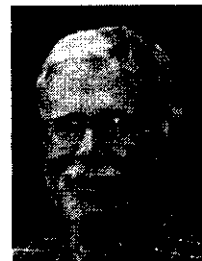


Contingent Concerns

By J McDermott, Contingent Concerns Officer

This month's column is turned over to Dr. Alexandra Tolin Schultz, who recently drafted, at the request of Brother Simons, a reflection on her life as an adjunct. Both Bill and I found it to be a very honest expression of her status, and she agreed to its publication. We both thank her.



I don't think anyone decides on "adjunct" as a career choice. Certainly no one enters the daunting, poverty stricken years of a doctoral program with the intention of one day spending years teaching several classes a semester at the college level for \$12,000 a year. I know I didn't. I spent my twenties enjoying graduate school, listening to professors tell me I was brilliant and special. Teaching college classes, even when it was, at times, for only \$1800 a course, felt like a special privilege.

The wages did not bother me so much. I loved teaching, had few expenses, and, more importantly, I thought it was only *temporary*. One day, I'd be making \$80,000 a year to do what I loved. And at any rate, it certainly didn't matter, since what I did was a labor of love, living a life of the mind. Certainly I wasn't doing this for anything as base as money. I'll never forget hearing the union organizers and adjuncts at my graduate institution sing "we shall overcome" to protest their vulnerability in the workplace and angrily wondering aloud how they dared to compare their situation to the civil rights struggle.

After all, they'd *chosen* to go to graduate school.

Now it is ten years later. I have a Ph.D. I am still part of a pool of temporary laborers: mostly female, disproportionately mothers. I am the mother of two small children and I have no job security despite years of experience and excellent teaching reviews.

At any point I could be let go, regardless of how long or how well I serve the institution I am currently at. I have had little time to develop my research, little time to do anything much except teach and raise children. My husband, who I met the first day of graduate school, does have a tenure track job. He is wonderful and equally shares domestic duties, but he is in a field that relies less on adjunct labor and hires more full time faculty.

So, I'm privileged in that sense. But sometimes I wonder what would happen if, God forbid, he died. Despite all my education and experience, would I be able to support my family? Would my years of dedicated service at various institutions count for anything? The recent story of the elderly adjunct at Duquesne who, after twenty-five years teaching there, died penniless and homeless can only serve to separate me from any illusions on that count.

It took years of difficult experiences, shared by many of my friends, to realize how untenable the temporary faculty labor situation is. It took growing up, becoming an adult and a parent with real responsibilities to realize how painful and dangerous and frankly frightening it feels to be utterly expendable. We are on the front lines. In many cases, we are the only faculty member from our fields who students will ever encounter. We teach the survey courses; in many cases we teach upper level courses, too. We work what always ends up being a full time job for little pay and no recognition. I wonder if parents know when they help their children with tuition fees, how little of that money is going to instruction. How their sons and

Contingent Concerns (continued)

daughters will be meeting with underpaid, overworked faculty in tiny, cramped offices shared with many other temporary faculty who feel similarly underappreciated. These instructors often will not feel they are part of a community. Many of us will not feel qualified to give your children advice on long term career goals or pursuing a major.

I was somewhat reluctant to write about this because I am privileged compared to most of the other people who work as adjunct labor. I have a friend who teaches sixteen classes a year for \$32,000. I know other people who are barely scraping by in situations far more tenuous than my own. I am happy, I love teaching, I love research, I will continue to work toward one day getting a tenure track position, and if I don't, I'll probably be just fine (again, unlike many of my fellow adjuncts). But that doesn't make my situation fair. I wonder about organizing a nation-wide adjunct strike so universities and colleges throughout the country would be forced to recognize that higher education cannot survive without us.

We deserve better.

Once again, we thank Dr. Tolin Schultz for this essay. If any other members would like to write a similar reflection on adjunct life, we will happily consider it for publication. We will work with you to ensure that your effort does not invite retaliation.



Part-Time Labor Management Meeting, October 25, 2013

UUP: J McDermott, Contingent Concerns Officer; Darryl Woods, UUP Labor Relations Specialist
Administration: Lisa Wenck, Senior Executive Employee Services Officer

There were four agenda items from our side for the first meeting of this academic year:

First was practical planning: the setting of a schedule for this year's remaining meetings. Pending confirmation from both sides, they will be held on three Wednesdays in December, February, and April.

We then reviewed this year's PT Orientation in light of its very low utilization by adjunct faculty. Discussions will begin on potential changes in its format and objectives, with hopes to firm up proposals by Spring 2014.

We then reviewed the start-of-semester parking permit policy, which is particularly important to adjuncts who arrive on campus at start of semester. The issue will move to the full Labor Management meeting next week, which will focus on discussions with SUCO Police leadership.

