

# Connection *uup*

Binghamton Chapter, United University Professions

*From the Chapter President*

## Adjuncts—the University Doesn't Work Unless They Do

by Benita Roth  
Sociology Department

In this issue of *Connection*, readers will find a theme: contingent faculty instructors at Binghamton University. Early in January, we sent out an email message to more than 150 contingent faculty employees and received the responses you will find in this newsletter.

Contingent faculty instructors—often referred to as “adjuncts”—are an invisible but substantial part of the university fabric. Without them, students don't get taught to write or think or play the bassoon.

There are several layers of invisibility that we hope to cut through by focusing on contingent faculty in this newsletter. First, there's the big picture that many of us don't think about. Article after article about the casualization of the American higher education workforce flies into my email inbox, so here are some numbers:

- in 1969, tenured and tenure-track positions made up about 80% of teaching positions in higher education;
- by 2009, the percentage of tenured and tenure track faculty was down to 33.5%, with 66.5% of faculty outside the tenure stream (see a paper from the Council for Higher Education Accreditation at [www.chea.org/pdf/Examination\\_Changing\\_Faculty\\_2013.pdf](http://www.chea.org/pdf/Examination_Changing_Faculty_2013.pdf));
- from 1997 to 2007, the overall number of tenure track positions grew by 8.6%;
- full-time non-tenure-track po-



sitions grew by 38.2%; and part-time non-tenure track positions grew by almost 43%.

Second, many of us represented by UUP don't realize that UUP represents contingent faculty instructors. I didn't realize that such was the case until I became the Binghamton chapter president. Many of us assume that all graduate students who teach are funded by graduate study assistantships or stipends, and thus represented by the Graduate Student Employees Union (GSEU). But many graduate students who are still working on degrees, let alone those who have finished degrees, are funded by contingent work: they pick up a course—or two or three or four or more—in order to keep body and soul together. Many contingents are not aware that UUP represents them, a situation that we tried to change earlier this year when we mailed actual letters and membership cards to them via “snail mail.”

Lastly, for many of us, it's easy to not think about how much teaching contingent faculty do. They help departments meet their bottom lines

**Contingent faculty  
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integral to the  
mission of BU**

financially and do the service teaching that is required in this growing university. Contingent faculty instructors are integral to the mission of BU; we certainly would not be able to function the way that we do without them.

Certainly, contingent faculty instructors teach at BU for different reasons. Some are finishing up degrees; others have finished degrees and are waiting out a fickle job market where the odds of being hired into a tenure-track position are growing slimmer and slimmer. Some contingent faculty instructors have family obligations that keep them in the area. There are even contingents who are teaching here in what we would truly think of as an *adjunct* fashion—that is, they are teaching as an addition to other work they have.

Here and there, a contingent faculty instructor is relatively well paid. But mostly, contingents are paid poverty-level wages. According to a recent piece in *The Washington*

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# Connection

Binghamton Chapter newsletter  
Number 88 March 2015

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An official publication of the Binghamton Chapter of the United University Professions, Local 2190 of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, and affiliated with New York State United Teachers; the Binghamton Chapter is a member of the Broome County Federation of Labor.

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors or of the Binghamton Chapter and are not necessarily the opinions of United University Professions.

The editor welcomes letters and other comments of interest to the Binghamton Chapter.

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*From the Vice President for Academics*

## UUP and New York's Taylor Law

**by Heather DeHaan  
History Department**

In October, an unnamed adjunct professor of writing at San Jose State University called for February 25 to be the first annual "National Adjunct Walkout Day" (NAWD). Given the low pay and lack of job security for adjuncts, who constitute roughly 76% of today's professorate, support for the NAWD initiative rapidly grew.

Yet despite widespread dismay at the growing adjunct crisis, UUP could not legally support the call for the strike. Thanks to the Public Employees' Fair Employment Act of 1967 (better known as the Taylor Law), New York's public sector unions and employees are barred from going on strike or withholding their labor in an organized way. Should UUP have voiced any support for a walkout on the part of its own members, it would have been liable to a fine, and all members who struck would have been subject to the loss of two days pay per each day on strike.

