

FORUM

NEWSLETTER FOR ISSUES ABOUT PART-TIME AND CONTINGENT FACULTY

12.1 FALL 2008

CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION

I N S I D E

From the Editor: What Is a Fair Wage?	A1
Off the Tenure Track: The Tenuous Art of Adjuncting	A3
Claudine Griggs	
A Brief Comparison of Teaching Assistantship and Adjunct Faculty Positions	A5
Nicholas Behm	
Weak Ties and Academic Community	A9
Fred Johnson	
A Retired Administrator in the Classroom: Advice for Full-Time Faculty and Administrators	A12
Sallyanne H. Fitzgerald	
Adjunct Incognito: Joining the Blogosphere	A14
Holly Pappas	

From the Editor: What Is a Fair Wage?

Evelyn Beck

One afternoon a few years ago, three colleagues and I drove over to the home of one of our adjunct instructors to make sure he was all right. He hadn't turned in his final grades and wasn't answering the phone. We found him unconscious on his couch. He was sick but recovered enough to teach on for a few more years. What I most remember from that visit was the horrible place where he lived: a tiny, dirty apartment that reeked of poverty and hopelessness.

For teaching five sections of English composition during the fall, spring, and summer semesters, this gifted teacher made a yearly salary of less than \$20,000 per year, which is below the U.S. poverty level for a family of four. My college pays only about \$1,100 per three-credit-hour class to adjunct instructors, and those English classes can include up to 28 students per section. There is no health insurance, no sick leave, no professional development funds for "part-timers." It is a depressingly exploitive situation that still manages to attract talented professionals who love the classroom.

While adjuncts in some high-demand areas like engineering can earn as much as \$10,000 per class, most adjuncts make far less. Look at job ads in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, at HigherEdJobs.com, and at individual college websites and

About Forum

Forum is published twice a year by the Conference on College Composition and Communication. As editor, I welcome you to submit articles related to non-tenure-track faculty in college English or composition courses. Submissions for the fall issue should be received no later than May 1; for the spring issue, the deadline is September 1. Note: Submissions will not be returned.

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

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

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

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

© 2008 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Printed in the United States of America. ISSN 1522-7502

you will find many adjunct positions that pay from \$1,500 to \$2,000 per course, with most at the lower end of that range. My own experience has ranged from \$900 to \$4,100 per course, with most of my per-course compensation at around \$1,500.

A survey conducted by the University of Michigan’s Center for the Education of Women and published in 2006 as “Non Tenure Track Faculty: The Landscape at U.S. Institutions of Higher Education” finds higher salaries. A survey of administrators at 551 public and private four-year colleges and universities found that per-course compensation for part-time faculty ranged from \$3,171 to \$5,564 when colleges paid per course, and from \$869 to \$1,350 per credit hour when colleges paid that way.

At the lower end of these ranges for four-year institutions, an adjunct who is lucky enough to put together a full-time load by getting hired to teach five classes each for fall, spring, and summer might earn close to \$40,000 or as much as \$80,000. The problem is that it includes no benefits, and steady work is rarely guaranteed. And most adjuncts labor for far less money.

A fair wage—even in tough economic times—is a very basic demand. Anything less is exploitation. As James Papp writes in a July 2002 essay in *College English* called “Gleaning in Academe: Personal Decisions for Adjuncts and Graduate Students,” “I don’t believe a job in which someone would have to teach ten courses to surpass the earnings of the average high school graduate (\$21,680)—but without benefits—deserves an applicant with a master’s or doctoral degree.”

From my perspective, a minimum salary of \$4,000 per class seems a reasonable baseline. However, many colleges will continue to pay instructors far less. And until we refuse to work for abominably low wages, the exploitation seems sure to continue.

Works Cited

- “Non Tenure Track Faculty: The Landscape at U.S. Institutions of Higher Education.” Center for the Education of Women, University of Michigan, Nov. 2006. 11 July 2008. www.umich.edu/~cew/PDFs/NTTexecsumm06.pdf.
- Papp, James. “Opinion: Gleaning in Academe: Personal Decisions for Adjuncts and Graduate Students.” *College English* 64 (2002): 696–709.

