

# Contingent Voices: an Overview of a Field-Wide Study and Suggestions for Support on Three Levels

**Katie Rieger**

*University of Missouri*

**Christina Lane**

*Tulsa Community College*

**Sarah Lonelodge**

*Eastern New Mexico University*

**Lydia Welker**

*Missouri State University*

**Abstract.** Labor issues are an ongoing concern within the Writing Studies field; however, while numerous studies discuss this topic, few center the voices of contingent faculty. Emerging from our own experiences as contingent laborers, we developed this CPTSC grant-funded study to identify labor issues in the Writing Studies field and to enact real change at the programmatic level. Utilizing a nationwide survey, we elicited the experiences of over 250 contingent and non-tenure track (NTT) laborers, including graduate students—a demographic typically excluded from previous studies. Our survey addressed topics such as resources, compensation, support, and frustrations. In this article, we first review the existing literature regarding the abuse of contingent/NTT laborers and describe our IRB-approved study. Then, we categorize our results into three levels: individual, departmental, and institutional. Within each level, we identify several sub-themes. At the individual level, we discuss collegiality and value. At the departmental level, we discuss communication and governance, service and stability, and opportunities and support. At the institutional level, we discuss salary and recognition as well as care and support.

We conclude our article by offering concrete suggestions that can improve the working conditions of contingent laborers at each of these levels.

**Keywords:** contingent, non-tenure track, labor, social justice

## Introduction

For the past two decades, higher education institutions have continued to hire more contingent laborers in lieu of full-time, tenure track (TT) positions. This practice has resulted in an ongoing precarious labor situation. In 2021, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) reported that contingent laborers make up 70–75% of instructors at the collegiate level (AAUP, 2020a) and account for about 12 million instructors in the United States alone (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2020; Murray, 2019). Contingent laborers are the new faculty majority.

Both adjunct and NTT positions face a number of issues (see Dorfeld et al., 2015; Colby & Colby, 2020.; Melonçon et al., 2020). The new faculty majority often teach at multiple institutions and more than what is considered a full-time (4/4) load. They are compensated at a rate that does not reflect this increased workload. The American Federation of Teachers found that 66% of adjunct instructors make less than \$50,000/year, and 33% of those individuals make less than \$25,000/year (Flaherty, 2020). Beyond the essential living costs, this minimal income must be also used for healthcare coverage, as contingent positions rarely provide it. In addition to these hardships, adjuncts—and at some institutions, full-time non-tenure track (NTT) positions—offer only precarious contracts that are dependent upon enrollment and budgetary constraints.

David Bartholomae (2011) has argued that “The issue is not simply that there are too many faculty members hired for too short a time. It is that too many have been around for years, many teaching full-time, with inadequate compensation and participation in governance” (p. 7). A devastating example of the precarious nature of these roles was illustrated on a national level with the life and tragic death of Margaret Mary Vojtko. Vojtko worked for 25 years as a per course instructor at Duquesne, made roughly \$10,000 a year, was not provided with health insurance in her contract, was left in a destitute situation unable to afford to heat her home, and died due to health complications (Dorfeld, 2015).

In addition, we note that graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) are

often in precarious situations as well. Many face food and housing insecurity, especially after COVID-19 (Ogilvie et al., 2020). Many must rely on loans, additional jobs, and food banks in order to continue their studies. In this same study, researchers found that related to the economic precarity of food and housing insecurity and a lack of institutional support, graduate students reported concerning levels of anxiety, depression, and PTSD symptoms. These levels were exacerbated in marginalized groups (Ogilvie et al., 2020). Further worrisome, GTAs are typically excluded from labor studies (for example, Melonçon et al., 2020), despite the problematic nature of GTA positions. We argue that this exclusion reveals a research gap due to the significant role that graduate students have as higher education instructors. For example, in 2020, at Oklahoma State University, where three of us were PhD students, we were paid \$1,734.50 per month. A nine-month appointment was \$15,610. For a one-person household in the United States, the poverty rate is currently \$13,590, and, in Oklahoma, the living wage for a one-person household is \$33,535. Many graduate students such as ourselves have partners and are caregivers, which drastically increases the income needed for a living wage. Like adjunct and NTT positions, GTA-ships offer low pay and no or minimal healthcare coverage, require work overloads, and more. We believe this erasure of graduate students (Wright, 2017) from larger labor studies continues the exploitation of vulnerable workers.

Although our inclusion of NTT, adjunct, and GTAs in this study may feel too disparate in scope to some, we argue that it is the inequity these contingent laborers experience that obligates us to categorize them together. While we understand that the treatment of contingent laborers is different at each college and university, we argue that all share inequitable experiences worth listening to and can provide invaluable insight for program directors, department chairs, and administrators at every level of academia.

In order to more fully illuminate the issues facing the new faculty majority, we argue that studies on labor within the field should include all voices: GTA, adjunct, and NTT. Therefore, we approach this study through a transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2009; Phelps, 2021) in an effort to illuminate new ways of seeing and doing. As such, we join the conversation by responding to Lisa Melonçon and Kirk St. Amant's (2018) call for "field-wide" data on the state of contingent labor and by joining the social justice turn in the field of technical and professional communication (TPC) (Walton et al., 2019) in an effort to address labor inequities within higher education. This study, therefore, moves beyond collecting data regarding only salary and benefits and invites

participants to discuss their expectations, actual job duties, levels of support, professional development opportunities, and more.

### **Contingent/NTT**

To describe the individuals who inform and are impacted by this study, we use the AAUP's (2020b) base definition of contingent faculty as "adjuncts, postdocs, TAs, non-tenure-track faculty, clinical faculty, part-timers, lecturers, instructors, or non-senate faculty" (para. 2). As Melonçon (2017) discussed, these roles include part-time, full-time, outside tenure lines, and graduate student employees. We also consider that these roles may be connected to administrative (e.g., GTA assistant directors) or tutoring work (e.g., writing center consultants) and are within colleges and universities at various levels and sizes. While we appreciate the AAUP's definition, we also note Bartholomae's (2011) argument that "non-tenure track" (NTT) may be a more encompassing term due to some individuals' contracts being renewed year after year. And while we agree with Bartholomae's claim that many NTT individuals are compensated poorly for multiple years, we do not want to dismiss the precarious nature of some contingent roles. For example, many contingent faculty do not have the stability that is granted to TT positions, and many contingent faculty contracts may not be renewed at any given semester for a variety of reasons.

