in the higher education program at New York University. He has been affiliated with the Higher Education Research Institute at Cornell University, the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University, and was a Visiting Scholar at the Center for Studies in Higher Education at the University of California, Berkeley.

Nicholas DiGiovanni Jr., Esq. is Partner in the firm of Morgan, Brown & Joy in Boston. He specializes in representing institutions of higher education on labor and employment matters and is currently counsel to numerous institutions, including Harvard University, Brandeis, Tufts, the University of Vermont, University System of New Hampshire, and the Vermont State Colleges, among many others.

\*Shorter and less current versions of this article were published first as a working paper by the Center for the Studies in Higher education at UC Berkeley and later in the *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy* as follows:

Julius, Daniel J., and Nicholas DiGiovanni Jr. "What's Ahead in Faculty Collective Bargaining? The New and the Déjà Vu." *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy*, vol. 4, no. 5, 2013.

(As a result, citations have not been converted to MLA.)

**Abstract, cont.**

Issues examined include: factors that influence negotiation processes; governance; bargaining dynamics; the institutional and demographic factors associated with faculties who vote in unions; compensation; and the legal status of graduate student unions. Collective bargaining with faculty is viewed through a wider lens of “craft unionism”, as it is known in the industrial labor relations context. An effort is made to review contemporary subjects and challenges engaging the parties during negotiations in the second decade of this century. The paper offers an analysis of the impact of collective bargaining on changes in decision making processes and forums and offers insight into the kinds of management strategies most effective in organized environments. Finally, the authors ask what is new about negotiations, and what has remained the same during their experiences over the past 45 years.

---

Collective bargaining involving faculty has reached the seventy-year mark, from its nascent beginnings at the New School for Social Research and Howard University, at community colleges in Michigan and Wisconsin, and at the City University of New York in the 1960s.<sup>15</sup> Given this history, it seemed timely to consider two salient sets of questions for those interested in collective bargaining in higher education. The first focuses on how to conceptualize and evaluate the impact of academic collective bargaining. What do we know and what is still unknown about faculty unionization? What contextual, institutional, and demographic variables should practitioners focus on in order to evaluate the past and predict what might be in store over the next 50 years? As but one recent example to highlight this question, legal and legislative frameworks, among the most important predictors of bargaining behavior, appear to be undergoing a fresh examination. For example, legislative change through diminishing union rights has been headline news in Wisconsin for some time. A former cradle of faculty unionization, Michigan is now a right-to-work state. Is this a developing trend for years to come, or a political aberration to be nullified in due course?

The second issue, closely related to the first, is the contemporary subjects and problems engaging the parties at the bargaining table. In other

---

<sup>15</sup> Timothy R. Cain, “Campus Unions: Organized Faculty and Graduate Students in U. S. Higher Education. ASHE Higher Education Report,” *Special Issue: Campus Unions: Organized Faculty and Graduate Students in U.S. Higher Education* 43, no. 3 (2017); William A. Herbert, “The Winds of Change Shift: An Analysis of Recent Growth in Bargaining Units and Representation Efforts in Higher Education,” *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy* 8 (2016). Available at <http://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba/vol8/iss/1/1/>.



words, given the changing organizational and political environment in which bargaining has occurred, is there an identifiable set of bargaining topics? Is there something new, something unique about the scope and context of negotiations today—or is it déjà vu all over again? In answering these questions, we have tried to offer a picture of the organized and organizing post-secondary landscape and examine it for new themes or general trends. We look at conceptual ways to understand faculty unionization and areas of contention at the table. We make an effort to compare what we are witnessing today to our personal experiences as practitioners and scholars commencing in the mid-1970's.

### **The Context: Trends in Unionization**

Collective bargaining in higher education has been studied from a variety of disciplinary perspectives which have focused on different aspects and issues associated with industrial labor relations in post-secondary institutions. Although the roots of collective bargaining for faculty date back nearly 70 years, unionization took a firm hold during the 1960's. The phenomenon spread as select states enacted legislation permitting public sector employees to unionize. Today, faculty unions are primarily associated with large public schools/systems in approximately 15 states where there is (or was) enabling labor legislation. Roughly half of the unionized professoriate works in New York or California (states with the largest two-year and four-year systems).<sup>16</sup> This movement, which began in the public sector, continued to grow following the 1970 decision<sup>17</sup> by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) which asserted jurisdiction over private colleges and universities for the first time.

Few industries are as organized as higher education, particularly if other than faculty employees are considered. Craft and trade unions, for example, trace their roots back to the 1930's at various Ivy League institutions, although data regarding non-faculty employees has not been systematically collected.<sup>18</sup> As "services" in colleges and universities are contracted out, unions may become less prevalent. However, in many instances, certain types of work contracted out (for example, to adjunct or

---

<sup>16</sup> "Regional Conference at California State University, Long Beach," *National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions*, 2019, <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/nscsbhep>.

<sup>17</sup> Cornell University, 183 NLRB 329 (1970).

<sup>18</sup> At one time, the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining, now at Hunter College, CUNY, collected this data. Research on staff other than faculty personnel was also collected by the College and University Personnel Association, now CUPA/HR. This information may also have been collected by scholars at the ILR School, Cornell University. Daniel Julius, *Collective Bargaining in Higher Education* (Washington, DC: College and University Personnel Association, 1985).

contingent faculty teaching part-time) have become growth areas for unionization. In a number of public systems, part-time faculty are included in units with full-time faculty. In other cases, in both the public and private arenas, part-time faculty have organized into separate bargaining units.

While the labor movement in the U.S. may be declining based on union membership in the private sector, select industries in both the private and public sectors remain heavily unionized, such as professional sports, entertainment, the U. S. Postal service, post-secondary education, and the like. Of course, it is only in certain sectors of higher education where full-time faculty unions flourish: in the larger, public two-year and four-year systems and institutions in labor friendly states. The overwhelming number of full-time faculty working in private higher education remain unorganized, although non-faculty employees, such as service and maintenance workers, in these institutions may have been organized for years. Interestingly enough, in the most prestigious institutions and systems is where we are seeing the growth of unionization among part-time faculty, graduate students, and post-doctoral fellows.<sup>19</sup>

As noted above, the NLRB took jurisdiction over faculty in private colleges and universities in 1970, and over the following decade faculty in a number of private institutions, primarily in the northeast and Midwest where public sector colleagues had already joined unions, organized. Organized activity in the private sector slowed considerably, particularly for full-time faculty, following the Supreme Court's *Yeshiva* decision<sup>20</sup> in 1980 where the court found that faculty at "mature" colleges and universities were collectively found to be "managerial" employees and therefore not afforded coverage under the NLRA.<sup>21</sup> In other words, due to

---

<sup>19</sup> Nicholas DiGiovanni Jr., "The New Focus of Academic Organizing: Private Institutions Now Face Academic Collective Bargaining," *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy* 7 (2015). In past years' data (a faculty directory was published by the National Center at Hunter College, identifying the entire university of academic unions by individual units, by state, institution, bargaining agent, initial contract year, etc.). While the Center still publishes an informative newsletter, unfortunately a directory has not been published for nearly 8 years, making current generalizations difficult. The major bargaining agents, AFT, AAUP, and NEA know which units are operative, but a comprehensive directory is no longer available.

<sup>20</sup> *NLRB v. Yeshiva University*, 444 U.S. 672 (1980).

<sup>21</sup> The Supreme Court wrote in the decision: "Unlike the purely hierarchical decision-making structure that prevails in the typical industrial organization, the bureaucratic foundation of most 'mature' universities is characterized by dual authority systems. The primary decisional network is hierarchical in nature: Authority is lodged in the administration, and a formal chain of command runs from a lay governing board down through university officers to individual faculty members and students. At the same time, there exists a parallel professional network, in which formal mechanisms have been created to bring

their considerable collective power through institutional governance systems, they were the “management” of the university and were therefore ineligible to negotiate as unionized employees. The decision is complex and does not apply to faculty in public jurisdictions.

In the wake of the *Yeshiva* decision, many faculty units were dissolved and further unionization among private sector, full-time faculty slowed considerably. But it is also of interest, perhaps, that nearly forty years after that decision there are nearly double the number of academic employees under contract in private institutions, primarily due to large increases in the numbers of adjunct, part-time, and graduate student employees seeking representation. In addition, many private schools with unions prior to *Yeshiva*, opted to continue these relationships for a variety of reasons. While *Yeshiva* University remains the law of the land, the NLRB must adhere to its holdings.

The *Yeshiva* decision did not touch adjunct faculty, whose collective power in governance is largely non-existent at most, if not all, colleges and universities, nor did the decision address graduate student workers whose bargaining status hinges more on the question of employee status versus student status. (The situation involving graduate students remains particularly fluid as we shall see later in this article.)

### **The Growth of Unions Representing Adjunct and Contingent Faculty**

The growth areas for faculty organizing since the late ‘90s, and in the immediate years ahead, will undoubtedly continue to be among contingent faculty, which includes part-time/adjunct faculty and full-time, but non-tenure-track faculty. In addition, there has been, and may continue to be, increased unionization among graduate teaching and research assistants. Recent data supports this reality, particularly for contingent faculty. In 1998, the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions reported in its *Directory of Faculty Contracts*<sup>22</sup> that a total of 75,882 adjunct and part-time faculty were represented by unions. By 2012, that number had risen to 147,021, almost double the number in 14 years.<sup>23</sup> While there were 107 free-standing units of adjunct, part-time faculty members, not counting the units that include part-timers along with full-time faculty, some five years ago, at least 40

---

the expertise of the faculty into the decision-making process.” 444 U.S. 672, 696-697.

<sup>22</sup>Richard Hurd, J. Bloom, and Beth Hillman Johnson, (1998) “Directory of Faculty Contracts and Bargaining Agents in Institutions of Higher Education,” *The National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions* 24 (1998).

<sup>23</sup> Joe Berry and Michelle Savarese, *Bargaining Agents in Institutions of Higher Education*, ed. R. Boris (New York: National Center for the Study, 2012), vii. This is the last year the directory was published.

new adjunct bargaining units have been added over the past several years, particularly because of a surge in organizing activity by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which has dedicated enormous resources to their Adjunct Action and Faculty Forward campaigns. The SEIU's recent successes at major and prestigious institutions, including Duke, Tufts, Washington University, Northeastern, George Washington, and Boston University (to name but a few) have been noteworthy. And there is no sign that these efforts will slow down. New units are being added on a regular basis, and these numbers are likely to climb, as attention is being focused on the increased use of adjunct faculty, as well as the relatively lower compensation and troublesome working conditions for many such faculty around the country. While some adjuncts in the professional fields or in applied graduate disciplines are working in postsecondary institutions because they desire to teach, most of the focus of union organizing has been centered on adjunct faculty trying to make a living teaching part-time. These faculty are, in a number of schools, a generally neglected group with little compensation, no benefits or job security, and, some may argue, a lack of respect from full-time faculty. Adjuncts may see unionization as a road to better pay, more security, and the beginnings of campus respect. As their numbers have steadily grown to the point where they teach more than half of the credit-bearing courses at many institutions, this under-class of academia has become a prime target for union organizing in both the public and private arenas.

While organizing adjuncts in the public sector will continue, it is also true that in the private sector union organizing of adjuncts will be easier than organizing full-time faculty, because union organizers will be unencumbered by the *Yeshiva* decision. Private sector institutions will find it virtually impossible to make a credible argument that their adjunct faculty—like their tenured faculty—are managerial employees under *Yeshiva*. Adjuncts simply do not have the managerial involvement in running their institutions that full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty have. Indeed, the NLRB's 2014 decision in *Pacific Lutheran University* (discussed below) opined that, for the most part, the Board will not look favorably on any managerial exclusion arguments for contingent (i.e., non-tenure-track) faculty, whether full or part-time. The lack of security for contingent faculty compared to that held by tenured faculty was deemed to be a major factor for the NLRB, as it laid out its new approach to determining whether or not a petitioned group of faculty are managerial or not.

### **New Life to Graduate Teaching Assistant Unionization**

Currently, over 64,000 graduate student employees are represented by unions, distributed among 28 institutions of higher education, almost all in the public sector.<sup>24</sup> Over half of unionized graduate students work in

<sup>24</sup> Berry and Savarese, *Bargaining Agents in Institutions of Higher Education*.

three states: New York, Florida, and California. Most of these are either teaching assistants or research assistants at their universities. While such units have been around for many years, the private sector has been largely immune from graduate student unions, as the NLRB, except for a brief period in the first years of the century, has not been favorably disposed to finding that such individuals were students. Its 2004 NLRB decision in *Brown University* found that such individuals were primarily students and had no right to unionize under the National Labor Relations Act.

However, all this changed in August 2016 with the NLRB's decision in *Columbia University*.<sup>25</sup> In that case, the Board was comprised of a majority of Democratic, pro-union members, and reversed the 2004 *Brown University*<sup>26</sup> case while holding that, despite the fact that graduate teaching assistants and research assistants were students, they were *also* employees, and, as such, they enjoyed the full protection of the National Labor Relations Act. In the wake of this decision, organizing efforts increased and petitions for NLRB elections were filed at many institutions.<sup>27</sup> Unions such as the SEIU and United Auto Workers (UAW) were certified as bargaining representatives of graduate student workers following NLRB-run elections. Collective bargaining agreements for graduate student workers were negotiated and concluded at such private universities as Tufts, Brandeis, American University, and The New School. As of this writing, negotiations are ongoing at Harvard and Columbia in units of teaching and research assistants. As with the adjunct faculty units, certification of graduate teaching and research assistant units may be the first time many private institutions have had to consider academic collective bargaining of any type.

However, whether this trend in the private sector continues remains to be seen. In May 2019, the NLRB—now dominated by Republican appointees under the Trump administration—announced:

The National Labor Relations Board will be engaging in rulemaking to establish the standard for determining whether students who perform services at a private college or university in connection with their studies are "employees" within the meaning of Section 2(3) of the National Labor Relations Act (29 U.S.C. 153(3)).

---

<sup>25</sup> Columbia University, 364 NLRB No. 90 (2016).

<sup>26</sup> Brown University, 342 NLRB 483 (2004). Graduate teaching and research assistants were primarily students with no right to unionize.

<sup>27</sup> Yale University and UNITE HERE Local 33, 1-RC-183016; 1-RC-183022; 1-RC-183-025; 1-RC-183031; 1-RC-183038; 1-RC-183039; 1-RC-183043; and 1-RC-183050 (January 25, 2017); See also Duke University and Service Employees International Union CLC/CTW, No. 10-RC-187957, NLRB, Region 10 (January 18, 2017).

On September 23, 2019, the NLRB followed through and announced its proposed rule which held that:

In order to more effectively administer the National Labor Relations Act (Act or NLRA) and to further the purposes of the Act, the National Labor Relations Board (the Board) proposes a regulation establishing that students who perform any services for compensation, including, but not limited to, teaching or research, at a private college or university in connection with their studies are not “employees” within the meaning of Section 2(3) of the Act. The Board believes that this proposed standard is consistent with the purposes and policies of the Act, which contemplates jurisdiction over economic relationships, not those that are primarily educational in nature. This rulemaking is intended to bring stability to an area of federal labor law in which the Board, through adjudication, has reversed its approach three times since 2000.

If this rule becomes final (there is a public comment period that expires on December 31, 2019), the NLRB will no longer have jurisdiction over such student workers and future unionization efforts to organize graduate student workers will likely shift away from the NLRB election procedures and instead lead to public relations campaigns to force universities to voluntarily recognize graduate student unions.<sup>28</sup>

### **Full-Time Faculty Organizing in the Private Sector: The NLRB Redefines the Test**

While *Yeshiva* remains bedrock law, the interpretation of that decision in individual cases has varied since 1980, with the Board in given cases sometimes finding managerial status and sometimes not. In 2012, the Board signaled that it would completely revisit how it would analyze managerial employee cases going forward and requested amicus briefs from the public in the case of *Point Park University* on the issue of whether the faculty members at that institution were statutory employees or, rather, should be excluded as managerial employees under *Yeshiva*. This followed a remand from the Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit which denied enforcement of the previous Board ruling that the Point Park faculty were not managerial. The Court believed that the Board had failed to articulate how it reached its result.

---

<sup>28</sup> Such efforts have already been successful at Georgetown University and, ironically, at Brown University where those institutions have voluntarily recognized graduate student unions over the past year.



Specifically, in its call for briefs, the Board said the briefs should address some or all of the following questions:

1. Which of the factors identified in *Yeshiva* and the relevant cases decided by the Board since *Yeshiva* are most significant in making a finding of managerial status for university faculty members and why?
2. In the areas identified as “significant,” what evidence should be required to establish that faculty make or “effectively control” decisions?
3. Are the factors identified in the Board case law to date sufficient to correctly determine whether faculty are managerial?
4. If the factors are not sufficient, what additional factors would aid the Board in making a determination of managerial status for faculty?
5. Is the Board’s application of the *Yeshiva* factors to faculty consistent with its determination of the managerial status of other categories of employees and, if not, (a) may the Board adopt a distinct approach for such determinations in an academic context or (b) can the Board more closely align its determinations in an academic context with its determinations in non-academic contexts in a manner that remains consistent with the decision in *Yeshiva*?
6. Do the factors employed by the Board in determining the status of university faculty members properly distinguish between indicia of managerial status and indicia of professional status under the Act?
7. Have there been developments in models of decision making in private universities since the issuance of *Yeshiva* that are relevant to the factors the Board should consider in making a determination of faculty managerial status? If so, what are those developments and how should they influence the Board’s analysis?
8. As suggested in footnote 31 of the *Yeshiva* decision, are there useful distinctions to be drawn between and among different job classifications within a faculty—such as between professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and lecturers or between tenured and untenured faculty—depending on the faculty's structure and practices?

