

FORUM

NEWSLETTER FOR ISSUES ABOUT PART-TIME AND CONTINGENT FACULTY

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From the Editor: The Multiple Voices of Compositionist Labor

Brad Hammer

For many of our readers, *Forum* has become a space in which to bridge our understanding of the complex material, pedagogical, and disciplinary implications that contingency both produces and sustains. I've imagined that by pulling together this work, our essays could contribute to defining the consequences (and perhaps root causes) of the growing uses and misuses of contingent labor. Like the thousands who teach voicelessly in these positions, I sought to make public the ways in which our work is both undervalued and serves to bolster a corporatized reformulation of the academy.

By speaking with marginalized faculty from across the U.S., I've come to see how the growing uses of contingent labor help sustain first-year writing pedagogy as an instrumentalist and nondisciplinary practice. And, as I listen to the voices collected in our recent survey, I read stories of isolation, excessively low pay, onerous teaching loads, and generalized invisibility.

Our non-tenure-track colleagues now constitute the majority of faculty employed within composition. The reasons have been well documented, from the over-production of graduate students to the reformulation of a first-year curriculum that necessitates "service" over disciplinarity. Time and again, I am asked, "what's being done" to ameliorate the inequities? Simply, who is looking out for the thousands who teach without benefits, security, or a living wage?

About *Forum*

Forum is published twice a year by the Conference on College Composition and Communication. As editor, I welcome your 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 bhammer@unc.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 Brad Hammer, *Forum* editor, bhammer@unc.edu, or phone 919-621-1000.

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Based on the preliminary findings from our current survey, 35% of our respondents make less than \$2,000 per course, and 60% make less than \$2,500. To compound the indignity, 38% of those who responded had been teaching in these conditions for more than ten years.

Within the recent submissions to *Forum*, I’ve read varied yet analogous stories of nonbelonging, contextualized by poverty-scale wages and punctuated by endless calls for action. We’ve all read the position statements, heard the “calls to action” at our conferences, and seen the ongoing reconstitution of committees that seek to address issues related to the long-term viability of the instructorate. Yet, even as I write this introduction to our latest issue, contingency remains vigorously on the rise. Clearly, our ineffectuality in addressing its root causes has crippled our discipline and delegitimized the value of our graduate training. As Thomas Benton argued in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, there is only room left in our instructorate for the “independently wealthy” and “well-connected.”

In the last issue of *Forum*, we read calls for unionization and for continued publishing on issues related to faculty abuse. But, have either of these goals, as yet, altered materially the conditions under which we labor? No. While grassroots campaigns can, at times, gain momentum, there is no longer enough institutional power and money centralized within our local departments to assert and demand change.

For more than two decades, writing program administrators, instructor-theorists, and our professional organizations (WPA,

CCCC, MLA, NCTE) have been deeply engaged in revealing and shifting this trend—even in the face of rising numbers of contingent faculty. As part of this work, both MLA and CCCC have recently reconstituted committees to deal with issues related to contingent labor. See the calls at http://www.mla.org/governance/about_committees_and/commsugg_clip_main and <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/committees/ptaclabor>.

As a member of the CCCC committee, I can report that members of the leadership from both entities are working together to address contingency. In fact, the next issue of *Forum* will include a report from the CCCC Committee on Part-time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor—due to meet at the CCCC Annual Convention in Louisville.

Although the findings of past committees have been fundamentally ignored by large numbers of writing programs, unionization and other movements have enforced better (but still inequitable) contracts while arguably affirming our work as “labor” and not inquiry. It has become clear that, without the defining of real mechanisms for change, exploitation will grow. Consequently, now is the time to alter the discourse of acceptability on faculty labor within the discipline. While we must heed the warnings of faculty voices, it is only our professional organizations that can wield the power to sanction and/or deny accreditation to noncompliant and exploitative writing programs. With the power to certify “compositionists” and accredit writing programs (similar to APA’s role in the field of psychology), MLA and CCCC can set fair-labor standards and *delegitimize* exploitative programs.