We argue, therefore, that a hybrid term, "contingent/NTT," captures the realities of both "contingent" and "NTT." When necessary, however, we employ specific group names (GTAs, adjuncts, lecturers, etc.) to identify unique positions and realities. We strategically chose this combined term as a way to represent the occasionally-steady-but-often-precarious nature of these positions. Though we use an umbrella term, we realize that it represents a heterogeneous group of individuals who are unique and multifaceted and who have many reasons for being off the TT line (Kaezer & Sam, 2010).

### **Research Questions**

In order to address labor issues in TPC and in the wider Writing Studies field, we developed research questions to guide this study:

- What are contingent/NTT TPC instructors' experiences regarding their labor in contingent positions (duty expectations, actual duties performed, compensation in these roles, reappointment, promotion opportunities, and other aspects);
- What is the level of support they receive from their program, institution, and colleagues; and
- What are their preferences and suggestions for micro/macro levels of support based on these experiences?

In the following sections, we outline the literature that informed

our work, provide an overview of the study we conducted, present our analysis, and offer tangible steps based on this analysis. Our suggestions for tangible steps are aimed at all allies in various levels within academia but may be especially useful for department chairs and program directors who want to support their contingent/NTT colleagues.

## **Literature Review**

In this section, we provide historical context regarding labor issues in order to contextualize the historical struggles regarding labor inequity and describe the current landscape of the field. We note here that much of the research on contingent labor is situated in the larger English/Writing Studies field. Subsequently, our study intentionally includes information on the larger English/Writing Studies field as opposed to only TPC for two reasons. First, we believe that this framework will help situate TPC into the larger English/Writing Studies conversation, which may be beneficial for program directors and departmental chairs when speaking to those in administrative positions. Second, many contingent/NTT laborers who teach TPC courses—particularly the introductory or service TPC courses—have a variety of training/educational backgrounds and may not be considered by others or themselves to be TPC specialists. Consequently, some of these individuals, like graduate students, have been excluded in previous studies. Because our goal is to support all contingent laborers teaching these courses, we have developed this project with a broader scope.

### **Historical Context**

The abuse of contingent/NTT individuals has been going on for decades. But how did we arrive at this (ab)use of contingent laborers? Scholars attribute the 1960s as the decade in which the rise of contingent labor occurred. At the time, only 22% of higher education instructors were contingent/NTT workers (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). That number grew to 66% by 2009 (Evans, 2018). After the first rise, the English/writing field provided various actions and position statements to support contingent laborers. For example, the Wyoming Resolution of 1986 was one of the first social action collaborations to discuss composition instructors' benefits and working conditions, which led to the 1989 Principles of and Standards for the Post-Secondary Teaching of Writing.

After this period, one solution was the implementation of humane lecturers. Sue Doe et al. (2011) described humane lectureship positions as long-term, renewable contracts. While these positions do offer some

stability, they should still be critically examined. A potential issue that can arise from these positions is a permutation of the caste system in higher education (Melonçon & England, 2011). These positions typically have lower salaries, larger teaching loads, a lack of professional development opportunities, and the anxiety of whether one's contract will be renewed. We offer this example not to diminish these positions but instead to emphasize the wicked problem of contingent/NTT labor issues as well as the need to continually work and reflect on current practices, especially at a local level—such as within one's institution and department.

Within the larger field of English/Writing Studies, programs tend to overuse and abuse contingent laborers. In 2011, *College English* dedicated an entire issue to topics on contingent labor reform. Doe et al. (2011) discussed contingent labor as an issue of workplace equity and highlighted how vital contingent labor is currently paramount to institutions' ability to function. We want to be clear: We are not arguing for the continuing (ab)use of contingent contracts but rather illustrating that while these positions are on the fringes (Schreyer, 2012), contingent/NTT are the faculty majority and account for 12 million instructors in the US alone (AAUP, 2020a; NCES, 2020).

The 2011 *College English* issue ended on a hopeful, but perhaps mistakenly optimistic, note. The issue suggested that, after the 2008–2012 recession, the overabundant use of contingent labor may be resolved. In other words, there was hope that higher education as a system would better support faculty after the 2008–2012 economic crisis ended. However, labor issues were only exacerbated and intensified during times of prosperity (AAUP, 2020a). As many in programmatic/departmental leadership roles have seen, institutional-level support and money have “invested heavily in facilities and technology while cutting instructional spending” (AAUP, 2020a, par. 5), thus illustrating that contingent labor was not an economic necessity. Based on these reports, the (ab)use of contingent labor is an ongoing choice.

Since the 2011 *College English* issue, governmental actions meant to help contingent workers, including policies like the Affordable Care Act (ACA), were followed by worsening conditions. For context, the ACA requires employers to fund health insurance for individuals working more than 20 hours a week. However, after the ACA was passed, many institutions capped many contingent laborers at or below 20 hours in order to avoid the requirement of providing health insurance (Kahn, 2017). This reduction in hours forced many contingent labor-

ers to seek piecemeal employment opportunities at multiple institutions to help make ends meet (Kahn, 2017). Furthermore, if this issue increases during times of economic prosperity, we may see (and in fact have already seen) the even more unsettling effects that the COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturn will have on the contingent workforce.

### **Recent Studies**

More recent studies indicate that the (ab)use of contingent/NTT faculty is ongoing:

- Currently, 70%–75% laborers are contingent, 83% of all service TPC courses are taught by contingent/NTT individuals, and there is an overall higher use of contingent/NTT labor in English/Writing Studies/TPC, as compared to general higher education (Melonçon & England, 2011).

Further, data illustrates that contingent faculty (in higher education):

- Account for 70–75% of all appointments (AAUP, 2020a; Mazurek, 2011)
- Teach the equivalent of full-time load (AAUP, 2020a)
- Have contracts split between multiple institutions to make ends meet, and with this part-time status (AAUP, 2020a; Colby & Colby, 2020)
- Are not provided with health insurance (AAUP, 2020a)
- Are provided little recognition for their scholarship as well as “virtually no time to carry it out,” even though many of these instructors are actively engaged in research (Doe et al., 2011)
- Spend as much time as their full-time and TT counterparts in the classroom, meeting with students, and general out-of-class working time (Doe et al., 2011)
- May be graduate students who
  - Are told by programs that teaching is an apprenticeship that will enhance their graduate studies when—in reality—this work distracts from their completion of the program (AAUP, 2020a)
  - Have dwindling chances of obtaining TT positions due to limited availability of TT positions (AAUP, 2020a) and the collapse of jobs in the humanities market (Micciche, 2002)
  - Are at institutions that use differential workload distribution situations, which reinforces hierarchies, marginalizes teaching, and makes success difficult to achieve, even for those contingent faculty with a research component as part of their work-

load (Doe et al., 2011)

