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Focus on Contingent Faculty BSU Situation and IFT Position Paper “The Four C’s for Contingent Faculty”

70 percent of Nation’s Faculty is Non-Tenured (includes graduate TAs)

**AFT Represents 100,000 Contingents;
Pay is 25% Higher on Unionized Campuses**

Low Pay, High Education

How Adjuncts Carry Boise State University

by Jessica Murri, *Boise Weekly* (Feb. 26, 2014)

Anne makes a little more than \$1,000 a month. If it wasn’t for her husband’s income, her family of four would be nearly \$7,000 below the poverty line. Despite working 35 hours a week, she only earns enough to cover babysitting—not daycare—for her two children, both under the age of 5.

When she first got pregnant, she called human resources and explained that she understands her job doesn’t give her health insurance, but asked if it would be possible for her to pay into a benefit policy.

“HR said no, and told me to look into state benefits,” said Anne (whose name has been changed to protect her job). “A.K.A., welfare.”

Nine months later, the baby came. “I couldn’t afford to go to the hospital to have my second baby,” she said. “I had to have a midwife. It is not an experience I would have chosen if I had financial stability.”

Anne’s story is echoed by thousands of others in

Idaho, made louder amid the debate over whether to increase the state’s minimum wage, but Anne isn’t a pimply teenager behind a fast-food counter. She’s a well-educated adjunct instructor at Boise State University, . . . but her pay isn’t likely to go up anytime soon.

“When I first signed up, I thought, ‘Oh yeah, in five years, I’ll probably have a full-time position. That’ll be perfect because by then, the kids will be in school,’” she said. “That is not the reality.”

She’s taught classes as an adjunct at Boise State for almost four years. Though she loves the time she spends in the classroom, calling Anne frustrated doesn’t begin to describe her. And she’s not alone.

She said her colleagues work other jobs at restaurants and grocery stores to survive, and while that is far from ideal, almost none are willing to risk their job to speak out. Many adjuncts were contacted for this story, but Anne was one of only a few willing to talk to *Boise Weekly* on the record, albeit under an assumed name.

She said the job itself is great. It’s the lack of benefits and the reality of the pay that’s not. And things just keep getting worse—many adjuncts saw their hours further cut last semester.

After the Affordable Care Act passed, university officials realized the schedules of many of their adjuncts made them eligible for health care. Using IRS recommendations, the university altered the number of credits adjuncts can teach at the beginning of the fall 2013 semester to avoid having to provide benefits.

While they used to be able to teach up to four classes (12 credits) in the fall semester and three classes

(nine credits) in the spring, for a total of 21 credits per year, the university set that number to a flat 11 credits per semester--three classes and maybe a one-credit workshop or lab if possible, though those are almost always taught by graduate students.

While on paper, the total number of credits adjuncts can teach has been increased by one, the reality is that very few adjuncts are able to pick up those extra credits. For all intents and purposes, adjuncts saw their class loads cut by one per semester.

Boise State pays about \$900 per credit, which means adjuncts with a full slate of classes went from about \$10,800 per semester to about \$8,100 per semester--a 25 percent reduction in pay. And still, no benefits.

Because adjuncts have their contracts renewed every semester, Anne said she worries that if she voices her concerns, she may not get classes the following term. She even kept her pregnancy a secret until after signing her contract. After breaking the news, she said the administration wasn't happy, but at least she had her classes.

Despite a review held only a few weeks ago where adjuncts came and talked about their experiences, she said nothing came of it. Anne ticked off a laundry list of frustrations: Adjuncts can't use the recreation center without paying, adjuncts can't park on campus without paying, adjuncts get no discount on daycare, adjuncts can't check out a laptop from the school library.

"I'm a professor, and I have to wait in line to get on a general computer at the library to write my syllabus because the computer [in my office] cannot function and sounds like an airplane taking off," she said. "It's just one thing after another."

But it's a job. A good job. Anne sticks with it to add professional experience to her resume and she feels a certain amount of prestige being an educator on a college campus. But there also just aren't many other options.

"It's discouraging because it's the nature of the job," she said. "[The university] doesn't hide it. Well, I signed up for this and I knew what it was going to be like."

Anne said there's still a large amount of unrest among her fellow adjuncts, which gets depressing for her. The adjuncts in her department even had a

conversation about withholding grades at the end of last semester to see if it would get the university to listen to them. They decided not to, assuming they'd be fired instead.

"If you don't want to do it, that's fine. There's 50 other people waiting to fill your job," Anne said. "You always feel like you're at risk. That's why no one will talk. Because we really need these classes." Yet she said she struggles not to feel disempowered and disfranchised. "I would be far better off if I would have gone to school as a plumber," she said.

