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"It's Me and the Adjuncts": Writing Program Administration and Marginalized Students/Teachers

AT THE MOST RECENT MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE Composition and Communication, I met with the editors of this special issue and brainstormed with them some ideas for submission. As I introduced myself, I discussed my university's problems with student retention and persistence, which have led me into a new line of research focusing on the need to couple access to a four-year institution with support structures that will enable marginalized students—including my Basic Writing students—to succeed in attaining a four-year degree. As we talked, the editors asked who taught Basic Writing at my university. "Well," I said, "it's me and the adjuncts." And thus an article was born.

I am an Assistant Professor of English and the Basic Writing coordinator at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW), a regional, open-admission, comprehensive university of about 14,000 students; the university offers associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees. For full-time, undergraduate students who entered IPFW in the fall of 2003 (the most recent available data), the four-year graduation rate was 6%; the six-year graduation rate was 23%. Although open-admission institutions such as IPFW typically have graduation rates below those of more selective institutions, some of my other work (Webb-Sunderhaus and Amidon "Kairotic Moment") has addressed how IPFW's graduation rates are significantly lower than those of its peer institutions. As I have also illustrated in previous work, the students enrolled in the basic writing courses I teach and supervise are about eight percentage points less likely than their first-year writing peers to return for their sophomore year (Webb-Sunderhaus "When Access Is Not Enough"). Clearly, we have a problem with retention and persistence at IPFW.

We also have a problem with contingent labor, particularly in my department. The Department of English and Linguistics is one of the largest departments at IPFW, in terms of both the numbers of majors (nearly 300) and faculty. The department employs 24 tenure line faculty; nine are writing specialists, ten are literature specialists, four are linguists, and one is a folklorist. The contingent faculty includes six full-time, non-tenure track faculty; approximately 45 part-time, non-tenure track faculty; and roughly ten graduate teaching associates.

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All but one of the contingent faculty teach in the writing program,[1] which is part of the Department of English and Linguistics and is overseen by the Composition Committee and the Director of Writing, who reports to the department chair. The Director of Writing is assisted in the administration of the program by two Associate Directors of Writing and the W129 (Basic Writing) Course Coordinator, the position I currently hold.

Our reliance on adjuncts is troubling for those of us in writing program administration at IPFW, as we are well aware of the ethical challenges and the all-too-often exploitative practices and institutionalized sexism of contingent labor. Contingent faculty are overworked and underpaid, and this type of labor is disproportionately performed by women, who make up the majority of contingent faculty not only at IPFW, but also in the academy writ large (Bousquet, Scott, and Parascondola; Marshall; Miller; Schell; Schell and Stock). In *Textual Carnivals*, Susan Miller writes of the "sad women in the basement" who "by and large fill the temporary jobs teaching composition that are the residue from declines in 'regular' appointments" (124). At IPFW, working conditions are far from ideal, but our contingent faculty aren't quite "sad women in the basement," either. Unlike adjuncts at some institutions, many of our part-time instructors are only supplementing their income by adjuncting. These instructors hold full-time jobs elsewhere or are retired; they usually teach not because they need the money, but because they enjoy the work of teaching college writing and earning some extra spending cash or retirement savings. Their full-time jobs or retirement plans pay their bills and offer them health insurance.

However, we do have a significant number of contingent faculty whose main source of income is the meager wages they receive for teaching writing at IPFW. They do their best to eke out a living by securing other employment, such as teaching at other local universities; teaching for-profit institutions' online courses; substitute teaching in the local public schools; scoring essays for ETS and other testing services; and working service jobs at local restaurants or the mall. This description of the lives of this group of contingent faculty will undoubtedly sound familiar to many readers, as this is the story of contingent faculty everywhere. It is a painful story, one that illustrates the inconsistencies and fractures of our field—but it is an incredibly, depressingly common story, which is why it still needs to be told.