In response to this request, many amici briefs were filed. The AAUP filed an extensive brief urging the Board to read *Yeshiva* narrowly. It went on to offer additional factors the Board should consider. Essentially, the thrust of the AAUP’s brief was that since the 1980 decision, the growth of the corporate business model of running colleges and universities has increased dramatically and is now pervasive. The increase in administrators, the growing percentage of budgets now devoted to

administration rather than instruction, and the examples of faculty advice being ignored on key educational matters were all cited by the AAUP as factors for the Board to consider in future *Yeshiva* cases.

Ironically, the Board did not use these briefs to decide the *Point Park University* case but later ended up utilizing the input from the public in deciding *Pacific Lutheran University*,<sup>29</sup> where the Board set forth in detail what it expected an administration to prove when it makes an argument that its faculty are all managers. The *Pacific Lutheran* standards remain as the current blueprint for institutions that wish to make the case for the managerial status of its faculty.

In *Pacific Lutheran University*, the NLRB specified the analytical framework it would use in addressing such issues going forward. The Board wrote that in examining the degree of control faculty members have in a given case, it would distinguish between “primary” and “secondary areas” of decision-making. The Board defined as “primary” considerations three broad areas of inquiry:

- Academic Programs: For example, the university’s curricula, research, major, minor and certificate offerings, and the requirements to successfully complete those offerings.
- Enrollment Management: The size, scope, and make-up of the university’s student body.
- Finances: The power to control or make effective recommendations regarding financial decisions, both income and expenditure. For example, what the school charges for tuition.

The Board considered the secondary areas to be:

- Academic Policy: For example, teaching/research methods, grading policy, academic integrity policy, syllabus policy, research policy, and course content policy.
- Personnel Policy and Decisions: Faculty control over personnel policy, including hiring, promotion, tenure, leave, and dismissal policies.

The Board then went on to hold that, within these areas, the institution must prove “actual control or effective recommendation” power by the faculty. Mere paper authority is insufficient. The Board stated that it will need “specific evidence or testimony regarding the nature and number of faculty decisions or recommendations in a particular decision-making area, and the subsequent review of those decisions or recommendations, if any, by the university administration prior to implementation, rather than mere conclusory assertions that decisions or recommendations are

---

<sup>29</sup> 361 NLRB No. 157 (2014).

generally followed.” As to what constitutes “effective recommendations,” the Board stated the faculty’s recommendations “must almost always be followed by the administration,” to be deemed effective.

Finally, and importantly, the Board stated that an evaluation of whether the faculty actually exercises control or makes effective recommendations requires an inquiry into the nature of the employment relationship between the faculty in question and the institution. Commenting at length on the “corporatization” of higher education, and the connected use of contingent faculty, the Board noted that contingent faculty—such as full-time, non-tenure-track lecturers—have limited appointments that often depend on a single administrator “producing the kind of hesitancy regarding controversy or offense in teaching and research that limits academic freedom.” Such faculty members tend not to be involved in governance at most institutions and the net result “of their unique, temporary relationship frequently is a diminution of the faculty voice.” The Board concluded that it would examine “whether the nature of the employment in issue prevents those affected from helping shape the academy as a whole at their individual institutions.”

### **Impact of *Pacific Lutheran***

The continuing impact of this decision on academic unionization will be considerable, and the decision raises a number of significant concerns. For example:

- The Board gave no indication of whether an institution must establish faculty decision-making in all three of the so-called primary areas to show managerial status, or whether something less will suffice. Is one primary factor sufficient? What if no primary factor is proved, but both secondary factors are proved?
- What if an institution can show faculty power in everything except financial decisions?
- The Board’s emphasis on the fact that “effective recommendation” means that faculty recommendations “must almost always be followed.”
- The fact that normal layers of administrative review of faculty recommendations prior to final enactment—even if perfunctory—may block a finding of managerial status.
- The clear indication that most full-time contingent faculty will not be found to be managerial because of the tenuous nature of their appointment.
- These and other types of issues will undoubtedly continue to be litigated before the Board and in the courts.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> One U.S. Circuit Court has weighed in on *Pacific Lutheran*. In *University of Southern California*, Case No. 17-1149 (D. C. Cir., March 12, 2019), the Court of

### **What We Do Know**

When we endeavor to wrap our arms around the historiography of unionization, or review the institutional landscape associated with faculty unionization, generalizations about the terrain, as we argue, are not easy to measure. There are always exceptions attributable to particular personalities and situational concerns. We know that the process unfolds somewhat differently in different universities or systems, such as at Rutgers, the University of California at Santa Cruz, the University of Montana, the University of Cincinnati, the University System of New Hampshire, the State Colleges and Universities in Pennsylvania, the University of Florida, the Graduate Center at City University of New York, and Westchester Community College—not to mention private institutions like the University of San Francisco, Long Island University, or Rider University. Colleges and universities are different in mission, culture, management practices, funding, and the type of students they serve; therefore, it comes as no surprise that collective bargaining and faculty administration relationships play out in different ways in different institutions and systems. In such contexts, collective bargaining reflects varying legal structures, cultures, and personalities, but is anything unique or truly new?

We certainly believe from our experience that leadership matters, but few studies seem to be able to substantiate this point. The leadership issue is complicated due to the glacial pace of change in colleges and universities, high turnover rates for administrators, and the oddity of institutions where the progressives of one era are invariably pegged as the reactionaries of the next.

There are other observations where we feel more comfortable making generalizations. We now know that collective bargaining has served to codify previously informal policies, so that overall administrative and human resources practices have become more structured, transparent, and standardized. Unionization has brought consistency and more equity to compensation practices, some finality to governance interactions, and “binding arbitration” to issues covered in labor agreements (many of which are very similar). Collective bargaining has invariably (in the areas of compensation and grievance administration)

---

Appeals for the D.C. Circuit upheld the basic parameters of Pacific Lutheran but also rejected the Board’s treatment of how the disputed category of adjunct faculty’s numbers on governance committees should affect the outcome. The NLRB had “counted heads” and essentially held that if the adjuncts on a faculty committee did not constitute a majority of the committee members, then their managerial work on such committee could not be considered evidence of managerial status. The Court found that such a strict rule was a major problem and returned the matter back to the Board.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

shifted authority upwards to the presidential and system offices, as local flexibility often gives way to broader institutional interests. In institutions and systems where faculty and non-faculty are organized, collective bargaining has served to standardize human resources practices for all categories of employees, although there often remains the struggle to equalize benefits across campus where different union constituencies may have sharply different goals and do not always share a common interest in standard benefits.

We know that unionization has served to identify supervisory responsibilities (for deans and chairs) and necessitated a more standardized way of managing. Unionization has inevitably ushered third parties into the decision-making process (arbitrators, mediators, legislators), and in general it has led to greater and more varied involvement of union leaders in institutional decision making—directly or indirectly—under the protection of state and, in the private sector, federal legislation.

We also know that, despite early misgivings, the collective bargaining process itself, one that accommodated a wide range of workers and professions since the late 1930s, also proved adaptable to faculty collective bargaining. This is not too surprising considering that ballet dancers, musicians, engineers, journalists, teachers, and other professionals, not to mention other types of industrial workers, public sector professionals, and, in some cases, military personnel, have bargained collectively for years.

### **The Broader Industrial Labor Relations Context: The Craft Analogy**

Earlier studies of unions in higher education made many claims about the probable impact of unions on campus.<sup>31</sup> Many suggested that collective bargaining may be incompatible with the dictates of professionalism and values of the professoriate. However, as we have noted, there is very little research that establishes a causal relationship, particularly in regard to professionalization. Perhaps a better lens through which to evaluate the actions of organized faculty is through a comparison to craft unions in industrial or corporate settings (e.g., electricians, plumbers, musicians, printers, journalists, etc.).<sup>32</sup> While such comparisons are by no means

---

<sup>31</sup> Edwin D. Duryea and Robert S. Fisk, *Faculty Unions and Collective Bargaining* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1973); Robert K. Carr and Daniel K. Van Eyck, *Collective Bargaining Comes to the Campus* (Washington: American Council, 1973); Joseph W. Garbarino, *Faculty Bargaining: Change and Conflict* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975).

<sup>32</sup> Margaret K. Chandler, “Craft Bargaining,” in *Frontiers of Collective Bargaining*, ed. John Dunlop and Neil Chamberlain (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 50-74; Daniel J. Julius, “The Status of Faculty and Staff Unions in Colleges and Universities: 1930s-1990s,” in *Managing the Industrial Labor Relations*

exact, it is useful to consider the similarities between faculty and craft unions.

Crafts are known to be flexible within their own groups but rigid in their external relations. They can be adaptable, but this is not one of their prime characteristics. If craft employment conditions and rights are provided for, the craft will concern itself with administering these. If seniority or craft entrance criteria are threatened, for example, rigid reactions can occur. The group may rise to defend its jurisdictions, and a great deal of non-productive activity may take place. Crafts have the ability to participate well in the managerial process, but the relationship of a craft to the management with which it deals can become destructive if both parties focus on the defense of their respective rights to the neglect of the problem both are trying to solve.

Craft employees who work on project-type tasks usually have the freedom to run their affairs autonomously; the contractor for whom they work counts on this. However, when craftspeople work in large organizations, the relationship with managers who head the organization can cause problems. The cause of these difficulties is, however, frequently misstated. Observers perceive a clash of viewpoints because the “craft orientation” is often contrasted with that of the “bureaucrat.” In reality, there are some marked *similarities* between craftspeople and bureaucrats. Both stress universal standards, specialization, and evaluation of competence on the basis of performance. Conflicts arise not because of the differences but because of the similarities.<sup>33</sup>

As colleges and universities evolved in the early 1900s, professional specialists (faculty) confronted another emerging group of specialists, academic administrators, who claimed responsibility for many of the same functions and prerogatives. Indeed, the role of faculty and administration in shared governance matters has never been clearly delineated.<sup>34</sup> With the arrival of collective bargaining 60 years later, the

---

*Process in Higher Education*, ed. Daniel J. Julius (Washington, D.C.: College And University Personnel Association, 1993).

<sup>33</sup> Chandler, “Craft Bargaining”; Margaret K. Chandler and Daniel J. Julius, *Faculty Vs. Administration: Rights Issues in Academic Collective Bargaining* (New York: National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, 1979).

<sup>34</sup> The AAUP has issued statements concerning shared authority and the delineation of the territorial boundaries of the respective parties. Various state statues and accreditation bodies have also addressed these matters. However, these issues are by no means settled and remain salient and often undefined in both unionized and non-unionized institutions. The issues that are shared depend on a variety of factors which include the nature of what is being decided, whether a crisis exists, the culture and history attendant to shared decision making in the institution, as well as other systemic and personality-based factors.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)



inevitable jurisdictional disputes arose. In the 1960s and 1970s, as well as today in locations where faculty are organizing, these disputes were hastened by enrollment-related factors, public calls for institutional accountability and lower tuition rates, and the loss of legislative funding. As administrators (and legislators) endeavored to assert control over faculty workloads, promotion and tenure standards, job security and the like, faculty (who, in addition, may have experienced a real decline in salaries and decision-making prerogatives), joined unions in states where enabling legislation facilitates collective bargaining.

Faculty unionization can be attributed more to the craft orientation of the professoriate, rather than economic factors. Assertion of craft rights (i.e., control of work schedules, selection of course content, defense of appointment, promotion and tenure policies, and protection of the faculty's role in curriculum and teaching methodology) arguably remain the most important stimulus for unionization and a primary impetus for collective bargaining.

If the analogy of crafts to traditional professional orientations is accepted, the debate over professionalism versus unionism becomes less meaningful. If, by unionism we mean seniority-determined work rights, uniform procedures and policies in the workplace, and guaranteed job security, a potential conflict may exist with professional academic values. However, the above analogy fits with what is thought of as the “industrial” approach to unionism, not the craft approach.

As craft-type unions, academic employees have negotiated provisions into labor contracts that reflect a professional/craft orientation. For example, bargaining agreements do not usually specify the use of standardized personnel policies, nor do they dispense with traditional academic criteria used to assess intellectual quality. The majority of labor agreements contain language protecting tenure. The traditional argument for tenure is based on its relationship to academic freedom. Without the tenure process, it can be argued, the professor is merely an “employee,” directly dependent on the administration. For the professional craft group, however, tenure is the keystone to its existence. Through the tenure process, traditional craft controls can be exercised. Perhaps, in this context, it is the equivalent of the hiring hall in the construction trades.

### **Which Unions Are in Play?**

The traditional education labor unions—AAUP, AFT, and NEA—are still actively involved in organizing faculty and staff, but their new competition comes from more traditional blue-collar unions. For example, as noted, the SEIU has targeted contingent faculty and some graduate students in its organizational efforts, in addition to its usual activity among higher education staff. While all three of the traditional educational unions pledge support for adjunct and graduate teaching assistant unionization, for example, and all have active organizing wings, they are not the prime organizers of these folks. Instead, the SEIU, UAW, and others are

presenting a different look for those groups interested in collective bargaining.

Nevertheless, the three main unions are seeking new ways to become relevant to a wider body of potential faculty members and staff. Like other unions in the U.S., issues of bread and butter outweigh ideology, and all higher education bargaining agents have proved willing and able to merge in various institutions to present faculty with a more inclusive look. According to the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions,<sup>35</sup> those three labor organizations represent 54% of all unionized faculty; however, it is frequent to see collaboration between unions, and indeed a number of merged unions now represent many bargaining units. As one example, United Academics, an affiliate of both the AAUP and AFT, currently represent faculty in several places around the country, including the University of Alaska, University of Vermont, and Rutgers University.

Gradations of academic status and economic differentiation among full-time faculty, graduate students, and adjunct faculty remain very salient, particularly in institutions where the full-time faculty remain unorganized, and where other professionals seek representation. In such cases, it is not politically feasible for traditional faculty agents (or associations—terminology which still is difficult to pinpoint in many locales) to jump into the fray; particularly when, as is often the case, the full-time faculty may not support collective bargaining. While the administration is often cast as recalcitrant, administrators are often responding to subtle cues from full-time faculty. This is reflected in the types of relationships that occur when those with less status and prestige endeavor to seek representation, and in the agents—more often industrial unions seeking new clientele for additional dues—which more often represent these groups. For example, the United Auto Workers represent graduate students at the University of California, Harvard University, Columbia University, and New York University. The United Electrical Workers represent graduate teaching assistants at the State University of New York and the University of Iowa, and, as noted, the now has dozens of contingent faculty units across the country, from major private universities like Duke University to community college systems in Missouri and New Hampshire. The introduction of such historically “industrial” unions into faculty organizing is partly by design, as in the case of the SEIU that has consciously sought to expand its organizing activity among faculty,<sup>36</sup> and partly by necessity, as in the case of the UAW, which suffered dramatic loss of membership in their traditional industry.

---

<sup>35</sup> Berry and Savarese, *Bargaining Agents in Institutions of Higher Education*.

<sup>36</sup> Already with over 2 million members and growing, the SEIU specifically highlights its recent activity in trying to organize adjunct faculty. See [www.seiu.org](http://www.seiu.org).

### **Table Talk: What Issues Will Be Front and Center in Faculty Negotiations?**

What will the central issues for negotiations look like in the next decade? As always, administrators at the bargaining table will hear familiar themes. We would be remiss if we left the impression that faculty concerns and challenges were only those heard at the negotiating table. While there is no doubt some overlap, the problems articulated by union spokespersons, a number of whom may not even be members of the faculty where negotiations are occurring, versus those discussed by faculty in other campus settings, may not track closely. Union spokespersons are rightfully concerned with wages, hours, and working conditions, and many are “true believers,” or elected to represent certain constituencies. In any event, we do not subscribe to the notion that the “faculty” and the “union” are the same. Opinions and views voiced at the bargaining table may or may not be representative of general faculty concerns. Our experience is that at the bargaining table faculty will complain of too much “top down” management, that shared governance is not being shared, that many students are ill-prepared for college, and decry the lack of autonomy or resources. Negotiators may complain about too much pressure to publish or engage in meaningful research, or the amount of time spent in service activities, and how the decline in staffing the institution with tenure-track faculty has only added to their burdens. They will grumble about process issues, unfair evaluations, and too much emphasis on student evaluations. They will insist that benefits be kept untouched, and those benefits being enjoyed prior to bargaining be added to those now being negotiated, salaries increased, release time for every manner of activity be instituted, and, in many locales, “work” for the union be recognized as academic service for promotion and tenure. Some of these claims should be taken very seriously, others not.