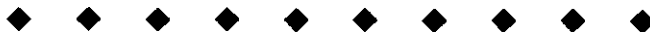
The meeting closed with broad discussion of campus plans for implementation of deficit reduction leave and discretionary salary awards; campus policy is under refinement to meet the goals of the contract language as it applies to contingent employees.

Thoughts on Gun Violence and Nelson Mandela (continued)

learn that hunters often have great respect for the animals they kill, which includes a deep sense of obligation to avoid wasting the game that they have taken. Hunting also provides an environmental benefit by helping to mitigate an exploding deer population - which contributes to the spread of Lyme disease and causes crop damage and automobile accidents.

Nevertheless, guns are dangerous. We must also acknowledge the enormously beneficial role that universal background checks provides, as well as the need for anti-trafficking legislation,— especially in American cities. Why is there still political resistance to the fact that all Americans would benefit from keeping felons and the dangerously mentally ill from gaining access to firearms?

There is nothing courageous about politicians ginning up a base of supporters to promote policies that have little chance of being enacted. Effective government requires problem solving. We are allowing our elected leaders to avoid their responsibility. Genuine political courage requires the confidence to stare down one's fringe supporters in order to craft effective solutions. It is this that demonstrates the greatness of Nelson Mandela.



Contingent Concerns Labor-Management Meeting: Wednesday, December 18, 9:45 AM By J McDermott, Contingent Concerns Officer, UUP Oneonta

For UUP: Officer for Contingents J McDermott and Labor Relations Specialist Darryl Wood

For Management: Senior Executive Employee Services Officer Lisa Wenck

Agenda items discussed:

1. Clarification of parking policy for first week of Fall classes—*there is no 'grace period'*. Existing passes from the previous year are good through the end of August, so if a member does not have a pass at the first class day, there are a few days to obtain one. But the passes are now available through the mail over the summer, so members can have a new pass on the car before the start of the semester if they take advantage of the system.
2. The administration was informed of the recent unanimous vote by the UUP Oneonta Executive Board in support of the "Mayday \$5K" campaign. This national campaign was already endorsed by UUP at the Fall DA. It was pointed out that information about the campaign and its logic for a national minimum salary of \$5000/3 cr. Course is available online.
3. Inquiry was made about the timetable for subsequent phases of the administration's salary adjustment schedules. When Phase I (for FT academics) was announced, many of us were left wondering when and what about us? We were informed that contingent/PT issues will be addressed in Phase III. It was added that the administration is fully committed to all phases of the campaign, and that Phase III may not necessarily come *after* Phase II.
4. There is a previous practice of compensation for needed training sessions for those adjuncts who must complete assessment reviews. Because the session for that training has already been held, those who attended will receive compensation retroactively.

This was the second of the four mandated Contingent Concerns labor /management meetings for the 2013-14 academic year.

Notes: Contingent Concerns Labor/Management Meeting: Feb 12, 2014, 2:30 pm
By J McDermott, Contingent Concerns Officer

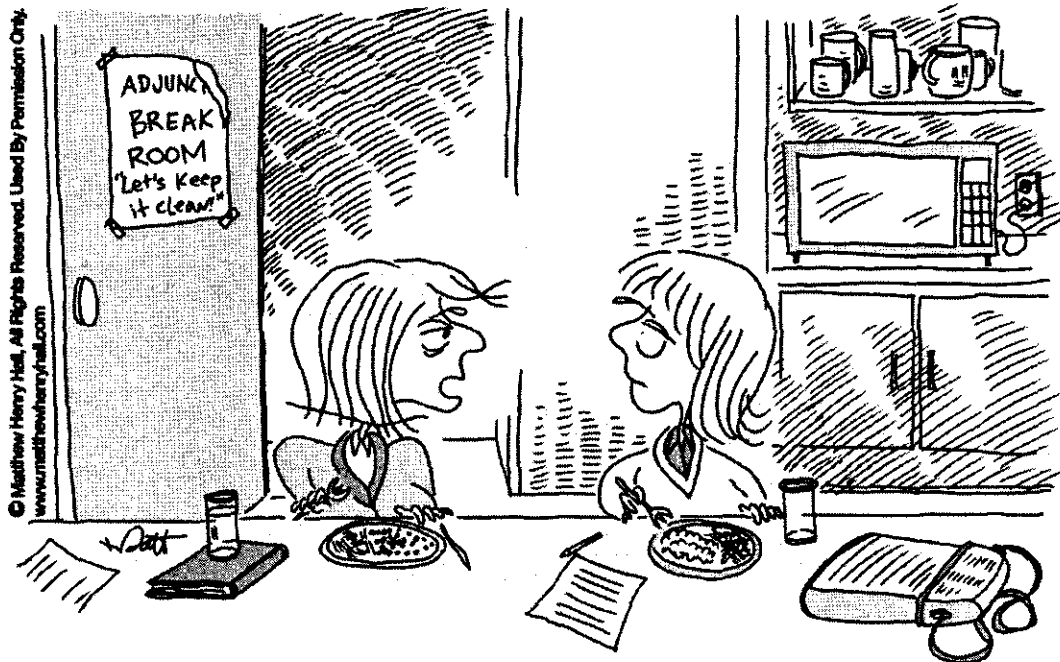
Administration: Lisa Wenck, Senior Executive Employee Services Officer
UUP: J McDermott, Contingent Concerns Officer; Darryl Wood, UUP LRS

