

# FORUM

NEWSLETTER FOR ISSUES ABOUT PART-TIME AND CONTINGENT FACULTY

11.1 FALL 2007

CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION

## I N S I D E

<b>From the Editor: Working Conditions for Online Adjuncts</b>	A1
<b>The Writing Life of an Adjunct Composition Instructor</b>	A4
Carrie E. Cubberley	
<b>There Is an / in Community</b>	A7
Sara Schupack	
<b>Fearless Joy</b>	A10
Gregory B. Zobel	
<b>My Road to a Full-Time Position</b>	A12
Bill Elgersma	
<b>Faculty Development as Working Condition</b>	A14
Ed Nagelhout	

### From the Editor: Working Conditions for Online Adjuncts

Evelyn Beck

Having taught as an online adjunct instructor for eight colleges in eight states, I'd like to reflect on the working conditions adjuncts find in this role and suggest some standards for fair treatment. Some of these suggestions are specific to the online environment, while others apply to the experience of all adjuncts.

**Keep the application process simple:** The path to apply for a position can be frustrating. Some colleges require you to submit lots of material, including official transcripts, when first inquiring about an opening. It would be nice if that information were requested only after the institution has expressed interest in hiring you. Each official copy of your transcripts costs money, so a request for unofficial transcripts early in the process would be a good compromise.

**Keep training simple:** The training is probably the biggest differential I've found. I've been hired to teach courses for which I've received absolutely no guidance about anything, from the course management software to the college policies. Being thrown into a course with no preparation is overwhelming; since this tends to happen at the last minute for an unfilled slot, it is doubly stressful. At the other extreme, one college required my attendance in a six-week online course that featured many reading assignments and intensive writing assignments that were graded very strictly, with a certain number of points accumulated before I could proceed to the next level—observing another instructor's class for six weeks—all of

**About Forum**

*Forum* is published twice a year by the Committee on Contingent, Adjunct, and Part-Time Faculty (CAP) of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. As editor, I welcome you to submit news items, book reviews, editorials, and/or articles related to non-tenure-track faculty in college English or composition courses. Submissions for the fall issue should be received no later than May 1; for the spring issue, the deadline is September 1. Note: Submissions will not be returned.

Submit your work electronically via email or an email attachment. Address your work to beck.e@ptc.edu and put the words “*Forum* article” somewhere in your subject line. Submissions should include the following information:

- your name
- your title(s)
- your institution(s)
- home address and phone number; institutional address(es) and phone number(s)
- if applicable, venue(s) where submission was published or presented previously

For additional guidelines or information about *Forum*, contact Evelyn Beck, *Forum* editor, Piedmont Technical College, 620 N. Emerald Rd., Greenwood, SC 29648 or phone 864-941-8450.

It is the policy of NCTE in its journals and other publications to provide a forum for the open discussion of ideas concerning the content and the teaching of English and the language arts. Publicity accorded to any particular point of view does not imply endorsement by the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, or the membership at large, except in announcements of policy, where such endorsement is clearly specified. Similarly, opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, the Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Special Interest Group, or the Conference on College Composition and Communication.

© 2007 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Printed in the United States of America. ISSN 1522-7502

this unpaid. In fact, I’ve never had any required training for which I was compensated. Reasonable training acquaints you with the course software and the course requirements. An online training course can be a nice way to meet some colleagues, and it mimics what the course will be like, so it’s an effective way to get comfortable. But colleges should keep the amount of required work low. And faculty should be paid for time spent in required training.

**Give compensation for course design:**

Some colleges expect you to follow a template. Some want you to design your own course. There are advantages to each approach, depending on your experience and your pedagogical creativity. Though it requires more effort, I prefer to create my own course from scratch—assuming I’ll be asked to teach it repeatedly. Only one college in my experience ever paid me for modifying a shell the first time around. An extra stipend of even a few hundred dollars should be paid for the first time an instructor teaches a course; even modifications to an existing shell take a good bit of time.

