



The Society for the Study of Social Problems

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November 11, 2020

Mr. Robert J. Morse, Chief Data Strategist,
Mr. Eric Brooks, Senior Data Strategist, and
Mr. Matt Mason, Product Manager, Education
U.S. News and World Report
1050 Thomas Jefferson St. NW
Washington, DC 20007

Dear Mr. Morse, Mr. Brooks, and Mr. Mason:

We are writing on behalf of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP), one of the oldest and most respected social science organizations in the country, with members from across the country and numerous countries outside of the United States. We would like to ask *U.S. News and World Report* to consider and hopefully implement a recommendation from the SSSP membership (please see the enclosed resolution approved by our membership), requesting that you assign more weight and importance to colleges' and universities' use and treatment of adjunct or part-time, non-tenure track, faculty in your assessment and ranking of these institutions.

As you know, the impact of adjunct or contingent faculty in higher education has increased dramatically in the past few decades, and is likely to increase in the future, in part as a consequence of the pandemic. Non-tenure track faculty constitute over 70% of the instructional workforce. They are, indeed, the new teaching majority. *US News and World Report* currently weighs the use of non-tenure track faculty at one percent of the total. It is included under "Faculty Resources" and calculated as "proportion of faculty who are full time." In contrast, only full-time, tenure track faculty are included in your compensation statistics, at seven percent of the total.

We believe that institutions' increased reliance on non-tenure track faculty, and prospective students' and their parents' desire to have as much information as possible in their selection of a school, calls for the inclusion of adjunct faculty's salaries and benefits as well. By including the difference between full-time, tenure track faculty compensation and that of non-tenure track faculty, the measure of non-tenure track faculty proportion becomes much more meaningful. Furthermore, including the percentage of non-tenure track faculty with terminal degrees would also be very helpful for students and their parents as they make one of the most important decisions in their lives.

In closing, and especially if we have not convinced you, we hope that you will give us the opportunity to make the case with you. Thank you, in advance, for your consideration of our request and recommendation.

Sincerely,

Héctor L. Delgado, Ph.D.
Executive Officer, SSSP

Keith R. Johnson, Ph.D.
Independent Scholar

Jill Niebrugge-Brantley, Ph.D.
The George Washington University

Enclosure

Resolution to Support Improved Conditions for Contingent/Adjunct or Non-Tenure Track Faculty

Submitted by: Keith R. Johnson and Gillian Niebrugge-Brantley

1. **Whereas**, there has been a shift in higher education over the last half-century so that “tenure system faculty are now a privileged minority” (Report of the ASA Task Force 2019: 6—hereafter Task Force) and over 50% of instructors in public and private institutions of higher education are now “contingent” or “adjunct” faculty (GAO 2017: 15, n32)—a condition so pervasive that one organization representing these instructors is titled “The New Faculty Majority.” This shift has been accompanied and achieved by a policy of deliberately ignoring the crucial role and plight of non-tenure track faculty in higher education today. One example of this is the confusing range of titles for these faculty, that are frequently employed in contradictory ways among institutions.

2. **Whereas**, what we do know about the treatment of these faculty is that it is not good: it is detrimental to the state of higher education and the workers who labor as non-tenure track faculty. Non-tenure track faculty workers are typically employed under the following conditions, all of which create a condition of precarity:

a. low salaries— “Overall, part-time faculty respondents report low compensation rates across all institutional categories. Toutkoushian and Bellas (2003) found that part-time faculty earn approximately 60% less than comparable full-time faculty in institutional salary when expressed on an hourly basis.” (Task Force 2019: 14)

b. absence of benefits— “Benefits are a particular problem for part-time faculty. The CAW survey (2012) found that only 22% of contingent faculty respondents had access to health insurance coverage through their academic employer. The American Federation of Teachers offered similar findings in a 2010 survey, which found that 28% of part-time faculty had health coverage through their academic employment. “Health insurance benefits appear to be linked with course load,” the latter survey found. “Just 11 percent of those who teach only one course receive employer health benefits, while 26 percent of those who teach two courses and 39 percent who teach three courses or more receive benefits.” (AFT 2010: 14) (Task Force 2019: 14)

c. job security is minimal, contracts are typically issued only around the start of a term, if at all; renewal is typically not guaranteed; (Task Force 2019: 15)

d. non-tenure track faculty are typically excluded from participation in governance at the institution and from professional development opportunities; (Task Force 2019: 21)

e. office space ranges from shared to non-existent; (Task Force 2019: 21)

f. computers and copying facilities are typically sub-standard and restricted. (Task Force 2019: 21)

3. **Whereas**, this combination of conditions is detrimental to the educational experience, leading to:

a. lack of time to prepare syllabi and all the problems attendant on that first difficulty; (Task Force 2019: 18)

- b. being forced to order texts at the last moment; (Task Force 2019: 19)
- c. working without adequate access to computer, copying, and library facilities; (Task Force 2019: 18)
- d. working without orientation to governing policies for student conduct; (Task Force 2019: 19)
- e. working around a substandard office situation (frequently having to meet students in coffee shops or one's car); (Task Force 2019: 20-21)
- f. having to teach at more than one institution in order to earn a living wage; (Task Force 2019: 18, 21)
- g. going unrewarded, unaided, and unrecognized for one's own scholarly achievements. (Task Force 2019: 21-22)

4. **Whereas**, because this condition of precarity, maintained by low salaries and lack of job security, gives administrators more flexibility in terms of costs and scheduling, administrators have little interest in improving the situation for non-tenure track faculty, which frequently function as part of the institution's financial margin.

5. **Therefore, be it resolved** that SSSP request *US News and World Report*, in its widely used rankings and assessment of colleges and universities in the United States, to include as a criterion how well institutions provide for non-tenure track faculty. The following criteria should be included as components of the final evaluation:

- a. qualifications of the non-tenure track faculty as compared with tenure-system faculty at the institution;
- b. salaries as compared with tenure-system faculty at the institution;
- c. benefits as compared with tenure-system faculty at the institution;
- d. inclusion in governance as compared with tenure-system faculty at the institution;
- e. office space and access to technology and library resources as compared with tenure-system faculty at the institution;
- f. professional development opportunities as compared with tenure-system faculty at the institution;
- g. job security as compared with tenure-system faculty at the institution.

Members of SSSP would be happy to be available to editors to help in the production of this new criteria.