- Lack access to necessary resources such as offices, computers, photocopying services, research databases, office phones (AAUP, 2020a; Doe et al., 2011)
- May receive food stamps to supplement their contingent work; 34,000 PhD students supplement contingent work with food stamps (Kahn et al., 2020)
- Lack time to dedicate to research (which would assist many in career aspirations) (AAUP 2020a, 2016; Colby & Colby, 2020)

Narrowing the scope to the English field, a few additional interesting notes should be provided:

- Adjuncts (not all contingent/NTT faculty) account for 70% of general education writing course instructors (Kahn, 2017)
- More than 95% of contingent/NTT faculty taught first-year composition (FYC) courses (McBeth & McCormack, 2020)
  - The “freshman-composition-only model” where contingent/NTT instructors teach only the FYC course leads to burnout due to the high paper count, grading, and mental load (McBeth & McCormack, 2020; Kahn, 2020; Colby & Colby, 2020)
- 83% of TPC service courses are taught by contingent/NTT individuals (Melonçon & England, 2011)
- Our field shares a stark disregard for teaching positions (Kahn, 2020). In other words, research positions are unfairly viewed positively while teaching-intensive or teaching-only positions are frowned upon and discouraged
- Contingent/NTT instructors, especially graduate students, are dissuaded from pursuing teaching positions because they “aren’t prestigious enough or don’t afford enough research time” (Kahn, 2020)
- Contingent/NTT instructors suffer from professional disrespect (Kahn, 2020)
- Evaluations and raises based on student reviews and D/F/W rates (Nardo & Heifferon, 2020) instead of holistic review systems
  - Many institutions lack structured pay increases that come with promotions similar to TT positions (Colby & Colby, 2020)

In an effort to contribute to the ongoing conversation within the field regarding contingent/NTT labor, we developed this study with the goals of both gathering data about laborers and listening to the concerns that they have. In the following section, we discuss our methodological approach and describe the methods we employed to reach



these goals.

## **Methodology**

In our design of this study, we employed a transformational framework (Mertens, 2009) due to the oppressive conditions contingent laborers often experience. This transformational framework informed both how we approached this study and how we interpreted our findings in a manner aligned with the social justice turn in TPC (Walton et al., 2019). As Johanna L. Phelps (2021) discussed, TPC researchers have been using axiological, ontological, epistemological, and methodological tenets from the transformational framework for years without explicitly articulating that connection. Within a transformational framework, we specifically utilized the theories of radical transparency (RT) and ethics of care in order to address the complexities of conducting a study focused on a social justice issue we were/are so intimately situated within.

### **Radical Transparency**

Because of the need for more research into the precarious conditions that contingent laborers face, we employed RT in hopes that future scholars will be able to build upon our work just as we have built upon the work of others. As a theory, RT has been associated with a variety of practices and fields such as leadership practices (Scott, 2011) and environmental practices (Reid & Rout, 2020). We argue that it can be a useful concept in TPC/Writing Studies. RT is a necessary part of a transformational framework as it focuses on sharing information to prevent informational silos and presents feedback, frustrations, innovations, and ideas to all levels in an educational setting. RT can be achieved through articles with published datasets, descriptions of implementations or models, and narratives from contingent workers, among other resources. By sharing these materials more openly, we can achieve four goals:

1. Create a richer understanding of the workforce
2. Invite more collaboration and innovation on a cross-institutional basis for tackling this issue
3. Draw upon more data to conduct replicability studies, create sustainability with our research, and/or share information with administrators to support the individuals in our institution/department/program
4. Support contingent/NTT laborers more readily

RT can apply to the sharing of data, instruments, resources, and experiences and can, therefore, lead to solutions to the wicked problem

of labor (ab)use in higher education. In line with this theory, we have done our best to be transparent through our experiences, methods, and sharing of data (where ethical).

### **Ethics of Care**

In addition to RT, and in line with our transformational framework, our research is also informed by an ethics of care through strategic contemplation. As Jacqueline J. Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch (2012) wrote, practicing strategic contemplation enables us to be able “to observe and notice, to listen to and hear voices often neglected or silenced, and to notice more overtly [our] own responses to what [we] are seeing, reading, reflecting on, and encountering during [our] research processes” (p. 85). With a focus on ethics of care, we acknowledge the responsibility we have in researching, analyzing, and discussing this topic with attentiveness, particularly as current and former contingent laborers ourselves. For this reason, and as an aspect of RT, we have presented autoethnographic vignettes of our experiences (see Appendix A) as individuals who have been or are still contingent laborers in academia. Some of our common experiences include working as GTAs; being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic; and perpetually being overworked and underpaid yet continuing to be passionate teachers. However, we have also had very different experiences. For example, we differed in how we chose and funded graduate school, in choosing to remain in a contingent laborer position, in pursuing an alt-academic (alt-ac) career, and in our non-academic roles, like our differing experiences as caregivers.

We believe sharing our stories is a foundational element in building the ethics of care lens through which we interpret our findings in this study (Royster & Kirsch, 2012). Sharing our reflections of our time as contingent laborers was a necessary step in consciously acknowledging how our own experiences have influenced our methods. As contingent laborers who have been or are currently being silenced or neglected, we admit those experiences have indeed impacted who we are as researchers. We emphasize that being radically transparent does not only mean sharing our methods or findings in a more detailed manner but also requires a willingness to be strategically contemplative, particularly when it comes to how our stories shape all parts of our research. However, we emphasize here that the iterative process of collaborative autoethnography (Chang et al., 2013) is not a formal method of our study.

### **Methods**

With our transformational framework in mind, we developed research methods that would allow us to ethically and fully investigate the cur-

rent situation regarding the new faculty majority. Employing RT and an ethics of care, we developed a mixed-methods survey in order to gather quantitative and qualitative data that is both varied and complementary. Including both quantitatively and qualitatively oriented questions allows for a more complete analysis of the ongoing labor issues in higher education. The qualitatively oriented questions provided respondents an opportunity to voice their own thoughts and opinions outside the parameters of quantitative data collection, which allowed us to more fully consider the issues contingent laborers face. Our detailed survey (see Appendix B) was granted IRB approval (#21-2). In this section, we describe the process of developing and distributing this survey and gathering and analyzing the results because, as Melonçon and St. Amant (2018) asserted, we need to strive toward sustainable research practices that are replicable by others in the field. In addition, we offer methods as a component of RT, which is key in enabling others to discern the quality of our research and makes it as simple as possible to conduct similar studies.