**Pay us fairly:** Most of the challenges facing adjuncts are the same whether the classes are online or not. We are all familiar with insulting salaries. I have worked for as little as \$950 per class. The most I’ve gotten per course was \$4,500; the most I’ve received per student was \$250. Most compensation seems to be around \$1,500 per course. Strangely, schools that charge the highest tuition do not necessarily pay the best. My feeling is that anything under \$2,500 is unreasonable.

**Limit class size:** Class size fluctuates wildly. I've had classes as small as five (though that's quite rare) and as large as 40. I think that payment should increase as class size goes up. Some colleges pay per student; others pay per course. But do ask about caps. A reasonable cap for a composition class is 20. A larger enrollment maximum should come with a higher salary. One other consideration is class length, which for me has ranged from five weeks to sixteen weeks. While the workload should be identical no matter how long the term spans, that's not the case. The amount of assignments might not differ, but an instructor is probably going to be responding to more emails and postings in a sixteen-week term than in one that ends after five weeks.

**Keep demands reasonable:** Requirements for instructors are also all over the place. Some colleges require adjuncts to participate in hour-long monthly conference-call meetings. Some require live online chats for the course. Some require that you be online five days out of every seven (and offline no more than one day at a time). One college I worked for required all adjuncts to submit annually an incredibly detailed portfolio that documented performance in multiple areas, including college service. A pretty standard requirement is that you respond to emails and phone calls either within 24 or 48 hours. In my mind, reasonable demands are that you actively engage with your class and respond to messages within 48 hours. While being invited to meetings is fine—and while the meetings are a good way to meet others and feel included—the requirement to attend virtual meetings for which you are not paid is ridiculous.

**Keep reporting requirements simple:** Some colleges require periodic reports of student progress. This was a real bear at one college that had a time-consuming manual process requiring the inputting of lots of information about each student on a form that didn't mesh too well with my software. Colleges need to automate the grading and reporting process.

**Offer reliable tech support:** Technical support fluctuates. At one institution, there was one contact person for technical support, and she never returned my calls or emails. This was the same college that “lost” my entire course. On the whole, though, I've been pleased with the technical support I have received at most colleges. The best tech support is a number to call rather than an individual contact person, who might be on vacation or otherwise inaccessible.

**Make the evaluation process transparent:** Teacher evaluation is conducted differently. At some schools, there's an annual review in which the evaluator looks around your course. At one college, I received an email with the evaluation. At a friendlier, smaller place, I talked on the phone with the evaluator. Annual evaluations are fine; the process just needs to be made standard and clear.

One thing about teaching in multiple states is that I can benefit from some of the hard-won benefits fought for by faculty in other states. For example, though I no longer teach for any colleges there, I still have several thousand dollars in a retirement account in California. And that's also the state where I found the highest salaries.

I'm often asked how one goes about getting a job teaching online. There are a number of good job boards, including *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (<http://chronicle.com/jobs/>), HigherEdJobs.com, and AdjunctNation.com. There's another called Adjunctopia.com, but I haven't found that one very useful. There are also listservs you can join: I recommend eFaculty eXchange (to join, send an email to [efacultyexchange@ecollege.com](mailto:efacultyexchange@ecollege.com)). I also registered with FacultyFinder.com, and did get one job that way when an administrator who read my profile emailed me. In another case, I received an email from a college administrator who needed a world literature instructor and had come upon my homepage during a Google search. Create your own homepage if you don't have one, register wherever you can, and check job boards regularly. I've also found less widely advertised jobs by going to individual college websites and checking their openings. This is a pretty laborious process, but it can lead to opportunities.

One problem is that salaries are rarely stated, so you might go through the whole process only to find out that the pay is too low. But if you're just starting out and need experience, you may be willing to start with some of the lower-paying positions. And if the college at which you teach on-ground courses offers opportunities for training to teach online or asks for instructors to teach sections, take advantage of those opportunities.

---

### **The Writing Life of an Adjunct Composition Instructor**

Carrie E. Cubberley

Space—room to converse, think, and write—is scarce for me as an adjunct composition instructor. I share an office with at least three other adjuncts. Our office is far removed from the full-time faculty's offices and the secretarial offices. Nothing clearly marks the hallway that leads to our offices, and once I step inside, it's tough not to fall asleep—not because my work is uninteresting but because the temperature inside the office is at least ten degrees warmer than any other space on campus. I spend very little time there. My usual workspace is at home, on the bottom floor of our tri-level, at the computer that sits directly beside my two small children's toy collection. My "office" is the large closet in our downstairs bathroom.