In addition, those on term appointments would have been vulnerable to Article 19 disciplinary action, up to and including termination, and those on temporary appointments could have faced immediate termination. No matter what the desire to show solidarity, UUP could not support this action.

The event drew attention, yet again, to the Taylor Law—a subject of long controversy. The Taylor Law grants to public sector workers the right to organize and to bargain collectively for wages, benefits, and working conditions. In the years following its promulgation, it spawned the formation of union bodies on SUNY campuses, ultimately resulting in the formation of UUP.

Despite its support for unionization, however, the law made it ille-



gal for public sector workers to strike, giving them no leverage with which to force management back to the bargaining table in the case of failed contract negotiations.

Whenever a contract period drew to its close, union members faced the possible loss of hard-won concessions for stepped raises, benefits, and improved terms and conditions of employment.

To remedy this problem, in 1982 New York approved the Triborough Amendment, which mandated that the terms and conditions of an expired contract be extended until the negotiation of a new contract. This amendment in turn was, and still is, heavily criticized by anti-union groups, who argue that it encourages bad-faith negotiations on the part of unions, at least when generous contract provisions are unlikely to be renewed.

Even its supporters regard the Taylor Law as a mixed blessing—its primary benefit being its defense of the principle of good faith negotiations. For UUP members, the current formulation of the law ensures the duration of health care plans, retirement benefits, and any stepped annual pay increases even after our contract expires.

However, the Triborough Amendment does *not* ensure the duration of either Individual Development Awards or the Dr. Nuala McGann Drescher Affirmative Action/Diversity Leave program, which need to be renegotiated with each contract. UUP has great incentive to bargain for *improved* pay, security, and work conditions, and it remains unable to strike to push for these things. On

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## 54 Win Individual Development Awards

**by Fran Goldman  
Asian and Asian American  
Studies**

I am happy to report that the Individual Development Awards Committee met in late January to review applications for the IDAs. Binghamton University's allocation for this year was \$48,638, which included some funds not expended in 2013-14. The committee received 83 applications, of which 54 were funded. Of these, 24 were academics (45%), 29 professionals (53%) and 1 librarian (2%). In addition, 47 were full-time (85%) and eight were part-time (15%). Listed at the end of this article are the names of the awardees.

The money for IDA grants comes from funds that are negotiated as part of our Agreement with the State of New York. Article 42 defines the make-up of the Statewide Development Committee, which consists of three appointed representatives from UUP and three from the state. The committee is one of those under the statewide joint labor-management committees noted in Article 21 of the Agreement.

The charge of the Statewide Development Committee is to "review, make recommendations and implement programs for professional development and training programs which are designed to improve job performance and assist employees in developing their full professional potential and in preparing for advancement" (p. 65). Information on negotiated annual amounts contributed by the state can be found in Article 21 for the 2013-2016 years. No funds were negotiated for the first two years of the Agreement, which is why there was no allocation or awards for the first years of the contract.

While the purpose for which the funds can be allocated ranges from



research to conference attendance to artistic or creative endeavors, 15% of the total allocation must be earmarked for part-time academic and professional staff, with the remainder going to full-time staff. The IDA provides a means for many to attend a conference, workshop and other events that contribute to their professional development, as well as the ability to acquire expertise in their field and to seek promotions and permanent or continuing appointment.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the committee (Serdar Atav, Robyn Cope, Suk-Young Kang, Janet Keesler, Beth Kilmarx and Susan Seibold-Simpson) for agreeing to serve and for their thoughtful and thorough review of the applications. I would also be remiss if I did not acknowledge the contributions of Brandy Emm from the Provost's office, whose administrative help was invaluable.

Although the Committee was unable to provide awards to all who applied, we would encourage everyone to think about the next round for 2015-16.