Of course, there will be lectures about arbitrary decision-making of executives, their embrace of new “corporate models,” the increasing number of administrators, and the lack of attention to the basic values of the academy in pursuit of goals of legislators or other outsiders. All these will sound familiar, some of it is true, and we would agree that faculty are at the core of what universities represent and do. Students, research funding, academic distinction, and the like come to universities because of faculty expertise; faculty are the ones who make the lifelong commitment to teach, research, and serve, and it is faculty, not administrators, whom students remember.

Simultaneously, collective bargaining often uncovers deep suspicions and fractures between schools and disciplines, exposes the haves and have-nots among senior and less senior (untenured) faculty, and causes an examination of the inequality of treatment by faculty against others who may also call themselves faculty, but who are not part of the inner power structure within departments or schools. Faculty view

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

collective bargaining, more often than not, as an “add-on” to existing arrangements, benefits, policies, and practices. What is good for the union may not necessarily be good for students or faculty, and this observation is drawn into sharp relief as bargaining intensifies. Although it’s a contentious and sensitive issue—particularly in areas of workload, scheduling, evaluation for reappointment, promotion or tenure—unions are sometimes faced with conflicting pressures to balance needs for accommodation or job security and control with student success and rigorous performance criteria. Added to these dynamics will be new and emerging areas of conflict, as well a few of which we discuss below.

### *Online Courses and Distance Learning*

Front and center will be the myriad of issues surrounding online courses and distance education. Some of the likely areas of discussion will focus on workload; other areas will include the question of ownership of such courses and what compensation, if any, faculty should receive for developing such courses or for having others teach such courses. As online education advances in the years ahead, and as more and more faculty are engaged in developing and teaching online courses, there will inevitably be difficult negotiations over such issues as:

- Whether such online course work can be assigned or remain voluntary?
- How much training will institutions give faculty for online teaching?
- Will there be incentive compensation for faculty who choose to teach online? Incentives for those who choose to develop courses online?
- Should teaching an online course count equally for workload purposes as live classroom instruction? Is it more difficult, easier, or the equivalent?
- Who owns the intellectual property to such courses?
- Will faculty who develop a course receive royalties when someone else teaches it?
- Who owns the courses? The institution, the faculty member, or is it shared?
- Is there room for some profit sharing for developing online programs?

Some of these issues are already being dealt with in collective bargaining agreements. No doubt that where an institution has made a substantial investment in online education, there will be added pressure to share the “profits” of their endeavors with the faculty involved. Long discussions on the vagaries and intricacies of copyright law will ensue.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

### *Family-Centered Issues*

Here, colleges and universities will inevitably be faced at the bargaining table with demands to accommodate family needs and to strike the proper balance between work and family. This is the era when all employers have had to modify their work requirements with the realities of family life in the 21st century.<sup>37</sup> Unions have made, and will continue to advocate for, provisions in collective bargaining agreements that focus management's attention on the needs of individual workers in all aspects of their personal lives—from the challenges of child rearing, and the poignant and time-consuming care of elderly parents, to the complex issues of mental health and the all-consuming emotions of divorce and other personal crises. Time off for such events—with or without pay—will likely be a benefit that unions will strive to achieve in their negotiations with administrations.

On this point, many faculty contracts already embrace not only the basics of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) but other family-friendly policies that are not required by law. These include paid time for certain family emergencies, suspending the tenure clock for pregnancies and early child rearing, special provisions to cover adoptions, and other family-friendly policies. Current issues often center on demands for entire semesters off, with pay, for both mothers and fathers.

In dealing with such issues at the table, institutions of higher education will not have the option that non-educational employers have to argue that personal life issues must sometimes yield to the competitive need for high production and achievement of maximum profit. And while the daily business of the university needs to be attended to, unions can make compelling cases that education will not be ruined by accommodating the personal vagaries of individual faculty life, and that indeed campuses should lead the way on this movement.

### *The Impact of Technology on Doing Business*

In addition to the focused issue of online education mentioned above, the new ways of communicating—email, texting, Twitter, Facebook, and

---

<sup>37</sup> Indeed, polling results from the National Partnership for Women & Families, issued on December 3, 2012, indicate that regardless of party affiliation, a majority of respondents struggle with the balance between work and family responsibilities. The majority feel that Congress should pass legislation that would require paid sick days and paid family and medical leave insurances. While Congress may struggle with such issues, some states, such as Massachusetts and Vermont, have already moved forward by guaranteeing paid time to employees within the state. This trend is likely to continue, although with the advent of the Trump administration, great care should be exercised in making generalizations.

other social media—will be part of the dialogue at the table. For example, students may still need face-to-face office time, but they are much more likely to communicate with their professors via email—and to assume they can do it at any time of the day or night. Indeed, thousands of students taking online courses never see their professor; in some locales students can get a degree without attending a traditional class. As such, some questions to consider would be:

- What are the 21st century means of communications between faculty member and student?
- Administrations will rightfully expect faculty to respond to student needs, but to what degree? This becomes a workload issue in contract talks.
- What faculty post on Facebook for their students will be a new area of concern, particularly as to the scope and propriety of such postings. Other issues that entangle new technologies with the educational process may also find their way to the bargaining table.
- For those who teach online, how will they be evaluated by students and administration? How does a colleague, chair or administrator “observe” an online course in action, and how is such information incorporated into rank and tenure considerations? What changes will need to be made to the methods of evaluating faculty?

Regarding student evaluations, paper course evaluations are quickly giving way to online evaluations. This raises questions about when such online evaluations should be done, what form they should take, what type of access professors will have to such evaluations, and what they can be used for. Again, all are items for discussion at the table.

#### *The Right to Criticize Administrations*

Academic freedom has always been a major subject of bargaining, as well as a major historical issue concerning academic professionalization and autonomy. Here the AAUP deserves credit for its pioneering role in the development of policies protecting academic freedom. Most labor agreements covering faculty contain academic freedom provisions adopted from original AAUP statements. Such provisions remain at the heart of virtually all faculty contracts and can be the third rail of negotiations if administrators seek to restrict them in any way.

Of course, it should be noted that while faculty unions have vigorously fought—and will continue to fight—for academic freedom, they could ironically also undermine academic freedom because of their organizational goals. For example, for many years at the University of San Francisco,, tenured faculty could be fired for not paying union dues;

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*



academic freedom, also covered in the labor agreement, notwithstanding.<sup>38</sup> The dilemma of union solidarity, the need for dues, and the rights of faculty to exercise freedom of conscience when it comes to joining or criticizing the union are also part and parcel of the bargaining environment. Here, unions have had more difficulty reconciling competing definitions of academic freedom.

On the nature of academic freedom itself, we have observed that unions have already started to push for more expansive visions of what academic freedom means. They have sought—and will continue to seek—to have academic freedom embrace far more than speech in the classroom or freedom of research. We believe that with court restrictions on First Amendment rights of public employees,<sup>39</sup> public sector faculty especially may seek broader contractual guarantees of their right to criticize administration policies, while force-fitting it under the umbrella of academic freedom.

This discussion may also include what faculty choose to say on Facebook posts as well. The growing volume of advice and case law from the NLRB on what constitutes protected concerted activity and the limits on the degree to which management can limit criticism of the employer on social media sites is still evolving and has already been a source of litigation. Faculty unions will press for contractual guarantees of their right to criticize the administration (an easy target) in social media settings and

---

<sup>38</sup> Efforts to have the University of San Francisco faculty accept something less than forced dues payment upon employment, a provision based on freedom of conscience to mandatory union membership, where faculty could pay an equivalent amount in dues to another organization, led to significant labor strife in the 1980s.

<sup>39</sup> The lead case in this area is *Garcetti v. Ceballos*, 547 U.S. 410 (2006). In that case, a California district attorney, Richard Ceballos, was demoted and transferred after he wrote a memorandum to his supervisors in which he criticized the sheriff's department and its practices. His suit against his supervisors claimed that he had been retaliated against for exercising his First Amendment free speech rights. The Supreme Court ruled against Ceballos holding that "when public employees make statements pursuant to their official duties, the employees are not speaking as citizens for First Amendment purposes, and the Constitution does not insulate their communications from employer discipline." The Court reasoned that public employers must have the ability to restrict the speech of their employees in order for public institutions to operate efficiently and effectively. Since then, some other federal court decisions have limited free speech rights of public employees in different settings. See, for example, *Savage v. Gee*, 665 F.3d 732 (6th Cir. 2012); *Demers v. Austin*, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 60481 (E.D. Wash. 2011); *McArdle v. Peoria School District*, 7th Cir., No. 11-2437 (Jan.31, 2013) (An Illinois middle school principal fired after she charged her predecessor and immediate supervisor with misuse of public funds lacks a First Amendment retaliation claim because she spoke as a public employee on a job-related matter rather than as a citizen on a matter of public concern).

elsewhere, armed with the guidance and rationale of the NLRB. Even though the Board only covers the private sector, public sector unions, hamstrung by the Supreme Court's *Garcetti* ruling,<sup>40</sup> will push administrations at the table to provide the protections that the Court has not given. In addition, the new means of communicating with the world—Facebook and Twitter, for example—raise technical issues regarding the traditional mandate that the faculty member should always indicate that s/he is not an institutional spokesperson. Does every tweet or post need a disclaimer, or will such social media and other 21st century modes of communication somehow be exempt from the 1940 AAUP mandate?

#### *Merit Pay and Compensation Issues*

On the administration side, there will be a growing demand to pay faculty based on performance, as well as student and institutional outcomes measures. Merit pay—frequently a contentious issue now—will only grow in importance, as students, legislators, and parents demand accountability. Administrations will ask “what is working and what is not?” How can merit be woven into the collective bargaining agreement in a way that respects and rewards faculty efforts and success (we would argue only with the faculty union as a partner not as an adversary), and is not merely perfunctory window dressing? The format for deciding upon merit pay, the criteria to be used, and the amount of the raise dedicated to merit, including the link of compensation to institutional outcomes, will be salient topics. It may also be the case, particularly in larger state systems where negotiations are conducted by members of the Governor's staff representing the employer, that funds will be so scarce that merit or across-the-board increases will not be forthcoming. It is one thing to argue about merit pay when there are funds to distribute. In locales where the proposed settlement is so meager, the parties may simply return to universal cost-of-living increases.

Regardless of how salary money is distributed, administrations—both public and private—will struggle with raising revenues to support such increases. The reality facing virtually every institution in the country is that tuition can only be raised so much. The drive to keep tuition

---

<sup>40</sup> *Garcetti v. Ceballos*, 547 U.S. 410 (2006). See footnote 20. The trouble posed by *Garcetti* for those in the public sector is the Court's exclusion of First Amendment protection for a public employee when she/ he is speaking “pursuant to his official duties” as a public employee. Thus, criticism of administration policies might not enjoy the protection of the First Amendment in many settings. See, for example, *Demers v. Austin*, supra where a claim by a Washington State University faculty member that he was retaliated against for publishing a criticism of the administration and his own School of Communication failed in federal court.

increases very low (fueled by the realities of low inflation<sup>41</sup>); the high cost of tuition, room, and board at many institutions; and growing student debt will likely be maintained in all quarters. Couple this with the fact that in many areas of the country, such as the Northeast, the demographics regarding high school graduates are alarming. Fewer students coming out of high school means more institutions competing in a pool of fewer students. For small institutions dependent on student tuition as their sole source of significant revenue, the economic future seems quite precarious.<sup>42</sup>

In addition, public institutions will not be well-funded by the state for the foreseeable future, and new revenue will consequently be limited. In response, unions will continue to attack what they will suggest are needless (i.e., non-faculty) expenditures on campus. They will demand an increasing amount of data and information from administrators on how money is spent and criticize the growth in the number of administrators, and they may suggest linking pay increases to tuition increases or linking the size of the entering class to a certain pay raise, much like there have been conditional salary increases in the public sector based on state funding.<sup>43</sup>

Everyone will continue to look for solutions to the rising cost of health insurance. The passage of the Affordable Care Act—assuming it survives in some form during the Trump administration—continues to present new challenges, particularly with part-time faculty, as noted below. If the Act is repealed in whole or in part, what will replace it, and how will that new scheme affect bargaining? No one can be sure.

Another benefit issue that is likely to grow in prominence at the bargaining table are proposals for economic assistance with child care. More and more unions are proposing that administrations provide either child care on campus or provide some monetary supplement to help employees pay for private child care.

---

<sup>41</sup> According to the Bureau of National Affairs, the annual inflation rates for 2013-2016 have been 1.5%, 1.6%, 0.1% and 1.3% respectively.

<sup>42</sup> Indeed, a growing number of small institutions have gone out of business in the last two years, including Mt. Ida College and Newbury College in Massachusetts, Burlington College, Southern Vermont College, Green Mountain College, St. Joseph College in Vermont, Dowling College in New York, and Grace University in Nebraska. At well-regarded Hampshire College in Massachusetts, the Board of Trustees is struggling to keep the College from closing its doors, and its AY 20 freshman class was reduced to less than 100.

<sup>43</sup> In Vermont, significantly low state funding, which consistently ranks 50th in the nation, has led to the necessary merger of Johnson State College and Lyndon State College into a new entity, Northern Vermont University, in an effort to save money.

Many institutions and states will finally be forced to pay attention to the debt they have incurred promising post-retirement medical benefits. Aggressive proposals from the administration side of the table will seek to lower future retiree benefits for current faculty and perhaps eliminate them all together for new faculty. These will pose immense challenges at the table to find some common ground.

#### *The Special Issues in Adjunct Faculty Negotiations*

Adjunct faculty negotiations will continue to present special challenges in the years ahead. Here, many administrations are still in virgin territory. While there is a growing number of adjunct contracts already in effect, the field is still relatively new. As more and more adjunct units come into being, new approaches to handling common issues may emerge, especially in areas like course assignments. This will include what will be the perpetual tension between the need for flexibility to deal with the vagaries of student enrollment, and the adjuncts' desire for commitment as to how much and when they will teach.

Adjunct faculty are a diverse group, with some teaching for an occasional supplement to income or to share their professional expertise in the classroom, but with others seeking to cobble together a living from part-time assignments, often at more than one institution. They are integral to many colleges and universities, particularly in the graduate and professional areas. Such faculty members, especially those who are in the liberal arts and at the forefront of unionizing efforts, are looking for guaranteed commitment and respect not only from institutions but from full-time colleagues as well. Some may ultimately seek a pathway to full-time status, but, at the very least, they would like the certitude of knowing they can teach two, three, or four courses a semester. Given the semester-to-semester adjustments in course offerings, this is difficult for administrations to accept and, we would argue, might not be supported by the full-time faculty as well. Moreover, when budgets are trimmed, courses taught by adjuncts, not full-time faculty, are the first to go, thus exacerbating the problem of guaranteed work. Administrations will find it difficult to provide too much security for this remaining faculty group over whom considerable flexibility now exists.

On a related issue, adjuncts will seek greater job security for more senior members of the group, asking for commitments in offered classes especially desirable to them. Here, institutions will counter with the need to put the best possible adjunct faculty member in the classroom by taking into account academic credentials; past teaching experience in the particular course; qualifications and sub-qualifications; curriculum needs in general; teaching effectiveness; and, of course, student demand. But compromises in these areas can be reached. As but one example, there are now preferred hiring pools at some institutions where adjuncts, once accepted into the "pool," have a reasonable guarantee of employment for classes they have been teaching, sometimes for many years. In other

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

contracts, seniority is a tie-breaker for assigning courses only after analyzing relative credentials, teaching experience and performance, and determining that all such factors are equal. In some of the newer SEIU contracts, provisions are made for multi-semester, multi-year contracts, and, in some cases, with some course guarantees. Stronger evaluation systems have accompanied such benefits, resulting in a weeding out of less effective adjuncts who may have previously slid under the radar.

Another issue for the adjunct table will be how to deal with reductions in offered courses. The idea of retrenchment, in its traditional sense, does not quite fit the world of contingent faculty because, unlike tenured faculty, they do not have contractual ongoing employment. It is likely that parties will at some point have to address the issue of how to deal with large-scale cutbacks in available adjunct assignments. When an institution needs to cut budgets, adjuncts that traditionally might have been given three or four courses per semester to teach may find they are only given one course. Thus, while not technically without work, or “laid off,” the bulk of their income may be severely reduced. Regardless of contract language, the practical expectations that long-term adjuncts develop *vis-à-vis* workload and income will have to be reconciled with an institution’s need to reduce costs and courses. These issues may be dominant in bargaining and functionally equivalent to traditional layoff arguments in other employment sectors.

Another growing area of concern is how institutions will measure performance. In trying to establish reasonable procedures for determining teaching effectiveness, evaluations will play a new role in adjunct negotiations. Given their sheer numbers, adjuncts have rarely been systematically evaluated. But in bargaining, it is likely that administrations—desirous of avoiding straight seniority assignments—will seek to establish clarity in this area, so they can reasonably measure the performance of one adjunct against another. The need for greater accountability from adjuncts will necessitate such evaluations, and, perhaps equally as important, will also usher in an era of greater training and much improved professional support for these faculty members. An attendant complication where both full-time and adjunct faculty are unionized is that the burden of evaluating adjuncts may fall on department chairs. In many cases, such chairs are also unionized, sometimes residing in the same bargaining unit with adjuncts, sometimes not. Thus, changes in an adjunct collective bargaining agreement with regard to chairs’ duties to evaluate adjuncts may spawn workload disputes with the full-time faculty union that represents chairs.

