Unequal Pay for Equal Work?
Universities' Exploitation of Adjunct Labor

What is "contingent labor" or "contingent faculty"?
- The term *contingent faculty* refers to non-tenure track faculty and includes both part-time and full-time faculty members.
- At CUNY, contingent faculty are mostly made up of faculty members called *adjuncts* who may teach part-time or full-time but are not considered full faculty members.

How is the experience of an adjunct different from a full, tenured, or tenure-track faculty member?
- Adjunct faculty often do exactly the same work as full faculty members (e.g. teach, grade, research and publish, advise students, etc.) and they usually possess the same advanced degrees or are working toward them (Masters or Doctoral degrees)
- Many adjuncts teach more classes than tenured or tenure-track faculty members. Despite doing the same work, however, adjunct faculty have a very different experience from tenured or tenure-track faculty in several ways.

Compensation
- Adjuncts receive much less pay than full, tenured professors:
  > Salary for a full professor at CUNY ranges from **$66,799-$194,039**.[1]
  > An adjunct teaching *more than full time* (3 courses/semester) receives a starting annual income of **$18,722.**
- To put this in perspective, the median income for a New Yorker with no more than a high school education or GED in 2007 was **$28,077**.
- This means that adjuncts at CUNY earn almost ***$10,000 less than*** New Yorkers with only a high school diploma, despite having a much higher level of education and performing a job traditionally considered that of a "professional."
- When compared to New York residents with the same education level, the pay for CUNY adjuncts is even more shocking: in 2007 the average income for a New Yorker with any graduate or professional degree was **$63,669**. That means that starting wages for an adjunct teaching a full load at CUNY are less than a third of what other New Yorkers with similar educations earn!
- Added to these low wages, adjuncts who have taught at CUNY for many years have actually seen their economic status *decline* with the years rather than increase with their length of service.
- Since adjunct wages have not kept pace with the increasing cost of living and inflation, an adjunct actually earns *less* now (in real dollars) than they did in earlier years.[2]

Job Security
- Adjuncts have virtually no job security.
- Since they are hired on either a semester-by-semester or a yearly basis, they have little assurance that their job will be there in the future, even if they have been teaching at a school for many years!

Benefits
- As with wages and job security, adjuncts receive far fewer benefits than full faculty members. For example, adjuncts at CUNY have to teach for two consecutive semesters just to become eligible for health insurance and if their teaching load drops below six hours they automatically lose their health coverage.
- Doctoral student adjuncts who teach one or more course per semester are eligible for health insurance through the state of New York. Students who are not employed at CUNY or who are earning Master's Degrees are not eligible for this insurance. When students lose their teaching positions, they also lose their health insurance!

Growing Reliance on "Contingent Labor" in American Universities and at CUNY
There is a startling trend over the last thirty years or so, and especially in the last ten years, of increasing reliance on "contingent faculty." Consider the following figures:
- In 1969 only 3.3 % of full-time faculty appointments were not tenure-track.
- Non-tenure-track positions of all types now account for 65% of all faculty appointments in American higher education.
- Between 1998 and 2001, the number of full-time non-tenure-track positions grew by 35.5%.
- At CUNY, ***more than half*** of the teaching faculty are non-tenure track and the administration has called for a further increase in the number of contingent faculty.

---

[1] PSC-CUNY Salary Schedules: http://www.psc-cuny.org/SalarySchedules.htm and Chancellor's University Report 2009: www.cuny.edu

[2] Ellen Balleisen, "Adjunct Pay: More Experience Means Less Money," *The Advocate*, April, 2007.

Although adjuncts are talented, committed professionals, their work conditions *hurt students and the whole university:*
- When adjuncts are overworked and underpaid, they have less time and energy to devote to each class and each student.
- A critical element in a functional university is *fair compensation for comparable work* – this will improve students' experience along with that of adjunct faculty.
- When adjuncts' *academic freedom* is threatened by limited job security, students suffer because they are exposed to a less diverse, less exciting set of ideas and approaches.
- When there is high turnover rate among adjunct faculty, students may be unable to take another course with (or even locate) an instructor they studied with in the past.

CUNY administrators justify their reliance on "contingent faculty" by citing budget constraints. In other words, adjuncts represent a cheaper labor force which is an attractive option when considering financial matters.
- For this reason, CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein claims CUNY must retain the "flexibility" that comes with a majority adjunct workforce.
- However, consider the fact that in 1975, for 250,784 students, CUNY employed 11,300 full, tenured, or tenure-track faculty, and today, for 225,962 students, CUNY employs only 6,817 full, tenured, or tenure-track faculty.[3] That's almost half the amount of full faculty today for fewer students than in 1975.
- These statistics are even more shocking when we consider that CUNY *did not charge tuition before 1976*.

What are adjuncts doing to address this crisis in the universities?
- Many campaigns by "contingent faculty" have sprung up in recent history, and all attempt to address the issues raised above. One example of organizing on a national level is carried out by the COCAL (Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor.)
- Within CUNY, adjuncts, along with full-time faculty members, have attempted to utilize their union, the Professional Staff Congress (PSC).
- They have also formed groups such as The Adjunct Project (AP) and CUNY Contingents Unite (CCU).
- In the last round of contract negotiations, adjunct demands included wage increases, a greater degree of job security, and benefits for adjunct faculty.
- The primary gain to come out of the most recent contract for adjuncts was health insurance for graduate student employees.
- Pay inequity, job insecurity, and a lack of other benefits such as parental leave and sick days still negatively affect adjuncts lives.

What is CUNY Equity Week?
CUNY Equity Week is a week of action that seeks to focus attention on the increasing and exploitative contingent employment practices in our colleges and universities and the problems resulting from these practices. Many individuals or groups who participate in CUNY Equity Week are also concerned with what they see as "the corporatization of higher education."

Discussion Questions for your classes:
- What do you think we mean when we say "the *corporatization* or *neoliberalization* of higher education?"
- What evidence is there for this trend in universities? At CUNY?
- What does CUNY Equity Week have to do with students or with this class?
- What does *tenure* mean and how does receiving tenure change a faculty member's status or experience?
- What is *academic freedom*?
- How does having no *job security* limit academic freedom for adjunct faculty?
- How does limiting academic freedom affect your learning environment?
- Why should students care about the growing numbers of "contingent" workers at CUNY and at universities in general?
- Why does CUNY continue to employ so many "contingent" faculty members?
- How can students help address the academic labor crisis?
- Why should you get involved?

Adjuncts, students, and full faculty can work together to address the academic labor crisis! Get involved!

---

[3] "Hiring Spree at CUNY?" AFT Blog: Face Talk, August 2007 (http://aftblog.blogs.com/face/2007/08/hiring-spree-at.html)