It's not glamorous, but it is cooler and less inhabited than the office on campus, and I generally have the space all to myself.

Space is not the most important factor in my work as an adjunct; it really doesn't affect my teaching. My students always manage to find me when they need to talk, and I can check my voice mail and email in the space I'm provided. Space, though, does affect my composing life—my writing self. I embrace Donald Murray's belief that a composition teacher must compose. My full-time colleagues in the English department compose, and I know I should, too. And I want to. I love to write. But I find myself more akin to my students than to my colleagues in my life as a writer, and space is the equalizing factor.

My full-time, tenure-track colleagues write from inside the proverbial ivory tower. (I know, I know: Their lives are NOT that glamorous.) I should mention here that I'm married to a full-time, tenure-track professor, so I do care for and admire those colleagues. But they have space in the tower in which to compose. Their offices are temperate, newly carpeted, and softly lit. They each have their own space. They can close the door and be alone. They can listen to the music they like while they write, or they can write in absolute silence. They can leave their spaces and find them exactly as they left them when they return. They write on sleek new computers. Except when they're teaching or in meetings, they can compose whenever they want to or need to. They can finish an entire draft at one sitting, sipping their coffee from their own coffee pots, in their own spaces. Do I romanticize, even fantasize, about the notion of having my own space in the tower in which to write? I do.

In dire contrast are, I imagine, the spaces in which our students write—clearly beyond the tower walls. Our students write in rooms they share with siblings or other roommates. They write on computers used for the family's budget, the older sibling's college reports, and their younger sibling's Playhouse Disney computer games. Our students write on notebook paper yanked directly from spiral notebooks, perhaps at work between customers or boss's visits. Our students write late at night, after attending classes for five hours and working for eight hours. They are often, I imagine, uncomfortable, irritated, and tired when they write. They write one or two paragraphs at a time, between power naps and others' needs. Their spaces are not their own, and their spaces are not ideal. But they manage to produce drafts they know could be better if their spaces permitted. But things are as they are, and they write when they can, the best they can.

Where does this leave me—the adjunct composition instructor? I do spend time at the ivory tower, but I don't write much there. At times, I can write between classes in "our office," with the door cracked wide open for ventilation. Sometimes,

when I'm there alone, I can stream 107.1 KGSR from Austin, Texas, through the old PC on the desk. Usually, I write between my sheets at night, journal propped on my knees—after I've taught all morning, cared for my four-year-old all afternoon, and fed my family in the evening (*my* full-time, tenure-track gig). I write in the corner of the family room while my kids play “mommy and daddy” or “Backyardigans” or “wrestling” around me. I compose to the melodies of “Greatest Kindergarten Hits” blaring from a CD player upstairs and, sometimes, in the forty minutes of silence I get when a sick child is sleeping. I write in small-town coffee shops, in the corner, listening to retired women talk about what tasks their priest would have them do at church. I write in my car, on my laptop, between visits with my student teachers (I forgot to mention that I do adjunct work in two departments—the education *and* the English departments). My life as an adjunct leaves me feeling like my students must feel a lot of the time: disjointed—waiting to write between things I have to do and in whatever space I happen upon.

I teach my students to find a writing process that works for them, to embrace writing. I harp on the necessity of revising and rewriting and re-rewriting. And, yet, I rarely get past the prewriting stage myself. Instructor as hypocrite? I have thousands of essays, short stories, and poems in my head. But my spaces, or lack thereof, permit few to find their way to paper or screen. When a few do escape my brain and make it to the pages, it is often in fragments or a few paragraphs here or there on whatever scrap of paper I have in my car or that I find in one of the university's recycling bins. I write like my students—outside the ivory tower.