### **Awardees:**

Professor Jeffner Allen  
Ms. Stephanie Allen  
Dr. Jennifer Amey  
Professor Ming An  
Professor Susan Appe  
Ms. Kristie Bowers  
Professor Nicole Cameron  
Mr. Stephen Capobianco  
Ms. Biama Charles  
Professor Lubna Chaudhry  
Professor Junghyun Cho  
Professor Seokheun (Sean) Choi  
Professor Sung Hoon Chung  
Professor Robyn Cope  
Ms. Cindy Cowden

Ms. Zoraya Cruz-Bonilla  
Ms. Allison Daley  
Mrs. Aynur de Rouen  
Professor Sidney Dement  
Professor Juanita Diaz-Cotto  
Mr. Stephen Duseau  
Ms. Laura Evans  
Mrs. Megan Fegley  
Professor Melissa Figueroa  
Ms. Gina Glasman  
Ms. Frances Goldman  
Mr. Brad Gordon  
Ms. Elisabeth Gray  
Ms. Courtney Huff  
Professor Gladys Jimenez-Munoz  
Professor Zhanpeng Jin  
Professor Hyeyoung Kang  
Professor Suk-Young Kang  
Professor Jonathan Karp  
Professor Changhong Ke  
Ms. Shanise Kent  
Professor Neha Khanna  
Ms. Beth Kilmarx  
Professor Hoe Kyeung Kim  
Ms. Anne Larrivee  
Professor Yoonkyung Lee  
Mr. Tyler Lenga  
Professor Tim Lowenstein  
Professor Sandra Michael  
Ms. Catherine Miller  
Professor Ralph Miller  
Professor Mario Moroni  
Mr. Tony Morris  
Professor Carrie Moylan  
Professor Tomonari Nishikawa  
Professor Ravi Palat  
Ms. Judith Quaranta  
Ms. Christina Raplee  
Mr. William Reardon  
Mrs. Beth Riley  
Ms. Nicole Riley  
Ms. Maria Roberts  
Ms. Lyne Roglieri  
Professor Ana Ros  
Professor Nadia Rubaii  
Professor Nasim Sabounchi  
Mr. Stephen Safranek  
Professor Kelvin Santiago-Valles  
Professor Hiroki Sayama  
Ms. Brandy Smith  
Mr. Mark Stephens  
Ms. Cherie van Putten  
Professor Wendy Wall  
Professor Linda Wong  
Professor Xiangjin Xu  
Professor Bogum Yoon  
Ms. Vanessa Young  
Professor Lei Yu



# We Are Well-Positioned to Build Community Partnerships

by **Kim Evanoski**  
CCPA, Social Work

Adjuncts—there are many of us hidden on campuses everywhere and growing in numbers. We are hard at work building a sustainable economy for our families, neighbors and communities. The adjuncts I know are talented, committed professionals, usually in community leadership roles. They teach, like me, because they believe in helping their professional and business communities. They observe needs and fill gaps to benefit students, faculty, administrators, businesses and organizations alike.

I am writing this article to encourage dialogue about adjuncts' role as a valued partner to the University and to our communities. My sense is that adjuncts and leadership can create value through participation in new and innovative projects that will further facilitate inclusive and collaborative working relationships, especially in the area of high-impact service learning.

I am in my third year as an adjunct and have learned some lessons that help serve my University and care for my community. I share these lessons here in the hope that this might encourage other adjuncts to develop positive connections and/or perhaps come forward with further ideas for discussion campus- or department-wide. Lessons learned include the importance of:

**Awareness that campus leadership's modeling of inclusive team-building creates a true premiere learning environment.** Inclusiveness produces satisfaction and equitable commitment to all—adjuncts included.

For example, when invited to an "all-team meeting" or to training opportunities, encourage inclusive team building by attending as many as you can as an adjunct. If you can't



attend, send a note expressing your regrets but desire to follow up on how you can assist in an event or small project. Send an appreciative note when your name is included on

the roster bulletin board or placed in the faculty phone directory. As an adjunct, I really appreciate professional recognition and inclusive teamwork.