None of us involved in administering the writing program at IPFW wants to be part of this story, and we have attempted to improve working conditions in various ways. Four of the seven members of the Composition Committee are non-tenure track, giving contingent laborers significant input into the administration of the writing program. Full-time faculty salaries were frozen for 2.5 years, but the Director of Writing secured small raises for the part-

1. This instructor—a Visiting Assistant Professor of English—is a literature specialist and teaches general education literature courses, as well as classes in African-American literature and drama

time writing faculty during this time. While most of our part-time faculty have to share desks in a large office, over the past two years more office space has been secured to alleviate overcrowding, and TAs now have their own desks in an extra-large office set aside for their use. Four of the six full-time, non-tenure track writing faculty members have their own offices; of the two instructors who share an office, one teaches exclusively online and does not hold face-to-face office hours. In fact, during my first year at IPFW, the other three new tenure-line hires and I shared offices, while the four full-time, non-tenure track instructors maintained their individual offices. I do not wish to unduly praise my program, as these have been admittedly small steps towards more equitable treatment of contingent faculty. Nonetheless, I feel compelled to note our efforts since few universities make even this small effort. In short, the IPFW writing program administration is attempting to do right by its contingent faculty while working within institutional and programmatic constraints that limit our options for doing so.

What We Can (and Can't) Do: Marginalized Faculty and Programmatic Constraints

Many factors inhibit decisions IPFW writing program administrators can make in regards to our marginalized faculty. One such factor is demand for our English W131, the first-year writing course all university students are required to take. As may be inferred from the preceding sentence, a full year of writing instruction is not required of first-year students at IPFW, unless they choose to take English W129, a Basic Writing course. Because only one semester of writing instruction is required, most of our first-year students want to take English W131 during their first semester of college—which is, in most cases, fall semester. It is not only students who wish to take the course in the fall. We in the writing program know that well-meaning parents, advisors, and faculty members in other departments strongly encourage their students to do so, and upper administration at the university also wants students to take the course as quickly as possible. This is because they believe English W131 is critical for student success and should be taken immediately upon entrance into college—a difficult idea to argue with, particularly when the writing program has received additional funding and support from these proponents.

The writing program administrators are of course glad that students, parents, advisors, colleagues, and administration view our writing course in a positive light, but their good intentions have significant repercussions for the writing program when it comes to enrollment and the use of contingent faculty. We offer approximately 25 sections of English W129 (the BW course) and 80 sections of English W131 (FYC) each fall semester; W129 is capped at 18 students, while W131 is capped at 22. In the spring we only offer 15 sections of W129 and 55 sections of W131, due to lower demand for these courses. The Director of Writing has pro-

posed converting some of our part-time positions into full-time, non-tenure track lines, and some of the full-time, non-tenure track lines to tenure track positions. However, the fact of the matter is that even if funding for these new lines is eventually secured, which will be no easy task in the current budgetary climate, it will be difficult for the writing program to meet the fluctuations in demand without the use of part-time instructors. While our reliance on part-time labor would be reduced, the difference in enrollment from semester to semester is simply too great to navigate to eliminate the use of these adjuncts—and even if the use of contingent labor could be eliminated, it is an open question as to whether it *should* be, a point I will address in the conclusion.

Another potential solution may be found in collaboration with other disciplinary units. The Director of Writing has had preliminary conversations with the Communication Department about requiring students to sequence English and communication courses in ways that would be beneficial to both departments. A public speaking course is also required of all students at IPFW, and the Communication Department faces issues similar, though not as dire, to our own in staffing sections of this course: approximately 60 sections of the course are offered in the fall while roughly 50 are offered in the spring, leading to a reliance on contingent laborers whose work for the spring semester is reduced or eliminated.