The trends in higher education are clear. That is, as Vandana Gavaskar, a past contributor to *Forum*, made clear with her reporting of national statistics for contingent labor, 40% of ALL faculty across the disciplines now work off the tenure stream (A6). And, while this statistic is quite alarming, for compositionists the number is double, with 83.8% of all our instructors now teaching writing off the tenure track (Gere 4). In effect, our professional organizations, through unenforceable calls for self-regulation, have been unable to alter the material conditions of those they represent. Yet they persist in the same ineffectual vein.

So, while contingency grows, the great masses of our colleagues teach, not only off the tenure track, but in positions of subjugation that thwart real attempts toward both professionalization and critical inquiry. Consequently, who is left to theory-build around, and better name the rhetorical construction(s) of contingency and “service” within the academy? The question is no longer merely one of working conditions and pay, but rather, how do these issues of labor concomitantly affect research, theory, pedagogy, and even disciplinarity?

While much has been written about and advocated for, little has changed except that our contingent ranks have increased. Arguably, there are now well-funded and

independent writing programs (Harvard, Duke, George Washington, and several others) that still maintain hiring practices that keep compositionists off the tenure track. Consequently, the ravages of compositionist labor will not end with programmatic autonomy, once touted as a core goal. Whatever the root causes of unbridled contingency, our position statements have proven ineffectual, from the Wyoming resolution in 1987 (CCCC, "Secretary's Report" 372–73) to the 2003 CCCC resolution that declared, amongst other points that have gained little traction, "all full-time writing positions will be tenurable or covered by continuous employment certificates" (CCCC, *Resolution 5*). Simply put, mere declarations of support from our professional organizations have proven ineffectual and inadequate. Consequently, before real change can occur, I would argue that one core understanding is still missing: Have we, as compositionists, adequately defined the disciplinary limits and implications of contingency beyond a discourse of economy—in ways that legitimize a need for programmatic accreditation and instructor certification?

I pose this question as both CCCC and NCTE fail to adequately address the divide between insiders and outsiders. Contingent faculty therefore inhabit lives of subordination within our institutions as subjugation becomes so normalized that misuses of contingent labor become routine.

While many elite institutions have now popularized "post doc" appointments as a way to marginally professionalize their instructorate, these quasi-faculty appointments are impermanent and do little to retain and support the long-term scholarly and professional lives of our colleagues. While some teaching-track positions are beginning to form within autonomous programs, those coveted positions are few and do little for the thousands of our colleagues who teach for abysmally low wages, have semester-to-semester contracts, and live ad hoc teaching lives that demarcate a nonprofessional subclass of instructors. There is still no clear standard by which programs of writing can/should be certified by our professional organizations, and, therefore, the standards by which we define both instructor qualifications and rates of pay vary immensely throughout the U.S.

What we do know is that students in only 16.2% of undergraduate writing classes can now expect to be taught by a tenured or tenure-track faculty member (Gere). What we don't yet fully understand are the implications for student learning and the intellectual costs corresponding to the decline of disciplinarity within the writing classroom. That is, issues of labor are complexly wed to the current "service" agenda of writing pedagogy, whereby institutional calls for "skills" reject a disciplinary make-up for our courses. As we centralize our focus on the struggle for salaries and longer-term contracts, we are forgoing an essential debate regarding the erosion of disciplinarity within composition. As adjunct instructors, we are forced to substitute disciplinary teaching for the work of "skills acquisition." While

issues related to labor and economy are a byproduct of contingency, so, too, is our marginalization within the academy. And that marginalization supports a pedagogy of remediation that not only subverts the need for our scholarship and inquiry but also destabilizes our disciplinarity. I would posit that the struggle against contingency is as much a battle to gain disciplinary legitimacy as it is a Marxist narrative on labor.