Two questions, then, remain. Question one: What kind of teacher does this make me? I'm keenly aware of how crammed my students' lives are. I GET IT when a student says, “Mrs. Cubberley, I don't really have much of a draft. My kid threw up all day yesterday when my husband was out of town. I spent the day cleaning sheets ... thinking about what I *should* be doing.” I GET IT that writing IS a priority but that our spaces sometimes intrude on our best, most passionate desire to write. But my students and I, kindred writing souls because of our spaces in life, work at composing. We do compose often and for audiences ... sometimes not for the purposes assigned to either of us and sometimes on neither paper nor screen. So I think teaching and writing as an adjunct makes me a good, capable, sympathetic teacher.

Question two: Does this adjunct business—this reality of being more like my student writers than my colleagues—make me a less academic writer? Maybe. My whole definition of “composition” has changed in the five years I've been “adjuncting.” I still believe, more than ever, that good writing must have an audience and a genuine purpose. Good writing must communicate, sincerely, to

someone, for some specific effect. But my best (and my students' best) writing often has (or *can* have) little to do with academic writing. Our best writing is often reserved for the note to the kindergarten teacher asking about our child's difficulty in comparing objects by size. There's a composition with an audience and a purpose! There's a composition sure to be full of logos, pathos, and ethos. There's a composition worthy of review and proofreading! Our best writing serves compose for real purposes, in the spaces—outside of the tower—in which we must live.

*Carrie E. Cubberley has been teaching for ten years. She is currently an adjunct instructor and a student teacher supervisor at Wright State University—Lake Campus in Celina, Ohio.*

### **There Is an / in Community**

Sara Schupack

I don't know his name. I may have asked once and forgotten. We bump into each other occasionally (and literally) in the cluttered, anonymous office shared by too many adjuncts, and usually the tone of exchange is prickly and defensive when I ask if he has office hours and he says he's just dropping something off. I aim for friendliness and compromise, always adding that I'm currently squatting myself, with my one office hour at another time, but somehow he never hears that part. This time, I push further, and, referring to a long roll of paper in his arms, offer, "You always have interesting scrolls and other unusual items."

"Oh yes. I'm having them draw pictures of the characters, and map the progress of the narrative. . . ." I'm forgetting what exactly he said, but suddenly, he was enthusiastic and eager to share.

Why do we remain so isolated and compartmentalized? Clearly, this instructor rarely has the chance to talk about what he's doing, and clearly I and other instructors would benefit from hearing from him. Later that day, I stumbled upon him again, this time with his class, crowded in a hallway, with the visual aid tacked up on the wall, and an animated discussion about the images there. I felt inspired. He had literally taken his class out of the classroom, and reminded me of the multiple modes available for teaching and communication.

When I describe my goals as an educator, I often talk about "community building." And when I do, I am thinking about the classroom and the institutional or departmental communities. In every level of society, from the national scale to local neighborhoods, from a community college campus to an individual classroom, we all crave and need more cohesive communities. It feels good to facilitate

and encourage such a sense of belonging. It also can feel removed and oddly godlike.

What I sometimes forget to acknowledge directly is how much I need this sense of belonging, too, and how my contributions to these academic communities could and should fulfill me. If I have more at stake, perhaps my work will also become more meaningful and successful for all concerned.

I also need to remind myself that when you can't find what you need in a certain environment, it is time to expand your framework or definition of community. For my students, that means setting up online opportunities for sharing, as most of them work, parent, and are otherwise too busy with all sorts of responsibilities to meet with me or classmates regularly and in person. I offer them group and partner work during class time, and a range of exchanges so that we can build common ground from myriad starting points beyond the obvious ones of language, ethnicity, and politics.

For me, expanding the definition of community means reaching out to other adjunct faculty even beyond my current institutional affiliation, and tapping into communities that support my other "selves" as a parent, a writer, a woman. I expect my students to honor and analyze their many selves and the perspectives represented by them. This enriches the class and students' own thinking and writing. When I can do that, too, I am a better teacher and a happier person.