Because negotiations with adjuncts are still relatively new at most schools, and because there is no pre-existing template such as a tenure system to accommodate, adjunct bargaining will potentially be highly creative in terms of how the parties address job security protections, pay systems, and other working conditions. Lacking the traditional but rigid tenure system, and lacking a large number of comparators, adjuncts and

their bargaining partners can literally create new schemes of contract sequences, compensation options, performance pay, training and professional development, and other such areas.

Also, it is likely that, little-by-little, adjuncts will attain some success in negotiating benefits for themselves, albeit on a modest level. One can see small incursions into this territory. Some adjunct contracts already provide limited health insurance benefits to more senior adjuncts, for example. In addition, we are seeing limited contributions to pensions (a benefit that, unlike health insurance, can be specifically calculated and budgeted) and some access to tuition reimbursement. This benefit trend is probably going to continue, though slowly, as it will simply be too difficult to maintain the structure of half the curriculum taught by faculty members who have no benefits.

And finally, and perhaps most imminently, the impact of the Affordable Care Act continues to loom large, as institutions try to understand the Act's 30-hour provision for defining full-time work and try to ascertain how many hours a week their adjunct faculty really spend working. How this law is interpreted will be a major factor as to whether or not adjuncts begin to attain health insurance coverage. In some situations, administrations will be faced with a new reality that some of the adjuncts they considered "part-time" are really "full-time" under the Act. That, in turn, will lead to new internal administrative debates about assessing the cost of providing health insurance to such individuals versus incurring government penalties for not doing so. This will be immensely complicated and, at present, stands as a question without any firm guidelines or regulations from the federal government.

### **The Difficulty of Analysis**

One immediate challenge in addressing the questions posed is the difficulty of untangling the impact of collective bargaining from other internal and external forces shaping post-secondary education. For example, can the effects of collective bargaining be gauged in an era when other external catalysts appear to be more salient in promoting organization change? We mentioned enabling legislation in some Midwestern states. What about the decline in federal and state support; the increased use of adjuncts and decline in full-time appointments; the presence of free online courses (which may soon be transferable for credit); public pressures for tuition decreases and a growing disenchantment with the benefits of higher education; transition in presidential or decanal leadership; institutional size; or the region in which bargaining occurs? All have been cited for years by scholars as catalysts for change in higher education.<sup>44</sup> Or have local labor management

---

<sup>44</sup> Jeffrey Pfeffer, *New Directions for Organizational Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Peter M. Blau, *The Organization of Academic Work* (New York: John Wiley, 1973); Joseph W. Garbarino, David E. Feller, and



relationships and the “personalities” who shape interactions had a greater impact on a particular college or university than the external factors?

The difficulty in assessing the impact of collective bargaining is not confined to the larger organizational questions. Take the issue of bargaining agent effectiveness. Does it matter if faculty or graduate students are represented by a particular union or bargaining agent? Do particular agents bargain better agreements? Does the recent union trend towards mergers, such as the AAUP-AFT combined units, yield better results at the table? Even within the context of individual unions, are results at the table driven by the personalities who negotiate or by organizational constraints?

Although there are few objective studies which concern these questions, what evidence there is seems to suggest that what is more important when discussing issues associated with agent effectiveness is where the bargaining occurs (i.e., the institutional and demographic characteristics of institutions or systems and/or *what* particular employee groups are represented), rather than the particular agent.<sup>45</sup> While we realize such claims may be controversial, the majority of organized faculty in the U.S. today are represented by mergers of unions, not one particular bargaining agent.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, even within the context of a single union, the variations and results at the table can often depend on the force of personality (power and influence) of the negotiator and his or her team as opposed to the relative abilities of the opposing team. For such reasons, claims that one particular bargaining agent or union is more “effective” (assuming that term can be defined) are spurious best. This is not to say that certain agents at various schools can be very effective, but it is difficult to make across-the-board generalizations.

When trying to discern themes, trends, and outcomes, those who have studied collective bargaining in higher education have had difficulty untangling a myriad of variables such as internal and external, demographic, environmental, personality and the like, which effect the processes and outcomes. Nor have we found many studies that identify the long-term impacts of bargaining. For example, in the area of compensation, the question of whether or not unionization results in higher

---

Matthew W. Finkin, *Faculty Bargaining in Public Higher Education: A Report of the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1977); Frank R. Kemerer and J. Victor Baldrige, *Unions on Campus* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1976); Harold L. Hodgkinson, *Institutions in Transition: A Profile of Change in Higher Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971).

<sup>45</sup> Daniel J. Julius and Margaret K. Chandler, “Academic Bargaining Agents in Higher Education: Do Their Achievements Differ?” *Journal of Collective Negotiations* 18, no. 1 (1989): 9-58.

<sup>46</sup> Data compiled by the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, Hunter College, CUNY (<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/ncscbhpep>).

salaries remains unclear, despite the claims of many, because there is no body of research which unambiguously demonstrates, after all these years, that unionization results in higher salaries.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, the highest paid faculty members in the U.S. remain unorganized—as do the lowest paid.<sup>48</sup> Nor is there unequivocal data, despite strongly held opinions by many union adherents, around the issue of student outcomes, and whether students fare better (stay in school, graduate) when taught by adjuncts rather than full-time faculty. Nor can we pinpoint whether unionization has encouraged the hiring of greater numbers of adjunct faculty. Unionized institutions appear to be hiring adjuncts at the same rate as non-unionized institutions. Clearly, there is a need for additional research in these important areas.

Another issue concerns the impact of bargaining on shared governance. Our experience indicates it not only survives unionization, but in some cases collective bargaining has resulted in the establishment of additional joint decision-making bodies on campus. To be sure, in some settings, the faculty union has trumped the faculty senate in importance and influence, or taken it over, but by no means does it appear that faculty unions have marked the death knell of governance bodies themselves. Other important academic concerns—institutional rankings, the teacher-mentor relationship, the impact of technology and online courses, the share of full-time faculty teaching undergraduate courses, faculty diversity, and student debt ratios—all may be going through profound change, but there is a paucity of evidence pointing to collective bargaining as the reason or cause of transformation in these areas.

---

<sup>47</sup> However, there does seem to be an emerging trend that unionization of adjunct faculty members has resulted in significant increases in per credit rates, at least in the initial year of a first collective bargaining agreement. Some of the newer adjunct faculty settlements at institutions like Tufts, Boston University, Washington University in St. Louis, Lesley University, and Champlain College, among others, show substantial increases, sometimes double digit increases in the first year, with lesser increases in subsequent years of the agreement in many cases. Whether this early trend continues remains to be seen.

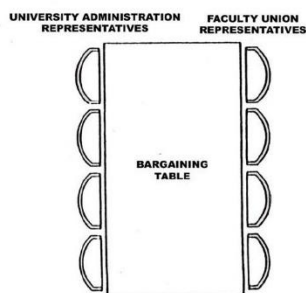
<sup>48</sup> One reviewer reading this manuscript suggested the following: “It could be said that any salary advantage to faculty bargaining collectively is time limited and subject to general market forces affecting faculty salaries by sector, region, and discipline.” One of the best discussions of the research in this area can be found in Cain, Timothy. R. (2017) *Campus Unions Organized Faculty and Graduate Students in U. S. Higher Education. ASHE, Higher Education Report*, Vol. 43, Number 3, John Wiley and Sons, N.J.: See also, Herbert, W.A., *The Winds of Change Shift; An Analysis of Recent Growth in Bargaining Units and Representation Efforts in Higher Education. Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy*, 8 Retrieved from <http://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba/vol8/iss/1/1/>.

## Decision-Making and the Dimensions of Collective Bargaining

Charts 1 through 6 depict the dimensions of labor relations and constituents who impact collective bargaining processes and outcomes. Knowing the “dimensions” is a *sine qua non* for understanding how the process is influenced, as well as the “rhetoric to reality” journey.<sup>49</sup>

### Chart 1

#### DIMENSIONS OF BARGAINING



The issues that are brought to the table, or scope of bargaining, are determinative and can set the tone for collective bargaining relationships. In many jurisdictions, the scope of negotiations (wages, hours and working conditions) is outlined in enabling public sector labor legislation. Terms, such as wages, hours and working conditions can be ambiguous in higher education settings. In general, creative spokespersons can negotiate the issues they need to address each party's concerns. However, there remains a healthy tension between unions and various “governance” committees in many institutions. There are no set rules for the number of individuals who sit on bargaining teams. In general, it is more often difficult to come to agreement when greater numbers of individuals participate, particularly if party spokespersons lack the necessary clout or integrity to deliver on promises made at the negotiating table. In some systems or institutions, bargaining protocols are set forth in negotiated agreements. The location of bargaining sessions, release time for negotiators, and team membership can all be contentious issues. Normally, chief institutional representatives, President, or Chancellors do not participate in negotiation sessions. To do so would significantly reduce their ability to “take positions” or “remain above the fray”. The absence of chief executives also provides flexibility to negotiators to float trial balloons or table sensitive topics. Bargaining is a political process which causes those in charge to “compromise”. Eventually, the need to engage in compromise erodes authority.

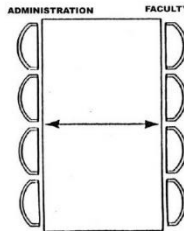
---

<sup>49</sup> The following charts, titled “Dimensions of Collective Bargaining,” were, to the best of our knowledge, originally developed for training programs by the U.S. Department of Labor in the 1940’s or 1950’s. We have adapted them for use in higher education and have been using them since the 1970’s.

chart 2

### DIMENSIONS OF BARGAINING

HORIZONTAL - ACROSS THE TABLE

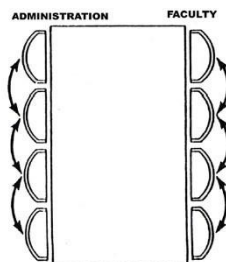


All formal agreements should be initiated by the chief university and union negotiator. The arrow between the administration and faculty depicts the horizontal bargaining that takes place between two chief negotiators. Such bargaining may begin at the table, but ultimately migrates to legislative hallways, restaurants, and bathrooms. Toward the conclusion of negotiations, the parties invariably spend more time away from the table than at the bargaining table itself. Nevertheless, personal trust, integrity, and professionalism remain a constant feature of effective collective bargaining. Demonizing opponents or rotating negotiators (so others can get a turn, but who may have no awareness of history or trade-offs necessary to conduct negotiations), hampers collective bargaining. Why would any professional negotiator come to a resolution which often involves compromise and the need to "sell" the resolution to other team members or constituents, with one negotiator only to find that individual had been replaced by another spokesperson with no memory or appreciation for the compromise recently made. Unions who engage in such practices, allegedly to promote democratic values or training opportunities often have difficulty coming to resolution with employer counterparts. Seeing negotiating positions through the eyes of the individual sitting across the table is important! Creative negotiators have an uncanny ability to find shared objectives and construct contract language which addresses the concerns of both parties. Here the key is not to negotiate language which proves impossible to implement. This can be problematic as many negotiators, union and administration, have no real management or supervisory experience. Negotiators are often very naive about how contract language is translated and utilized in the workplace. (A good reason to insure that "managers" or other faculty are present on the bargaining team). Moreover, in many higher education settings, individuals who determine 'bottom line' parameters for the union and management are not present at the table. All the more reason that chief negotiators are able to deliver on their promises. In the final analysis, all the negotiator really has to offer is his or her word.

**Chart 3**

**DIMENSIONS OF BARGAINING**

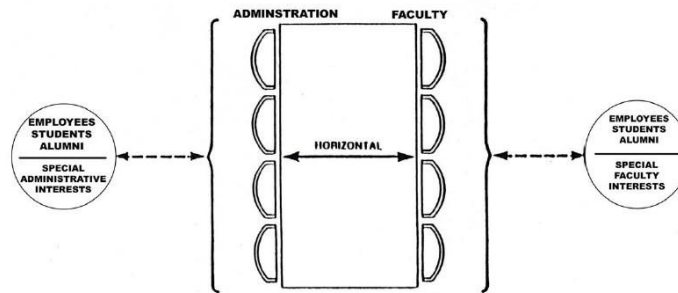
INTERNAL - WITHIN EACH TEAM



In most higher education settings, there is political intrigue and honest disagreement among members of the same bargaining teams. Significant internal negotiations can occur between representatives of academic units and financial offices. It is also quite common for various faculty in different schools to disagree over standards. Faculty often have pronounced opinions concerning the work of those in other disciplines which, if not addressed openly, can hamper negotiation processes. This is particularly the case in systems where different institutions seek to safeguard institutional autonomy and resist centralizing tendencies. In some employee associations, there are factions who seek to take over the union, particularly in organizations where leaders are not secure. In such cases, negotiations can be very challenging, as negotiating counterparts are reluctant to make concessions to individuals who may be unable to deliver on promises, or who are susceptible to recall elections. Personal animosities between different units, divisions, or individuals also hamper collective bargaining processes. These animosities are exacerbated when those responsible for labor relations are demonized by other administrators or faculty, or accused of "giving away the store". When negotiating positions are not in alignment with organizational values or mission statements, or institutional leaders undermine negotiators by allowing "end runs", the process breaks down. The maintenance of sound labor relations requires institutional and union leaders to stay focused on outcomes and ensure that authority and trust are accorded to negotiators. Obviously, collective bargaining is impeded when those given responsibility for negotiations are not trained, do not understand the role of the negotiator, lack the confidence of the senior leaders or understand unique organizational features of colleges and universities.



**Chart 4**  
**DIMENSIONS OF BARGAINING**  
EXTERNAL - WITH OUTSIDE GROUPS

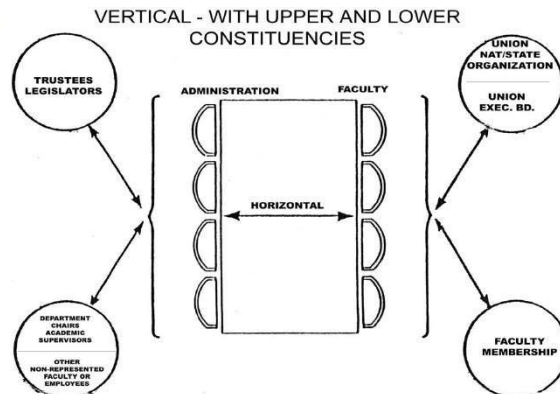


Special interest groups effect bargaining outcomes in many negotiating settings. Collective bargaining is inherently political and requires an awareness of the importance of particular external constituencies. Those who negotiate must negotiate on behalf of wider audiences. For example, agreement on economic provisions which require increases in tuition or agreement on contract provisions which change promotion or tenure criteria, or the compensation of department chairs, potentially effect other powerful special interest groups. Providing particular economic benefits to one group may require similar benefits be offered to comparable employee groups. The "costs" of such compromises must be seen in a larger context. A party cannot easily afford to 'settle' with one constituency to the detriment of other interests; both must please a particular constituency within its ranks. Ultimately labor relations requires a redistribution of power and influence; this is difficult in organizations where shared governance and consensus are normative. Labor relations demands finality. Academic organizations resist hierarchy and deadlines. Negotiators from all perspectives face similar problems and challenges.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*



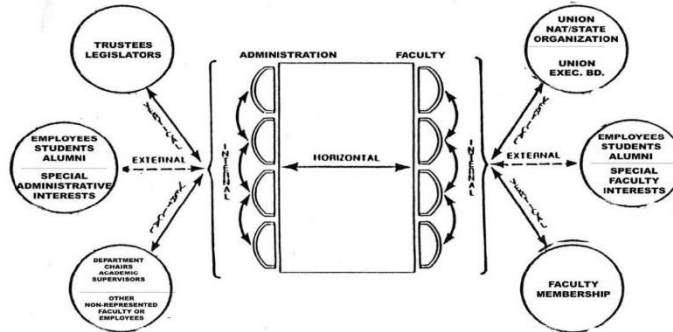
**Chart 5**      **DIMENSIONS OF BARGAINING**



Ultimately, administrative representatives must convince Trustees, Legislators, or other powerful academic leaders to come to agreement or compromise on matters that may have been characterized as “principles”. This requires an internal structure to guide the decision-making process. Problems and challenges are complicated when those who negotiate are external to academic divisions where organized faculty and academic leaders reside. Union negotiators have similar challenges, particularly when organizing rhetoric promises new gains and the redistribution of power relationships. Negotiators who make such promises risk losing the confidence of union members or union executives if such claims are not deliverable. It is also the case that senior organizational leaders, on both the administrative and union side, may have bigger fish to fry. While compromise on an issue (parking rates, subcontracting, office hours, and the like) may seem monumental to local constituencies, individuals responsible for approaching state or federal officials for new legislation or increased financial support, may not feel “local” issues are worth the fight when “larger” systemic concerns are being debated. In this regard, parties external to the process can exert a pronounced influence on bargaining relationships.