Off the Tenure Track: The Tenuous Art of Adjuncting

Claudine Griggs

In a galaxy far away and long ago, when I was an undergraduate at Cal Poly, Pomona, majoring in English with a discrete sideline in economics, I read Robert Ringer’s *Winning through Intimidation*. After all, I wanted to be a winner. I wanted not to be intimidated. And I wanted to make money. One of Ringer’s key proclamations is “to get paid,” meaning that regardless of occupation or medium of exchange, remuneration must clear a bank somewhere. The currency may be in psychic dividends or hard cash, but winners take home checks. Losers go away empty-handed.

So, in my contemporary galaxy as a 54-year-old adjunct English instructor at Rhode Island College (RIC), I asked myself a few questions:

Have I been winning? Answer: I’ve managed a few timely extra-base hits along with some very big strikeouts. There are days when I’d rather clean the litter box than read student papers, but overall, things are OK by me.

Intimidation? I resist about as often as I capitulate. My preferred method is to go around obstacles when possible. This probably spells *wimp* to Ringer.

And how am I doing regarding legal tender for all debts public and private? By developing-world comparisons, pretty good. By corporate or even tenure-line standards, my salary is an embarrassment. But have I been paid by a reasonable measure of exchange? Could another occupation offer greater personal satisfaction? Mightn’t it be wise to move out of academia and into the real world where success is measured by the chips you take away from the table?

These are the questions that drive me crazy because I respond to them differ-

ently from month to month. But it seems that I rejected Ringer's gold standard in the spring of 2006 when I declined an opportunity to interview for a tenure-track position at a community college. I was happy teaching two English courses, writing as a freelancer, and dealing with the insecurity that goes with that life. Like a blended margarita, the concoction worked for me. But I wondered how other part-timers might view their situations, and in September 2007, I decided to ask.

Joyce Cote, Ph.D., an RIC adjunct who also held a full-time temporary position at the Community College of Rhode Island, says, "Adjuncting *could* be wonderful. I like the low level of institutional responsibility and the emphasis on teaching. This makes it easy to love the job. But as a single woman, real issues for me are income, health insurance, and job security. I am a little jealous of people who can afford to adjunct." Dr. Cote adds poignantly, "And the tenuousness of adjuncting sometimes wears away at my self-esteem."

Part-timer Thomas Harshman, Ph.D., who teaches at two institutions, likes the flexibility in scheduling courses along with "freedom from committee work and from expectations to attend conferences, to research, and to publish in academic journals." Adjuncts can "just show up, teach, and leave on a given day without shirking prescribed responsibilities. . . . Seems like a fair trade-off." On the other hand, says Harshman, "some people can make a satisfactory living by teaching on multiple campuses, taking on night classes and summer programs, but for many that is just too much. I would say it's a temporary solution until something better comes along."

Jim Kittredge has been an RIC part-timer for nineteen years, regularly works other jobs to make ends meet, and is in large part responsible for the union organization of adjunct faculty at Rhode Island College. He says, "Adjuncting is a fragile and unprotected position. It's hard to count on, and most people are in part-time situations by necessity, not choice. There's a lack of legitimate recognition combined with an institutional paternalism that can only be seen as demeaning and insulting." When asked what might improve the status of adjuncts, Kittredge responds, "The best hope is unionization, a kind of revolution without cutting people's heads off. The system as it is can really wear away at people year after year. Equity is important."

Dr. James Williams, a "full-timer," is Writing Program Administrator and Professor of Rhetoric and Linguistics at Soka University in Aliso Viejo, California. In response to my email query, he writes:

There clearly are many instances in which hiring an adjunct is both necessary and beneficial. In the majority of cases, however, the hiring of adjuncts is merely exploitation. They usually are paid a flat rate significantly below the pro rata that full-time professors receive for course overloads, and they usually do not receive any benefits.