I have felt so alone for a while now, but I am finally discovering that many other adjunct instructors face the same obstacles as I do: a department with no funding and often no interest in professional development, a full-time staff that is either overworked and too busy or, having "arrived," feel no interest in including adjunct instructors in the important discussions about best teaching practices and programmatic improvements. Then there is the tension between professors with a literary background and the compositionists and creative writers. If the department is dominated by the former, and an adjunct instructor represents one of the other traditions, she or he can feel even more marginalized. (See Tim Mayers's *(RE)Writing Craft: Composition, Creative Writing, and the Future of English Studies* [University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007].)

How am I starting to reach out and build community? I like to think of the dialogue motif for my students' learning. I am considering restructuring my composition course with this in mind: I would have small groups of students present views on a particular theme and engage in dialogue with one another and with other texts, gradually developing opinions, building arguments, and amassing evidence to support specific views. My students need deeper engagement with written texts, and this dialogue mode might do the trick. (See James Mayer's article, "Persuasive

Writing and the Student-Run Symposium" in *English Journal*, Volume 96, No. 4, March 2007.)

Now I'm thinking of how this idea applies to me as well. Through participation in professional development opportunities, such as CCCC, through reading, and through opening up conversations online and in my dingy office, I begin these important and energizing dialogues.

Back to the idea of compartmentalization, there is a current either/or type of thinking that I find limiting and destructive. And I'm in good company. Deborah Tannen, Barack Obama, and Alfie Kohn, to name a few, seem to be noticing the same thing. This affects just about every facet of our lives. I'm a composition instructor *or* a literature teacher. I am a college instructor *or* a middle school teacher. A given piece of writing is "creative" *or* "academic." One is a full-time faculty member *or* an adjunct, and if you are one, you judge and pigeon-hole the other. I challenge this way of thinking by initiating dialogue across all barriers. Having been a middle school teacher, I communicate with that wonderful group of educators and my past self. There is plenty to share, plenty to learn from these exchanges. I interact with texts across these barriers, too, reading *English Journal*, literary arts periodicals, and articles written for and by college instructors. I am nourishing my writer-self by finally getting a new writing group going. I have wanted to produce a paper for CCCC, and who knows if or when that will ever happen, but in the process, I've found a fascinating, brilliant friend who currently teaches in an adult education program. Writing this little article is another gesture towards this effort.

When my students can see beyond their individual perspectives to those of classmates and written texts, and when I can push beyond some daunting barriers in my professional life, our thinking is refined, our identities are strengthened and more clearly defined, and we experience a sense of community that makes life fun and fulfilling.

Wanna join me? Email [sara\\_schupack@yahoo.com](mailto:sara_schupack@yahoo.com).

*Sara Schupack currently teaches composition in San Pablo, California. Previously, she spent eighteen years teaching English in fourth grade through the middle and high school levels. Much of her teaching career was spent in Hong Kong. She writes short stories, memoir, and personal essays. In the classroom, she is particularly interested in looking at teacher feedback and in building trust and confidence in her students.*



**Fearless Joy**

Gregory B. Zobel

I am a neophyte: a freshly minted M.A. in English who is teaching his first year at a rural community college. My job is far better than anyone ever told me it would be; in fact, my experience goes against much of the lore that I have read and heard about “adjuncting.” I thought I would be trembling in fear, bleeding financially, and an outcast in my department; instead, my fear is gone, my lifestyle is simpler, and I have learned an enormous amount from my colleagues. I love what I do. I am proud of what I do, and I am grateful that I am paid to teach composition. Every day, I am knee-deep in language, grammar, essays, and dialogues about them. Who could ask for more?

Adjuncts could ask for more. Adjuncts do ask for more. Adjuncts have been asking for more for decades—when they have not been too scared to raise their heads and voices. While the glacial rate of positive change has moved forward at some institutions, most contingent academic workers are still highly exploited—universities and colleges extract hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars from our labor. We receive low job security and usually no health care in return.

We face the same body of problems that all part-time workers do. Adjuncts have a lot in common with tellers at banks, cashiers at fast food joints, and employees at cleaning companies. However, many of those individuals are in worse positions than we are. It’s easy to feel abused, but when I know I’m making two to three times what other part-timers are making, it puts things in perspective. I am not suffering as much as some others. I am paid to do what I enjoy and relish doing. I don’t know that others who clean grease traps, stock silk flowers, or charge overdraft fees feel the same.