As the intellectual work of composition, steeped in the development of critical thought, becomes appropriated by the institutional goals for “service” writing, our courses naturally get taught by adjuncts, part-timers, and other forms of “contingent” labor. Consequently, I am asking anyone affected by contingency (faculty, WPAs, and even students) to log on to the *Forum* website at <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/forum> and click on the link titled “Contingent Faculty Questionnaire.” Over the next two years, I will be making public your voices within these pages as we charge our professional organizations to reframe this discourse on contingency.

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The Turf and the Path: Contingent Faculty Members, Silence, and Voice

Whitney Larrimore

Instantly a man’s figure rose to intercept me. . . . His face expressed horror and indignation. Instinct rather than reason came to my help; he was a Beadle; I was only a woman. This was the turf; there was the path. Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me.

—Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*

Virginia Woolf's poignant description of being "put in her place" by the Beadle rings as true today as it did then. Being out of place, Woolf transgressed. She walked upon the turf where only fellows and scholars trod. Not considered by men to be their equal, Woolf was forced to return to her proper place. Just as the turf welcomed fellows and scholars into its relaxing softness, the gravel path directed women and other outsiders off the grounds and out of the annals of history.

In Woolf's time, many men silenced individuals who violated social expectations; today the university often silences contingent faculty members. Necessary to teach first-year and introductory courses, contingent faculty members are often an academic "other" employed to staff large, labor-intensive classes at a low cost; institutions benefit economically but risk exploiting contingent faculty and hurting students. According to Judith M. Gappa,

In total, 60 percent of today's 1,138,734 faculty members are outside the tenure system . . . and full-time non-tenure-eligible faculty are now one-third of the full-time faculty in all types of institutions. (50)

An American Federation of Teachers-sponsored study indicates around "70 percent of people teaching in college today hold . . . temporary jobs and are known as 'contingent' faculty and instructors" (3). Because increased enrollments and economic stressors lead to greater demand for easily dismissed, cheap labor, institutions increasingly hire contingent faculty members who, as a result of the institutions' ability to dismiss them easily, feel marginalized and voiceless. To reverse this trend, contingent faculty members should unite through NCTE and similar organizations to increase their voice and thus influence university policy making in order to attain academic excellence rather than simply to survive.

Humanities departments offer core curriculum classes that all students must take, leading to many sections having high enrollments. Consequentially, institutions frequently hire inexpensive contingent faculty to staff these classes. McMahon and Green write, "Composition programs are . . . devalued, and heavily populated by contingent faculty" (1). A few tenured faculty members run English and writing departments, teaching upper-division courses populated by few majors, while their contingent colleagues teach many sections of filled-to-capacity first-year and remedial grammar and composition classes. Often these instructors endure "the labor intensive work of teaching four . . . [to] six sections of first-year writing to 150 students or more each semester" for roughly half the pay of their tenured colleagues (6). Moreover, because first-year composition courses are "labor intensive, underpaid, and supposedly 'nurturing,' . . . [they are perceived as] less rigorous or intellectually informed work than other areas of academia" (1). First-year classes likely are not considered serious courses because they are wrongly cast as extensions of

high school classes, those that students take as part of the “13th grade” that “is” the first year of college. When colleges place low value on first-year courses—composition or otherwise—and pay instructors so little to teach them, they are implying that those courses *and* the contingent faculty members are unimportant and beneath “real” scholarship. These courses and the faculty members who staff them, however, *are* important because they lay the academic foundation for students to excel in upper-division courses.

The price that students, administrators, and faculty members pay to perpetuate a system that favors tenured faculty members is overworked, demoralized contingent faculty members who are stretched thin teaching too many students for too little pay. One might ask, though, why bother changing the system of contingent labor at all if changing the system does not mean providing tenure for all? Contingent faculty, through forums that invite the open discussion of their needs and concerns, can direct attention to those needs, which hopefully will result in increased awareness and thus an improved system that, while not providing tenure for all, will at least provide opportunities for contingent faculty to voice themselves without fear. This freedom of expression will likely increase morale and foster greater desire among contingent faculty for professional excellence.