Leaned On

Universities' reliance on contingent faculty has skyrocketed. According to adjunctnation.com, only 21 percent of instructional staff was made up of non-tenure-track positions 45 years ago, but according to a 2012 report from the American Association of University Professors, part-time employees had grown to comprise more than 75 percent of total instructional staff by 2009.

Martin Schimpf, provost and vice president of academic affairs at Boise State, said the university hires adjuncts as a way to keep higher education accessible and deal with a growing student population. This semester, there are 623 tenured professors, and 540 adjuncts--a proportion similar to other universities around the country.

"As we grow, we've brought on more adjuncts," Schimpf said. "That's one of the benefits of living in a metropolitan area. We can hire those folks to open up a new section of a class. ... Adjuncts are the most economical way that we can add faculty for our students with the money we are given."

Adjuncts don't need any teaching certification or even a Ph.D. to be hired, although having a Ph.D. over a Master's degree throws a few hundred dollars more into their paychecks.

It's difficult for adjuncts to budget since their contracts are renewed mere months before the next semester, but if an adjunct with a Master's teaches three classes both semesters, she'll make barely more than \$16,000 a year before taxes.

Schimpf said the average salary for a tenured professor includes health insurance and retirement benefits, and ranges from \$65,000 to \$70,000 a year

at Boise State.

“I mean, we could double tuition and then put tenure track in all of the classes,” Schimpf said, “but that might not be what’s best for the students, because we need to be accessible.”

He said he understands some of the downsides of adjuncts, like that they don’t have the “time commitment” to work with students as much outside of class. He said there’s also high turnover and lots of hiring. But he said the university offers adjuncts other perks, like access to the facility and limited amounts of sick leave. Adjuncts can also take classes at a discounted rate. As far as parking goes, “I pay for parking,” Schimpf said. “We all pay for parking.”

Boise State has tried to make it a priority over the past 10 years to hire on more adjuncts full-time, with an in-between position called a lecturer. Lecturers teach up to four classes, but aren’t expected to do any research, like tenured professors. They do receive health insurance and retirement savings, and earn \$38,000 a year. Schimpf said the university has made a “concerted effort” to swell the ranks of lecturers.

While the university has converted 132 adjuncts into lecturers over the years, there are still more than 500 adjuncts—many of whom are vying for those positions.

Schimpf blames adjunct instructors’ low pay on state funding. He said as soon as the university starts to get more support from the state, it’ll be able to convert more adjuncts into lecturers. With no increases in funding, Boise State can convert about six adjuncts a year. When funding rises, Schimpf said he can bump it up to 15.

Since the reduction of state funding during the recession, the university has had to rely more on adjuncts, and Schimpf said he doesn’t expect state support for higher education to return to pre-recession levels any time soon. What’s more, Boise State’s appropriation amounts to 60 percent per student what the University of Idaho gets.

But Schimpf said adjuncts shouldn’t rely fully on the university to support them. “The goal is not to hire adjuncts who are doing this for their living. The goal is to get the practical experience in the classroom from someone who is out working in their field,”

Schimpf said. “The reality is that as we’ve grown and advertised we need somebody to teach a class, these people show up and they just need a job. If they’re good, we keep hiring them back. It is supposed to be a temporary position, although some have been doing it for a long time.”

Schimpf said the university lowered the number of credits adjuncts could teach last fall for “fairness.” And, he said that since the Affordable Care Act requires employers to give health insurance to full-time employees, limiting adjuncts to teaching only 11 credits dodged that bullet. Or else, “We could get into [financial] trouble.”

The IRS suggests a “reasonable method” for colleges to tally the work of adjuncts, and determine if their workload makes them eligible for health benefits under the ACA, is to figure that for every hour they spend teaching, they work an additional hour and 15 minutes outside the classroom, whether that’s preparing for classes or grading papers.

Anne calls that “baloney.” “I would like to see a class with that much preparation put into it,” she said. “I guess we’re all just working too hard and that we need to be more lazy. But we care and we love our students.”

Schimpf admitted the IRS’s recommendation might have been a little on the conservative side and he has some sympathy for the plight faced by some adjuncts. “It’s got to sting a little bit,” he said, though added that he hasn’t heard any complaints from adjuncts. “No one has come to see me about it.”

The Freeway Fliers

Greg Heinzman started what he calls his “indentured servitude” at Boise State in 2008. To make ends meet, he became what adjuncts call a “freeway flier.” He taught three classes at Boise State and three classes at the College of Western Idaho per semester, plus two or three classes over the summer if he could get them. If not, he worked as a caterer or wheat harvester in Washington.