I have seen joy in my contingent colleagues’ faces. They also have shown frustration, fear, terror, and angst. Like all people, our emotions and our situations are not simple. We cannot simply quit—we have bills and responsibilities. More important, why should we sacrifice what we love to do just because we’re exploited? We live in post-industrial capitalism—everyone is exploited, and many of them suffer far more than we can even grasp. To assume that a solution can be found in a simple sentence or two is to use a sledgehammer to open the office window. It not only destroys an important resource, but it also upsets everybody else in the room and accomplishes nothing.

As an adjunct, I know I am a valuable resource. I love what I do and I am happy to contribute to the purposes of higher education, but I also want the eventual security of full-time work—almost all adjuncts do. Most of us won’t get it. In the

meantime, a little more respect, a few more health benefits, and a reliable system of seniority would go a long way in easing our strains. But most of us will not even receive these most reasonable requests. Consider that most criminal lawyers will not be Johnnie Cochran and earn phenomenal pay; most high school kids will never become Michael Jordan in the land of hoops; few street singers will be the next Bob Dylan. In spite of the enormous odds against their dream, they all continue to try; they all continue to dream; and almost none of them will let their dream be stolen from them. Many lawyers, kids, and musicians are often encouraged by family, friends, and colleagues to pursue their dreams, their hopes. For adjuncts, our dream of full-time work is not nearly as unlikely a stretch as gliding like Jordan or croaking like Dylan—and yet we are often regarded as fools for keeping our hopes alive. Is it really a surprise that, in spite of others' doubts, many of us are willing to suffer for our dream of teaching composition full-time?

When we choose to suffer, it does not mean that we like being exploited, abused, harassed, or mistreated. It does not mean that we condone those behaviors. If we were all independently wealthy, we could all join together on one fine day and quit—that would show corporatized administrations how powerful we are. But that just won't happen. We are not all wealthy, and we know that if we keep our eye on the prize, we might—just might—get it. It's easy to mock those who buy lottery tickets, but you have to pay to play; if we do not take the chance of adjuncting, we will never have a hope of fulfilling our dream.

Like many of my peers, I have opted to “suffer up” for a few years while I determine if I want to pursue a Ph.D. and teach for the rest of my life. My condition is not the result of ignorance or foolishness; I am not a victim. I am proud of what I do. I do not see my contingent colleagues as victims. We chose to do this work, we chose to enter these fields, and we have accepted the contracts we have been offered. Instead of relying on the decades-old disempowering perspective where we view ourselves—and encourage many of our bosses and full-time colleagues to view us—as powerless pawns, it is critical that we actually acknowledge how much the academic industry relies on our thoughts, sweat, and labor. Their profits are built upon our love. They need our excitement, idealism, and passion. It is our joy, our fresh views, and our energy that help keep all those required undergraduate classes rolling.

I am proud of my energy, my excitement, and my service to my students. I am equally proud of my adjunct colleagues' work and contributions. I am glad to be a member of a profession that largely regards itself as progressive and egalitarian—and that often works towards those ends. I look forward to engaging with my colleagues, learning from those with more experience, and contributing to the

continuing dialogue on composition. Unfortunately, I fear that many of my adjunct colleagues silence themselves out of fear—often justified—that they will face unjust retribution for their words and deeds. As post-modern as it sounds, I draw strength and inspiration from a mantra in Frank Herbert’s *Dune*: “I will not fear/ Fear is the mindkiller,/ Fear is the little death/ that brings total oblivion.” I am not a victim, nor will I allow myself to be treated as one. Regarding me as a victim is insulting and disrespectful to me and my decisions. I want to be here, and I want to be an adjunct for a year or two.

As an adjunct, I am proud to be happy and to have conquered my fear of retribution. Fearless joy is a key to our power. While we have many just complaints, they should not be our focus; we need to smile, act, organize, and teach without fear.