Our departments are currently discussing the possibilities of requiring students to take this communication course, which includes a good deal of instruction in rhetoric, and first-year writing in separate semesters: one group of incoming students would take English W131 in the fall and Communication 114 in the spring, while another group would enroll in COM 114 in the fall and ENG W131 in the spring. Students would benefit by having their rhetorical education reinforced over multiple semesters, and the departments would have more consistency in their staffing needs from the fall to spring semester, which would offer our contingent faculty some financial stability. However, such a strategy would require the approval not only of our two departments, but also the Dean of the College and the Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs. Since the university administration has typically moved to eliminate or reduce students' course requirements and restrictions over the past several years, obtaining this approval will be no easy task.

Teaching loads—specifically, the types of courses contingent and tenure-line faculty can teach—are another decision shaped by institutional constraints. The Department of English and Linguistics has a small graduate program, enrolling approximately 35 M.A. and M.A.T. students per year;[2] some of these students are done with coursework but are studying for comprehensive exams or writing a thesis. Due to the program's small size, four grad-

2. Almost all of the students seeking a M.A.T. (Master of Arts for Teachers) are currently teaching in the local K-12 school systems.

uate-only seminars—capped at 15 students—are typically offered each semester, and almost all upper-level courses for majors are cross-listed as graduate courses, meaning that undergraduate and graduate students enroll in these courses. For example, my literacy studies course is listed as W460 (for undergrads) and B505 (for grad students); the last time I taught the course, five of the students were undergraduates, and five were graduate students. Enrollment in these courses is restricted to anywhere from 22-35 students, and ten students must enroll in order for a course to make.

The size of our graduate program impacts our contingent faculty because IPFW, like almost all universities, stipulates that only faculty members with the terminal degree can teach graduate students. Since almost all of our contingent faculty do not hold MFAs or Ph.D.s,[3] they are ineligible to teach the four graduate seminars and the cross-listed undergraduate/graduate courses, of which there were 17 during the Fall 2011 semester. The department does offer 200 and 300-level courses for majors that are not cross-listed at the graduate level; writing courses at this level are capped at either 15 or 22 students, and literature courses are capped at 22 or 30. Contingent faculty can and do teach these courses every semester. Again, using Fall 2011 as an example, 21 sections of these courses were offered, and ten were taught by contingent faculty.

The graduate course policy also shapes the teaching assignments of the tenure-line faculty. While only three tenure-line faculty members regularly teach basic or first-year writing,[4] it is not because the majority of the faculty think this work is unimportant or somehow not worthy of their efforts. It is because they are part of the group of faculty who has the terminal degree; therefore, they are among the only instructors who can teach these cross-listed upper-division/graduate courses. The demand for these courses is so great that every available faculty member is needed to teach them.

These courses are in such high demand because our major has grown dramatically over the past few years, for reasons that are not completely clear and could not necessarily be anticipated. In 2006, there were roughly 160 majors in the English and Linguistics department; as of Fall 2011, that number has nearly doubled, to approximately 300 majors. As a department, we aren't exactly sure to what we can attribute this significant increase. Like many universities, IPFW's first-time enrollment and transfer rates surged in the wake of the economic crash of 2008; students who in the past would have gone to West Lafayette (Purdue) or Bloomington (Indiana) are now opting to save money by enrolling at our regional campus,

3. One part-time instructor has a Ph.D., and one has a MFA; two of our full-time, non-tenure track faculty members are enrolled in Ph.D. programs.

4. Three other tenure-line writing faculty teach our 100-level creative writing courses, meaning that six of the nine tenure-line faculty in writing regularly teach general education courses populated by first-year students and non-majors.

which has lower tuition and allows these local students to commute from home. However, the university's enrollment has not doubled over the past five years, as our major has. We simply do not know many of the reasons why the growth of our major has significantly outpaced the growth of our university.