My story is similar to that of many contingent faculty members. For me, the recent economic crisis has been unnerving. University administrators froze pay raises, stopped contributing to retirement, and asked employees to voluntarily retire early or assume part-time positions. Tenured and contingent faculty members were angry, but only the tenured faculty members spoke vehemently against the administration, confident that they could not be fired despite what they said. Contingent faculty members largely remained silent, some fearful that they might inadvertently dispose themselves to termination by virtue of their questioning, others so disempowered that they were not even present to protest. Given that contingent faculty members were hired to teach students how to develop their own academic voice, I find the instructors’ silence bitterly ironic.

Tenured faculty members confidently voice their concerns without fearing serious penalties such as termination, but contingent faculty often cannot. This inability for *all* faculty to confidently voice concerns further contributes to what Henry Giroux describes as the corporatization of higher education, a process producing “a permanent underclass of part-time professional workers . . . [that shifts] power away from the faculty [and] to the managerial sectors of the university” (54). Mike Arznen, an associate professor of English at Seton Hall University, echoes Giroux and asserts that many contingent faculty members he knows “are still looking for full-time work, cobbling together careers. . . . It’s demoralizing. There’s this vicious cycle of being an adjunct with three jobs, not making . . . much money . . . and

not having free time to pursue publication. They're on . . . the burnout track" (qtd. in Hamilton, par. 16). With greater voice, contingent faculty members can work alongside tenured faculty to oppose the corporatization threatening higher education; rather than the two groups acting, such as they unfortunately have in the past, as the proverbial "house divided against itself," they should work together.

Contingent faculty members can effect change through numbers and necessity, and can successfully mobilize, not in unions that would only further define contingent faculty as labor, but in professional organizations organized by and for contingent faculty. Through these organizations, contingent faculty members can assert their voices and end their silence. NCTE, CCCC, and MLA need not marginalize contingent faculty members, for the marginalization that has occurred through ignoring these faculty members is as much a product of contingent faculty members' reticence to speak as it is the perception by many that contingent faculty members have little or no right to speak.

Through the forums presented by NCTE, CCCC, MLA, and other professional organizations, my fellow contingent colleagues should challenge the "path" of contingency that forces them into silence. I challenge contingent faculty members to speak during faculty meetings; to challenge NCTE, CCCC, and MLA for increased attention; to create new professional organizations devoted to contingent faculty; to hold conferences established by and for contingent faculty; and to run for offices in professional organizations. I challenge them to refuse to be silent and to risk openly voicing themselves.

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Training 2.0: Advocating a Grassroots Approach to Building 21st-Century Faculty

Lauren Garcia-DuPlain

For years now, academics such as Cynthia L. Selfe, Gail E. Hawisher, and Anne Wysocki, among others, have been urging us to consider our students' increased digital literacy both in and out of our classrooms. In 2009, Kathleen Blake Yancey opened the NCTE report "Writing in the 21st Century" with the following statement:

Today, in the 21st century, people write as never before—in print and online. We thus face three challenges that are also opportunities: developing *new models of writing*; designing a *new curriculum* supporting those models; and creating *models for teaching* that curriculum. (1)

Yancey goes on to label this report a "call to action, a call to research and articulate new composition, a call to help our students compose often, compose well, and through these composings, become the citizen writers of our country, the writers of our world, the writers of our future" (1); however, I would suggest that for this movement to come to fruition, we need to consider a different call to action. Because of the conditions under which many composition faculty teach, English departments that wish to act on Yancey's recommendations must determine what technological resources are available to faculty and what training that faculty might need to meaningfully integrate digital technology into the classroom. In a recent article, Cynthia L. Selfe recognizes the lack of training available for faculty who wish to integrate multimodal projects into the composition classroom¹ (641). If those leading the 21st-century charge do not also lead the charge for part-time faculty training and support, it is entirely possible that 21st-century digital technologies will never make it to many composition classrooms—leaving many students without valuable knowledge about emerging technologies and the tools to critically examine how those technologies mediate their understanding of and interaction with the world around them.