### **Survey Development**

Because of the rhetorical nature of survey question creation, we referenced survey questions from both the AAUP and the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW) throughout the survey's formation and added questions related specifically to teaching TPC courses. The survey was divided into six sections:

1. Instructions with Agreement to Participate and Identification as a Contingent Laborer
2. Overview of Support and Labor
3. Resources and Compensation
4. Demographic Information
5. Frustrations and Other Thoughts
6. Optional Follow-Up

Each section contained questions that helped to present a clearer picture of each respondent and allowed for detailed information regarding their positions, labor, professional development, and much more. Due to the AAUP's long-standing reputation in conducting surveys, some of our questions were developed similarly to questions in their annual faculty compensation survey and follow-up report. For example, an illuminating excerpt from their survey (AAUP, 2022a) stated that

"The[a]verage pay for part-time faculty members teaching a three-credit course section varies widely between institutional types, with average rates of pay ranging from \$2,263 per section in public associate institutions without ranks to \$4,620 per section in private-

independent doctoral institutions. Within institutional categories, minimum and maximum pay rates span huge ranges.” (Survey Report Table 15)

Necessitated by our own experiences and the findings shared by the AAUP, the third section of our survey was dedicated to resources and compensation. We also referenced questions from the CAW’s (2012) contingent faculty survey. Like the AAUP’s (2022a) annual faculty compensation survey, the CAW’s survey enabled respondents to address the precarity of being contingent laborers. For instance, their second section was labeled “Employment in Postsecondary Teaching” and asked about employment status, how many institutions they teach at, and how many sections they teach. Specifically, Question #2 in their second section asked, “At how many institutions of higher education are you teaching in the fall term 2010? (Do not count multiple campuses of the same college or university.)” while Question #3 asked, “How many classes/sections for credit are you teaching in the fall term 2010...” As such, we also developed questions that focused on similar topics. For example, in some quantitatively oriented questions, we inquired about teaching loads for Fall 2021 (i.e., sections taught and number of institutions).

As noted at the beginning of the Methods section, although quantitative data reveals much about the precarious conditions that contingent laborers work and live within, we also included qualitatively oriented questions that would enable us to more authentically hear contingent laborers’ voices. Examples of the qualitatively oriented questions from the fifth section include the following:

- With your position(s), what are (if any) frustrations you have related to this position(s)?
- With your position(s), what monetary resources/office resources/professional development (not just those included above) would make your position better?
- Are there additional thoughts that you wish to convey about the support (or lack thereof) in your position(s)?

We shared the survey via three listservs: the Association of Teachers of Technical Writers, the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication, and the Council of Writing Program Administrators. The first 80 participants were offered a \$25 Amazon gift card (made possible by the grant from CPTSC). The survey was open to all contingent laborers—NTT professors, adjuncts, and graduate students. We received 254 completed surveys by the end of December 2021.

### **Data Analysis**

In an effort to fully and ethically analyze the survey data, we developed

analytical procedures in line with our focus on radical transparency and the ethics of care within the transformative framework. In doing so, we moved beyond rigid protocols for analysis that may exclude some interpretations and toward multifaceted analyses that considered both text and context. As Royster and Kirsch (2012) wrote regarding this shift toward broader analytical practices within the rhetorical studies field,

This re-formed view encourages the use of patterns of observing, reading, analyzing, and interpreting that are dialogical, dialectical, reflective and reflexive and that generate thereby multiple sources of information that have to be balanced in knowledge creation and knowledge use. As professionals in the field, then, we face the challenge of gathering data with a consideration of multiple viewpoints, balancing the viewpoints that emerge, and then coming to interpretations of the enriched landscape that are substantive, fair, and respectful. Facing this challenge requires more than just excellence in scholarly work. It also requires patience, attention with caring, a willingness to consider more than one set of possibilities and to forestall coming to closure too quickly. (p. 139)

Each of our unique positionalities within academia and our experiences as contingent/NTT laborers (see Appendix A) enabled us to consider the survey data through our own lenses, to reconsider it through other possibilities, and to not rush to interpretation. Instead, we reviewed and talked through the data on multiple occasions until we reached consensus on emerging themes (Creswell, 2014; Gonzales et al., 2020; Royster & Kirsch, 2012; Saldaña, 2021). After individual recursive readings of the data, we each identified themes we saw emerging from the quantitative and qualitative data on a shared Google Doc. Then, during one of our bi-weekly online research meetings, we discussed, compiled, and condensed our initial codes into primary themes. Through intensive dialogue over several meetings, we came to group consensus on each theme (Creswell, 2014; Royster & Kirsch, 2012; Saldaña, 2021). While not a full codebook, Table 1 shows sample survey responses, initial code examples, and the primary themes that we merged from those codes. These themes will be identified in the Results section and elaborated upon in the Discussion section.

**Table 1. Examples of Raw Data, Initial Codes, and Themes**

Survey Response Data	Initial Code Examples	Assigned Theme of Support
<p>“The TT faculty infantilize and dismiss our work even though we bring in more revenue than anyone, and fund their research.”</p> <p>“The TT faculty believe strongly (in general) in their expertise and their protection from some service tasks.”</p>	<p>Frustrations Disrespect Collegiality Support/lack of support from TT faculty</p>	<p>Individual</p>
<p>“...as an adjunct I had THREE new course preps, and one of them was another one-and-done.”</p> <p>“We are also encouraged to go to conferences etc but get a limited amount of money to attend. This leaves us to choose between saving money for expenses or our careers.”</p>	<p>Lack of professional development opportunities Service for no pay Teaching only lower division courses</p>	<p>Program/Departmental</p>
<p>“We are grossly underpaid given the amount we earn for the university.”</p> <p>“I also feel worried that we will be pressured to move every course back to in-person for the Spring rather than keeping some online sections which have been a clear benefit to our disabled, neurodivergent, caretaking, and/or working students. Also, the University should provide N95 masks for everyone.”</p>	<p>Salary and benefits issues Timeliness of contract renewal Transparency Unionization</p>	<p>Institutional</p>

## Results

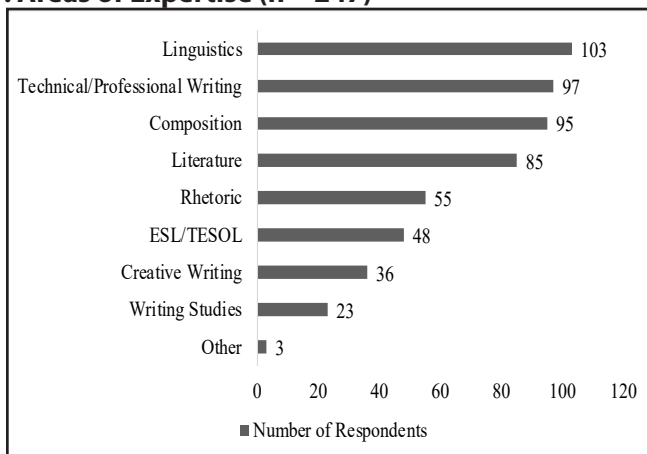
### Quantitative

The results from the quantitative questions include demographic information about contingent/NTT faculty and the conditions under which they work. A total of 254 people responded to the survey. Most questions were optional, and not all participants responded to every question. The following data about survey respondents provides info in connection with gender, age, ethnicity, education, contingent laborer position type and number of institutions worked at, additional non-academic jobs, caregiver status, desire to engage in service and/or professional development, and overall satisfaction. We present this data in an effort to describe our respondents and to highlight who the new faculty majority is.