One factor in our growth of which we are aware is the Indiana Department of Education's decision to change teacher licensure requirements. As of Fall 2010, students who wish to teach high school English are required to take 51 credit hours in English; previously, 39 hours were required. Additionally, for current public school teachers, a state law passed last year that implemented a merit-pay system; these educators would no longer automatically receive an increase in pay for a graduate degree. However, the law also stated "that teachers enrolled in a graduate program before July 1 and on pace to complete it by 2014 will eventually be entitled to the raise that teachers with a master's degree received in years past" (Wiehe). This provision pushed many teachers to hurriedly begin a graduate program before the deadline so that they could be compensated for that degree, and some of these teachers have enrolled in our graduate courses. In a recent departmental survey of our graduate students, nearly 30 percent stated that they were pursuing an advanced degree now so that they would be eligible for the traditional pay raise. Thus, the state's changes to teacher preparation and compensation—changes that many did not expect to happen as quickly as they did—have increased demand for upper-level and graduate courses in English at IPFW.

Decisions made within the department and the writing program in particular also shape our labor practices. Many years ago, the department chair and writing program administrator at the time decided that only faculty with advanced training in the teaching of writing would teach writing courses at IPFW. In other words, the literature faculty do not teach composition. This decision grew out of concerns that some literature faculty at that time were turning first-year writing courses into a writing about literature course, a common and much-written about phenomenon (Crowley; Lindemann; Tate).[5] Today, the writing program continues to require that anyone not currently enrolled in our MA program who wishes to teach one of our courses must have a master's degree that includes a significant amount of coursework in the teaching of writing; there have been cases in which the WPA has required potential instructors to take a course in the teaching of com-

"In other words, the literature faculty do not teach composition."

5. My literature-specialist colleagues are routinely assigned 100-level literature courses, however, so they are required to teach first-year students and non-majors.

position, the same course our new TAs take, before they can pursue employment at IPFW.

The department and the writing program in particular are satisfied with this policy, as we strongly believe that it helps to ensure our students receive writing instruction that is theoretically sound and aligned with the best practices of our field. However, this policy has a significant trade-off: it increases our reliance on contingent labor. Since literature faculty do not teach writing courses, that further reduces the number of tenure-line faculty members who are available to teach these courses and intensifies the writing program's need for adjuncts. We have nine tenure-line faculty in the writing program, five of whom have been hired over the past six years; three of these positions were new lines, indicating that we do receive significant support from upper administration for our hiring needs. Nevertheless, we still face the conundrum of having only nine faculty while offering approximately 105 sections of basic and first-year writing each fall. Between our small number and our duties in teaching the previously discussed upper-level/graduate courses, the tenure-line writing faculty simply cannot meet the demand for writing instruction. That is why "it's me and the adjuncts" teaching Basic Writing at IPFW.

What We Can Do: Improving Conditions for Marginalized Teachers and Students

Our field has been discussing the inequitable treatment of contingent faculty for at least forty years, as CCC published Ray Kytle's "Slaves, Serfs, or Colleagues—Who Shall Teach College Composition?" in 1971. Similarly, access for marginalized students has dominated Basic Writing scholarship for some time. I do not dispute the need for student access, as most of my career from before graduate school until now has been spent at open-admission institutions. However, my five years as a professor at IPFW have taught me that our attention to equity for faculty and access for students has been too limited; student equity is an important part of this conversation as well. Access without success is meaningless for my Basic Writing students—the very same students who are the most likely to be taught by contingent faculty. Yes, these students have access to a four-year institution, thanks to open-admissions, but they are unlikely to be retained, as IPFW's dismal graduation rates illustrate.

