



by Nathalie Rozot

The explosion in adjunct faculty members has served to underscore the R&D funding crisis for this group of part-time teacher/scholars

The heartfelt thank you notes I receive from students are not only rewarding, they are also informative. My thesis students might find the high standards of research, analysis, and critical and conceptual ideas I hold them to demanding, but then generally, they are proud of their progress and results. The knowledge and experience I bring to this process mainly comes from my independent critical study: I allocate estimable resources to my research and development, and a significant amount of time to reading, thinking and more recently writing—but this research is on me.

In *The Adjunct Project*, Cindy E. Hill writes “The Adjunct Model: a Good Thing Gone Wrong.” I agree for several reasons and will focus on one. Today’s educational system relies on both a contingent teaching faculty and an outdated system of academic funding structures, and this has led to a funding crisis for a growing group of education providers: the part-time teacher-scholars.

There was a time when learning came from two kinds of academics: full-time faculty provided in-depth knowledge, and professional adjuncts contributed expert skills sharpened in the field. A radical shift has occurred in the past 15 years in the U.S. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) reported that in 2005, the national average for part-time faculty was 48 percent. Today, per a 2010 report from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), 70 percent of faculty in higher education are contingent. Adjuncts (a.k.a. part-time faculty, visiting professors, instructors, lecturers, etc.) grieve lower pay rates, lack of benefits, job security and

facilities, alienation from institutional governance and resources, as well as adverse impact on student learning and extended return on investment. In a 2013 Gallup survey for *Inside Higher Ed*, a vast majority among over 1,000 provosts agreed with the statement that “future generations of faculty in this country should not expect tenure to be a factor in their employment.”

Times have changed, but the models for academic compensation and grant funding have not. A full-time faculty salary is based on nine months of teaching and service and three months of independent work, although independent research or scholarship is not always required for tenure. In addition, full-time faculty often cumulate academic appointments and full-time professional practices. By contrast, adjuncts are compensated for teaching time, sometimes for service, but receive no compensation for research.

Students and institutions rely on the independent work developed by contingent faculty to teach critical study and analytical reasoning. Universities use it for marketing purposes, and strongly encourage a commitment to engaged inquiry, but supportive words of encouragement are no substitute for effective funding.

LET’S TALK NUMBERS

Funding is different from compensation: grants are typically reserved for direct costs incurred by research, and remain based on an obsolete model of full-time academics doing research and education for lesser pay than their professional peers. The average adjunct teaching income was \$11K in 2005, and online databases show national mean salaries of \$52-132K for full-

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time assistant professors and \$60-143K for associate professors.

For adjuncts, writing articles and papers takes time and effort, and it does not generate revenue. Rather, it generates new knowledge and ideas, more research and more writing. This scope is not billable to business, and institutional stipends and speakers' compensation come short of reimbursing participation in academic conferences and professional conventions.

Per a 2013 Urban Institute study, U.S. economic growth just took a historic turn: the economic growth of current and future working generations is less than those before them. Silver spoons aside, our students who are interested in research and teaching will likely think twice under post-graduation economic pressure and soaring student loans.

Parsons, whose School of Constructed Environments (SCE) was once the cradle of a pioneering graduate program in lighting, is a good case study. It is now a conglomerate of six New York-based art and design schools, and one of the New School University's seven divisions. The whole university enrolls nearly 11,500 students and it advertises a 9:1 student-to-faculty ratio, based on full-time equivalent students to "full-time equivalent instructional faculty."

Part-time faculty represent 80 percent of the university's 2,102 faculty members, and 85 percent across Parsons, SCE and the lighting design graduate program. In more ways than one, the New School treats its part-time faculty well: Our pay rates are higher than other places, and as a result of collective bargaining, we may benefit from health and retirement plans, relative job security, early contractual appointments, compensation for service and paid academic leaves. Though

both the New School and Parsons actively support faculty research and development, their programs largely benefit full-time faculty, and part-time faculty have restricted access to limited resources.

The university's various support mechanisms for faculty include teaching training through workshops and seminars, access to restricted funds such as outside funding, and university-wide competitive opportunities for direct funding. Three of these, for instance, are open to full-time faculty and eligible part-time faculty applicants, and share \$125K per academic year with maximum awards of \$10K. Yet based on the past three years, adjuncts are eight times less likely to apply than full-time faculty, and while they represent a third of applicants, they are approximately six times less likely to receive funding than full-time applicants. Similarly, a new multi-year fund benefits only a fraction of part-time faculty. Other university sources support eligible full-time faculty only, including a faculty student assistant fund, which subsidizes faculty research with the equivalent of 10 student hours per week for two semesters. Last year, Parsons' faculty received over \$500K from this fund, and the school also created \$300K in new funds, also for full-time. Comparatively, Parsons dedicates \$40K per academic year in competitive funds for eligible part-time faculty with maximum awards of \$1K. Based on four competitive programs for direct costs associated with research open to part-time faculty, on a yearly average, 0.1 percent of the New School's 1,686 adjuncts received \$10K or less and 4 percent of Parsons' 919 adjuncts \$1K or less.

In the AFT survey, 8 percent of adjuncts wished for more support for development. Adjuncts are not only markedly penal-

ized by a lack of compensation for their research and fewer funding opportunities, but they cannot use funding for compensation. Competition with full-time faculty is punishing: we spend uncompensated time pursuing both research and funding.

KICKSTARTER FOR PAPERS?

In the U.S., institutional, federal and state grant programs neither reflect current academic demographics, nor do they offer adequate programs for adjuncts. Until this changes, much of lighting

research is left to crowd sourcing or the abyss. Lighting professional organizations such as the Nuckolls Fund for Lighting Education, the IES and the IALD support a few student grants and new or extended lighting educational programs, which are often initiated by full-time educators. Our industry must understand how part-time faculty serve lighting education, and step up with new strategies to fund research that is critical for our academic and professional practices.

I take pride in doing what I love, which includes teaching and beating harsh odds with lighting topics in highly competitive multi-disciplinary fellowships and grant programs. I aspire to fair and sensible funding opportunities because my options are dismal. One example is my recent proposal "Lighting Education: Nuckolls in the 21st Century." I proposed an investigation into the evolution of lighting educational programs relative to the cultural history of our industry, including student, academic and professional demographics, since James Nuckolls' days at Parsons. This knowledge would be beneficial for lighting education: absolute and relative statistics on our trade would inform visions for an evolving academic field. This initiative cannot be developed without support, but as part of the other 80 percent, I don't even have a place to turn to for consideration.

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