The advantages, then, to the schools are significant, whereas those that accrue to the adjunct are not. This explains why on so many campuses we find that 50% or more of the classes are taught by adjuncts. Meanwhile, the typical adjunct is teaching part-time at two or three schools to make ends meet. . . . I have resisted hiring adjuncts throughout my career because I have been reluctant to be yet another enabler in the exploitation of people who deserve better. There have been occasions when, to borrow a phrase, resistance was futile. In those situations I did all I could to ensure equitable and professional treatment of adjuncts, and in the majority of instances, I was well pleased with what those I hired brought to the writing program, leading me to think that everyone might be better served if administrations would consolidate the numerous part-time positions into the equivalent full-time appointments and hire from the pool of adjuncts. Given the budgets of most schools, the increased financial cost would not be burdensome, and they would surely be offset by the knowledge that the schools were doing the right thing.

Equity *is* important. And despite my better-than-developing-world income, the ethereal late-night demons sometimes disturb my sleep. I worry that next semester's classes won't fill and I'll lose those professional relationships with students and colleagues that cement the pieces of my life together. I worry about loving the classroom too much because it might disappear into a budgetary black hole, without blame or malice, a simple derivative of red and black columns in a ledger. And I worry about other part-timers who manage their professional uncertainty with faint hope and a desperate regimen of excessive course loads at multiple institutions.

Adjuncting can be wonderful. It can benefit the institution. It can provide jobs for people who love to teach. But even considering that tenure-line faculty have service, committee, and publication responsibilities beyond many part-time colleagues, there seems to be a disquieting rift. People make up institutions. Institutions create castes. And some caste members are earning much less than others for similar work. I wonder what Robert Ringer would think about this feature of higher education?

Claudine Griggs is currently a part-time lecturer at Rhode Island College. Her publications include three nonfiction books and about a dozen articles.

A Brief Comparison of Teaching Assistantship and Adjunct Faculty Positions

Nicholas Behm

Many graduate students, upon completing their course work, consider relinquishing their teaching assistantships in favor of adjunct appointments. As adjuncts, they

can make more money and have more opportunities to teach a variety of classes. Furthermore, if they live in a larger metropolitan area with several community colleges or universities, they could have an opportunity to experience a wider array of institutions than they could as a TA (many universities prohibit TAs from teaching at other institutions). The extra experience could help them narrow their job search while strengthening their vita. From discussions with colleagues at conferences and at my home institution, I have gleaned that the relinquishing of TA-ships in favor of adjunct positions may be a growing trend. If so, it could have a major impact on the discipline. In an attempt to help teaching assistants to consider this decision carefully, I'll examine a few of the major differences between the two types of positions, both of which I have served in simultaneously at different schools.

Although TAs and adjuncts are often grouped together as exploited and marginalized teachers, there are substantial differences between the two groups. Adjunct faculty are possibly more marginalized and probably positioned less advantageously than teaching assistants. Because they are paid per course and teach four to six courses a semester, adjunct faculty probably make more money than teaching assistants, but more than likely, neither earns a livable wage. As the CCCC Committee on Part-Time/Adjunct Issues reports in its survey of twenty-one freestanding writing programs, part-time/adjunct faculty make about \$2,700 per course, which averages to \$21,500 per year if they teach eight courses per academic year (341). Even if adjunct salaries, on average, have increased since the CCCC report, I imagine they are still a far cry from the \$6,200 to \$8,800 that the MLA Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities recommends be paid to adjunct faculty per course.

Although adjunct faculty may make more money, most likely neither TAs nor adjuncts have health insurance or any other benefits. TAs may have some semblance of job security, though: although their positions and funding are contingent upon successful completion of degree requirements, TAs know that they will be assigned classes and that they will be earning at least some money because most universities make four-, five- or six-year commitments to teaching assistants. The psychological and emotional benefits of this assumed security cannot be overstated. With a much less chaotic teaching life, TAs may be able to devote more energy to their scholarship and to improving their pedagogy. Moreover, this sense of security creates an important intangible learning experience: it helps TAs develop a feel for what it's like to be a teacher-scholar in a full-time position. What is more, because TAs may have less stressful teaching lives (without having to experience the common freeway flying of "gypsy" adjuncts), they may be better positioned to finish their degrees. The increased responsibilities and time commitments

required by adjuncts' substantial teaching loads may take precedence over the work required for completing degree requirements, especially the dissertation, significantly stalling progress on the degree, as well as success within the discipline.

