



**SEIU 500 CAL**  
Part-time faculty uniting to  
improve higher education



Dear St Mary's and Dominican College Adjuncts,

We are writing to express our support for your unionization efforts with SEIU. At Georgetown University, we unionized with SEIU Local 500 in May of 2013, and ratified our first union contract this fall. We are very proud that the agreement marks the first adjunct union at a Jesuit University. The contract includes many noneconomic and economic improvements, and gives us a united voice for the first time. It reflects, we believe, the values of our institution, while further enriching the benefits students receive from part-time faculty professionals and scholars at Georgetown University.

The composition of the faculty in America's higher education classrooms has changed dramatically in the last 40 years. In 1969, tenured and tenure-track faculty made up approximately 78 percent of the faculty and non-tenure-track comprised about 22 percent. In 2009, tenure and tenure-track faculty were 33 percent of the faculty and non-tenure track faculty comprised 66 percent of faculty.<sup>1</sup> According to the Department of Education, half the teaching faculty in 2- and 4-year institutions is now part-time.<sup>2</sup> The over-saturation of the academic job market with part-time and contingent faculty positions has been marked by a decline in working conditions, which can have negative ramifications for students. Respondents to the Coalition of Academic Labor survey of 2012 on part-time faculty were asked about the level of institutional support provided by their employers:

The respondents paint a dismal picture, one that clearly demonstrates how little professional commitment and support part-time faculty members receive from their institutions for anything that costs money and is not related to preparing and delivering discrete course materials. The findings also reflect a lack of processes and resources to include part-time faculty members in the academic community of the college or university.<sup>3</sup>

A report from the Pullias Center for Higher Education points to casual hiring practices, lack of job security, no process for appointments, and lack of long-term commitments as demoralizing and impeding a faculty member's ability to prepare for classes, build knowledge of departments and

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<sup>1</sup> AFT Higher Education Data Center, 2009. Quoted in *The Changing Faculty and Student Success*, Pullias Center for Higher Education. University of Southern California Rossier. 2012.

<sup>2</sup> The National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education Digest of Education Statistics, 2011. [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d11/tables/dt11\\_263.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d11/tables/dt11_263.asp)

<sup>3</sup> "A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members: A Summary of Findings on Part-Time Faculty Respondents to the Coalition on the Academic Workforce Survey of Contingent Faculty Members and Instructors." The Coalition on the Academic Workforce. June 2012.

students, and to find the time to meet with students.<sup>4</sup> Lack of funding for professional development and little or no mentoring may leave part-time faculty poorly prepared to serve students, the report finds.<sup>5</sup>

*Who is Professor "Staff"?*, a policy report from the Center for the Future of Higher Education from 2012, also critiques "just-in-time" employment practices and "bumping" of part-time faculty (another faculty member is assigned the course a part-time professor was slated to teach at the last minute) as impeding part-time professors ability to prepare for the semester and to be as effective in the classroom as they would like to be. This report also demonstrates that part-time professors are much less likely to have institutional support and instructional tools, and this too can negatively affect instructional performance and educational quality.<sup>6</sup> Lack of job security and over-reliance on student feedback to evaluate part-time faculty puts those professors in a precarious position in the classroom. Gary Rhoades claims that semester-by-semester appointments and "just-at-will" renewal practices "makes it literally dangerous for adjunct faculty to maintain strong academic standards."<sup>7</sup>

Adriana Kezar and Dan Maxey have found that the work environment of part-time faculty impedes their ability to participate in and support student assessment efforts.<sup>8</sup> Negative factors include a work environment that "narrowly defines teaching as classroom time," last minute hiring, little orientation to campus learning goals, little professional development or mentoring about assessment, exclusion from curricular design, minimal resources and assistance, lack of (non-punitive) evaluation and feedback.<sup>9</sup>

In our contract negotiations at Georgetown University, we led with the framework that adjunct faculty be viewed, treated and respected as full members of the faculty and of the Georgetown community. We insisted that Georgetown University see us not as experts that teach *courses*, but core members of the Georgetown community that teach and mentor *students*. Most of the improvements in our contract also serve to improve the learning conditions of our students and address many of the concerns raised in the literature on the effect of part-time faculty working conditions on student success.