“[Teaching and prep work and grading] was all I was doing,” Heinzman said. “It’s not ideal, especially when you’re trying to buy a house and plan a wedding.” He figures he worked for about \$13 an hour. The semester-to-semester contracts also

make it hard to budget, he added—never knowing if he'd be teaching two or three or four classes, or one, if everything else fell through. It's unpredictable.

"It's easier for the university to hire two adjuncts for the price of one lecturer and have double the classes taught," Heinzman said. "I mean, it's not a bad job. We're not in a tomato field getting sprayed by pesticides. And there's some prestigious to teaching at a university. But your students don't know that you're teaching six classes and barely squeezing by and you couldn't pay your rent last month."

Heinzman, his long brown hair pulled back in a gray-streaked ponytail and carrying a leather book bag full of titles the average reader might find a little dry, ordered a water at the restaurant where he met with *Boise Weekly*. He thought about a cup of tea but passed, "unless you are buying," he joked.

Heinzman's home situation kept him afloat. He never had to skip a meal or not put gas in his car because of his wife's generous paycheck from St. Luke's Regional Medical Center. "If I would have been on my own, or supporting a wife and a kid, it would have been really, really hard. . . . I have no idea what I would have done if I were the 'breadwinner,'" he said. He looked up the poverty line and found that his wage alone would have put him below it.

Because adjuncts are temporarily contracted employees, there's no pay increase for experience or longevity. Heinzman remembers one across-the-board raise during a seven-year period: an \$18 raise per credit hour.

All that changed last semester when Heinzman interviewed for a lecturer position in the foundational studies department. After the interview, he took a trip to Montana to visit his brother and sister-in-law. . . . He saw the "426" number and knew it was from Boise State. He thought, "maybe this is it," and sure enough, he found out a few weeks before the fall semester started that he had a whole new job.

"I went out in the backyard and went, 'Yes!'" Heinzman said. "I loved the fact that I got the job, but I was like, 'Wow, why am I celebrating so much for a \$38,000-a-year job?' Which isn't bad, but it's just such a difference between adjunct pay and lecturer pay."

Fourteen years ago, Heinzman worked for Washing-

ton State University, teaching GED workshops in a penitentiary. He said back then he got paid \$33 an hour, received benefits if he went over part time, and the state matched 5 percent of his income in a retirement savings account.

"I'm just now making the same amount of money again," Heinzman said. In order to edge closer to his lecturer position, Heinzman spent lots of unpaid time serving on committees and befriending department chairs.

Anne agreed that service and committee work is necessary to get that full-time job. "But if you have to pay for babysitting and you don't get paid for those meetings, you pretty much can't compete. You can't afford to go to those meetings and afford to do the extra commitments that aren't counted by the IRS and aren't part of the job descriptions," she said.

"I could go to a meeting every day of the week if I wanted to and the people who get the lecturer positions go to those meetings. But if you're working three jobs or have kids, it's hard to compete."

Only two lecturer positions opened up in her department last year—and 35 adjuncts wanted them. "So then you're baited against each other and that's ugly," she said. "Some people have been here for 15 years and still aren't lecturers."

Now that Heinzman's a lecturer, he gets paid almost double to teach the same amount of classes, if not fewer, plus he gets the benefits. Now, he has a feeling of longevity, and of validation.

The "Ugly Reality": Few Lectureships; Many Adjuncts

Adjunct instructors don't have much in the way of union representation. Daniel Wolf, an organizer with Idaho Association of Government Employees, said his group has never even tried unionizing adjuncts. *Editor's note: The IFT, on the other hand, has been doing it for years.*

"A lot of it is fear [on the adjuncts' part]," Wolf said. "They think because they're contracted, they think they could be targeted or pushed out for wanting to have a voice for their wages and possible benefits."

Adjuncts at two private colleges in the Seattle area

are already working toward winning union representation, but Wolf said it's tough to start such a campaign because 70-80 percent of the adjuncts would need to sign on. *Editor's correction: 50 percent +1 is sufficient, and the AFT already represents hundreds of contingents in the Seattle Community Colleges. The AFT has 5,000 members on these campuses.*

And not all adjuncts are unhappy. Some do have jobs in their respective careers and teach a class or two to supplement their income or give back to their field. Others, like Eldon Hattervig, are retired and find the classes stimulating. Hattervig became an adjunct in 2007 and he's taught History 101 every semester since.

"As an adjunct, and having had another career, I think I can give a different perspective to students," he said. "Just because you get a degree in an academic field doesn't mean you're going to work in that field."