The last major study published by the U.S. Department of Education reports that in 2005, 48% of faculty members nationwide were designated as part-time (AAUP). Furthermore, more recent reports indicate that, particularly in community colleges, anywhere from 60 to 70% of faculty teach part-time.² Perhaps failure to consider

these figures—and the working conditions of this new faculty majority—has stalled the movement that those at the digital forefront advocate. This issue is further complicated by another recent article from Audrey Jaeger, an associate professor of higher education at North Carolina State University. She and her colleagues have researched the use of contingent faculty and its effect on student outcomes. Their research found that “students who had between 76 and 100 percent of their first-year credits with contingent faculty were significantly less likely to persist than their counterparts with the least exposure (25 percent or less) to part-time instructors.” Jaeger speculates that the finding stems “from the inability of students to meet or connect with these instructors outside of the classroom” (n. pag.). Though Jaeger points to instructor accessibility as the main culprit, questions of quality could also be raised; either way, the study shows that more research should be done to determine what effect(s) part-time faculty have on student outcomes.

If we assume Jaeger’s findings are correct, her research gives us another reason to look at how part-time faculty use digital technology. If we are losing students due to a lack of personal contact, as Jaeger suggests, having students write and interact with peers and instructors in online spaces may increase their feeling of “connection” between classes. Furthermore, though some part-time instructors express concern about becoming the educational equivalent of a 7-11—open 24-hours, 365 days a year—using digital technology to hold virtual office hours may give part-time instructors a more convenient and expedient way to stay connected to their students while also maintaining jobs at various institutions.

With all of this talk about technology and composition, where do we stand as a field if those who teach first-year writing courses are drowning, sometimes unable and sometimes unwilling to participate in what Yancey calls the “Age of Composition” (5)—an age where it’s no longer true that “print literacy comes first and digital literacy comes second and networked literary practices, if they come at all, come third and last” (6). How can we negotiate any gaps between our abilities as compositionists and rhetoricians and our understanding of the digital tools made available in this increasingly technology-driven world?

I have seen instructors express frustration, dismay, anger, and even fear when trying to integrate technology into their pedagogy. To be sure, there are downfalls to technology: computers crash, the Internet connection goes down, students find more expedient ways to plagiarize. The deeper resentment and fear of technology, though, may be the result of what Stephanie Vie terms the “Digital Divide 2.0”—the phenomenon created when students are more technologically adept than their instructors. Vie suggests, however, that while students may be more practiced in digital technology and online spaces, instructors should serve to help students

garner critical awareness of those tools. For instructors to accomplish this, it will be necessary for them to understand the technologies students are experiencing. While many have taken it upon themselves to get any necessary training, widespread adoption of the teaching philosophy suggested by digital literacy proponents will require departments to provide more direction and training to help part-time faculty navigate, and perhaps close, the divide.

In December 2008, I conducted an online survey of part-time composition faculty at 43 institutions (13 public four-year, 10 private-four year, and 10 two-year colleges/universities) across the state of Ohio. Respondents were asked about their general background, technology background and training, training assessment and resources, and technology use in the classroom. Of the 48 respondents, 39 (83%) taught at public four-year institutions; 10 (21%) taught at private four-year institutions; and 15 (32%) taught at two-year institutions. The survey allowed respondents to remain anonymous, not allowing for follow-up interviews; however, most questions provided space for personal responses that clarified the multiple-choice answers.

The responses indicate that instructors have three main concerns that affect their use of digital technologies in the writing classroom: inadequate training; skepticism about the pedagogical relevance or efficacy of technology; and concern over current labor conditions and the added pressures (both time and financial) that technology and unpaid/unrewarded training create. The nomadic lifestyles of part-time instructors make collaboration and knowledge-exchange difficult—many of us come and go from our institutions from day to day without seeing even one colleague. This lack of community creates a situation where individuals rely on word-of-mouth and individual study to keep abreast of trends in technology and education.