All too often, contingent faculty become the scapegoats in conversations about student retention and persistence; when a recent study by Audrey Jaeger and M. Kevin Eagan showed a correlation between low graduation rates and a reliance on contingent labor, some participants on online discussion boards were quick to target adjuncts for their alleged failings. And when contingent faculty are not being blamed for students' performance, they are often exhorted by university administrators to take on the role of the self-sacrificing mother that Miller, Schell, and so many others have described—to nurture their students and to give

more of themselves and their time, without any additional compensation or accommodation. I recall the story of a colleague at another institution who was required—like all full- and part-time faculty—to wear a special button at all times while on campus so that students could instantly recognize faculty, ask questions, and receive answers, no matter if they were in class, the gym, or the restroom. The university administration promoted these buttons as a "retention strategy"—as if faculty were employees at an office supply store who can be summoned by pushing the "easy" button. It is "strategies" such as these that position contingent faculty as the straw man in arguments about student success: if only they would know more, do more, give more, sacrifice more, then more students would graduate. What these arguments do not acknowledge is the fact that it is not adjuncts' alleged lack of knowledge or caring that hinders student success. It is the lack of resources and support made available to these instructors and students that causes student inequity. Reliance on contingent labor is the symptom of a much larger problem: states' abdication of their role in supporting higher education.

While we as Compositionists may not be able to change our state legislatures' funding decisions, we can engage in more substantive efforts to develop student equity; furthermore, we can do so without adding significantly to the workload of contingent faculty, who are already overburdened. Program administrators have decisions available to them which can positively impact student learning, retention, and persistence, as well as the lives of the contingent faculty who teach these students. As part of a wider overhaul of the Basic Writing program at my institution, the Director of Writing successfully lobbied the university administration to eliminate Accuplacer as our placement method for writing courses and implemented guided self-placement. Since Fall 2008, we have utilized an online placement instrument that asks incoming students about their high school performance, SAT scores, and writing experiences. Specifically, students' class standing and SAT math scores (yes, math) are used in making a placement recommendation, as they are commonly available and, according to IPFW's Office of Institutional Research, have statistically significant correlations to success in our writing classes; the SAT verbal score has no such correlation. As part of the online placement process, students also take the Daly-Miller test of writing apprehension, as we have found that high levels of writing anxiety correlate with poor performance in our courses; similarly, students with low levels of writing anxiety and weak high school records also fail our courses at higher rates. The student's class' standing, math SAT score, and Daly-Miller results are combined to generate a recommendation that the student takes either our basic or first-year writing course. The student has the final word on the course he/she will take, however.

In addition to the changes in the placement process, the two Basic Writing courses

that existed before 2008 were scuttled, with a new course taking their place. The former courses included a two-hour studio course which was unsuccessful in assisting students to meet the demands of first-year writing and a non-credit bearing, Basic Writing course that did not have any defined outcomes or philosophy of instruction. We eliminated these courses and created a new, three-hour, credit-bearing Basic Writing course that has the same outcomes as our first-year writing course, with the understanding that the time our students have to meet those outcomes has been stretched over two semesters.[6]

In the first two years since these changes have been implemented in the Basic Writing program, the DWF (drop, withdraw, fail) rate has ranged from 30.6% to 31.5%, for an average of 31.05%. Although that number is still quite large, in the six years prior to the writing program's changes, the DWF average was 46.98%. Thus, our average DWF rate has dropped almost sixteen percentage points. The writing program does not yet have persistence data, since the new placement process, course, and curriculum have only been in place for three years, but we do know that our programmatic retention has also improved over the past three years. Before 2008, fewer than 60% of Basic Writing students successfully completed Basic Writing and First-Year Composition during their first two semesters. Now, nearly 70% of these students do so. While these data can only establish correlation, not causation, it is my contention that guided-self placement is an important first step towards developing self-efficacy in students, which we know is an important trait in predicting student success (Hidi and Boscolo, Lavelle, Pajares and Valiante, Reynolds). By giving students more ownership of, and responsibility for, an important decision in the initial stages of their education, we are encouraging them to take more ownership of their education and thus develop a trait essential to their intellectual development.