One of the more important advantages that teaching assistants may have over adjuncts is being constantly embedded within a scholarly environment. Because teaching assistants are involved in the inner workings of a department for multiple years, they are more likely to be assimilated into the departmental culture and thus more likely to develop productive dialogical relationships with the faculty and staff. These relationships provide opportunities for collaboration on articles, presentations, workshops, assessments, administrative work, and novel teaching strategies, and help teaching assistants work on their scholarly craft and improve as teachers and writers. In addition, they provide opportunities for networking within the profession and demonstrating one's knowledge and expertise.

It is much more difficult for adjunct faculty to develop productive interdepartmental relationships and take advantage of professional opportunities for several reasons: First, they generally are not at the same institution long enough to be integrated into the culture of a department and, as a result, they are not able to develop close professional relationships. Second, even if they do teach at the same institution for multiple years, their disproportionate, onerous workloads and poor working conditions preclude any opportunities for developing close relationships or for participating in extemporaneous hallway conversations. What Linda Robertson, Sharon Crowley, and Frank Lentricchia suggest in "The Wyoming Conference Resolution Opposing Unfair Salaries and Working Conditions for Post-Secondary Teachers of Writing" still rings true in our current disciplinary economic conditions: due to their marginal, disenfranchised positions and to the unmanageable working conditions, adjunct faculty may be unable to develop their scholarly talents.

Third, because adjuncts may be—as J. M. Gappa and D. W. Leslie call them—the "invisible faculty," they may not have their contributions recognized or be offered opportunities for departmental support. As the CCCC Committee on Part-Time/Adjunct Issues reports, adjuncts are not as likely to be invited to or to vote in departmental meetings, have access to travel funds to attend professional conferences and workshops, or have opportunities to apply for institutional grants in order to conduct research (341–343), which means they are less likely to attend conferences where they might be able to voice their concerns and relate their narratives. Certainly, the major conferences in composition studies have panels, committees, and forums that discuss part-time/adjunct issues; however, even with this exposure, there has been negligible positive impact since the "Wyoming

Resolution” on the economic conditions that ensure the disenfranchised status and unmanageable working conditions of adjunct faculty (Harris).

Lastly, when TAs finish their degrees and enter the job market as newly minted Ph.D.s, they may have an advantage over adjuncts applying for the same positions. In “Dossier on Shared Borders, Contested Boundaries: Part-Time Faculty, ‘Others,’ and the Profession,” Frances Kavenik et al. suggest that hiring committees may favor the allure and promise of “fresh graduates over the *actual productions* of temp profs and others” (31, emphasis in original). This possible advantage may have to do with the conflation of adjunct faculty’s marginalized status with a misperception of them as merely teachers who do not conduct research or publish (Kavenik et al. 38, 47). Hiring committees may think adjuncts deserve their marginalized positions because of some ostensible inability to survive in the publish-or-perish world of full-timers and may therefore be hesitant to offer adjuncts full-time positions. However, this misperception doesn’t seem to be similarly associated with teaching assistants.

I hope this discussion does encourage more research into whether there is a growing trend for advanced graduate students to relinquish their TA-ships in favor of adjunct positions and what the possible causes and consequences of this trend might be.

Works Cited

- CCCC Committee on Part-Time/Adjunct Issues. “Report on the Coalition on the Academic Workforce/CCCC Survey of Faculty in Freestanding Writing Programs for Fall 1999.” *College Composition and Communication* 53 (2001): 336–48.
- Gappa, J. M., and D. W. Leslie. *The Invisible Faculty: Improving the Status of Part-Timers in Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993.
- Harris, Joseph. “Meet the New Boss, Same as the Old Boss: Class Consciousness in Composition.” *College Composition and Communication* 52 (2000): 43–68.
- Kavenik, Frances, et al. “Dossier on Shared Borders, Contested Boundaries: Part-Time Faculty, ‘Others,’ and the Profession.” *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 30 (1997): 29–51.
- MLA Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities. “MLA Recommendation on Minimum Per-Course Compensation for Part-Time Faculty Members.” 16 July 2007. 10 Oct 2007. http://www.mla.org/mla_recommendation_course.
- Robertson, Linda R., Sharon Crowley, and Frank Lentricchia. “The Wyoming Conference Resolution Opposing Unfair Salaries and Working Conditions for Post-Secondary Teachers of Writing.” *College English* 49 (1987): 274–80.