Those instructors who manage to remain current may face other obstacles. As some scholars have noted (Tillyer), many part-time instructors do not have access to hardware or software that would enable them to integrate technology into their lessons. Many respondents noted that, even if the tools are there, departmental training is often ineffective or altogether absent. When training is available, two-thirds of respondents indicated that their departments do not follow through by assessing the efficacy of that training. These results indicate that the few resources used to promote the professional development of part-time faculty are being poorly allocated. Instead of following a top-down model, departments need to communicate with their part-time faculty to determine what training and resources they need to meet the department's programmatic goals. Let us help to eliminate wasteful spending of money and time while improving our teaching and your department.

As a proponent of digital technology, I find that the most damaging results of my survey were that nearly half of the respondents said personal finances had a negative impact on their ability to learn and/or integrate new technologies. Others, finding these obstacles impossible to surmount, said that they had given up on using any technology in the classroom.

Despite all of this (and perhaps because current scholars are advocating for change), over half of the survey respondents said that they would attend more technology training if it were made available. Therefore, departments that plan to provide more training—and eliminate waste—may want to consider the following concerns raised by the survey:

- Teaching at multiple institutions (or in different classrooms on the same campus) with varying technologies makes lesson preparation difficult.
- Training is either oversimplified or does not cover practical applications for classroom use.
- Training sometimes overemphasizes a utopian vision—technology as profound and transformative—and seems to dismiss those who are technology-resistant as outdated.
- The software in the training session is not compatible with the computers owned by instructors or provided by the department.
- Training often occurs on main campuses and does not accommodate those who teach at branches (alienating them further).
- Department training is often led by authors or publishers who are pushing a product that may or may not be purchased.

While findings such as Jaeger's may stir debate about the effects of contingent labor on student outcomes, few would deny that the perpetuation of part-time labor in academia creates an environment that does not support widespread professional development. Asking departments to fund training for faculty members who were hired as a cost-saving measure might seem fiscally counterproductive to some. But not giving those faculty members the tools they need to remain current and relevant in the 21st-century classroom is counterproductive to our mission as educators.

English departments need to make themselves aware of the obstacles part-time faculty are encountering—be they personal or professional—so that they can provide meaningful training that helps part-time faculty meet both the goals of the writing program and the needs of students who are living in a computer-mediated world. Departments, with the power and charge to support their part-time faculty, need to provide the tools to use on that training, which otherwise becomes a wasted effort. Departments need to build a framework of support for their part-time faculty so that they can connect with each other and with their students through

technology that is costing our colleges and universities—and thus our students—billions of dollars. If we truly hope to make Yancey’s vision of the 21st-century classroom a reality, departments and part-time faculty must work together to understand (not fear or puzzle at) all of the places where students go to write—virtual or otherwise—so that we may provide our students every opportunity to leave our classes with a critical awareness of the technologies that help to shape their visions and roles as 21st-century citizens.

Notes

1. Selfe does not specifically address the disparity in resources dedicated to part-time and full-time faculty, but if training is unavailable for full-time faculty, it is likely even less accessible to those who teach part-time.
2. Most recently, both Gary Rhoades (“The Centrality of Contingent Faculty to Academe’s Future”) and Audrey J. Jaeger (“Contingent Faculty and Student Outcomes”) have suggested this figure.

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From Independent Contractor to Connected Community Member

Suanna Davis

As a multi-year adjunct, separated by teaching times from the tenure-track faculty, I rarely have interaction with my tenure-stream “colleagues.” This segregation led me to view myself as an independent contractor, taking me further out of contact with my peers and sealing my insular attitude. The road to burnout would have led to a crash (Friedman 595), if I had not made a small change that reversed my course back toward full engagement in academia (Prieto, Soria, Martínez, and Schaufeli 359). This change was my renewed participation in professional conferences.

In my isolation, teaching had become boring. However, since I’ve been attending conferences again, my classroom practices have become more richly nuanced and complicated, as I ongoingly “try on” what I learn. As a result, my students have gained a more engaged instructor, one who is able to share her own writing mistakes and opportunities. In addition, I have become an active participant in my local academic community and no longer feel wholly isolated.