Chart 6

**DIMENSIONS OF BARGAINING**



This chart depicts why collective bargaining, particularly in large complex systems, is a cumbersome and time consuming affair. Negotiation processes, horizontal, vertical, internal, and external, occur with an array of individuals. Relationships break down during periods of institutional transition because those responsible for making decisions or legitimizing bargaining compromises leave or are at risk themselves. Stable academic environments and consistency in leadership are important. In large organizations or systems, executives or faculty leaders must effectuate policies and procedures in alignment with other institutional endeavors. This can be difficult where permissive leaders or those who insist on being popular or loved by all are reluctant or unable to hold others accountable, or senior union officials are subject to the whims of elected faculty. Ultimately the ability to negotiate effectively requires integrity, political acumen, support by institutional leaders and good fortune. Various actors and constituencies away from the table exert continuous pressure on parties to come to agreement or, in some cases, resist compromise. For example, a Dean who seeks to impress a particular faculty group or president may, for his or her own selfish reasons, undermine the efforts to negotiators. Communication and a concrete strategy underpinned by realistic and objective bargaining parameters are essential. At some juncture during the negotiations, the good of the organization must be put before the interests of any one party or constituency.

### **The Dimensions of Collective Bargaining: Rhetoric Rarely Translates into Reality**

In our experience, there are five primary reasons why statements made about collective bargaining, particularly in the initial phases before elections, or during negotiations for successor agreements, may not be predictive of bargaining outcomes. These are discussed briefly below.

#### *Political Process*

Collective bargaining is an inherently political process based on perceptions calibrated to garner political support. Like elected politicians who often fail to deliver on campaign promises, it is much harder to guarantee outcomes than to talk about expectations. This is especially the case when administrative or faculty leaders (or constituents) are inexperienced or lack even a rudimentary appreciation of what has occurred in other jurisdictions. Moreover, the behaviors needed to be successful at the bargaining table are often alien to the dispassionate stance of scholars. Add to this a certain bias on the part of many in the professorate, which can translate into many thinking “their” issues or points of view are more important than those who actually make decisions (and who are held accountable). Collective bargaining is an inherently fluid process (because of the multiple actors, high degrees of interdependence, role of external parties, and the like) with all of the attendant benefits and pitfalls associated with processes that demand “trade-offs.” Unlike many academic meetings, those with “power” win the day, not those with more “rational” academic arguments.

#### *Dimensions of Negotiations*

As the charts depicting the dimensions of collective bargaining illustrate, a multiplicity of actors, interest groups, constituencies, and “players,” influence bargaining processes. The goals of some groups may conflict with others. Once bargaining gets underway, those with real power and clout (governors’ staffs for example) may make their will known and cause the parties to accept settlements on terms other than those initially promised to faculty or administrative colleagues. National union leaders may also feel, for reasons external to the institution, that settlement is in the best interest of the union, regardless of local feelings.

#### *Compromise Demands Trade-Offs*

Negotiators are vulnerable to political realities generated by practical dictates that may not have been initially manifest to the parties. For example, a union concerned about a rival faction may decide it is better to agree to a slightly less favorable settlement and obtain a three-year agreement (thereby eliminating competition from another individual union leader or rival union), rather than holding out for a more favorable settlement and risk looking ineffectual. Once labor agreements are signed, administrative or faculty challengers may have fewer people willing to

listen to how the situation could be enhanced if someone else were in charge! For administrators in particular, conflict in the organization generally turns to dissatisfaction with leadership. Better to get the contract signed than risk putting careers at stake. Ultimately, the desire or need to obtain settlement means that certain proposals fall by the wayside. These “proposals” may be held in high esteem by some and appear inconsequential to others. Negotiators are faced with these kinds of tough choices. I am reminded of the chief employer negotiator for a large western system who repeatedly begged the chancellor “not to make promises he couldn’t keep”. Those responsible for labor relations soon learn what is possible and what is not. Promising an 8% raise is meaningless if the funding authorities simply cannot afford to finance the settlement. There are rarely unused pots of money to cover settlements, and state officials with budgetary authority are constrained by voters as well as tax reserves.

#### *Bargaining Unit Strength*

Influence at the bargaining table (the ability to “deliver”) is directly related to the real and imagined influence of represented constituencies and, more importantly, what those constituents are capable of actually doing in the event demands are not met. Academic organizations are vulnerable to many internal and external constituencies. Faculty who consider a “walk out,” or engage in other forms of concerted action, often risk losing more than can be gained in such actions. Negotiators may realize, sometimes very late in the game, that if the opposing party were to call their bluff, chaos, not settlement, may ensue. The ability to bring pressure on the parties that requires unity and consensus among faculty—or engage in organized conflict—is often directly related to the bargaining demands that are met, and those that are dropped. This is true for unions and universities alike.

#### *Third Parties*

Third party intrusion into collective bargaining processes is another reason why rhetoric may not match reality. Arbitrators, mediators, neutrals, labor board officials, the courts, and legislative agencies become involved in collective bargaining, particularly if the parties cannot reach settlement or engage in “end run” tactics to bring pressure upon seemingly recalcitrant negotiators. In such cases, external procedures such as “fact finding” or “final offer arbitration,” procedures often set forth in legislation governing the bargaining relationship, cause the parties to confront new realities. Invariably, the folks who become involved as third parties may be unfamiliar with (or unsympathetic) to the culture of higher education. Cases and disputes are settled on the basis of accepted precedents in the “industrial” or “public” sectors. Related to this notion is the matter of “comparability.” Third parties who impose settlements will look to precedents and benchmarks found in other or “comparable” jurisdictions or institutions. Many in higher education think “their” situation is unique.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

This is rarely the case, and arbitrators, fact finders, and courts mandate terms based upon what others have already agreed upon.

#### *Salient Organizational Impacts*

Can salient organizational impacts be identified? As set forth in an earlier section of this essay, untangling the effects of employee unionism from other intellectual, social, economic, political, and organizational forces is exceedingly difficult. Although there are few studies on the longitudinal effects of collective bargaining on college and university systems, experience suggests that certain organizational consequences find their roots in collective bargaining. It would, however, be difficult to substantiate that direct relationships exist. Moreover, other environmental factors, particularly evolving legal and fiscal, or for-profit ventures, may exert similar systemic effects. With that caveat, the following effects of collective bargaining on college and university systems are suggested.

#### *The Centralization of Power and Authority*

In unionized systems, power and influence have inevitably flowed from individual campuses to system offices and union headquarters. From there, influence accrues to external agencies, elected politicians, and others who are integral to union-management relationships. These centralizing tendencies have resulted in increased bureaucracy, the codification of procedures and policies, and demands for consistent applications of university or system wide regulations, policies, and practices.

#### *The Need for New Styles of “Administration”*

One byproduct of unionization has been the “classification” and recognition of the specific responsibilities of supervisory, administrative, and faculty employees. This is no small issue in organizations where territorial boundaries, professional jurisdictions, and departmental autonomy have remained fluid and are considered one of the most significant organizational attributes of colleges and universities. The clarification of roles and responsibilities has, more often than not, ushered a change in personalities when unionization arrives, or agreements are renegotiated. Managing a unionized school requires additional skills than those needed to work in non-unionized environments, although this caveat is still only grudgingly accepted in many colleges and universities (indeed, involvement in labor relations is normally not a good route to leadership positions in academe).<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Notable university leaders, including Derek Bok (Harvard), Clark Kerr (University of California), Ken Mortimer (University of Hawaii), and several others, were industrial labor relations scholars and involved in collective bargaining. The skills learned in the industrial labor relations environment are those needed for success in higher education. However, the taint of “adversarial”

While there are increased opportunities for conflict once unions arrive, conflict resolution mechanisms are a salient feature of the labor management environment. Unionism has hastened the need for individuals who can “administer” labor agreements. Lastly, new faculty and administrative roles may contribute to organizational effectiveness by encouraging economic forecasting, strategic planning, benefits sharing, cost savings, and related policies, as multi-year labor agreements are implemented. Unionization forces review of compensation systems and may result in what are perceived to be more egalitarian approaches (salary steps, across-the-board increases) to the distribution of compensation. Formalized compensation systems are less common in non-unionized settings. Lastly, unionization forces faculty and administrative leaders to create a decision-making architecture (complete with policy manuals) to accommodate labor-management relationships.

*The Relationship of Faculty as “Employees” to “Employers”*

In many unionized colleges and systems, relationships between the “organization” and represented faculty has improved over time. Such is the case when power imbalances are reduced, and administrative offices act and speak with consistency. That being said, many believe academic institutions remain vibrant precisely because they are not managed like motor vehicle bureaus, or organizational health is attributed to the vigilant defense of departmental and school autonomy. It has been suggested that professional autonomy, hence academic quality, may be compromised through collective bargaining. For example, in what many consider the finest institutions of higher education in the U.S., professors remain non-unionized. Faculty in elite institutions are often rugged intellectual individualists and operate in ways antithetical to values unions promote such as probationary professors can be released, not due to poor performance, but because, in the future, more promising candidates may be found. It is thought that the least productive academic departments are those fully tenured. Senior research scientists have the autonomy and resources to act independently. Union leaders are quick to argue these values (and inequities) can be accommodated, and that wealthier institutions have the resources to keep everyone placated (to an extent we agree). But the tensions within unions, organizations legally obligated to protect professional prerogatives *and* job security, is ever present, particularly when faculty want similar raises given to all in the unit, or in cases where graduate students or adjuncts may be represented by competing unions. Moreover, administrators who face lengthy arbitration hearings over promotion or tenure denials are far less likely to make tough but necessary calls. In employment policy at least, unionization will cause

---

often hinders rather than helps academic careers, particularly affecting individuals who have served as chief negotiators for colleges or universities.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*



institutions to regress to a “status quo.” For many, this will be a real improvement and for others, a significant disadvantage.

#### *Enhanced Risks for Leaders*

Future challenges involving collective bargaining will probably result in greater exposure of organized institutions to both internal and external pressures. Administrative leaders will find that collective bargaining is inherently cyclical; tranquil times sometimes become attenuated. The progressives of one era become the reactionaries in the next. (This is particularly so when new presidents decide to change the “chemistry” between “their” administration and the faculty). The skills and attributes needed to be successful (i.e., the ability to hold others accountable, assure standardization in contract administration, and the like) lead to the creation of “internal” opponents. Eventually, when the five people that hate you link up with the five who are undecided, those in charge are forced out. In academe, friends come and go, but enemies remain. Collective bargaining feeds these interactions because the risk of exposure for poor decisions becomes greater in unionized organizations where simply not making a decision is no longer an option! Unionized public systems will become more beholden to state governors and legislative leaders. Such vulnerabilities, in evidence before unionization, are hastened, as the locus of bargaining has moved to legislative, not academic, offices.

#### *Leadership*

Leadership, for faculty and administrators, is an essential ingredient in the management of collective bargaining in colleges and universities, but it is not leadership in the traditional sense. The truly successful do not simply engage in the articulation of a vision or elaborate planning processes, they do not put great faith in rational decision-making, or behave as if their role is to serve others, nor do they manipulate colleagues and subordinates through cleverness or intimidation. Under such circumstances, leadership is impossible and certainly breaks down under conditions of goal ambiguity, professional dominance, and environmental vulnerability. The most effective executives and faculty leaders communicate well, know their institutional culture, engage in authentic behavior (they embrace the values cherished by their most respected constituents), legitimize the ideas and action of others, surround themselves with the right people, demand the bad news, continually agitate for excellence, are tenacious, patient, and focused on goals. They know when to react to external pressures and when not to. We can also discern cases where individuals hold important titles—Union Leader, President, Dean, or Provost—and have no effective influence or leadership skills. This is most often associated with “leaders” who handled a crisis ineffectively, cared too much about holding onto a job, or were put in place by those who seek to maintain the status quo; sobering thoughts for many who work in unionized organizations.

### *Observer Status*

In most jurisdictions, observer status is not uncommon. In some locales it is mandated in the enabling public sector labor legislation. It has been said watching a bargaining session is akin to watching grass grow. Nevertheless, the experience can be enlightening and lead to informed involvement. Minutes of bargaining sessions are often posted on websites. Departments might even consider assigning this task, on a revolving basis, to colleagues. Being influential in these processes requires one to devote time to be informed and present. Active engagement, now there is a novel thought!

### **What Has Not Changed Over the Years in Collective Bargaining**

#### *Trust and Honesty*

If one searches for those bargaining realities that are no different today than in the early days of academic bargaining, there is no doubt that the relationship between negotiators still remains of crucial importance. A relationship characterized by trust and honesty between chief negotiators remains a *sine qua non* for successful negotiations. Ultimately, negotiators must shake hands and sell the agreement to constituencies over whom they have no formal authority, keeping in mind some will be displeased with final outcomes, compromises, and tradeoffs necessary in all negotiations. End runs and related tactics notwithstanding, in the final analysis negotiators must deliver what was promised at the table. In academic settings, the actions and behavior of union and employer representatives are subject to frequent criticism by those who are not experienced or conversant with bargaining; authority and legitimacy are often questioned. Absent trust and an established relationship between negotiators, the bargaining process fails because in the political world of higher education, decision-makers on both sides of the table will not risk exposing vulnerabilities to would-be competitors or to constituencies to whom they report. Without honesty, negotiators will not conclude a final deal (the test of a successful relationship, we would argue) and will instead be held hostage to those who wish to see them fail or be blamed for lofty promises about the impact of unionization or provisions in the “new agreement.”

#### *History Intrudes*

History has always played its role in bargaining and still does. People in academic organizations have very long memories, particularly on the faculty side of the table. Personal history, disciplinary feuds, perceived slights that occurred years ago, and the desire to “even the score” impact

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

bargaining in a myriad of ways.<sup>51</sup> Activists in the union, sometimes referred to as true believers or those with whom peace and reconciliation are impossible, endeavor to address grievances decades in the making. Professors who have spent an entire professional career in one school or college remember conversations or personnel actions years before any of the current administration arrived, and they are not shy about airing a point of view which may have been true 20 or 30 years ago. Bargaining reflects the “history” between the parties, and we define history in this context as long-term perceptions about “injustices” nurtured over years (and there is always some truth on both sides of an issue). Because of the history, there is a tendency to blame others for situations that were, in retrospect, difficult to predict.

In addition to the influence of past perceptions is the nature of leadership in academic organizations. By and large, and there are exceptions, the road to the office of president or provost requires avoidance (at least outwardly) of controversy and conflict. Engagement in collective bargaining is a non-starter to search committees who want a charismatic (seasoned executive; renowned scientist; community builder; already a president at a place like this; inspirational fund raiser; can repair our reputation; understands our culture; dispassionate scholar; will take us to AAU status; non-traditional; stand up to the system head or governor; obtain Ph.D. programs... pick your favorite) academic leader “acceptable” to faculty on the search committee. Many who secure positions of leadership in academic organizations often arrive unprepared for what it is they have to do to be successful. This too presents problems because leaders in such situations may not understand why the history, coupled with particular issues and individuals, is so important in the academic environment. Often leaders lose patience with the management negotiator who tries to explain why a proposal, so simple and rational to the president, will not fly. In such cases negotiators are vulnerable and achieving agreement is far more complex (and a major reason why many management negotiators have the professional life span of field goal kickers in the NFL).

#### *Ground Rules that Work*

Ground rules remain a key ingredient today in most negotiations. Parties to negotiations are well served by a set of written ground rules that function as an umbrella for bargaining. Often ground rules provide the rules of engagement and some degree of shelter (privacy) to those who must explore difficult and complex issues at the table. While it is always

---

<sup>51</sup> Nicholas DiGiovanni Jr., “This Much I Know is True: The Five Intangible Influences on Collective Bargaining,” *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy* 3 (2011), <http://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba/vol3/iss1/5/>.

the case there is some old-fashioned blustering, saber-rattling, and posturing—all are part-and-parcel of the process—the parties need freedom to float trial balloons or tentatively advance an idea in order to gauge constituent reaction; when taken out of context such ideas might seem draconian. Bargaining cannot take place in a fish bowl; a certain amount of privacy is needed, and ground rules are essential in this regard.<sup>52</sup> The faculty member who sits behind the chief negotiator, glaring at the management representative, tweeting out each response and counter response, makes it immeasurably harder to reach agreement and in worst cases erodes trust and respect between the parties because most understand that such actions are in fact a violation of the spirit of the ground rules. Union spokespersons who invariably take the position in which they cannot control or censure such faculty, even when what is being tweeted is inaccurate, are not believed to be credible by management negotiators. They clearly see this behavior as a tactic to whip up constituent support and pressure the university into succumbing to union demands. We might add that this does in fact sometimes occur, but it is more often very counterproductive to negotiations. Ultimately, the “angry tweeter” violating ground rules becomes a problem for his own chief negotiator who needs some privacy and orderly engagement to reach agreement.

#### *Credible Data*

Data drive perceptions, and in the academic environment those who marshal good data with believable assumptions underpinning the data win negotiations arguments. Said another way, power and influence in the academic setting cannot be exercised without credible data to support proposals and ideas because many require objective evidence for arguments being made on behalf of one position or another. We know that managing perceptions remains an important aspect of all successful negotiations. In higher education the Holy Grail is “evidence-based validity,” which is not always easy to pursue in collective bargaining. Of course, the challenge here is self-evident as well because many on both sides of the table, trained to deconstruct ideas and question assumptions, arrive at very opposite views about what constitutes reliable and valid data to support bargaining positions.