Nicholas Behm is an assistant professor at Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, Illinois. He recently completed his doctoral degree at Arizona State University. He would like to thank Greg Glau for his comments on this essay.

Weak Ties and Academic Community

Fred Johnson

In *Academic Keywords* (1999), Stephen Watt calls for departments to be “committed to forging a *community*” wherein all scholars, regardless of hiring status, are supported in both intellectual work and professional development (151–52). *Profession 2006*’s special section on collegiality shows the continuing relevance of Watt’s call. Jeffrey Theis, writing there, makes departmental mailrooms a metaphor for collegiality problems, concluding that adjuncts, so often isolated from their colleagues, suffer most from “[t]he anonymity of the mailbox” and that “second-class status” is certain for adjuncts unless they are “careful to forge connections with tenured faculty members” (90). I highlight these two essays about a much-discussed set of problems because both call for active “forging” of a connected scholarly community, a worthy goal often frustrated by communication breakdown. Community forging is a complicated proposition, of course, and there are no easy fixes for the institutional issues contributing to departmental disunity, but here I want to suggest how attention to “weak ties” in our departments can help us to address day-to-day troubles under imperfect conditions.

Sociologist Mark Granovetter explores the paradoxical *strength* of our weakest interpersonal ties, noting what seems obvious once said: that our closest interpersonal connections cannot be counted on to bring us new information and ideas because those individuals tend to know the same people and information we do. Generally, it is those to whom we are less intimately connected—our weak ties—who know what we do not. The paradox, then, is that the person with many weak ties has a good chance of enhancing communication between otherwise separated or tenuously joined groups, whereas an excess of strong ties in a community can “lead to overall fragmentation” since the flip side of sticking together is exclusion of outsiders (1378). Thus, when we set out to forge stronger ties between departmental factions, our “weak ties” become powerful assets.

Like many departments, mine includes a large adjunct faculty responsible mainly for entry-level courses and a smaller tenure-line faculty in control, to various degrees, of management functions like hiring, scheduling, and curriculum development. Seven of our classrooms, located in a dormitory basement, illustrate

both the practical problems that attend such stratification—even when all involved are well-intentioned—and the way that weak ties can help to overcome those problems. These classrooms are excellent tech-rich spaces for teaching new literacies, but as high-tech classrooms shoehorned into rooms designed for chalkboards and chairs, they are imperfect first drafts, in need of revision. Every writing program adjunct knows that, but few are familiar with the complicated technology upgrade process. Though some of our tenured faculty do know about technology requests, few teach freshman composition, so they rarely venture into the basement. As a practical matter, our two large, strongly tied departmental factions have such different daily concerns that they often fail to communicate about mundane issues like the difficulty of switching between video sources at quirky teaching stations. Problems in the basement, then, tend to be material results of a fractured community.

In 2004, when, as a Ph.D. candidate, I had recently accepted a part-time teaching contract, my writing program administrator (WPA) asked me to help develop two “laptop-ready” teaching spaces in the basement, a request that led, by and by, to my continued involvement with departmental technology development. I soon realized that few departmental characters are richer in weak university ties than the graduate student turned adjunct. I had been a teaching assistant, served as a graduate assistant for study-abroad programs, worked summers at the museum, and run a grant program associated with several campus centers and departments. I had also, of course, taken graduate courses with the tenure-line English faculty. Through continuing advisee relationships with them, shared pedagogical concerns with the adjuncts, and my general knowledge of the university, I was, though newly hired, extraordinarily *in*. But I was an outsider, too. I was highly connected to the tenured faculty as a student but not (obviously) an insider in that group. I was a member of the adjunct faculty but presumably a short-timer, another *vita* on the market. And, in spite of my years at the university, I was a novice adjunct, new to committee structures, annual reports, the weight of student evaluations, and the frustrations of operating at a remove from critical decision-making. So I was weakly connected everywhere, central to nothing.

