

Better Working Conditions for Faculty = Better Learning Conditions for Students



Adjunct or “contingent” faculty—1.3 million non-tenure-track professors—teach the majority of U.S. college and university students, often under near-impossible working conditions. For the sake of the students who are America’s future, that must change.

TODAY’S REALITIES

- **Highly educated adjuncts are among the working poor.** More than 75 percent of the instructional workforce in U.S. colleges and universities are adjuncts and 50 percent are part-timers. On average, they earn about \$25,000 per year—just above the official poverty level of \$24,250 for a family of four. Moreover, most adjuncts are not eligible for unemployment compensation or public service loan forgiveness generally receive neither health nor retirement benefits. They have no job security, regardless of performance.
- **Poor working conditions limit opportunities for meaningful contact with students.** Mentoring, advising, and informal meetings with faculty are key to student success. Yet many adjuncts don’t have offices on their campuses, office hours for students, or time to write recommendations for students—their time is spent instead traveling from campus to campus, from job to job.
- **Restore the focus on the core mission of higher education: teaching students.** Now more than ever, post-secondary education is a necessary step on the road to invention, personal growth, and success in the global economy of the 21st century. We need to invest in faculty—the backbone of higher education—to equip the next generation of Americans to succeed in school and in life.

CHANGE IS NEEDED

- **The next Higher Education Act (HEA) should provide incentives to institutions to reverse the trend toward contingent labor and to invest in a well-supported, predominantly full-time and tenure-track faculty.** The next HEA also should require accrediting agencies to implement standards that include improved working conditions for contingent faculty such as fair pay, better benefits, access to resources such as professional development, and full participation in faculty work.
- **Make contingent faculty eligible for public service loan forgiveness.** The Adjunct Faculty Loan Fairness Act of 2015 (S. 1556), introduced by Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL), would allow part-time faculty to participate in federal public service loan forgiveness programs.
- **Make contingent faculty eligible for unemployment compensation between academic terms.** U.S. Department of Labor guidance on what constitutes “reasonable assurance” of another job offer must be updated to enable contingent faculty to qualify, as they do under legislation passed by the states of California and Washington.