**Focusing on "champion" University and community partners, those who see the value in collaboration and community building.** Share your creative ideas with these champions and build a bridge. If you can engage and include students in a process or event, think about any other campus partners with whom you can build a successful team activity. Focus ahead and come to terms with the fact that some adjuncts move ahead, leaving others behind who struggle with supporting an inclusive campus. I acknowledge this path is not easy; it is sometimes necessary to model forward thinking about the valuable role of an adjunct. Adjuncts can create opportunities by sharing high-impact learning experiences or workforce development experiences that only they, as adjuncts, can bring to campus.

**Opening your own doors by asking for opportunity.** As an adjunct, if you see an announcement about a learning opportunity or a chance to "bridge" to university or community work, ask. If adjuncts don't ask to participate or to provide project work, our University won't know of our interest or of our com-

mitment to bridging our students to the workplace. Adjuncts bring tremendous value and support to our community and business as investors in students' learning. Also, if you have a passion for a project or sense your professional experience would assist you in the classroom, look for and apply for funding opportunities. Keep asking until any "no" answers become "maybe, let's hear what you have to tell us" answers.

**Connecting with other adjuncts and professional organizations.** Adjuncts can and do have the ability to make a strong impact in partnering with their University and community; we model our work and professionalism for our students and many times participate in creating ideas for sustainable funding streams for businesses and organizations. Be and stay connected as you learn of other possibilities as well as gain support from those who wish you well. Lastly, consider collaborating with other adjuncts to cross-train and gain a fresh perspective in a different field.

## Faculty member needs our help

Donations of leave time are being accepted in Human Resources to extend important benefits to Professor Malgosia Krasuska, who is out on extended medical leave.

Please contact Bonnie Jenson at [bjenson@binghamton.edu](mailto:bjenson@binghamton.edu) or 7-6613 if you are able to donate vacation time. Thank you to all donors for your generous, greatly appreciated support of other professionals.

# Who Will Take Responsibility for Unfair System?

by James Parisot  
Sociology Department

Recently I overheard a graduate student in the natural sciences suggest that PhD students should not accept adjunct positions because doing so reinforces a system in which adjuncts serve as precarious labor. Within the realm of social sciences, arts and humanities, it has been my experience that obtaining a PhD is a constant struggle between finding time to write and locating ways to finance unpaid research. Working as an adjunct, in between those responsibilities, is a necessary part of the higher education career trajectories for most instructors. The work of adjunct instructors is also vital to the effective operation of most university campuses.

Yet, working as an adjunct instructor is often daunting. Many find themselves working seven days a week, as much as 60 hours a week, struggling to complete research and teach, in addition to the ever-present worry about how to pay the next month's rent. One option—often utilized—is to take out tens of thousands of dollars in loans.

However, in a tight job market, this does not necessarily guarantee a way out of the adjunct trap. Many feel stuck within this contradiction: on one hand, forced to support the adjunct system as a way to survive and, on the other, knowing that this system is not the solution to the plight of the social sciences in the age of the business model that has come to dominate the university system.

I calculated, for example, that (assuming all my students are paying in-state tuition); my 40 students spend at least \$35,000 to take my class. Meanwhile, I get paid \$5,000, which is actually relatively high for adjuncts in the United States. Still,



this leaves \$30,000 unaccounted for: so in this case I am getting paid about 1/7th of the tuition my class brings in.

Last year I contacted

President Harvey Stenger for his thoughts. At lunch he explained that, while his calculations suggest we should get paid more, the amount is decided by each department. Following this, I contacted the head of my department. The department head explained that my wage was not the product of the department; rather it was up to administration. In a Kafkaesque fashion, responsibility seems to lie with a force beyond reason; each authority blaming the other, and in turn, each side also profiting from the labor of the adjunct.