Most of the respondents were male (52.2%), followed by female (44.4%), those who preferred not to say (3%), and nonbinary (0.4%). Of those who responded to a question about age, the overwhelming majority were 23-42 years old. Most were in the 33-42 age group ( $n = 175$ ), followed by 23-32 ( $n = 22$ ), 53-62 ( $n = 9$ ), 63-72 ( $n = 3$ ), 43-52 ( $n = 2$ ), and 73+ ( $n = 1$ ). Of those who responded to an open-ended question asking them to categorize their ethnicity ( $n = 187$ ), 51% identified as White, 20% identified as Black, 13% identified as Hispanic, and a little less than 1% identified as Indigenous.

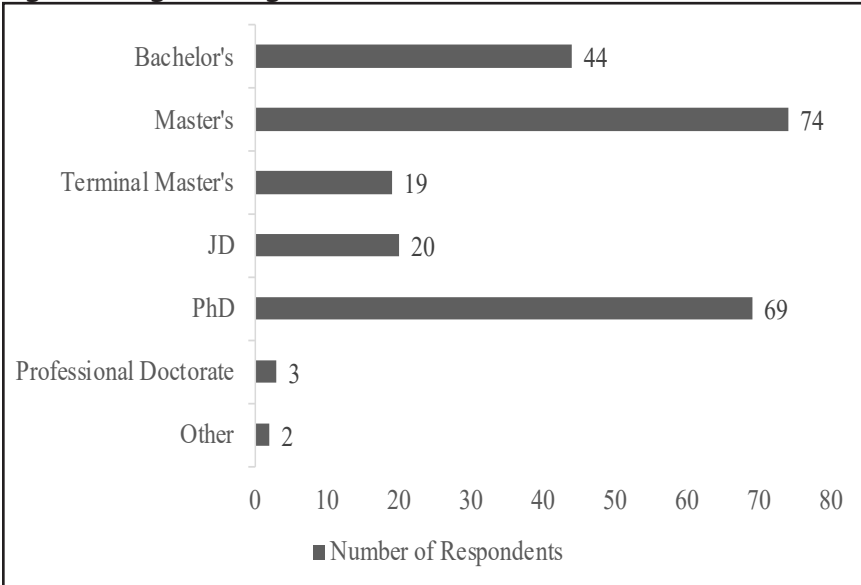
Respondents could also choose their area(s) of expertise as it relates to their degree(s) and/or an emphasis they have in addition to their degree title. While many respondents ( $n = 97$ ) considered their expertise TPC, several other fields within Writing Studies were selected, including linguistics ( $n = 103$ ), composition ( $n = 95$ ), and literature ( $n = 85$ ). See all respondents' selected fields of expertise in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Areas of Expertise ( $n = 247$ )**



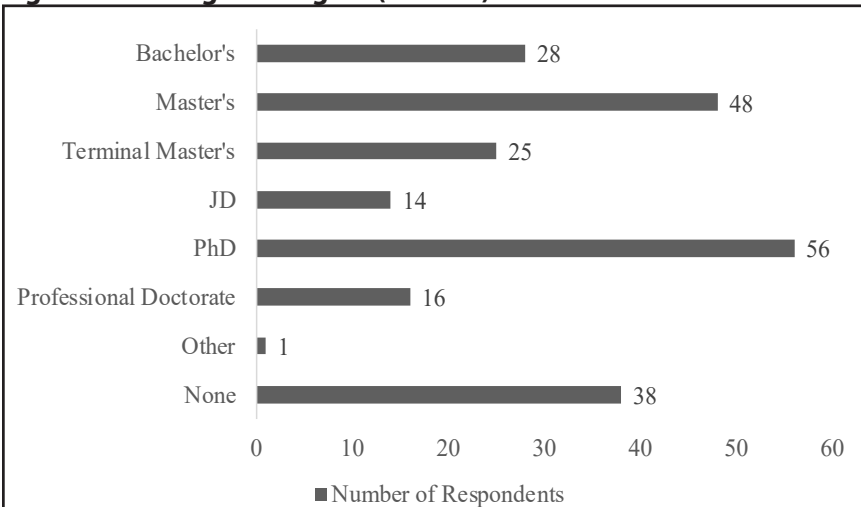
Participants were asked to mark the highest degree they earned or what degree they are currently pursuing. 30% indicated that they had a PhD, and 8% indicated that they had a terminal master's degree. 188 of 226 respondents indicated that they were currently working on a degree (see Figures 2 and 3).

**Figure 2: Highest Degree Earned (n = 231)**



Note. A terminal master's degree includes a Master of Fine Arts, a Master of Business Administration, etc. A professional doctorate degree includes a Doctor of Education, a Doctor of Psychology, etc.

**Figure 3: In-Progress Degree (n = 226)**

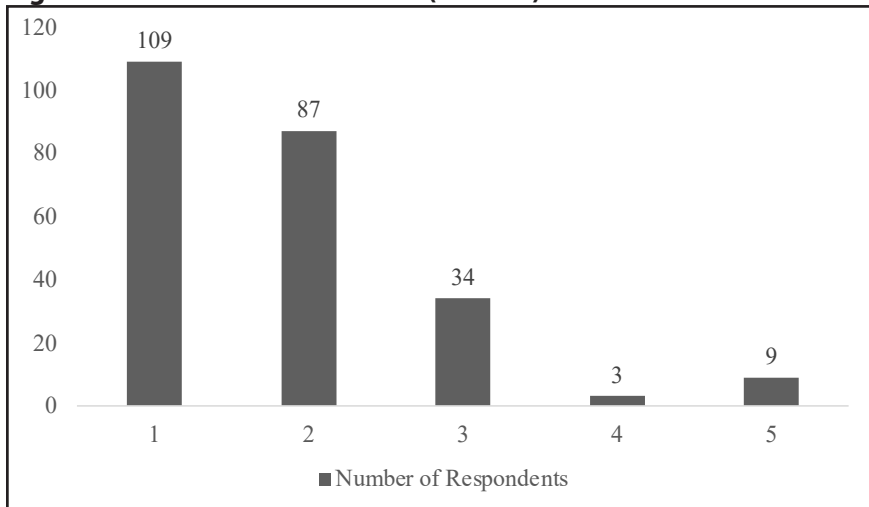




*Note.* A terminal master's degree includes a Master of Fine Arts, a Master of Business Administration, etc. A professional doctorate degree includes a Doctor of Education, a Doctor of Psychology, etc.

