

Resolution on Part Time Lecturers

Background

The gradual, but accelerating, transformation of the higher education faculty in the United States has been causing concern in many quarters about the future of higher education. No longer is most instruction provided by tenured or tenure-eligible faculty members. Indeed over 70% of classroom instruction is now provided by “contingent faculty.”

Clearly that transformation has taken place at Rutgers. Several thousand contingent faculty provide a very substantial fraction of classroom instruction and discharge a variety of other duties that were previously the responsibility of tenured and tenure-eligible faculty. The largest group of contingent faculty at Rutgers is the Part Time Lecturers (PTLs), numbering well over 1500 each semester.

Although there is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of the PTLs are skilled and committed educators and experienced professionals, the nature of the PTL appointment at Rutgers and the conditions under which PTLs teach can nevertheless have a negative effect on the quality of the education our students are receiving.

1. A PTL has no expectation of continuing employment and no entitlement to a fair evaluation before termination. As a result the teaching evaluation scores obtained through the SIRS process, notwithstanding all their well-documented flaws, are sometimes misused as the rationale for nonreappointment decisions. This practice can exert strong pressure on PTLs to demand less from their students and to assign higher grades in order to obtain higher teaching evaluation scores.
2. Students’ expectations and needs from their higher education experience do not change when their instructor is a PTL. Students look to faculty for advice, recommendations, and help. Departments also have expectations and needs consistent with providing a high quality curriculum. If participation of faculty in new course development and departmental committees is essential in order for a department to offer the highest quality educational experience to its students, then those activities should be considered part of the faculty appointment and thus compensated. Yet the Rutgers administration takes the position that PTLs should not officially do anything except teach their classes and grade their students’ work. Astonishingly, an administration spokesperson has specifically maintained that PTLs should not write letters of recommendation.

3. The compensation that Rutgers provides to most of our PTLs causes serious hardship for most of them. Typically, a PTL will be paid under \$5000 for teaching a three credit course. With such low pay and no health insurance, some PTLs qualify for public assistance. At the very least, worrying about one's health and trying to make ends meet lowers morale.
4. While the University Senate has made progress in getting the University to articulate a position that seems to provide academic freedom protections to PTLs, the administration has been unwilling to provide any internal recourse to a PTL whose academic freedom has been violated. It has long been recognized that academic freedom is a *sine qua non* for quality education.

Conditions provided by Rutgers for PTLs are inconsistent with their status as committed, highly educated professionals. It is imperative and urgent that these conditions be corrected and that Rutgers provide PTLs the respect and reward they deserve. The mechanism for correcting these conditions is through collective bargaining, which is currently taking place between the PTLFC-AAUP-AFT and the Rutgers administration.

Therefore be it resolved that the NBFC calls on the Rutgers administration to reach a fair agreement in a timely manner that will provide our PTLs with working conditions and respect appropriate for higher educational professionals.