Nationality has a place to play

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***“Activism is the rent I pay for living on the planet.”***

—Alice Walker, author

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in the adjunct structure. As an American student, I acknowledge that my position represents a position of privilege. International students tend to have great disadvantages. For example, one funded international PhD student I talked to was not given teaching assistant sections because that student's English was assessed as too “bad.” Instead this student received grading positions that included no teaching responsibilities. When this student then applied to adjunct, the application was re-

jected over other candidates' because this applicant did not have enough teaching experience.

For international students, whose VISAs also do not allow them to work outside the university, subtle and not-so-subtle forms of discrimination tend to be the norm. Sometimes they are forced to simply return to the countries within which they have citizenship. There, working conditions for adjunct and part-time faculty are frequently even worse than in the United States.

Over the past 25 years, the number of administrators at American universities has doubled, increasing at a rate much higher than increases of faculty positions or numbers of students. At the same time, the number of classes taught by part-time and adjunct faculty has increased from one-third to one-half.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, salaries for university presidents continue to skyrocket, with the product of adjunct instructors' labor bringing in tuition that helps pay university administrators' salaries.

This brings us back to the beginning: the contradiction of the adjunct. Adjunct faculty are forced to support a model of education that puts them at a disadvantage, yet with little other choice, given the hope of so many to pursue a lifetime career in higher education. And with administrators blaming departments and departments blaming administrators, it appears that the only way to correct the inequities of the adjunct situation is through the negotiation platform of our union, United University Professions (UUP).

<sup>1</sup>Marcus, John. “New Analysis Shows Problematic Boom in Higher Ed Administrators.” *Huffington Post*, February 6, 2014. [www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/06/higher-ed-administrators-growth\\_n\\_4738584.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/06/higher-ed-administrators-growth_n_4738584.html)

# I Love the Work, But Not the Working Conditions

by Martha Weber  
Music Department

I enjoy teaching bassoon here. My students are engaging and hard-working. I am privileged to see them progress over our time together. I enjoy hearing from them after they've graduated.

Being an adjunct lecturer, for me, means that I come to teach at Binghamton University after working my full-time job. I teach into the evenings, rarely seeing other faculty or staff. I am still teaching after the Music Department Office has closed. Most of my communications with other faculty and staff are through email. By working non-traditional hours, I do feel disconnected from the lively, talented, creative, musical, vibrant and out-of-the-box thinkers that also work here. On the rare occasion that I do see another staff person during my teaching time on campus, I relish catching up with them to see how they and their students are doing. It really makes my day to connect with them.

I teach my students to the best of my ability while I am here. That's what people see. What people do not see is all that I must do outside of my contractual hours just to get the job done. Outside of my contractual time at Binghamton University, I am holding office hours, fixing instruments, bringing instruments that I can't fix to the appropriate repair person, doing inventory, ordering supplies and equipment, writing proposals for instrument replacement, making reeds for my students, writing recommendations for scholarships and job applications, arranging and attending rehearsals for my students' recitals, copying forms for my students, filling out necessary paperwork for the department, staying current with relevant articles and research, responding to prospective



students' e-mails about BU, meeting high-school students and their families during their visits here hoping to recruit them to come to Binghamton, responding to departmental e-mails, searching my library to find just the best fit for solos or method books for my students, arranging coaching sessions for my students with other staff members, coordinating and exchanging ideas with faculty from other universities/schools of music, giving lectures at other schools and preparing for my own performances here at BU.

Adjunct lecturers in the Music Department, while given a set number of hours to teach each week, must coordinate with their students for when and for how long the lessons will be. If a student misses a lesson, the adjunct must reschedule that lesson so that it is made up either on another day, making an additional teaching day or a longer teaching day the following week. Remember, we saved that original lesson time for the student that cancelled.