Furthermore, these changes cost our contingent faculty very little. While the new course did initially require additional preparation for some, thanks to a curriculum that was revised to ensure all instructors utilized the best practices of the field, there was support for these changes. Until 2008, there had never been a coordinator for the Basic Writing course; upon assuming the coordinatorship, I quickly set about devising more instructor support systems. Along with the Director of Writing, I held workshops to introduce the new curriculum and placement process, and I created and

"these changes cost our contingent faculty very little"

6. For more information about the changes to the Basic Writing placement process and curriculum, please see "The Kairotic Moment: Pragmatic Revision of Basic Writing Instruction at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne," co-written with my colleague Stevens Amidon.

maintain an active listserv for Basic Writing instructors, where we continue to collaborate on assignments and texts and share the joys and challenges of working with our student population. Before the start of classes each academic year, I design a shared course syllabus and assignments that all instructors are encouraged to adapt as little or as much as they would like for use in their classrooms.

These changes have been popular with the program's cadre of instructors and, more significantly, have not made their professional lives more difficult. In fact, in some cases the changes have resulted in a reduced, and/or more pleasant, workload. Because students now choose to take the Basic Writing course, their resistance to being in the course has been virtually eliminated, making for a less onerous teaching experience. Almost all sections[7] of the Basic Writing course now use the same texts and similar—if not identical—assignments, and as a result, collaboration and support among instructors have increased greatly. Additionally, instructors can—and do—turn to me in my role as course coordinator for administrative and pedagogical resources, input, and assistance. As the semester progresses, I mentor, consult with, and serve as a general resource for both new and experienced instructors as needed, and I devise and lead other workshops on topics of interest to the instructors, such as conducting online peer review, preventing plagiarism, and using technology in ways that benefit our students and us (reducing the paper load, utilizing online conferences, etc.). My fellow WPAs also design and facilitate workshops, including sessions on grade norming and assignment design, for instructors who teach our first-year and second-level writing courses.

This is a marked change for our writing program, as for many years, we were reluctant to offer these workshops, and some still have lingering doubts. We do not want to exploit our instructors even further, and there is little, if any, funding to compensate those who participate in these voluntary workshops. However, many of us have begun to see how professional development affects working conditions, as Ed Nagelhout argues (A14-15), and we have focused our faculty development efforts on strategies that address issues of workload and time management, as these are the most pressing issues our contingent faculty face. We have realized that if we do not offer our instructors the opportunity for professional development—even if our reasoning is grounded in concerns about equity—we are missing out on opportunities to improve the lives of our faculty and the instruction our students receive (Nagelhout 15).

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7. Some sections are part of a learning community in which Basic Writing courses are linked with a course in another discipline. Depending on the nature of the linked course and the needs of the learning community, different materials are sometimes used.

Conclusion

Some may argue we at IPFW are attempting to do the best we can to treat our instructors justly and humanely while working within an unjust, inhumane system—an endeavor doomed to failure. On this point, over ten years ago James Sledd wrote the following of writing program administrators such as myself and my colleagues:

> With clear consciences and the best of good intentions, they have bought into an educational system that mirrors the encompassing society of greed. [. . .] People who mistakenly buy into a problematic system make themselves part of the problem. They can offer no hope of a good solution. (147)

More recently, I listened as a job candidate discussed his research on adjunct labor and composition students. When the candidate was asked what possible solutions, if any, he saw for the issue of contingent labor in our discipline, his answer was simple and direct: "Get rid of all adjuncts."

Given the argument I have made in this essay, it will come as no surprise to readers that I disagree with these positions. There can be no doubt that there are serious, systemic problems with Composition's labor structure, and too many contingent faculty are exploited. However, I contend that by becoming professors of Composition, we have already "bought into" the problematic system Sledd describes. By virtue of our participation in the system of tenure and non-tenure track, full- and part-time, contingent and permanent faculty—by our very presence in the university—we have all become "part of the problem." I reject Sledd's contention that we cannot be part of the solution, however. I am persuaded by the words of Joseph Harris, who writes that Compositionists "need to admit that we are indeed workers in a corporate system that we hope to reform, rather than persisting in fantasies of escaping that system, of operating in some pure space as critics who may happen to work at a university but who are somehow not of it" (51). Let me be clear: our discipline's heavy reliance on, and exploitation of, contingent laborers must change. Yet, I do not think we can ever effect such change if we refuse to admit that, by the nature of our positions as professors, we are complicit in that very system. We cannot persist in the fantastic notion that we are somehow outside this system if we hope to accomplish the reform that is desperately needed.