---

<sup>52</sup> No better example exists of the success of closed and secret bargaining than the work of the men of 1787 who locked themselves in Constitution Hall, issued no statements to the press, kept no detailed notes of their proceedings, and yet, in one summer, negotiated the most perfect model of democratic governance that had ever been seen (notwithstanding the unfortunate acceptance of slavery and the initial lack of universal suffrage, errors thankfully corrected by future generations).

The question of reliable data is complicated by additional factors. First, because so many harbor varying notions about institutional priorities in academic organizations, the use of data by the administration at the table can be suspect from the beginning. Faculty may view it as skewed to support a management position. Second, a culture of dissent coupled with negative perceptions about the nature of management make it harder to use data and persuade faculty that just because the idea comes from the administrative side, it does not make it anathema.

The challenge of arriving at a mutual understanding of what constitutes credible data and their relationship to issues at hand is daunting and yet is essential for success. Both sides will use data to support positions across the table, and, at times, the presentation of data can help persuade the other side to modify positions. Finally, should negotiations proceed to mediation, fact finding or arbitration, data assume a new critical role. There, data are used not just to persuade a skeptical opponent but also a dispassionate neutral. Those skilled in organizing and presenting data to support bargaining positions, including comparative data of peer institutions and systems, will be more successful in these forums. It has been our experience that outside mediators, fact finders, and arbitrators—those involved in the later stages of collective bargaining—will pay close attention to data because ultimately, they will have to justify their findings based on the information presented. They will also have much less patience with data purporting to show that faculty are exploited, that issues being debated are truly unique, or that valid peer institutions are too difficult to identify.

### *Managing Conflict*

Ultimately, collective bargaining has always been a process to manage disagreements about rights, authority, and the roles of important constituencies in academic organizations. Managing conflict is not easy, particularly in first-time negotiations where long-standing (sometimes a century old) policies, procedures, and statutes concerning “legal” authority, the nature of shared governance, and the like, must now be interpreted. In these contexts, the parties must also accommodate informal practices that have grown up around statutes and incorporate these into labor agreements, subject to binding arbitration. After all, the reality is that while formal authority may have been invested in a president or board, it falls to the faculty to implement and deliver what colleges and universities do. Further, whatever policies and statutes may say, it has been our experience that there are always exceptions made for any number of reasons.

Conflict arises when policies and procedures are formalized and standardized, one of the key results of collective bargaining. Conflict also arises because much of what is negotiated or renegotiated, as we discussed earlier, strikes at the heart of professional autonomy and perceptions about what is reasonable, fair, or just. In such cases there is a continuing need to

manage, or at least contain, conflict accompanying negotiations, and this in turn requires a decision-making architecture allowing for debate and communication among senior leaders, deans, and others—academic and non-academic—who may find themselves being marginalized as bargaining unfolds. In worst case scenarios, work stoppages or strikes occur, and while these are part of the process and sometimes necessary when negotiations break down, the resulting polarization between the parties can be a factor for years to come, cause the exit of respected leaders (from both sides), as well as damage students and the institution.

### **What Has Changed Over the Years in Collective Bargaining?**

#### *Technology and the Internet*

When the authors first worked together in the mid-1970s negotiating with organized faculty at the Vermont State Colleges, proposals were assembled on typewriters, no one owned a cell phone, words like “online,” “tweeting,” “blogging,” or “YouTube” did not exist or meant something entirely different than they do today. The negotiating environment has changed. We do not carry vials of “white-out” anymore. The computer has altered how we negotiate, and how others are involved in negotiations. Members of negotiating teams come to the table today with iPads or laptops, not yellow pads. Emails are checked routinely and links to principals who may be in the background are available as never before. Dramatic arguments for proposals may be accompanied by PowerPoint presentations. Proposals and counter-proposals are routinely sent between the parties by email. The historical record of bargaining can be neatly, and usefully, filed away on one’s computer, with no need to check reams of paper in dusty files to ascertain bargaining history. The evolution of an article can be seen quite clearly, in its dated proposal/counterproposal history between the parties. All of this has generally made bargaining easier and provided clarity surrounding what parties meant, that may not have existed before. In addition, the challenges of working in real time are evident. This is a new dimension of bargaining that we believe has made the process more inclusive and more complex because additional players are involved; those with ulterior motives have a far easier time upending the process.

#### *Less Authority for Negotiators*

Collective bargaining in higher education is no longer a new phenomenon. In the early years, negotiators, many of whom learned on the job (and some of whom had worked as labor arbitrators, or mediators, or came from industrial relations, or legal departments in business and law schools, or an occasional dean) were charged with managing a critically new organizational challenge. Union negotiators, the “true believers” with organizing experience, joined management counterparts; both were likened to gunslingers shooting it out at the “OK Corral.” Corporate law

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*



firms were involved, but here many of the labor lawyers negotiating agreements had not worked in the higher education sector and certainly not with organized faculty. Even for advanced labor negotiators, there was really no template to utilize in negotiating with faculty. Everything was new. A cadre of home-grown management negotiators soon emerged, many from Michigan and New York, and founded their own professional association in 1972 (which still meets each year).

In the early years, and in first-time contract situations, negotiators reported directly to presidents and chancellors. Many assumed executive positions and served as institutional leaders following their time managing negotiations. Those who bargained were given wide latitude and assumed a fair amount of authority needed to effectuate negotiations successfully. As collective bargaining became more institutionalized; as outcomes became more routine and knowable; as the number of successor agreements grew; as compensation for labor relations staff stabilized; and as other organizational crises edged out collective bargaining, the role and authority of negotiators diminished in many cases. Many now report to the general counsel, a human resources professional, or a senior administrative vice president. Labor relations are handled by folks who are lower in the organizational hierarchy. and, while it may be that legitimacy or credentials are no longer questioned, as a group, negotiators—those who handle academic bargaining in large systems or institutions—have less access to senior decision-makers, less organizational clout, and less ability to control processes attendant to negotiations.<sup>53</sup> This is a new situation, and where it exists, we would argue, it makes the process more cumbersome, time consuming, and expensive.

#### *The Post-Secondary Context*

All historical periods are turbulent in retrospect, and the current period will be no exception. We would argue, however, there may be several other new factors that will shape collective bargaining processes in ways unimagined in the past. The first, while not entirely new (few things are), concerns the evolving nature of higher education. The late Clark Kerr's line about common themes in the university—complaints over parking or coffee pots in communal areas—presaged a more autonomous and fragmented post-secondary environment. As state support and federal funding continue to decline, institutions and systems will evolve, and units based on their ability to generate revenue or meet a particular student or constituent demand will grow in importance. In several states, flagship schools are leaving or endeavoring to leave systems. As bargaining units

---

<sup>53</sup> The authors would acknowledge that this is not a universal development, and, particularly in smaller colleges and institutions, the negotiator may still report directly to the President or Provost.

become smaller and more homogenous, and as fragmentation and specialization increase—coupled with previously union-friendly states abandoning enabling labor legislation—the tenor, scope, and reach of collective bargaining will be altered.

Simultaneously, as more adjuncts, graduate students, and part-time employees join unions, how colleges and universities are funded, assessed, and governed will also change because authority will be more decentralized, a counterintuitive observation from what has occurred to date. Not long ago it would have been unimaginable to think that Lehman Brothers, not to mention U.S. Steel or other large banks, would be organizations of the past. We believe the same may be true for a number of organized public systems and smaller private institutions where bargaining has occurred. We have yet to witness the level of foreign competition that will challenge us in the future. Technology and the internet will continue to change the way we approach and deliver higher education. All of which reminds us of the ancient Chinese proverb: may you continue to live in exciting times. Count on it.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper we examined a number of important issues: first, how to conceptualize and evaluate the impact of collective bargaining in institutions where faculty are elected to join unions. We summarized what is known and what is not known about academic collective bargaining after nearly fifty years of unions on campus. We argued that faculty unionization is more a factor of institutional and demographic variables (enabling labor legislation, region, institutional size, the presence of other public and private sector unions, unit determination configurations, the scope of bargaining) than faculty “attitudes” about unionization. In this respect, many of the earlier studies of collective bargaining failed to account for the overriding forces and constraints common in the industrial labor relations context. Attitudes about unions, we now know, are relatively poor predictors of what actually occurs in unionized settings. This is not too surprising as most scholars who initially wrote about collective bargaining had limited experience in the labor relations processes, were not involved as practitioners in labor negotiations, and approached the phenomenon from theoretical perspectives which led to a number of predictions about unionization that proved not to come true (i.e., that tenure or academic freedom would be traded for compensation gains at the bargaining table, that “prestige” would have a strong negative effect on faculty proclivities to usher in unions, that unions and professional standards were not compatible, etc.). In fact, far more than originally thought, the legal and legislative architecture framing these processes steer the parties along very predictable pathways.

Faculty unionization is also a result of a defensive posture designed to safeguard newly won rights and prerogatives and to solidify gains in professional autonomy made by faculty, particularly in the state

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

college and university systems. We posited that an analogy with “craft union” behavior provides a powerful lens through which to assess academic collective bargaining. For this reason, we do not agree that faculty unions are necessarily antithetical to professionalism. In fact, in most instances, unions codify academic prerogatives into labor agreements and, in this sense, reinforce and safeguard professional rights and responsibilities. Of course, maintaining the delicate balance between the needs of organizations dependent on employee dues and devoted to employment security with the responsible exercise of professional obligations, including the non-reappointment of probationary faculty and access to graduate students for various employment activities, can be challenging. These and other characteristics inherent in the academic environment will forever cause tension between faculty in organized institutions. The “union” and the “faculty” are not one in the same, regardless of what many union leaders may say.

It may also be of interest to note that once a certain point of view takes hold, particularly if initially argued by those in elite places and in elite journals, such frameworks come to be considered as the established cannon by many in academic organizations; few are taking the time to see if the facts actually align with expressed theory. The “prestige as an inhibiting factor to unionization” took nearly three decades to debunk. Elite public institutions, including five AAU universities, are now bargaining collectively. Votes to unionize at other high prestige public schools were split between union factions, and so the “no agent” alternative was triumphant. We would agree, however, that the lion’s share of collective bargaining among faculty takes place at large public systems in states with enabling labor legislation. Although, if other employee groups are examined, for example graduate students seeking representation or non-faculty, the elite private and public sectors are very well represented. Another common notion, that the US Supreme Court decision has all but ended faculty unionization in the private sector, is also a case in point. In fact, faculty unions never made much headway in the private sector, even before the decision, and while the court made it more difficult to unionize in the private sector, twice as many private school faculty are now organized than at the time when the decision was rendered (it is still a very small number when compared to the public sector). Moreover, in the majority of cases where private universities were unionized prior to the decision, they have remained unionized, despite the legal arsenal now afforded those who wish to terminate organized relationships.

A second issue we explored, the contemporary subjects and problems facing parties at the bargaining table, yielded few surprises. Here we identify matters concerning workload and how to account for online courses and distance learning, family centered issues, the impact of technology, freedom of expression, merit pay and compensation, and negotiations with adjunct faculty, to be most salient. Have we uncovered

new or uncharted areas for bargaining, or did we discern an expansion of the scope of negotiations today? We hint in this paper that it is, for the most part, déjà vu all over again. That being said, we provided a view of the changing legal and legislative landscape; wild cards which will become more manifest, particularly when it comes to the assessment of graduate student unions and the future of enabling public sector labor legislation. The latter is directly linked to the presence of viable collective bargaining in the public sector, and we are comfortable in stating: so goes enabling legislation, so go academic unions.

Third, we argue it is exceedingly difficult to untangle the effects of collective bargaining from other forces shaping the academy. For example, despite years of research there is no consensus regarding whether or not unionization results in higher salaries. The highest and lowest paid faculty in both the public and private educational sectors remain non-union. We identified salient organizational impacts of academic unions once the dynamics of collective bargaining are institutionalized on campus, and we offered a number of observations on effective administrative strategies needed to manage in organized institutions. We argue that decision making processes, shared governance dictates, and administrative practices and policies change. We also suggested bargaining dynamics—a multi-dimensional process with many different groups potentially exercising influence—mirror the many constituencies involved in university governance. While negotiation processes retain a number of their primary characteristics, in higher education at least, they have changed in subtle ways as well. Like many in academe, those responsible for negotiations and collective bargaining in general have had to adjust to a “new normal”; they have less flexibility, power, and influence to effectuate change. Technology and “real time” communications have made negotiations more complex and public. We also sought to demonstrate why the rhetoric around labor management relations more often than not fails to become reality. Our depiction of the dimensions of collective bargaining was based on our involvement in hundreds of negotiations at colleges and universities representing over two thirds of all unionized faculty in the US.

We offer two other concluding comments. First, that organized faculty are still a relatively new phenomenon and do not represent the majority of those teaching in post-secondary education. Collective bargaining in the U.S. is nearly 100 years old. While the National Labor Relations Act was passed in 1935, faculty unions arrived on the scene in the late 1960's, and the NLRB asserted jurisdiction over higher education in 1970. Important cases that continue to shape the legal landscape are still winding their way to labor boards and the Supreme Court. Although unions have made significant gains on campus (public post-secondary education is one of the most organized sectors in the US), first time agreements are still being negotiated; the process is yet to fully unfold in a number of systems. Unlike other labor sectors, the probability exists that

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

we will see some additional variations on older themes. Moreover, despite the high levels of union penetration, there remains an uneasy balance between unions and pre-existing governance bodies (senates and assemblies). Few, if any, industries have competing structures like those found in colleges and universities. The jurisdictional territories of faculty versus those who “manage” the academic enterprise, overlap in many ways. Staking out clear areas of influence will remain a challenge; the organized professoriate will struggle with identity issues in the foreseeable future.

Second, the nature of academic labor is changing rapidly from one grounded in full-time, tenured positions to the perilous world of contingent faculty and online education. Putting aside the issue of whether tenured, full-time faculty really need a union, in the future the largest body of organizational activity will be with adjuncts, graduate assistants, and part-time faculty. Here we believe unions will thrive because they are needed by these constituencies, and institutions of higher education do not have the resources or the ability to address real concerns. Coupled with the decline in state and federal support and public calls for accountability and “objective” performance measures, the future may see more, not fewer, collective bargaining units.

### Bibliography

- American Association of University Professors. “Statement on Collective Bargaining.” *AAUP*. September 23, 2005.  
<https://www.aaup.org/report/statement-collective-bargaining>.
- American Association of University Professors. “Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession.” *AAUP*. November 24, 2003.  
<https://www.aaup.org/report/contingent-appointments-and-academic-profession>.
- American Association of University Professors. “Distance Education and Intellectual Property.” *Policy Documents and Reports*. 9th ed. Washington: AAUP, 2001.
- American Association of University Professors. “Statement on Collective Bargaining.” *Policy Documents and Reports*. Washington: AAUP, 1977.
- Arnold, Gordon B. *The Politics of Faculty Unionization: The Experiences of Three New England Universities*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Harvey, 2000.
- Ashraf, Javed, and Michael F. Williams. “The Effect of Faculty Unions on Salaries: Some Recent Evidence.” *Journal of Collective Negotiations* 32, no. 2 (2008).
- Baldrige, J. Victor. *Power and Conflict in the University*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1979.
- Baldrige, J. Victor, and Frank R. Kemerer. *Assessing the Impact of Faculty Collective Bargaining*. Washington: American Association for

- Higher Education, 1982).
- Begin, James P. "Statutory Definitions of the Scopes of Negotiations: The Implications for Traditional Faculty Institution Governance." *The Journal of Higher Education* 49, no. 3 (1978): 247-60.
- Begin, James P. "Collective Bargaining and Collegiality." *Proceedings, First Annual Conference*. NCSCBHEP. April 1973. Edited by Maurice C. Benewitz. New York: Baruch Coll., CUNY, 1973.
- Berry, Joe, and Michelle Savarese. *Bargaining Agents in Institutions of Higher Education*. Edited by R. Boris. New York: National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, 2012.
- Bendix, Reinhard. *Work and Authority in Industry: Ideologies of Management in the Course of Industrialization*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1956.
- Benjamin, Ernst. "Patterns of Professional Evaluation and Assigned Duties in Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreements." *Higher Education Collective Bargaining During a Period of Change. Proceedings, Twenty-Second Annual Conference*. National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions. April 1994. Edited by Frank R. Annunziato and Beth Johnson. New York: Bernard M. Baruch College, 1994.
- Benjamin, Ernst. *Exploring the Role of Contingent Instructional Staff in Undergraduate Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2003
- Benjamin, Ernst. "A Faculty Response to the Fiscal Crisis: From Defense to Offense." *Higher Education Under Fire: Politics, Economics, and the Crisis of the Humanities*. Edited by Michael Bérubé and Cary Nelson. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Benjamin, Ernst, and Michael Mauer. *Academic Collective Bargaining*. New York: American Association of University Professors and Modern Language Association of American, 2006.
- Birnbaum, Robert M. *How Colleges Work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1988.
- Birnbaum, Robert M. *How Academic Leadership Works*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992.
- Blau, Peter M. *The Organization of Academic Work*. New York: John Wiley, 1973.
- Brill, Edward A., and Tracey I. Levy. "Are You Prepared for Student Unionization?" *Business Officer*, 2002.
- Cain, Tim R. "The Research On Faculty Unions." *Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities*. February 9, 2013. <https://iprh.wordpress.com/?s=The+research+on+faculty+unions>.
- Cain, Tim R. "Campus Unions: Organized Faculty and Graduate Students in U. S. Higher Education." *ASHE Higher Education Report* 43, no. 3 (2017): 7-163. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aehe.20119>.
- Cain, Tim R. "The First Attempts to Unionize the Faculty" *Teachers College Record* 112 (2010): 875-913.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)