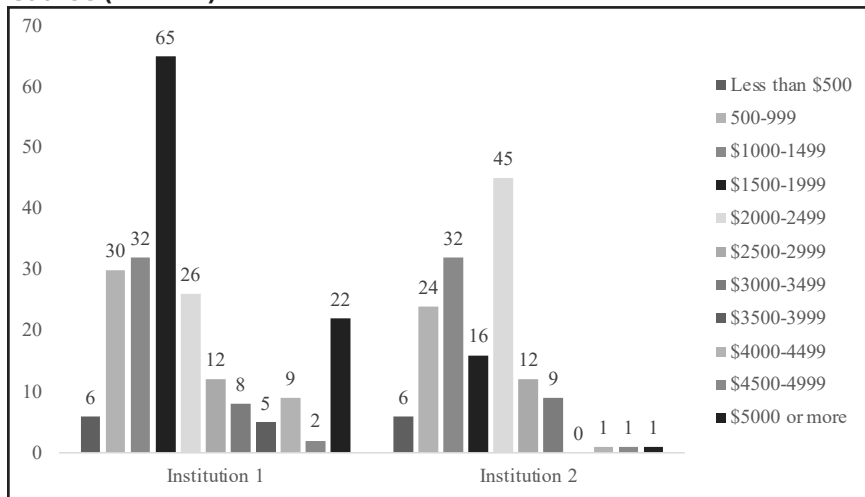
Notably, in terms of type of contingent labor position, 45.9% of respondents were GTAs, 46.8% were per-course adjunct instructors, and 36.5% were NTT instructors. 92.6% reported that they were teaching 1-4 courses during the term they participated in our survey, while the remaining respondents reported teaching 5-9 courses. Participants also shared the number of institutions where they worked at the time of the survey, either in TT or NTT/contingent roles (Figure 4), which highlights how many of these academics juggle positions at more than one university ( $n = 133$ ; 55%).

**Figure 4: Number of Institutions (n = 242)**

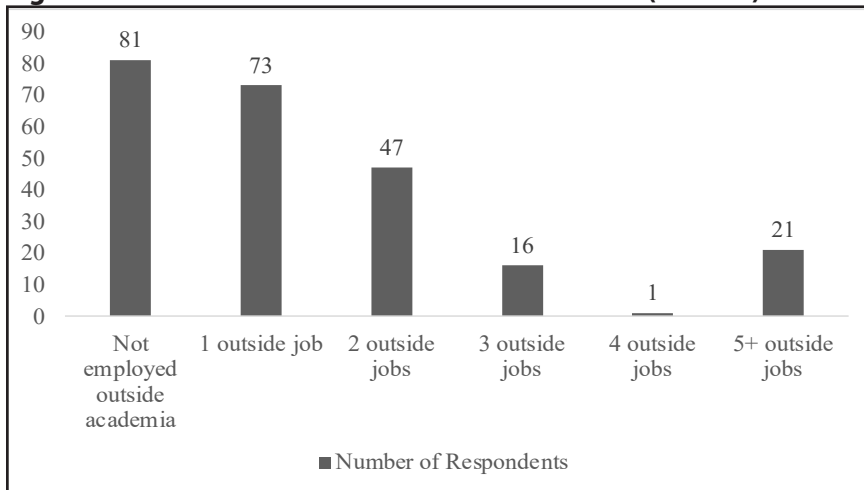


Understandably, compensation factors into both the number of courses and institutions respondents work at. The most commonly selected salary at the first institution for respondents was \$1500 1999 per three-credit-hour course. Teaching a full course load of four courses at that salary is far below the poverty line in all states. Thus, many respondents worked at multiple institutions. See Figure 5 for participant salaries at just the first and second institutions.

**Figure 5: Salaries at Institutions 1 and 2 per Three-Credit-Hour Course (n = 217)**



As discussed previously, graduate students are often left out of labor conversations and research. GTAs are often asked to perform “20 hours” of labor, complete coursework, and sign contracts acknowledging that they will not seek work elsewhere. However, their stipends fall near or below poverty levels and well under the living wage averages (see poverty guidelines from Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation [ASPE], 2023 and the living wage calculator from Massachusetts Institute of Technology [MIT], 2022). Therefore, we were also curious to see if any survey respondents were employed outside of academia in addition to working in a contingent/NTT position. 239 people responded to this question, and only 81 were not employed outside of academia. 66% of respondents noted that they held non-academic positions; at the upper end of the data, 21 people—almost 9%—had five or more jobs in addition to their work in a contingent/NTT position (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Number of Jobs Held Outside Academia (n = 239)**

In addition to questions about their jobs outside of the home, the survey contained two questions concerning caregiver status in order to illuminate how many contingent laborers also work at home. The two caregiver questions differentiate between those caring for people under the age of 18 and those caring for people over the age of 18. Of the 233 people who responded to the child-caregiver question, 77.7% (n = 181) cared for at least one child, and of the 234 adult-caregiver respondents, 40.2% (n = 94) cared for at least one person over the age of 18. Thus, our results show that most of our respondents were caregivers.

Our survey also requested information regarding professional development. Despite many respondents working multiple jobs both inside and outside academia and at home, 94% of respondents indicated that they would like to commit time to professional development opportunities. Almost 40% said that they would be comfortable spending 2-3 hours per semester on these opportunities. The majority of specific interests for potential workshops included assessment strategies, teaching tools, and pedagogy theory and tips. However, only about 30% of respondents marked that they were offered professional development opportunities.

In addition, the survey included questions regarding contingent/NTT faculty's overall views of their positions. We noted that less than half of the respondents selected that they were satisfied with their salary and health benefits at their first institution. 51% of respondents indicated that they had engaged in service without pay. Unfortunately, less than 30% of our respondents (or fewer for many questions) indicated that they were satisfied with opportunities for scholarly pursuits,

teaching loads, work/life balance, prospects for advancement, flexibility, and leave policies. Notably, over half of our respondents said that they had considered leaving academia (n = 114 out of 227) and/or their current institution(s) (n = 128 out of 223) over the past year. Strikingly, only about 25% of survey respondents marked that they were satisfied with their job(s) overall at their first institution.