He said he doesn't think his students know the difference between his class and one taught by a tenured professor. He shares an office with eight other adjuncts and earns about \$500 a month, but it works for him. "I know that I could have gone and worked at McDonald's and made more money than I make here. . . . But I really do enjoy the students," he said.

Heinzman, the recent adjunct-turned-lecturer, agreed. "Maybe that's part of the problem," Heinzman said. "There's so many people that will do it for cheap because they love it."

That's certainly the case for Anne. "But it's an ugly reality that BSU is run on the back of adjuncts," she said. "Although, if you change that, I guess I'm out of a job."

The Overuse and Abuse of Part-Time Faculty

Nick Gier, IFT President

In my conversations with college and university teachers, one of the most frequent topics is the overuse and abuse of "contingent" faculty. I will use the term "contingent faculty" to represent not only part-time faculty, but also faculty who teach a full load but do not have tenure or continuing contracts. Contingent faculty are sometimes called "adjuncts."

As reported above in the *Boise Weekly* (above), only 21 percent of instructional staff was made up of non-tenure-track positions 45 years ago, but according to a 2012 report from the American Association of University Professors, part-time employees had grown to comprise more than 75 percent of total instructional staff by 2009 according (see adjunctnation.com). Currently, two of three first-time hires in our community colleges are contingent faculty.

In a survey of nine disciplines, only 48 percent of the introductory courses were taught by full-time, tenured faculty. The remaining 52 percent were taught by teaching assistants and contingents. In English and Foreign Languages only 25 percent and 28 percent of introductory courses were taught by full-time, tenured faculty.

Gender differences are significantly higher among contingent faculty. In 1998, 36 percent of tenured faculty were women, but among the contingent faculty it was 48 percent. In the humanities the difference is much greater: 38 percent tenured time versus 59 percent female contingents.

Currently only 17 percent of contingent faculty have medical coverage and only 20 percent are on a subsidized retirement plan. Finally, 73 percent of these faculty are paid at a rate of less than \$3,000 per course.

Nationally, the AFT represents 100,000 contingent faculty, more than any other faculty organization. The National Education Association (NEA) estimates that it has about 37,000 members who are contingent faculty. The Service Employees International Union has 18,000 members on the nation's campuses. A recent survey has shown that pay for contingents is 25 percent higher on unionized campuses.

An NEA higher education report cited a study that showed that overuse of contingent faculty lowered graduation rates, and that "part-time faculty have less time to prepare for class and to interact with students outside the classroom, and less often use active and collaborative techniques to engage their students."

In 2007, 800 adjunct faculty at Wayne State University voted 442-57 for AFT as their bargaining agent. These hard-working teachers had no health insurance and many of them had not received a pay

raise in 10 years. On May 18, 2011, faculty (including contingents) at University of Wisconsin—Superior voted 89-5 for AFT representation.

The Four “Cs” for Contingent Faculty

Taking some items from AFT contracts for contingent faculty, I would like to propose “The Four Cs for Contingent Faculty.”

Continuity. After a period of satisfactory performance, contingent faculty would receive a “Certificate of Continuing Employment” that gives them hiring preferences and access to benefits. In stark contrast, some University of Idaho (UI) part-time instructors were fired at the end of the 2004 fall semester and rehired in the spring so that benefits would not have to be paid.

Compensation. Contingent faculty should be paid a salary proportionate to the salary paid to the full-time faculty with equivalent qualifications. In dramatic contrast, pay per course at the UI ranges from \$1,500 to one third of a full professor’s salary. Some UI contingents have not received a pay raise since they were hired. Faculty union contracts generally have salary step plans that guarantee a minimum raise for satisfactory performance.

Consistency. Not only is there wide discrepancies in pay, there are also wide differences in contingent appointments. The Idaho State University Department of English and Philosophy should be commended. Of its 58 faculty only nine are contingent. Although their salaries are low, the 20 instructors are employed full-time with full benefits on continuing contracts.

Coverage. Combining consistency and continuity, all contingent faculty who are working more than half time should be entitled to medical and retirement benefits. In 2002, one UI college cut medical benefits for all contingent faculty even though one English instructor was in the middle of cancer treatment.

Our contingent faculty are the draft horses of American higher education, and we must treat them with justice and dignity. As Frank Brooks of Roosevelt University says: “Contingency is a threat to quality, not contingent faculty. It’s not who we are but how we are treated that undermines the quality of higher education.”

Please Join Us in Protecting Faculty Rights; Increasing Salaries and Benefits

Members of the American Federation of Teachers receive a \$1,000,000 professional and legal liability policy, access to legal and moral support, and national/state AFT publications. For application forms please go to www.idaho-aft.org/IftDues.htm.