But with my range of connections and experiences—having either taught or learned in every type of departmental classroom, and having firsthand knowledge of teaching styles all over the department—I was surprisingly well positioned to help shepherd technology development. I kept the contract faculty advised of and advisory to the process, and that, alongside my practical knowledge of entry-level classes, helped me tailor changes to our needs and account for emergent snafus. I also talked with the tenure-line faculty, communicating both the importance of improving adjunct working conditions and the ways that our basement laptop

solutions could be translated into department-wide solutions to fit various teaching styles. I talked with the whole English faculty about the sometimes-vexing planning, purchasing, and renovation processes, spreading knowledge about tech development as I looked for ways to make the processes work more smoothly and reliably for us. As a result, the department is now having more unified conversations about technology, with concerns about improving those basement classrooms fitting into a more inclusive development agenda.

But there is too much of me, alone, in that paragraph. My weak ties facilitated information flow, but my contributions depended on our WPA's vision, our chair's securing of the dean's support, the backing of the faculty in general, and the work of university personnel. All those different kinds of ties, all those conduits for information and ideas, matter; it is connectivity, not one person or group, that is critical. If we wish to answer Watt's call, address mailroom alienation, or reject what Linda Hutcheon calls the "subtractive logic" of corporate competition (62), we must find some means for letting each other know about—and share in—the struggles, victories, and strengths of peers all over the department. Every faculty contains an idiosyncratic array of intradepartmental clusters—from adjunct and tenured groups to unpredictable clusters defined by, say, shared interests or hiring dates. A list of such groups can reveal departmental *incoherence*, but it also provides clues about highly connected characters who might facilitate the always-ongoing process of community formation. Though stratification and power gaps between us work against the creation of a roundly supportive scholarly community, this notion of weak ties—constantly forming, breaking, and reshaping the departmental social network—suggests one means to facilitate progress, at least, toward community-building goals.

Fred Johnson, having spent several years teaching as an adjunct and, before that, as a graduate assistant at Ball State University, recently accepted a tenure-line position teaching writing and American literature for Whitworth University.

Works Cited

- Granovetter, Mark. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973): 1360–80.
- Hutcheon, Linda. "Saving Collegiality." *Profession 2006*. New York: MLA, 2006. 60–64.
- Theis, Jeffrey. "Collegiality and the Department Mailbox: Subdivide and Conquer." *Profession 2006*. New York: MLA, 2006. 87–94.
- Watt, Stephen. "Faculty." *Academic Keywords: A Devil's Dictionary for Higher Education*. New York: Routledge, 1999. 132–52.

A Retired Administrator in the Classroom: Advice for Full-Time Faculty and Administrators

Sallyanne H. Fitzgerald

Two years ago when I retired from community college administration, I was apprehensive about returning to teaching. While the transition has not been without some bumps, in general, I have been pleasantly surprised. And I would like to share some ideas about how full-time faculty as well as administrators can make a difference in the life of a part-time faculty member.

Full-Time Faculty Influence

I discovered how important it is to help part-timers understand curriculum when I was a chair and a dean doing classroom observations. To help them understand the English department's curriculum philosophy, I interviewed them with that philosophy in mind, gave them materials explaining the philosophy, and then invited them to staff-development days. However, those approaches did not always result in revised classroom practice. As a result, we created a volunteer mentor program in which a full-time English faculty member who would not be evaluating the part-timer was paired with an English part-timer who requested a mentor. One of my best teachers and most professionally involved full-time English faculty members received a small amount of release time to coordinate the mentors, and she also developed regular workshops for part-timers on topics such as "Dealing with Difficult Students." When, after retiring, I was hired at Polk Community College (PCC), I was delighted to be provided with a full-time faculty mentor. Their program is much more clearly designed than ours was and includes a classroom observation by the mentor, feedback on my assignments and grading, and reports of student success.