We share and discuss the qualitative results of the survey's short-answer questions in the next section.

### **Qualitative**

In addition to our quantitative data, the results from qualitative questions offered a number of insights into contingent/NTT faculty support, recognition, salary, workloads, and more. From our recursive analysis of these open-answer questions, we identified several overarching themes (see Table 1) that we categorized into three levels based on who might be able to address the issue:

- Individual Level
  - Sub-themes: Collegiality, Value
- Departmental Level
  - Sub-themes: Communication and Governance, Service and Stability, Opportunities and Support
- Institutional Level
  - Sub-themes: Salary and Recognition, Care and Support

### **Individual Level**

We identified a number of responses that discussed issues encountered at the individual level, such as personal frustrations, interpersonal relationships, perceived attitudes, and more. Two sub-themes were collegiality and value.

**Collegiality.** At the individual, personal level, our survey showed that contingent/NTT faculty often felt not only invisible or neglected but also disrespected and dismissed. Survey results, therefore, showed both a pattern of passive abuse and active subjugation:

- "Lack of respect from TT faculty, lack of understanding of the current vagaries of the job market"
- "Lack of respect from TT colleagues + the fact that it is a term-limited position"
- "The TT faculty infantilize and dismiss our work even though we bring in more revenue for the department than anyone, and fund their research."
- "Too many to list here but mostly being bullied comes to mind"

From these examples, some of the issues within the current system are clear. Contingent/NTT faculty feel disrespected, "infantilized," and even "bullied" within a professional workplace in a higher education

setting. Moreover, contingent/NTT faculty may feel as if their personal labor is directly funding TT faculty research at the same time they are remanded to limited-term positions due to the current job market. While many systemic issues contribute to the abuse of contingent/NTT laborers, we also stress the importance of collegiality among faculty to avoid toxic workplaces as well as further abuse of contingent faculty.

**Value.** In line with increasing collegiality, our survey also returned responses more specifically focused on value. In the examples below, contingent faculty respondents discuss their professional positions and perceived value at the personal level:

- “Just a lack of respect in many ways—having all the jobs no one else wants dumped on me.”
- “I am disrespected by T/TT faculty. My program doesn’t respect my professional expertise. My program doesn’t value collaboration or cooperation.”
- “I do not always feel like an equal amongst my colleagues, and I often take on advanced responsibilities but am still not seen as equal.”
- “forced in-person teaching (with no vaccine or mask mandate)”

In addition to a lack of interpersonal relationships with tenure/tenure track (T/TT) faculty, contingent/NTT faculty also discussed a number of ways in which they are made to feel inferior to T/TT faculty. Respondents discussed taking on additional roles and responsibilities without recognition, being made to feel as if their professional expertise is beneath the expertise of others, and being required to teach in an unsafe environment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Again, at the individual level, contingent/NTT faculty who responded to our survey indicate that they often feel devalued. Despite many contingent faculty having similar levels of education and experience to that of T/TT faculty, the hierarchy within departments and the resulting interpersonal relationships and/or types of communication seem to be creating a rift among colleagues that is most heavily felt by those in contingent/NTT roles.

### **Program/Departmental Level**

We also identified issues encountered at the departmental level, such as stability of positions, support, professional development opportunities, training, and more. Overarching themes at this level include communication and governance, service and security, and opportunities and support. In each of these areas, respondents noted specific instances in which their department helped or hindered their work, feelings of support, or professional goals.

**Communication and Governance.** Important to any workplace,

communication among various levels and representation or input for policies, practices, etc., is crucial. Many respondents indicate that one or both of these attributes is lacking in their department. In many cases, this lack of communication and shared governance leads to an increase in frustration and in disparity among colleagues:

- “Lack of clear communication about what tasks (HR paperwork, required training--Title 9/cybersecurity/etc, where to submit course syllabi, how to sheets on the LMS, where to submit textbook info, etc.) need to be completed before I started my job!”
- “In both instructor and minor departmental administrator roles, lack of communication from higher ups. Toxic departmental culture makes cooperation difficult. Relatively low pay and few opportunities compared to TT colleagues.”
- “There is certainly a hierarchical feel in my department. The TT faculty believe strongly (in general) in their expertise and their protection from some service tasks. In the past, they have sought to tie up voting rights in our department. A few see themselves as social justice warriors, and I respect that; but their social justice does not extend to contingent faculty. They seem themselves as elite. I want to emphasize this is not department-wide, but the few squeaky wheels have done a lot of damage to our department. This damage has never in my opinion come from contingent faculty. The irony is that contingent faculty bear the heaviest teaching loads (by far) and have the most student contact.”
- “There is a lack of communication from my department chair. There is not enough contingent representation in department/college/university shared governance.”
- “The department is constantly over budget and has no funds according to announcements, and there’s always layoffs and broken promises to adjuncts and grad students”

From these responses, the realities of the contingent faculty roles within departments are clearer. Lack of communication from administrators causes added frustrations and stress to faculty who are already frustrated and stressed. Many who feel disrespected by colleagues as individuals also feel devalued and disrespected by their departments and by administrators. Respondents discussed a lack of startup training, poor budgeting practices, “broken promises,” and little communication or collaboration. In addition, contingent/NTT faculty expressed issues with governance, citing a lack of representation and/or specific disenfranchisement for contingent faculty—a clear issue of justice. One respondent noted that T/TT colleagues see themselves as “social justice warriors” but noted that “their social justice does not extend to

contingent faculty." This was discussed as a highly problematic situation in which contingent faculty may be denied voting rights and representation. As established in the discussion of individual level issues, respondents indicated an active agenda of abuse directed toward contingent/NTT faculty.

**Service and Security.** While many responses indicated particular issues with colleagues and administrators, respondents also noted frustrations stemming from policies and practices within the department. Often, these responses showed a desire for increased job security that may be possible to address at the department level or at least by the department chair in advocating for contingent/NTT positions or in determining what roles faculty at various levels take.

- "I often work unpaid, but I never get a promotion or salary increase when I work overtime."
- "I love my current job as a full-time NTT instructor. However, I have no job security. I also fear that some of my colleagues would rather see my job done by adjuncts (or by me as an adjunct)."
- "No path to full-time employment"
- "The University of Colorado Denver is a great place for NTT Instructors to work. I have been in my position for 15+ years and feel respected and supported most of the time."