Since my studio space is a shared space, I need to coordinate my teaching time so that there are no conflicts with other staff. If I have to get into my office when the other professor is teaching, I am interrupting their teaching time. Storage of any teaching related materials is limited. All phone calls, computer work, as well as answering any work-related e-mails, is done on my own time and dime as there is not a phone or a computer in my office. Using any computer program with my students requires using my own equipment. Sharing

recordings with my students also requires use of my own equipment. I have volunteered my time and experience as a public school music educator as we work towards offering a degree in Music Education here at Binghamton University. I have also volunteered my time having the BU Bassoon Ensemble perform at the Oakdale Mall for BU Day. This is great publicity for the University.

Some semesters, I have more or less students, but the above-mentioned job responsibilities are part of the whole picture of what I do as an adjunct lecturer in music. My commute to BU is a one-hour round trip. Other adjuncts commute two hours or more.

Our Music Department has many adjunct lecturers. Being an adjunct requires a certain level of educational training, experience and level of musical ability. In order to maintain that level of musicianship, we practice our instruments and perform regularly. I view practicing our instruments and publicly performing as equivalent to the required amount of research or writing that other departments require of their faculty to stay current.

As an adjunct, I've seen my hours cut. We were told that when money is tight, the only place they could find money to maintain contractual obligations was to cut the adjuncts' pay.

So, you may ask yourselves, why do I continue to teach at BU when my work hours exceed the pay offered to me? This is a question that I revisit each year when my contract expires and I have to wait to see if I'll be offered a contract and what my hours will be. I stay because of the caliber of the students and of the rest of the faculty and staff. I find teaching here engaging and challenging.



# Thinking Through the Effects of Increasing Reliance on Contingent Labor

by Sarah Seeley  
English Department

As a doctoral student and adjunct instructor at our university, I teach courses in first-year writing and writing in the disciplines. As such, I've too often heard various colleagues lament that "the students just can't write these days." This, unfortunately, seems to be a commonly held belief—one that's underpinned by the assumption that writing is an innate skill. This is, of course, not true, but the idea is insidious, and it places value judgments on *all* students. The student who writes well is the student who succeeds. The student who cannot, or who continuously struggles, is the student who suffers.

Instruction in writing entails many things—but most importantly, I think, it hinges on students developing their own voices and learning how to construct arguments that appropriately contribute to wide-ranging conversations. Such skills are the cornerstone of good liberal education and imparting them involves spending time.

Yet, the people who most often teach writing are working with contingent appointments. These people generally do not have the luxury of time, and the explosion of contingent labor across American universities highlights this uneasiness between time and value.

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation recently published a report on the often-noted trend toward increased reliance on contingent faculty.<sup>1</sup> That is, full or part-time, non-tenure track positions, and/or graduate student labor. The organization's 2014 report indicates that 51.1% of the faculty at public research universities in the United



States are contingent. To be clear, this particular figure reflects a definition of contingent faculty that only includes people who are holding full or part-time non-tenure track positions. So, this does not even include most graduate student labor – the group of people who most often teach writing courses at Binghamton. Regardless of how contingency is defined, the point I aim to highlight here is this: while argumentation skills are widely considered the foundation of higher education, the quiet assumption that these skills are somehow instinctively part and parcel of 'being educated' exacerbates the uneasiness between time and value for both teachers *and* students.

This uneasiness is also created and maintained by various processes of university institutionalization. Examining the pipeline through which graduate students move reveals an institutionally maintained scotosis. Graduate students spend years living off meager stipends, then often move on to teach various courses of their own making as adjunct instructors. The subtext in these scenarios indicates that student instructors are lucky and should demonstrate gratitude for being given such opportunities. From a number of perspectives, this may well be the case. Nonetheless, these circumstances set the stage for a willingness to accept contingent labor as a foregone conclusion. And, regarding the individual choice of whether to participate in that system, I will

merely suggest that opting out is not an option for most of us, and nor would it be desirable.

The majority of the adjunct instructors I know, myself included, genuinely enjoy teaching and want to continue doing so. The capacity to understand, rationalize, or control the circumstances of one's own labor does not, however, change the system. This is true for me as an adjunct instructor; it is also similarly true for the various people who graciously continue to provide me with classes to teach.