As an adjunct, I made teaching my sole focus. That was a mistake. “Students suffer when instructors stagnate—and although this certainly can happen to full-timers, it is built into the structure of contingent appointments” (Thompson 43) because adjuncts rarely have the time or money to support their continuing growth and education. Historically, our work dictates the teaching of multiple classes on several campuses—increasing the danger of burnout.

In an attempt to alleviate my developing ennui, I looked to conferences to reignite my interest in theory and teaching. Though I had participated in conferences in graduate school and while on the tenure track, this work seemed perhaps extraneous after I left full-time teaching for family responsibilities. Once I reentered the university and inhabited a place of marginalization, I thought I could not (perhaps even should not) add to the professional conversation. Struggling with my own professional voice and commitment to the field, I ran across TYCA-SW’s call for papers. Bored with the redundancy of my teaching, I crafted a proposal that challenged and extended the pedagogical limits of my classroom practices. When the proposal was accepted, I went. At the conference I was recharged by the concomitant sense of community and scholarly exchange. From my new community, I gained insights that helped me integrate others’ ideas into my classroom. For example, a presentation on using “lyrics to bridge the many diversity gaps” (Jarma) resulted in individualized vocabulary exercises in the poetry section of my second semester composition course that altered radically my students’ engagement.

Because of my involvement with this conference and others, I began to see myself, once again, as part of a community participating in the “professional knowledge landscape” (Cladinin and Connelly 24). As a consequence, I began to finally act as a member of my local community and attended a professional development event on campus, where I networked to secure an opportunity to teach a new course.

My story is no conversion narrative, yet, for me, getting involved in community-building has resulted in the opportunity to teach two unique courses as well as create my own syllabus and choose my textbooks and schedule. While arguably these are small advances, for those outside the tenure system, these opportunities create real connection with “belonging” in the greater academic community.

Participating in conferences has made my work as an adjunct more contextually driven, leading me to examine my teaching and think about my place within the university. For me, this professional engagement has led to “increases in student achievement” (Fullan and Hargreaves 2), which is the central goal of my work and the institutional charge for my course.

The desire to build a larger sense of community has proven to be a springboard for my professional involvement beyond conferences—publishing in *The CEA Forum* and now CCCC’s *Forum*. And it is the exploitation of these very opportunities which gives me both voice and belonging within the discipline.

Through all of this professional activity, I have regained perspective on my work. I am an adjunct—neither a loser nor an isolated individual. I recognize that I am part of an exciting and involved academic community that extends well beyond the confines of my one isolated context.

This commitment to and participation in the development of the discipline is not just important to me, but essential to all adjuncts. Adjuncts need to be involved in professional development to defend against boredom and sequestration. When adjuncts engage their work in isolation, they limit their pedagogical value to their students and their own sense of professionalism.

As professionals, adjuncts need to be involved in both research and theory-building around pedagogy. As more and more graduate students come into the ever-shrinking job market, the CVs of adjuncts will need to provide persuasive evidence for identifying us as equal to or better than other potential new hires—not merely so we can move beyond the ranks of contingent labor but even to sustain ourselves in the niche we now inhabit.

We are all aware of the economics that drive academia. My primary college can hire two PhDs, each as half-time contingent faculty, and save over \$30,000 per year—even without factoring in benefits. Unfortunately, being an adjunct is

often seen as being “not good enough.” In my experience, long-term adjuncts are often excluded from tenure-stream interviews because their years of self-isolation conscribe them as “outsiders”—thereby further reinforcing their separation from the general faculty and keeping them, in complex ways, from contributing to the discipline.

Even though the odds of eventually being hired as a tenure-track professor are low, being involved professionally is still essential for adjuncts who are committed to a life within the university. Professionalization simply increases an adjunct’s sense of autonomy and improves teaching. It is my hope that eventually my own professional development may push me from an adjunct status toward a full-time role. However, whether it does or does not, I will now resist self-imposed isolation and rejoin the community that has nurtured me.

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