*Gregory Zobel earned his M.A. in the teaching of writing and literature from Humboldt State University in 2006. He currently teaches composition as an adjunct at College of the Redwoods in Eureka, California. He is passionate about jogging, computers and writing, D. T. Suzuki, and budgies. Read his blog at <http://gz7comp.blogspot.com/>.*

---

### **My Road to a Full-Time Position**

Bill Elgersma

I was living in an area with two small colleges within ten miles of each other, and the academic environment within the local high school where I taught was heavily influenced by a student body comprised of children of academicians. Both colleges worked with us by providing student teachers, offering professors as guest lecturers for a day, and serving as resources for projects requiring greater expertise. Watching this from the high school classroom, I thought the life of a professor looked glamorous. So, after thirteen years of high school teaching and a master’s in English literature, I decided to join the ranks of higher education. In the fall of 2001, I took the leap.

After several failed attempts to be selected for a full-time position, in the fall of 2001, I accepted an adjunct position at a college, teaching two introductory writing courses in the fall and two in the spring. I also enrolled in a doctoral program as a part-time student. This was not what I had hoped for, but I came to understand that if I wanted to be seriously considered as a candidate, teaching whatever was available was necessary, and a terminal degree would indicate my commitment to the academy.

I had little interaction with the department. I taught introductory writing classes and introductory literature—core English requirements. I suppose I could have approached this assignment begrudgingly, insulted by the fact that if I taught English majors, it was only because they were assigned to my introductory section, but I did not. After the fact I believe that because of my approach and service to the department, the administration came to recognize my contribution and awarded me full-time faculty status as an assistant professor.

Two assumptions weighed on me when I began as an adjunct. The first was that in order to be respected by the department, I had to teach introductory courses at a higher academic level and with more energy than a full-time professor. In order to succeed, I needed to exceed the department's expectations. I taught with enthusiasm, intent on encouraging students to think critically and then express themselves through writing regardless of whether they were English majors or not. I set my standards high, pushing students beyond what they believed they were capable of and then facilitating their learning through accessibility and a genuine interest in them as individuals. Returning their graded essays within three days of submission, complete with edits and comments specific to the content and technical issues of the piece, took a great deal of time; however, students recognized my dedication. What I did not realize at the time is that the student evaluations were a significant indicator of my potential as a professor to the administration. During my time here, first quantitative evaluation was used, and for the past three years qualitative data have been collected through the use of the Individual Development and Educational Assessment (IDEA) form. Regardless of what faculty may think of student evaluations, they are a critical component for assessing professors in many institutions. Recently my dean went through the last three years of evaluations with me. A focal point for him was the fact that although the courses were mandatory and students did not want to enroll in them, my numbers were significant. Although I am considered demanding and the grades are not what students would like, they gave me high scores because of their perceived academic worth of the course and my approach to them.

My second assumption was that I needed to bring something new to the department. To that end, I have provided community service, guest lecturing at local high schools for senior English classes, judging the writing division of high school fine arts festivals, acting as a resource for first-year teachers who have questions about authors or materials available for specific lessons, and providing fresh ideas for attracting more majors. Recently we sponsored a day specifically targeting high school seniors interested in English. My role was handling the initial groundwork details as well as accessing the database of potential students and then tracking them through the process.

Some might suggest that I was ingratiating myself to the department. That was not my intent. As an adjunct teaching introductory courses, I had more time to manage the details of the department, things that may not have interested others who were busy writing, sitting on committees, or presenting elsewhere. I believe that I gained the trust and respect of the department by contributing in a capacity beyond a doctoral degree. I continue to demonstrate a genuine interest in the direction and value of the department through service and innovative thought. Admittedly, this takes time, but being proactive and analyzing needs and providing research to support ideas earns credibility and respect from colleagues and for me, inadvertently, full-time faculty status.

*Bill Elgersma is assistant professor of English at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa.*

---

### **Faculty Development as Working Condition**

Ed Nagelhout

I work at a university where literally all composition courses are taught by part-time instructors, graduate students, and adjuncts. Our teachers have worked under horrid conditions, and, at the same time, have had to do things on their own and alone. Faculty development—whether it be mentoring, conducting workshops, participating in norming sessions, or attending publisher-sponsored get-togethers—has never been seen as important by either teachers or administrators. Arguments of academic freedom, of burden, and of theory vs. practice have historically undermined faculty development. For many, these are arguments of common sense.