Not only do mentors make a difference, but so do the equipment and facilities available to part-timers. When I first became a part-time instructor back in the mid-1970s, my California community college had no handbook, no access to secretaries, and no office. As a part-timer in St. Louis in the 1980s, I felt fortunate to share a desk in a full-timer's office. That St. Louis college also had an orientation for part-timers, with dinner provided. As a chair, remembering my own experiences, I was delighted that my California community college insisted that language arts full-timers share their offices with part-timers. The college gave part-timers email after three semesters and a voicemail box as soon as they started. Once we put computers on all faculty desks, they had access to the office computers. However, like all

the other colleges I worked at, the secretary was for the full-timers or for me as the administrator—she did not take messages or help part-timers other than answer questions for them. Imagine my delight when I discovered that not only would the PCC secretary answer questions, but she would also provide me with supplies, take messages from students, and put their papers in my mailbox. But more than that, both of the staff knew my name almost immediately and never failed to greet me every time I walked through the office. Something similar happened when I was greeted at the Vero campus of Indian River Community College (IRCC) by a full-timer who showed me around the area and helped me find the copier and mailboxes. Both colleges have computers in a workroom area for part-timers to use and also gave me an email address.

Even more important than a welcoming atmosphere and access to equipment is the way that full-time faculty can facilitate the part-timers' success by helping with student issues. Knowing someone to ask without bothering the chair or dean about college procedures such as reinstatement of a dropped student or discipline procedures or even the absence policy makes the part-timer's life easier, but it also helps facilitate student success.

Administrator Influence

Like full-time faculty, administrators can also facilitate the success of part-time instructors. Beginning with the interview process, the administrator sets the tone for the new English instructor. Both at PCC and at IRCC, meeting with the chair/dean was a delightful experience. I was treated as a professional, and books and materials were provided. Most important, my schedule was discussed. As a chair, I had tried to schedule part-timers for a year at a time so that I could "beat" out the opposition by getting commitments early. In fall 2007, I was offered a full-time temporary position at PCC with an office and computer and even my name on the door. I have felt like a real person! Regretfully, I remember when I had refused to order name plates for temporary full-timers in my college. The name plates were about \$4.00, and for that I could have made some people feel as if they really belonged. Finally, the most interaction a part-timer usually has, besides a mentor, is with the chair or dean and his or her secretary. In addition to knowing the person's name, if an administrator just stops by to say hello, it can make a tremendous difference in the way part-timers feel about the college and the amount of effort they put into their jobs. But more than that, offering help with professional development is something that is really appreciated. As a chair, I involved part-timers in professional presentations, invited them to staff development, paid them to be readers for a pilot project for English placement. But what I felt most strongly about

was helping them get full-time jobs, so I regularly ran a hiring workshop to make visible the sometimes-obscure hiring process, offered to read their materials, and did mock interviews with them.

So what can full-timers and administrators do to make sure that their part-timers are successful? Make them welcome. Explain the college culture to them. Provide mentors. Open staff development opportunities to them. Encourage staff to help them and to know their names. Offer them access to offices and equipment. Such efforts will pay dividends in people who treat students with consideration while upholding the standards set in the curriculum and who are the professionals we all want as part of our colleges.

Sallyanne H. Fitzgerald retired as a California community college administrator in 2006. She is currently a full-time temporary English teacher at Polk Community College in Lakeland, Florida, but will rejoin the part-time community college faculty there and at Indian River Community College in spring 2009.

Adjunct Incognito: Joining the Blogosphere

Holly Pappas

I started blogging about four years ago, curious about this technology I'd only heard about and looking for some way to connect more satisfactorily with colleagues. By then, having taught as an adjunct at a community college for two years, I'd discovered that with heavy teaching loads and hectic schedules there was little time for conversation. That frustrated and disappointed and angered me. I hoped that blogs could be the electronic version of the coffee hours my professor-father had described in the 1960s and 1970s, a (flexible) time and a (virtual) space to share ideas, assignments, articles. As a teacher, I have been delighted by the opportunities for connection and creativity and stimulation that blogs have given me over the past four years; what's increasingly apparent to me, though, is the psychological benefit blogs have given me as an adjunct.

I'll start with a bold assertion: All academics should blog. After all, they all write, and blogs have many advantages over the more conventional venue of peer-reviewed journals: they are at once more informal, more immediate, and more interactive.