Thinking through the diverse effects of the increasing reliance on contingent labor is a preliminary step in reexamining the system as a whole. It isn't logical or tenable to place unwavering value on skills like argumentation and critical thinking, while uncritically participating in a system that devalues the means by which such skills are imparted. This hierarchy of value impacts everyone. And the fact remains: the ability to craft a sophisticated argument is not intuitive. It is a set of skills honed over time.

The pervasive failure to define effective writing in this way has adverse effects on students and faculty alike: learning outcomes suffer and productivity is thwarted. Acknowledging the problem in these (or other) specific terms is a step toward collapsing the perceived distance between university institutionalization and one's tacit participation in it. Until the problem is dismantled to reveal specific, and often layered, negative effects, it is likely to remain unchanged.

<sup>1</sup>*The Council for Higher Education and Accreditation. (2014). An Examination of the Changing Faculty: Ensuring Institutional Quality and Achieving Desired Student Learning Outcomes. Washington, DC.*

# Adjuncts—the University Doesn't Work Unless They Do

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Post's "Wonkblog" (February 6), the median compensation for a course taught by a contingent instructor is \$2,700. Most contingents at BU do better than that, but many do not do a whole lot better, and as people with high levels of education, they deserve more. Their wages are not market driven in any meaningful or consistent way.

To get some perspective about the unfairness of the wage, I think about my own experiences as a "freeway flyer" teaching courses in Southern California in the mid-1990s at public

and private institutions. I got anywhere from \$2,300 to \$6,000 per course, the latter in the University of California system, which actually put money in a retirement fund for me. I hate to remind myself that it's been 20 years since then, but it has, and I'm one of the lucky ones who got her degree and got a tenure-stream job. Not everyone I know was so lucky, and the picture now for permanency is a much bleaker one.

We are calling for more than just visibility and respect for contingent employees. At the statewide level,

UUP has a contingent employment committee for faculty as well as professional employees who work without the promise of permanency. Nationally, there are campaigns afoot to raise the compensation-per-course standard, from the National Mobilization for Equity's "May Day 5K [per course] campaign (<http://nationalmobilizationforequity.org/>), to even more ambitious campaigns by labor unions like the Service Employees International Union's campaign to raise the standard to \$15,000 per course (see the Wonkblog above). The latter standard seems unreachable, but setting the bar high seems to have paid off for those contingents represented by the SEIU; they've won real gains.

What we in UUP are calling for is fair wages, good working conditions and equitable treatment of our contingents. We also want SUNY to address the problem of reliance on contingent instructors system-wide, and provide more tenure-stream appointments. By including a few of the voices of our contingent faculty instructors, we hope to get everyone listening, and we want everyone to really think about how we as a university invest in the people without whom we really can't do our jobs.

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## UUP and New York's Taylor Law

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the other hand, the Taylor Law does compel management to engage in good faith negotiations. If state negotiators were to deploy pressure tactics (such as, for example, the threat of immediate widespread furloughs), UUP's negotiators could legally object under the "good faith bargaining" provisions of the Taylor Law, forestalling punitive action and thereby leveling the playing field for negotiations. In short, the law does provide greater stability in public services and, despite its flaws, does grant some leverage to state employees in contract disputes.

None of this resolves the adjunct crisis, of course, but the Taylor Law does not preclude productive and concrete action that tackles questions of inequity and poor pay within academe. To address the adjunct crisis or Governor Cuomo's assault on unions, we can write letters to our elected representatives, fight for better adjunct pay within our own departments, seek tenure or tenure-track hires where possible, join the push for raised minimum wage rates in New York, seek new state laws governing medical and maternity leave, and be more selective in

training students, thereby ensuring that we do not produce a surfeit of young PhDs ill-equipped to compete in the academic and non-academic job markets.

We all have a hand in decisions—on campus and in elections—that shape the academic workforce, both on this campus and in the wider academic community. Strike or no strike, Taylor Law or none, we can effect change—not just for ourselves, but also for the 76% of academic colleagues who need and merit it.

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