- We have mitigated against "just-at-will" renewals and "just-in-time" employment through creating protections on reappointment to courses we have previously taught through "good faith consideration" and by the establishment of a "just cause" standard for discipline and dismissal.
- We have also created a disincentive for "bumping" through a course cancellation fee. An adjunct faculty member who is appointed to teach a course is paid a cancellation fee of \$300 if the course is cancelled within 21 calendar days before classes begin for that course.
- We have created a professional development fund of \$35,000 per fiscal year. Adjunct faculty members who have "good faith consideration" may request reimbursement of up to \$600 per

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<sup>4</sup> *The Changing Faculty and Student Success*, Pullias Center for Higher Education. University of Southern California Rossier. 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Steve Street, Maria Maisto, Esther Merves and Gary Rhoades. 2012. *Who is Professor "Staff" and how can this person teach so many classes?* Center for the Future of Higher Education Policy Report #2. August 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Rhoades, Gary. 2012. "Bargaining Quality in Part-time Faculty Working Conditions: Beyond Just-in-time Employment and Just-At-Will Non-renewal," *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy*: Vol 4, Article 4.

<sup>8</sup> Kezar, Adriana and Maxey, Daniel. July 2014. *Student Outcomes Assessment Among the New Non-Tenure Track Faculty Majority*. National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. Occasional Paper #21. Pg. 11

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

fiscal year each for reasonable costs associated with professional development activities related to teaching.

- We have created a fair, non-punitive and transparent evaluations process that is expansive and non-punitive. We receive feedback on our teaching, and have the right to respond to an evaluation we believe is unfair. The University must promptly notified us if an issue regarding performance arises during the semester, so that we can correct that issue during the remainder of the semester.
- The contract mandates that we receive supports for teaching and the tools we need to do our jobs well.
- In the contract, the University recognizes that adjunct faculty members make valuable contributions to the University's academic community, and may participate in the academic community in various ways. Schools, departments and programs are encouraged to invite adjunct faculty members to participate in meetings and activities where appropriate. We have the same access to academic freedom and faculty rights as full-time faculty.
- Through a joint Labor-Management Collaboration Committee we have a forum for on-going problem solving and relationship-building with the University and to address issues and concerns that are in the best interest of the parties.

Throughout the unionization process and contract negotiations we received great support from our student body. During the organizing students produced videos, wrote articles and carried out on-campus activities to show their support for collective bargaining for the part-time faculty and to encourage Georgetown University to remain neutral during the process (which it did).<sup>10</sup> Undergraduate Sydney Browning wrote in The Georgetown Voice while adjunct professors were organizing, "Students are the beneficiaries of these professors' work and need to stand in solidarity with them. We need to support all professors' rights to join together in standing up for better salaries and job security. Georgetown faculty care about their students and now it's time for us to reciprocate the action and support them as well."<sup>11</sup>

The fact that we now have a great contract is in part due to this solidarity our students demonstrated. Through our union contract and our unified voice, we are able to continue to enhance our ability to teach, advise and mentor those students.

Sincerely,

Pablo Eisenberg, Senior Fellow, Georgetown University Public Policy Institute

Camille Gaskin-Reyes, Adjunct Professor, Latin American Studies, Georgetown University

Ori Z Soltes, Professorial Lecturer, Theology and Program for Jewish Civilization, Georgetown University

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fe-WLjE26zU&feature=youtu.be>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_detailpage&v=11-BDL4-Bbw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=11-BDL4-Bbw)

"Penny Pinching on Professors" by The Editorial Board, in The Hoya. November 6, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Browning, Sidney. "Part-time Professors deserve their full-time rights." The Georgetown Voice, February 6, 2013.  
<http://georgetownvoice.com/2013/02/06/part-time-professors-deserve-their-full-time-rights/>