For those not quite ready to start their own blog, reading blogs is a good start as a quick, convenient way to gather some new ideas about selecting texts, sequencing assignments, using technology in the classroom (a natural interest for many

bloggers), and other topics colleagues might chat about in the hallway if they had time to stop and talk. In contrast to these imaginary hallway chats, though, the blog format allows more space and time for deeper reflection and the potential for many more voices to chime in, from all over the country (or world) and from different types of institutions. (Kairosnews gives a list of blogs to start with at <http://kairosnews.org/node/3719>, and on its blog most people give a list of the blogs they regularly read, one basic way of connecting in the blogosphere.)

Normally all bloggers begin without an audience. Though audience is in some ways the *point* of this public writing, still I had many private motivations for starting my blog *Re: Thinking, Teaching, Writing* (http://hapappas.typepad.com/re_thinking_teaching_writ/): to have an accessible and secure repository for my reflections, to collect links and responses to articles, to publish my own sonnet if I felt like it (and, once, I did).

As months went by, I started to develop a (very) small audience, by inviting colleagues to drop by the blog (few came) and by commenting on or linking to other people's blogs. I began to appreciate audience in a new way, to understand again (as I had years earlier in writing workshops) how an awareness of audience can exert a positive pressure to get me started writing and to keep me writing. The informal-yet-public nature of blogging helped both as a prod and an incentive. It's an important lesson I wanted my students to understand, and it was something I started to think about in terms of developing those more public audiences for my students.

Once bloggers develop an audience, the value of blogging's interactive nature becomes apparent in its potential for connecting with others, sharing information, asking questions, provoking debate. Before I started blogging, for example, I'd come across an interesting article I'd want to share. I'd have visions of running through the halls, waving the article over my head. Now I could blog those articles with a link if the article is available electronically, or through summary or excerpt if it's not. I could throw out questions: What topics have you used in theme-based classes? Has anybody tried to use magazines as texts in a comp class? Does the analogy "writer is to rhetorician as juggler is to physicist" hold water?

As I began to bring this relatively new technology into the classroom, I shifted from course management software to blogs and wikis. I found that some students were already familiar with blogs through sites like LiveJournal and MySpace, and were eager to use them in class, while for others it was a harder sell, especially with the diverse populations we find at a community college.

In addition to struggling (sometimes) with the technology myself, I also think it's important that as a writing teacher I should be writing, immersing myself in the

process along with my students, to be able to bring into the classroom my own excitements and fears, my struggles with procrastination, my own sense of the difficulties and pleasures of this challenging activity we try to teach.

My blogging has expanded over the years. A few years after I started blogging, I became a contributor to the group blog Community College English (<http://cce.typepad.com/cce/>), and I took over the administration of that blog in January 2008.

During this time, my understanding of my position as an adjunct faculty member, one of the Faculty Without Offices who come out of the woodwork for the beginning-of-the-semester meetings, has deepened as well. *Adjunct English*, they explain to the full-time faculty at my community college who smile vaguely in our direction. (After several years, I begin to refuse to label myself that way.) The full-timers assure us that *we value the work that you do*, unaware of the condescension those words convey. (In the classroom I do the same work that you do, I think to myself.) The beginning-of-the-semester luncheon reminds me of lunchtime in the junior high cafeteria when I scanned the tables, looking vainly for someone I knew well enough to sit with. When classes start the next day, I schlep my bookbag across campus and in between classes hope to find a free computer in one of the six cubicles shared by 380 adjuncts. The humiliations of adjunct life are well documented.

Through blogging I preserve my self-respect. I carve out a professional identity. I have a voice that is not diminished by my lowly rank. Blogging has been invaluable to my psychological well-being, damping down my bitterness and frustration.

One blog I read when I started was the Invisible Adjunct, published for just over a year in 2003–2004. In that influential blog, a history Ph.D. wrote anonymously about her life as an adjunct, the inequities of the adjunct system, and the psychological toll it extracts from its victims, describing how it rendered her invisible everywhere on campus *except* in the classroom. My goal in blogging is substantially different: not to examine the adjunct situation but rather to transcend it, to rise above all the local humiliations by setting my sights on a wider audience.

Holly Pappas teaches composition at Bristol Community College and preaches the virtues of blogging to anyone who will listen.

For complimentary offprints of *FORUM*, call NCTE's Customer Service at (877) 369-6283; or email jbartlett@ncte.org.