- Cain, Tim R. "Only Organized Effort Will Find a Way Out: Faculty Unionization at Howard University." *Perspectives in the History of Higher Education* 29 (2012): 113-150.
- Cain, Tim R. "Unionized Faculty and the Political Left: Communism and the American Federation of Teachers on the Eve of WWII." *History of Education* 41 (2012): 515-535.
- Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education. *Faculty Bargaining in Public Higher Education: A Report and Two Essays*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1977.
- Carr, Robert K., and Daniel K. Van Eyck. *Collective Bargaining Comes to the Campus*. Washington: American Council, 1973.
- Chait, Richard. "Collective Bargaining and Tenure: A Collision Course." *Collective Bargaining in Higher Education. Proceedings, Third Annual Conference*. National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions. Edited by Joel M. Douglas. New York: Bernard M. Baruch College, 1979.
- Chandler, Margaret K. "Craft Bargaining." In *Frontiers of Collective Bargaining*, edited by John Dunlop and Neil Chamberlain, 50-74. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.
- Chandler, Margaret K. *Management Rights and Union Interests*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964.
- Chandler, Margaret K., Daniel J. Julius. *Faculty vs. Administration: Rights Issues in Academic Collective Bargaining*. New York: National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, 1979.
- Chandler, Margaret K., and Daniel J. Julius. "By Whose Right? Management Rights and Governance in the Unionized Institutions." *Unionization and Academic Excellence: Proceedings of the, Thirteenth Annual Conference*. National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions. April 1985. Edited by Joel M. Douglas. New York: Bernard M. Baruch College, 1985.
- Chandler, Margaret K., and Daniel J. Julius. "Determining Outcomes of Collective Bargaining in Two-Year Institutions." *Community Junior College Quarterly of Research and Practice Part I* 1, no. 4 (1987): 203-226; and *Part II* 12, no. 1 (1987): 1-20.
- Chandler, Margaret K., Daniel J. Julius, and Thomas M. Mannix. "Prestige, Affiliation and Region as Determinants of Collective Bargaining." *Higher Education Review* 1, no. 1 (1977): 13-27.
- Chatak, Elmer. "A Unionist's Perspective on the Future of American Unions." *Journal of Labor Research* 12, no. 4 (1991): 327-332.
- National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions. *Collective Bargaining Directories*. New York: Hunter College, 2006.
- DeCew, Judith Wagner. *Unionization in the Academy: Visions and Realities*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2003.

- DiGiovanni, Nicholas Jr. "This Much I Know is True: The Five Intangible Influences on Collective Bargaining." *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy* 3 (2011). <http://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba/vol3/iss1/5/>.
- DiGiovanni, Nicholas Jr. "The New Focus of Academic Organizing: Private Institutions Now Face Academic Collective Bargaining." *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy* 7 (2015).
- Douglas, Joel M. "The Impact of NLRB Vs. Yeshiva University on Faculty Unionism at Public Colleges and Universities." *Journal of Collective Negotiations* 19, no. 1 (1990): 1-28.
- Douglas, Joel M. *Directory of Faculty, Bargaining Agents and Agreements in Institutions of Higher Education*. New York: National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, 1992.
- Duryea, Edwin D., and Robert S. Fisk. *Faculty Unions and Collective Bargaining*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1973.
- Ehrenberg, Ronald G., Daniel B. Klaff, Adam T. Kezsbom, and Matthew P. Nagowski. "Collective Bargaining in American Higher Education." *Governing Academia*. Edited by Ronald G. Ehrenberg. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Ehrenberg, Ronald G. *Governing Academia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Elam, Stanley M., and Michael H. Moskow, M.H. *Employment Relations in Higher Education*. Bloomington: Phi Beta Kappa, 1969.
- Etzioni, Amitai. "Authority Structure and Organization Effectiveness." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 4 (1959): 43-67.
- Freeman, Richard B., and James L. Medoff. *What Do Unions Do?* New York: Basic Book, 1984.
- Garbarino, Joseph W. *Faculty Bargaining: Change and Conflict*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975.
- Garbarino, Joseph W., David E. Feller, and Matthew W. Finkin. *Faculty Bargaining in Public Higher Education: A Report of the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977.
- Garbarino, Joseph W. "Faculty Unionism: The First Ten Years." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 448 (1980): 74-84.
- Garbarino, Joseph W. "Faculty collective bargaining: A status report." In *Unions in Transition*, edited by Seymour M. Lipset, 265-286. San Francisco: Institute of Contemporary Studies, 1986.
- Gumport, Patricia J. "Public Universities as Academic Workplaces." *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 126, no. 4 (1997): 113-136.
- Gumport, Patricia J. "Learning Academic Labor." *Comparative Social Research* 19 (2000):1-23.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

- Gumport, Patricia J., and John Jennings. "Graduate Student Employees: Unresolved Challenges." *Journal of the College and University Personnel Association* 48, no. 3-4 (1998): 35-37.
- Gumport, Patricia J., and Brian Puser, B. "Reconstructing the Academic Environment." In *Planning and Management for a Changing Environment: A Handbook on Redesigning Postsecondary Institutions*, edited by Marvin W. Peterson, David D. Dill, and Lisa A. Mets. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997.
- Hedrick, David W., Steven E. Henson, John M. Krieg, and Charles S. Wassell, Jr. "Is There Really a Faculty Union Salary Premium?" *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 64, no. 3 (2011): 558-575.
- Herbert, William A. (2017) "The History Books Tell It: Collective Bargaining in Higher Education in the 1940's." *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy* 9, no. 3 (2017).
- Herbert, William A., and Jacob Apkarian. "Everything Passes, Everything Changes: Unionization and Collective Bargaining in Higher Education" *Perspectives on Work* (2017): 30-35.
- Herbert, William A. "The Winds of Change Shift: An Analysis of Recent Growth in Bargaining Units and Representation Efforts in Higher Education" *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy* 8 (2016).
- Hodgkinson, Harold L. *Institutions in Transition: A Profile of Change in Higher Education*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971.
- Hoffman, Elizabeth, and John Hess. *Contingent and Faculty Organizing in CFA: 1975-2005*. Conference on Contingent Academic Labor VI, Chicago, IL, August 6-8, 2004.  
<http://www.chicagococal.org/downloads/conference-papers/Hoffman-Hess.pdf>.
- Hollinger, David A. "Faculty Governance, the University of California, and the Future of Academe." *Academe* 87, no. 3 (2001).
- Hurd, Richard, J. Bloom, and Beth Hillman Johnson. *Directory of Faculty Contracts and Bargaining Agents in Institutions of Higher Education Volume 24*. New York, NY: The National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, 1998.
- Hurd, Richard, and Gregory Woodhead. "The Unionization of Clerical Workers at Large vs. Universities and Colleges." *Newsletter* 15, no. 3 (1987).
- Hutcheson, Philo A. *A Professional Professoriate: Unionization, Bureaucratization, and the AAUP*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000.
- Jacoby, Daniel. "Is Washington State an Unlikely Leader? Progress on Addressing Contingent Work Issues in Academia." *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 9, no. 41 (2001).  
<https://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/viewFile/370/496>.
- Jencks, Christopher, and David Riesman. *The Academic Revolution*. Garden City, NJ: Doubleday Publishers, 1975).

- Johnson, Benjamin, Patrick Cavanaugh, and Kevin Mattson. *Steal This University: The Rise of the Corporate University and the Academic Labor Movement*. New York: Rutledge, 2003.
- Julius, Daniel J. "Collective Bargaining in Higher Education: The First Decade." *Research Currents*, ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, November 1977.
- Julius, Daniel J. *Collective Bargaining in Higher Education*. Washington, D.C.: College and University Personnel Association, 1985.
- Julius, Daniel J. "The Status of Faculty and Staff Unions in Colleges and Universities: 1930s-1990s." In *Managing the Industrial Labor Relations Process in Higher Education*, edited by Daniel J. Julius. Washington, D.C.: College and University Personnel Association, 1993.
- Julius, Daniel J. "The Current Status of Graduate Student Unions: An Employer's Perspective." In *Collective Bargaining and Accountability in Higher Education: A Report Card, Proceedings, Twenty-eighth Annual Conference*, edited by Caesar J. Naples. New York: National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, 1999.
- Julius, Daniel J. "The Development of Human Resources Administrators in Colleges and Universities." In *Understanding the Work and Career Paths of Midlevel Administrators: Profiles and Pathways. New Directions for Higher Education*, edited by Linda K. Johnsrud and Vicki J. Rosser. Sanfransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000.
- Julius, Daniel J. "Unionization in Higher Education: The Case of Academic Employees in Large Public Systems." *California Public Employee Relations* 161 (2003).
- Julius, Daniel J. "Effective Management of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education." In *Academic Collective Bargaining: An AAUP Introduction for Faculty and Graduate Students*, edited by Ernst Benjamin. Washington, D.C.: Modern Language Association and American Association of University Professors, 2004.
- Julius, Daniel J. "Untangling the Issues: Social Justice and Collective Bargaining in Higher Education." In *Administration for Social Justice and Equity in Higher Education: Critical Perspectives for Leadership and Decision-Making*, edited by Julie Possett and Adriana Kezar. New York: Routledge, 2019.
- Julius, Daniel J., and Patricia J. Gumpert. "Graduate Student Unionization: Catalysts and Consequences." *The Review of Higher Education* 26, no. 2 (2002): 187-217.
- Julius, Daniel J., and Nicholas DiGiovanni Jr. "What's Ahead in Faculty Collective Bargaining: The New and the Déjà Vu." *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy* 4 (2013).
- Julius, Daniel J., and Nicholas DiGiovanni Jr. "Academic Collective Bargaining: On Campus 50 Years." *University of California, Berkley, ROPS Series, Center for Studies in Higher Education* 4, no. 13 (2013).

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

- Julius, Daniel J., and Michelle K. Chandler, M.K. "Academic Bargaining Agents in Higher Education: Do Their Achievements Differ?" *Journal of Collective Negotiations* 18, no. 1 (1989): 9-58.
- Kemerer, Frank R., and J. Victor Baldrige, J. V. *Unions on Campus*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1976.
- Kerr, Clark. "Industrial relations and university relations." *Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Meeting*. Madison, WI: Industrial Relations Research Association, 1969.
- Kerr, Clark. "Patterns of Faculty Unionization in Higher Education." In *Proceedings, Twentieth Annual Conference*, edited by J. M. Douglas. New York: National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, 1992.
- Klein, Michael W. "Ten Years After Managed Professionals: Who Owns Intellectual Property Now?" *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy* 2 (2012).  
<http://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba/vol2/iss1/2>.
- Kochan, Thomas A., Harry C. Katz, and Robert B. McKersie. *The Transformation of American Industrial Relations*. New York: Basic Books, Inc, 1986.
- Ladd, Everett C Jr., and Seymour M. Lipset. *Professors, Unions and American Higher Education*. Berkeley, CA: The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1973.
- Ladd, Everett C. Jr., and Seymour M. Lipset. *The Divided Academy*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975.
- Lee, Barbara A. *Collective Bargaining in Four-Year College: Impact on Institutional Practice*. Washington: American Association of Higher Education, 1978.
- Lee, Barbara A. "Contractually Protected Senates at Four-Year Colleges." *The Legal and Economic Status of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education. Proceedings, Ninth Annual Conference*. April 1981. Edited by Joel M. Douglas. New York: Baruch Coll, 1981.
- Leslie, David W. *The Growing Use of Part-Time Faculty: Understanding Causes and Effects: New Directions for Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.
- Levinstein, Aaron. "The National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education: The First Ten Years." In *Campus Bargaining at the Crossroads: Proceedings, Tenth Annual Conference*, edited by Joel M. Douglas, Joel M. New York, NU: National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, 1982.
- May, Ann Mari, Elizabeth A. Moorhouse, and Jennifer A. Bossard. "Representation of Women Faculty at Public Research Universities: Do Unions Matter?" *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 63, no. 4 (2010): 699-718.



- Meyer, Marshall W. *Bureaucratic Structure and Authority: Coordination and Control in 254 Government Agencies*. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.
- Mortimer, Kenneth P., and Thomas R. McConnell. *Sharing Authority Effectively*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1979.
- Mortimer, Kenneth P. "The Context of Collective Bargaining in American Colleges and Universities." In *Managing the Industrial Labor Relations Process in Higher Education*, edited by Daniel J. Julius. Washington: College and University Personnel Association, 1993.
- Moser, Richard. "The New Academic Labor System, Corporatization, and the Renewal of Academic Citizenship." *American Association of University Professors*. 2001.
- Neale, Margaret A., and Max H. Bazerman. *Cognition and Rationality in Negotiation*. New York: Free Press, 1991.
- Nelson, Cary. "What Faculty Unions Do?" *James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal*. March 9, 2011.  
[www.popecenter.org/commentaries/article.html?id=2489](http://www.popecenter.org/commentaries/article.html?id=2489).
- National Labor Relations Board v. Yeshiva*, 444 U.S. 672 (1980).
- National Labor Relations Board v. Point Park University*, 457 F.3d 42, 44 D.C. Cir. (2006).
- National Labor Relations Board v. Specialty Healthcare & Rehabilitation Center of Mobile*, 356 NLRB No. 56 (2010).
- O'Reilly, Charles A., and Jennifer A. Chatman, J. A. "Culture as Social Control: Corporations, Cults and Commitment." In *Research in Organizational Behavior*, edited by Barry M. Staw and Larry L. Cummings. Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 1996.
- Ormsby, Joseph G., and Susan Y. Ormsby. "The Effect of Unionization on Faculty Job Satisfaction: A Longitudinal Study of University Faculty." *Journal of Collective Negotiations in the Public Sector* 18 (1988): 327-336.
- Pfeffer, Jeffrey. *Managing with Power*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1992.
- Pfeffer, Jeffrey. *New Directions for Organizational Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Pfeffer, Jeffrey. *Power*. New York: John Wiley, 2006.
- Posner, Gary J. "Unionization and Positive Employee Relations: The Cornell Experience—A Case Study," *Journal of the College and University Personnel Association* 32, no. 4 (1981): 6-9.
- Rabban, David, and Donna Euben. *Brief of Amicus Curiae American Association of University Professors in Support of Petitioner United Automobile Workers, AFL-CIO. NYU v. UAW*. New York University 332 NLRB 1205 (2000).
- Rhoades, Gary. *Managed Professionals: Unionized Faculty and Restructuring Academic Labor*. Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1998.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)



- Rhoads, Robert A., and Rhoades, Gary. "The Public Discourse of U.S. Graduate Employee Unions: Social Movement Identities, Ideologies, and Strategies," *The Review of Higher Education: The Journal of the Association for the Study of Higher Education* 26, no. 2 (2002): 163-186.
- Salancik, Gerald R., and Jeffrey Pfeffer. "The Bases and Uses of Power in Organizational Decision Making: The Case of the University." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 19 (1974): 453-473.
- Salancik, Gerald R., and Jeffrey Pfeffer. "Who Gets Power—And How They Hold on to It: A Strategic-Contingency Model of Power." *Organizational Dynamics* 5, no. 3 (1977): 3-21.
- Schell, Eileen E. "Toward a New Labor Movement in Higher Education: Contingent Labor and Organizing for Change." *Workplace* 4, no. 7 (2001). <http://www.louisville.edu/journal/workplace>
- Sheed, W. "What Ever Happened to the Labor Movement: A Report on the State of the Unions." *The Atlantic*. 1973.
- Stepp, John R. "Union Employment Relationships in the 1990s." In *Proceeding, Eighteenth Annual Conference*, edited by Joel M. Douglas. New York: National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, 1990.
- Tulloch, Gordon. The Effect of Unionization on Faculty Salaries and Compensation. *Journal of Labor Research* 15, no. 2 (1994): 199-200.
- Walton, Richard E., and Robert B. McKersie. *A Behavioral Theory of Labor Negotiations*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965.
- Wickens, Christine M. "The Organizational Impact of University Labor Unions." *Higher Education* 56, no. 5 (2008): 545-564.
- Zimble, Linda J. *Compensation of Faculty and Instructional Staff in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 1998. National Study of Postsecondary Faculty, 1999 (NSOPF:99). E.D. Tabs*. Washington D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 2001.

# Instructional Spending Per Student: Patterns and Explanations

Steven Shulman  
*Colorado State University*

---

## Abstract

Most students know what they spend on tuition and other costs of attending college, but most do not know how much their colleges spend on their education in return. This paper provides figures on instructional spending per full-time equivalent student, broken down by institutional level and sector. Variations in this measure of educational spending can be substantial, even among apparently similar institutions. A cross-sectional multiple regression model utilizing 2016 IPEDS data on every public and private non-profit college and university in the United States is used to explore the possible causes of these variations. It shows that instructional spending per student is positively correlated with the portion of the budget devoted to instruction. It is negatively correlated with the non-tenure-track portion of the instructional staff, with the prevalence of students from low-income backgrounds, and with tuition as a fraction of total revenue. These results are generally consistent with expectations. The finding that instructional spending per student goes down when the non-tenure-track fraction of the instructional staff goes up, all else equal, lends credence to the perception that the increasing employment of non-tenure-track instructors is meant to drive down instructional costs and free up resources for non-academic purposes.