The meeting began with an observation that contract language has finally been settled. With both sides awaiting printed copies, we pointed out the text is available online on the UUP website, and that it is not behind a firewall.

UUP also acknowledged the way that the issue of Deficit Reduction Leave (DRL) for teaching-only academics had been clarified, and offered the observation that Oneonta is one of the rare campuses to have settled that point quickly.

There was one item on the agenda: to open discussion of the situation of long-serving adjuncts who continue to be employed on one-year contracts. Without revealing identities, discussion began with several instances of employees who have expressed strong concern over the fragility of late career employment at SUNY Oneonta. Administration expressed recognition of the vulnerability of senior employees working under ten month contracts, and agreed to a continuing examination of the problem and possible solutions. The topic will return to the agenda of the April meeting.

After some brief discussion of adjunct orientation for the fall, the meeting adjourned by 3:30.



"As I move into my 12th year as an adjunct, an adjunct whose one constant hope has been to attain a full-time teaching position at this specific school, I've begun to suspect tenaciousness is both a virtue and an evil curse sent by radio waves from an evil princess practicing voodoo on a remote island in the Caspian Sea."

Contingent Concerns Labor Management meeting 23 April 2014 2:30 pm

UUP: J McDermott, Contingent Concerns Officer, Darryl Wood, LRS

Administration: Lisa Wenck, Senior Executive Employee Services Officer

There were two agenda items. #1 was from UUP; #2 was from the administration.

#1: Discussion about the issue of the continued-employment vulnerability of long-serving adjuncts, who are restricted to one-year contracts. Although no fixed proposals were advanced, possible conceptual and language options were explored.

#2: The annual late-August Part-time Orientation session was reviewed. Both sides recognize it as a valuable resource, but as each year passes, the attendance at the event has fallen, despite publicity from both the college and UUP. It appears that many returning adjuncts limit their use to parking registration (which is now available by mail) and perhaps one or two other tables, and that the number of incoming new adjuncts in need of full exposure to campus resources is quite small. The personnel and facility costs of the event are now yielding a diminished return on the investment, which in real language means there are a lot of people staffing the event's tables, with all their required support, but each table may be visited by only a few adjuncts. Both sides agree that that interaction is quite valuable, but the event has become an inefficient way of providing it.

Discussion advanced utilization of online resources as they become available, perhaps through a designated 'contingent portal' on the campus website; the creation of a different campus event a little later in the semester to draw adjuncts and other campus individuals into a social environment was also examined.

This was the fourth of the four contractually required Contingent Concerns Labor Management meetings. They will resume in the Fall 14 semester.

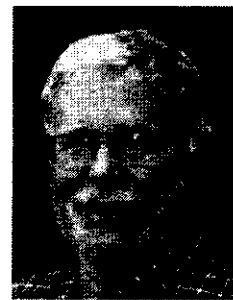


The semester draws to an end

By J McDermott. Contingent Concerns Officer

As classes end, grades are submitted, and seniors, like some cylinders, are graduated, I have a few thoughts to share.

First, if you regularly review any media that covers labor, politics and/or education, you are probably surprised by the growing coverage of contingent employment in the general economy, and more specifically in higher education. When I started with UUP shortly after I arrived on campus well over a decade ago, the 'plight of the part-timer' was well-known by part-timers, but it was the closeted secret of many other members of the campus community. That's no longer the case. When I travelled throughout the SUNY system as part of the last negotiating team, advocacy for the interests of contingents came from every corner of each campus. Not only is UUP much more strongly supportive of its contingent members, some of our members have been leading national campaigns through the New Faculty Majority and the Mayday Moratorium efforts. Others offer public support by publishing articles in print or on line: see our own Mark Ferrara's <http://askmyprofessor.org>.



This leads to my second point: One of the major efforts by both campus unions and advocacy groups is to address the issue of unemployment insurance eligibility for contractual employees. If a contract letter has an 'escape clause' that releases an institution from the promise of employment because of changes in 'budget or enrollment', is that contract a secure and reasonable promise of future employment? If an adjunct cannot be assured that a contracted teaching opportunity will actually exist in September, then shouldn't that employee be able to collect unemployment up to the date that secure employment begins again? Some adjuncts are (rightfully?) afraid to try to collect