I believe that faculty development should be both professionalization *and* a working condition. And if faculty development is a working condition, then it should be considered a legitimate part of teachers' everyday lives. As a writing program administrator, if I have certain expectations or seek to establish certain standards, then I must ensure the conditions allow teachers to meet those standards. This seems like common sense to me.

When I first approached this topic, I wanted to examine how working conditions affect faculty development. I soon realized that examining how faculty development affects working conditions is the more appropriate tack. In other words, if working conditions affect faculty development, then conditions dictate what we can and cannot do. Since working conditions for most composition teachers are deplorable, faculty development becomes hamstrung from the outset. On the other hand, if faculty development affects working conditions, our initial point of depar-

ture is that we can improve working conditions. My revelation may seem like common sense to some, but I believe it's an important distinction.

For example, many claim that if you want to have successful faculty development, you either "feed them" or "pay them." While I don't completely disagree with these "hints," I do believe they arise from the perspective that working conditions affect faculty development rather than vice versa. If we accept this position, then faculty development will always be a burden, always more work piled on already full plates.

Faculty development must address the problems of workload and time commitment. I've found two strategies to be effective: either it can be built into the expected workload or it can be designed to save teachers time.

If four courses are considered a full-time load, each teacher should be expected to spend ten hours per week per course, including time in the classroom and office hours. Workload primarily means course preparation, daily class preparation, and responding to student writing. In our business writing program, we use a standard syllabus and a common textbook. We also distribute a workload calendar that maps out the expectations for work-time spent each week of the semester, which is never more than ten hours per week, even when responding to student writing. We make these expectations clear. If teachers are spending more than ten hours per week on the course, they have to let us know so we can help them. For our program, faculty development is a part of the expected workload. Our faculty development meetings are held when the classroom workload is a bit lighter. This usually means those times between assignments, after one assignment has been returned and before the next assignment is submitted, ensuring that an hour in a meeting won't be overtime.

Another strategy is that a faculty development meeting should save the teacher time. For example, we had a ninety-minute workshop at the local community college designed to help teachers reduce their paper load. We discussed time-saving strategies, reviewed sample papers as a group, and put response to student writing in the context of larger writing program goals. After this workshop, teachers should save at least one to two hours each time they respond to a set of papers. A ninety-minute workshop should save them six to ten hours over the course of the semester.

Faculty development allows us to improve working conditions by creating manageable expectations for students and faculty. Faculty development does not mean dictating activities or prescriptive approaches to teaching. Faculty development does not hinder academic freedom. Instead, faculty development means that teachers have conversations about expectations, about standards, about definitions

for successful writing, articulating the kinds of support structures necessary for their long-term success.

More important, faculty development interrogates and defines working conditions in the context of a writing program. When we talk about faculty development with faculty, we establish where the working conditions are the most oppressive. Faculty development is more than making the writing classroom better. Faculty development is about making our *lives* better. This seems like common sense to me.

*Ed Nagelhout teaches at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. This presentation was originally delivered at CCCC in New York in March 2007.*

### **Help Shape NCTE Positions by Submitting a Resolution**

If you have concerns about issues that affect your teaching, or positions you would like to support, and you think NCTE should take a stand, you have an opportunity to be heard! Propose a resolution that may be voted upon and passed at NCTE's Annual Convention. If passed at the Annual Business Meeting for the Board of Directors and Other Members of the Council, proposed resolutions become part of the Council's position/philosophy on questions related to the teaching of English and can assist the Council in developing action programs.

For further details on submitting a resolution, or to see resolutions already passed by Council members, visit the NCTE website (<http://www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/107214.htm>) or contact Lori Bianchini at NCTE Headquarters (800-369-6283, ext. 3644; [lbianchini@ncte.org](mailto:lbianchini@ncte.org)). Resolutions must be postmarked by **October 15, 2007**.

**To secure complimentary offprints of *FORUM*,  
contact NCTE's Customer Service at  
(217) 328-3870 or (877) 369-6283; or [jbartlett@ncte.org](mailto:jbartlett@ncte.org)**