---

Steven Shulman is Professor of Economics and Research Director for the Center for the Study of Academic Labor at Colorado State University.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

**M**ost students seem well-informed about tuition and other costs of attending college. Few seem to know how much their college spends on their education in return. A simple metric of how much an institution spends on an average student's education is instructional spending per student. Although small differences in this metric may not mean much, large differences are bound to create corresponding contrasts in educational quality and in the educational experience. All else equal, most students would rather attend colleges that spend more on their education, as opposed to colleges that spend less.

This paper describes and explains patterns in instructional spending per student at U.S. colleges and universities. The data source is the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) within the National Center for Education Statistics.<sup>54</sup> IPEDS provides publicly available data on every college and university in the United States. The data in this paper are taken from IPEDS' 2016 files, the most recent year that the final version of the data is available. The sample is restricted to accredited colleges and universities that offer an academic degree. Specialized institutions, institutions that only enroll graduate students, institutions with fewer than 100 students, and institutions on which no data is available are excluded. These restrictions ensure that we are comparing colleges and universities that are all traditional academic institutions with traditional academic missions.

In this paper, instructional spending per student is defined as total instructional spending divided by total full-time equivalent student enrollment. Total instructional spending is the amount each institution spends on the units that run its educational programs. It is defined in the IPEDS data documentation as "the sum of all operating expenses associated with the colleges, schools, departments, and other instructional divisions of the institution, and for departmental research and public service that are not separately budgeted. This would include compensation for academic instruction, occupational and vocational instruction, community education, preparatory and adult basic education, and remedial and tutorial instruction conducted by the teaching faculty for the institution's students." Instructional expenditures thus can include non-instructional functions, such as research and public service, that are not externally funded and budgeted. This may be unavoidable from an accounting standpoint, but it means that the instructional expenditure data can vary for reasons that are unrelated to the money actually spent on each student's education. I return to this potential data problem below.

Total full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment is the sum of FTE undergraduate enrollment and FTE graduate enrollment. Calculating student enrollment in terms of FTE weights full-time students more than part-time students. This adjusts for the fact that full-time students require more classes and more instructional spending than part-time students.

---

<sup>54</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds>

Table 1 provides figures on median instructional spending per FTE student by institutional level (associate degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, or doctoral degree institutions, as categorized by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education) and institutional sector (public, private non-profit, and private for-profit) among the 2861 colleges and universities in the sample. It shows wide variation in instructional spending per student. Among public colleges and universities, instructional spending per student goes up with level, with doctoral degree-granting universities spending almost twice as much as associate degree-granting colleges. Private non-profit colleges and universities spend more on each student's education than their public counterparts with the surprising exception of associate degree colleges; however, the difference is especially large at doctoral degree-granting universities. Private for-profit colleges and universities, not surprisingly, spend less on each student's education than their public and private non-profit counterparts but surprisingly spend more at associate and bachelor's degree-granting colleges than at master's and doctoral degree-granting universities.

**Table 1**  
**Median Instructional Spending Per FTE Student**  
**by Institutional Level and Sector, 2016**

	Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit	TOTAL
Associate Degree	\$5,554	\$4,931	\$3,889	\$5,404
Bachelor's Degree	\$7,359	\$9,131	\$4,314	\$7,612
Master's Degree	\$7,908	\$8,528	\$2,920	\$7,974
Doctoral Degree	\$10,844	\$15,484	\$2,981	\$10,001
TOTAL	\$6,474	\$8,959	\$3,835	\$6,743

The breakdowns by institutional level and sector still leave broad categories within which instructional spending per student varies widely. One possible reason for this variation is the presence of an M.D., D.M.D, D.V.M. or other medical degree program. These programs could drive up instructional costs at doctoral degree-granting universities. Table 2 shows median instructional spending per student at public and private non-profit doctoral degree-granting universities (there are no private for-profit universities that offer these degrees). Doctoral degree-granting universities with medical degree programs show much higher levels of instructional spending for each student than universities offering doctoral degrees without such programs, especially in the private non-profit sector. The presence of these programs must be taken into account when making comparisons about instructional spending at doctoral degree-granting universities.

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

**Table 2**  
**Median Instructional Spending Per FTE Student**  
**at Doctoral Degree Universities with and without Medical Degree**  
**Programs by Sector, 2016**

	Public	Private Non-Profit	Total
With Medical Degree Programs	\$14,870	\$33,137	\$17,663
Without Medical Degree Programs	\$9,471	\$12,654	\$10,564
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$10,844</b>	<b>\$15,484</b>	<b>\$12,305</b>

Even when comparing ostensibly similar institutions, the variation in per pupil instructional spending can be surprisingly wide. For example, Table 3 shows instructional spending per student at the top ten universities as ranked by *U.S. News and World Report*. These are all private, wealthy, extremely selective, and research-intensive institutions. Despite these similarities, the variations in instructional spending per student are significant and seem to show no relationship to the presence of a medical degree program. The top two – Stanford and Yale – spend twice as much or more on each student’s education as Northwestern, Penn, Harvard, or Princeton. Gaps of this magnitude among seemingly similar institutions are difficult to explain.

**Table 3**  
**Instructional Spending Per FTE Student**  
**at Top Ten Universities, 2016**

Institution	Has Medical Degree Program	Instructional Spending Per FTE Student
Stanford University	Yes	\$117,659
Yale University	Yes	\$114,352
Columbia University	Yes	\$97,694
University of Chicago	Yes	\$94,192
Duke University	Yes	\$76,965
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	No	\$71,755
Princeton University	No	\$57,856
Harvard University	Yes	\$54,983
University of Pennsylvania	Yes	\$53,442
Northwestern University	Yes	\$45,461
<b>MEDIAN</b>		<b>\$74,360</b>

Another seemingly similar group of institutions are large (20,000 or more students), land-grant, public, doctoral degree-granting universities. These universities with similar missions, programs, and sizes would be expected to spend similar amounts on each student's education. But, as Table 4 shows, the spread in per pupil instructional spending is substantial, varying by almost four times between the highest spending and lowest spending of these institutions. Nor does there appear to be much correlation with the presence of a medical degree program.

**Table 4**  
**Instructional Spending Per FTE Student**  
**at Large, Land-Grant, Public, Doctoral Degree-Granting**  
**Universities, 2016**

Institution	Has Medical Degree Program	Instructional Spending Per FTE Student
University of Connecticut	Yes	\$26,643
University of California-Davis	Yes	\$25,848
University of California-Berkeley	No	\$20,512
Ohio State University-Main Campus	Yes	\$19,918
Purdue University-Main Campus	Yes	\$18,669
University of Wisconsin-Madison	Yes	\$18,403
Rutgers University-New Brunswick	Yes	\$17,826
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities	Yes	\$17,294
University of Florida	Yes	\$17,284
Michigan State University	Yes	\$16,469
North Carolina State University at Raleigh	Yes	\$15,927
Texas A & M University-College Station	Yes	\$15,878
University of Massachusetts-Amherst	No	\$15,612
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	Yes	\$14,946
University of Maryland-College Park	Yes	\$14,759
University of Nevada-Reno	Yes	\$14,406
University of California-Riverside	No	\$13,934
The University of Tennessee-Knoxville	Yes	\$13,865
University of Kentucky	Yes	\$12,957

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*



University of Arizona	Yes	\$12,906
Clemson University	No	\$12,504
Washington State University	Yes	\$12,487
Oregon State University	Yes	\$12,414
Virginia Polytechnic Institute	Yes	\$12,271
University of Missouri-Columbia	Yes	\$11,924
Kansas State University	Yes	\$11,808
West Virginia University	Yes	\$11,661
Louisiana State University	Yes	\$11,443
University of Nebraska-Lincoln	No	\$10,558
Colorado State University-Fort Collins	Yes	\$10,300
Auburn University	Yes	\$10,206
University of Arkansas	No	\$10,188
Oklahoma State University-Main Campus	Yes	\$9,834
University of Georgia	Yes	\$9,775
Iowa State University	Yes	\$9,641
Utah State University	Yes	\$8,991
Mississippi State University	Yes	\$8,146
MEDIAN		\$12,957

Adjustments for local differences in the cost of living might somewhat reduce the differences in per pupil instructional spending. But that adjustment would not be large enough to offset the basic point of these comparisons: instructional spending per student shows wide variations across seemingly similar institutions. Below I describe a model meant to explore several other possible reasons for these variations.

The empirical strategy is to run separate linear regressions on each type of degree-granting institution: doctoral degree universities, master's degree universities, bachelor's degree colleges, and associate degree colleges. The dependent variable is instructional spending per FTE student. The model explores four possible explanations for the variation in the dependent variable.

The first explanatory variable is instructional spending as a fraction of total institutional expenditures (ISTE). Colleges and universities that devote a larger share of their budgets to instruction should spend more on each student's education, all else equal. Thus, the coefficient on ISTE is expected to be positive.

The second explanatory variable is the fraction of the total instructional staff that is off the tenure-track. Non-tenure-track (NTT) instructors are much cheaper to hire than tenure-line instructors. Institutions that are more dependent upon non-tenure-track instructors

should spend less on each student's education, all else equal. Colleges and universities may hire instructors off the tenure-track in order to reduce educational spending and free up resources for administration, sports, or other non-academic purposes. Thus, the coefficient on NTT is expected to be negative.

The third explanatory variable is the percentage of undergraduates receiving Pell grants (PELL). This variable reflects the prevalence of students from low-income backgrounds. Low-income is typically correlated with lower test scores and other measures of cognitive skill. These students often require more support and remedial education, suggesting that they would tend to raise instructional spending per student. On the other hand, these students are less likely to attend selective colleges and universities with greater resources and greater capacity for instructional spending. Thus, the coefficient on PELL could be either positive or negative.

The fourth explanatory variable is tuition revenue as a fraction of total revenue (TUIREV). This variable represents the contribution of students to institutional resources. As such, it should also represent the obligation of the institution to create a return flow of those resources to students in the form of instructional spending. Thus, the coefficient on TUIREV is expected to be positive.

Several control variables are also included so that the results on the explanatory variables are net of other possible influences on instructional spending per student.

Dummy variables on the presence of a medical degree program (MED=1) and on land-grant status (LAGR=1) are included in the equation on doctoral degree-granting universities. As noted above, universities with medical degree programs spend much more on each student's education, so the coefficient on MEDDEG is expected to be positive. The predicted sign on LAGR is uncertain. Land-grant universities may have a greater commitment to educational spending insofar as it supports their larger institutional mission of service to their states. But land-grant universities may also be more dependent upon state funding and more prone to reduce instructional spending if they face state budget cuts. Thus, the coefficient on LAGR could be either positive or negative.

Dummy variables on the public sector (PUB=1), location in the south (SOUTH=1), and location in a city (CITY=1) are also included in all equations. The coefficient on PUB is expected to be negative since, as Table 1 shows, public institutions generally spend less on each student's education than their private counterparts. The coefficient on SOUTH is also expected to be negative because the southern states traditionally spend less on education than other states. The coefficient on CITY is expected to be positive because the cost of instructional salaries and services are likely to be higher in urban locations.

The sample is restricted to public and private non-profit institutions. For-profit institutions are excluded because their instructors

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

are almost entirely off the tenure-track, which can distort the results on the NTT variable. These institutions are also more likely to be online only and run on a different (and perhaps more dubious) financial model than traditional colleges and universities. Consequently, the results will be cleaner and easier to interpret if the sample is restricted to traditional colleges and universities.

Results are presented in Table 5 below. T-statistics are in parenthesis below coefficient values. Given the sample sizes, a T-statistic of at least 1.96 indicates significance within 5%, and a T-statistic of at least 2.58 indicates significance within 1%.

Results generally conform to expectations. The R-squares indicate that the equations are explaining approximately one-quarter to two-thirds of the variation instructional spending per student. That is strong, or at least strong enough, for cross-sectional regressions, which often have very low R-squares. Of course, most of the variation remains unexplained in most of the equations. This could reflect noise in the data, or there could be unmeasured or excluded explanatory or control variables such as unfunded research (since IPEDS includes it in instructional spending, as noted above).

**Table 5**  
**Regression Results on Instructional Spending Per FTE Student**

	<b>Doctoral Degree Universities</b>	<b>Master's Degree Universities</b>	<b>Bachelor's Degree Colleges</b>	<b>Associate Degree Colleges</b>
<b>ISTE</b>	43,981 (5.43)	14,557 (9.89)	16,224 (5.61)	9,840 (14.64)
<b>NTT</b>	-477 (-0.09)	-4,661 (-6.88)	-6,351 (-6.78)	466 (1.55)
<b>PELL</b>	-201 (-4.39)	-36 (-5.38)	-142 (-12.11)	-20 (-4.82)
<b>TUIREV</b>	-63,731 (-13.46)	-2,230 (-2.87)	-1,794 (-1.89)	-2,267 (-5.53)
<b>PUB</b>	-25,036 (-3.52)	-2,229 (-6.07)	-2,915 (-4.16)	-1,757 (-9.93)
<b>SOUTH</b>	-2,861 (-2.06)	-561 (-2.20)	-1,351 (-2.53)	-231 (-1.88)
<b>CITY</b>	-610 (-0.44)	444 (1.91)	677 (1.29)	-365 (-2.84)
<b>MED</b>	4,936 (3.06)			
<b>LAGR</b>	-4,048 (-2.12)			
<b>Sample size/ R-squared</b>	<i>N</i> = 303 <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = 0.62	<i>N</i> = 665 <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = 0.27	<i>N</i> = 553 <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = 0.43	<i>N</i> = 983 <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = 0.27

Instructional spending as a fraction of total expenditures (ISTE) is significant and positive, as expected, in all the equations. Colleges and universities that devote larger portions of their budgets to instruction tend to spend more on each student's education. This is an obvious relationship and it would have been surprising if the regression results failed to reflect it.

The non-tenure-track fraction of the instructional staff (NTT) is negative, as expected, except at associate degree-granting colleges where its significance level is below 5%. It is significant for master's degree-granting universities and baccalaureate-granting colleges. The correlation is still negative but smaller and less significant at doctoral degree-granting universities. This may reflect the fact that instructional costs at these universities are driven up by graduate programs, offsetting the cost-savings from employing non-tenure-track instructors in undergraduate programs.

The prevalence of students from low-income backgrounds, captured by the percentage of undergraduates receiving Pell grants (PELL), is negative and significant in all the equations. Students from low-income backgrounds are likely to attend less selective institutions with fewer resources and lower levels of instructional spending on each student. This result may not be surprising, but it is concerning. Students from low-income backgrounds often need advising, tutoring, remedial classes, and other support services. Instructional spending on them should be greater than spending on students from more affluent backgrounds. Yet the opposite was observed.

Tuition revenue as a share of total revenue (TUIREV) is negative and significant in all equations except the equation on bachelor's degree-granting colleges, where it is also negative but below 5% significance. This finding is unexpected. As noted above, TUIREV was predicted to be positive because institutions that depend more upon tuition revenue would be obligated or pressured to spend more on each student's education. Perhaps institutions facing financial difficulties feel pressure to both raise tuition and cut instructional spending, a pattern, if it were widespread, that could cause TUIREV to be negative.

The control variables generally perform as expected. Public sector colleges and universities (PUB) spend less on each student's education compared to their private non-profit counterparts. Location in the south (SOUTH) is also negatively associated with educational spending as expected. Urban location (CITY) is below 5% significance except for associate degree-granting colleges, where it is surprisingly negative. Finally, at doctoral degree-granting universities, the presence of a medical degree program (MED) is positively correlated with instructional spending per student as expected. Land-grant status (LAGR) is negative and significant. This may indicate that these institutions respond to state budget cuts by taking measures to reduce educational expenditures. In any case, the control variables are generally significant and help ensure that

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 3.1 (2019)*

the impacts of the explanatory variables are net of these institutional characteristics.

In sum, instructional spending per student varies in predictable ways. It rises with the portion of the budget devoted to instruction. It falls with the portion of the instructional staff that are off the tenure-track (a finding of particular concern since it suggests that institutions have hired non-tenure-track instructors in order to drive down instructional costs and free up resources for non-academic purposes), with the prevalence of students from low-income backgrounds, and with the tuition as a fraction of total revenue. It also is lower at public institutions relative to their private counterparts and at southern institutions relative to those in other regions. At doctoral degree-granting universities, instructional spending per student is relatively higher at universities with medical degree programs and relatively lower at universities with land grant status. These patterns generally make sense, even if much else about the instructional spending decision by college and university administrators remains opaque.

The amount of resources that colleges and universities devote to instruction is a metric that should be of great interest to students, educators, administrators, and analysts of higher education. It can provide a measure of an institution's commitment to its educational mission. It can be used to compare one college or university to another in terms of educational resources and, presumably, educational quality. It can help us understand trends, such as the growth in non-tenure-track instructional staff. Instructional spending per student is a simple statistic with any implications that deserves wider circulation and analysis. This paper is a first step in that direction.