This is also why deans, provosts, vice-chancellors, and other university administrators with a background in Composition Studies are needed. If we want to overhaul working conditions for contingent faculty—to secure more money for salary/benefits, to propose more opportunities for professional development, to provide more and better-quality office space, to offer more consistent schedules, and to convert some part-time positions into full-time non-tenure track or tenure-track lines—then we require administrators who are amenable to such arguments and who are sensitive to the need for equitable treatment of

contingent faculty. From where will these administrators come? They need to come from the ranks of Composition and Rhetoric scholars, including current WPAs, who have a commitment to the issues and who can make a difference as they move into higher levels of administration. I realize this is not a popular argument, as many of us—including myself—were drawn to Composition Studies due to its focus on pedagogy and students. I personally have no desire to leave the classroom and the basic writers I love so much to become a full-time administrator. At the same time, however, it is difficult to educate administrators whose disciplines have not confronted these issues about the needs of our field. If we hope to change the system in which we are all complicit, we will have to grow our own administrators who can be allies in this work.

Finally, as a field we should understand that there are some contingent faculty for whom parts of the current system work. Some discussions of contingent labor assume that conditions are the same everywhere, that all universities are employing hordes of part-time adjuncts with Ph.D.s who long for a tenure-track position. It is certainly true that the number of full-time and tenure-track lines are decreasing, leading to more Ph.D.s competing for adjunct jobs in large urban centers and university towns. At universities such as these, employing only Ph.D.s as adjuncts will soon be a possibility, if it is not already a reality.

But that is not the case at my institution, where almost all of our contingent faculty have master's degrees, and a significant portion of our adjuncts don't want to teach full-time, let alone on the tenure-track. They enjoy being retired or working at other jobs they love. Even among the part-time faculty who want full-time employment, there is very little interest in earning a Ph.D. or pursuing tenure. If my department had the funding to convert part-time to full-time or non-tenure track to tenure-track—wildly improbable in the current economy—many of our contingent faculty would not accept these positions, due to the unwanted demands of a full-time and/or tenure-track career. This is why "getting rid of the adjuncts" is not a solution for a university such as mine, as we would be firing many teachers who are happy with their jobs and whose teaching of writing is outstanding—an action which hardly seems fair or equitable and reeks of corporate downsizing, as Schell has argued.

I realize that some may argue that our adjuncts will soon be squeezed out of their positions by Ph.D.s who cannot find tenure-line jobs. Yet even Ph.D.s in literature—who are far more numerous and more likely to work as contingent laborers than Ph.D.s in Composition and Rhetoric—are rare in places like Fort Wayne, Indiana, a small city whose university does not offer a Ph.D. in any subject. The supply of literary Ph.D.s has far outpaced the demand during all of my not-inconsiderable lifetime, but my writing program has only one adjunct with a Ph.D.—a Ph.D. in literature. This long history makes me skeptical that universities like mine, in locales such as Fort Wayne, will soon be employing a contingent labor

force consisting only of Ph.D.s in Composition and Rhetoric. While contingent labor is an issue everywhere, we must realize that the nature of the problem is quite different in cities like New York City and Boston than it is in places like Fort Wayne and Duluth. In short, we need a better understanding that conditions are not the same everywhere, and we should avoid assuming that there is one ideal solution to the problems of contingent labor. While thinking globally is a laudable goal, Compositionists should act locally when it comes to exploitative labor practices.

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