While we note here that departments often do not have the power to create permanent positions and may also not be able to offer multi-year contracts due to upper-level administration, we do contend that statements such as these should be highly valued within departments and programs. Contingent/NTT faculty typically operate with very little job security, yet they must perform at high enough levels to constitute renewal each year or possibly each semester.

**Opportunities and Support.** Similar to issues of service, respondents indicated that professional development opportunities and support from department-created or -assigned sources necessitated a specific balance. Many respondents discussed a desire for more opportunities and support or appreciation for current resources; however, others indicated that only specific types of opportunities and support were useful.

- "I only get one professional development opportunity every semester."
- "I wish I could teach more than Rhetoric 105, and I wish I could count on being able to teach those courses regularly."
- "Course shells are nice and I appreciate that my third college has assigned mentors to the adjuncts."
- "No. The syllabus I was provided for the course I am currently

teaching was terribly antiquated in its course overview, lecture-oriented approach, reading selections, etc. I didn't use anything from it."

- "Professional development from department is good. Micromanaging from upper admin (trying to standardize courses on LMS, requiring campus presence, etc) is not helpful"

As evident in these examples, survey responses called for balance from departments and program leaders when offering support and professional development opportunities. Standardization, micromanaging, and template syllabi may often stem from attempts to reduce labor for contingent/NTT faculty; however, they are often discussed in the survey as problematic, belittling, or annoying. In addition, several respondents expressed a desire to teach other courses and to participate in professional development opportunities more often. We contend that this is a clear indication that contingent/NTT faculty have a genuine and sincere desire to advance and that they should be offered more options and opportunities to do so. Assigning courses, offering professional development, pairing mentors, and creating materials falls at the department level, and heeding these suggestions can make for a much stronger department and program.

### **Institutional Level**

Finally, a number of responses indicated issues that occur at the institutional level. These responses identified impacts beyond what individuals or departments were capable of addressing, such as compensation, benefits, budgetary considerations, and more. While we understand that large-scale change is needed to address these specific issues, we present them here to illuminate the struggles that many contingent faculty face and to give a voice to this struggle.

**Salary and Recognition.** The most oft-cited issue for contingent/NTT faculty was salary and recognition. Many faculty discussed the need for multiple positions and government assistance to continue their work. Low pay is a serious concern for all contingent faculty, including graduate students, and is an ongoing institutional issue. The responses below illustrate the difficulties that contingent/NTT faculty face in addition to those discussed above:

- "A lot of work for bad pay. I keep trying to find better places to adjunct, but haven't been successful."
- "I wish that there were more substantial raises. My raise for this year was less than 1k."
- "Living off \$15000 per year with summer funding not guaranteed (this would be an extra \$3000) is absurd. When that's taxed, it is nearly impossible to have enough money to survive. I had to apply



for the state assistance for food and health insurance because even though the school pays for the insurance, they obviously don't assist with any of the actual medical bills. We are also encouraged to go to conferences etc but get a limited amount of money to attend. This leaves us to choose between saving money for expenses or our careers.

- "Low pay—have to work a second job to make ends meet"
- "Salary could be higher, especially in relation to TT faculty. I've pretty much hit the limit of my promotion/professional growth at this institution. There's a lot expected of FT NTT faculty here, without a lot of material recognition."
- "At my institution, there is a whole class of people called 'Academic Professionals'—we're people with PhDs (or other terminal degrees) who basically do most of the heavy lifting for the school and still maintain active research agendas, yet we are criminally underpaid and viewed as unskilled. TT faculty are gods here."

These responses provide direct insight into the struggles that contingent/NTT faculty face in terms of salary and recognition. Many discuss an inability to live sustainably with basic needs such as food, healthcare, and housing. Several respondents noted that they have lengthy commutes or work at multiple institutions to make ends meet and still often fall short. Others maintain that they have reached the peak of their promotional opportunities despite their ongoing research agenda and terminal degrees. In another vein, several responses indicated a lack of recognition. This differs slightly from previous discussions at the individual and department level in that the job title itself as well as the responsibilities of the position seemed to be a factor—something we can assume is established by the institution.

**Care and Support.** In addition, many responses indicated a lack of care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic, noting that contingent faculty were often overlooked by the institutional support systems put in place during the crisis. These issues also related to workload and the policies surrounding pay scales as a result. Again, this seems to be an issue that the institution must address in order to create a more equitable working environment for contingent/NTT faculty:

- "Inability to change modality of course to online"
- "Recent cuts to advising and administrative assistant staff have made cross-College collaboration very difficult for me as Writing Program Administrator. I also feel worried that we will be pressured to move every course back to in-person for the Spring rather than keeping some online sections which have been a clear benefit to

our disabled, neurodivergent, caretaking, and/or working students. Also, the University should provide N95 masks for everyone.”

- “Again, the lack of support by faculty especially during covid, is stark. They preach about mental health and say they are here for support without actually providing the necessary systems and tools.”
- “To be 100% FTE in my current position, I would have to teach 120 students per semester (5x5 load). I can’t physically do this as a writing teacher, so I have had to reduce my FTE to 80% (and lose 10K in pay) to make my workload more manageable. I wish I could be 100% FTE and teach fewer classes so that I could feel like a good teacher and have time for my own creative work. Nobody can teach 120 writing students and do the job they really want to do if they care about teaching writing.”
- “Obviously, universities need to return to a model of more fulltime and tenure-line jobs. When I was able to move from part-time (at multiple institutions) to full time, it made a tremendous impact on my teaching and ability to contribute to the department. Before, I barely knew my students’ names, let alone their individual writing and career goals. I had trouble keeping track of the different institutions’ policies and learning outcomes. I had no ability to be flexible with students who needed extra support or time on assignments because I couldn’t keep track of everything.”
- “At the VERY least, when adjuncts are teaching core courses, multi-term contracts (even if they are still part-time) would help create some stability for faculty, students, and departments. They also wouldn’t cost the university any more money.”
- “We are grossly underpaid given the amount we earn for the university. Teaching load is too heavy for serious scholarship.”

Because this survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, our results offer a great deal of insight into the frustrations and limited care and support that contingent/NTT faculty received during this crisis. For example, many institutions did not provide masks or did not provide quality masks for instructors. A number of issues resulted in budget cuts that affected instructors but did not offer any additional support for those instructors who would now have added responsibilities. Additionally, many responses indicated a lack of flexibility—such as not allowing faculty to request online courses or to switch their courses to an online offering when case numbers rose. Beyond the issues from the pandemic, many respondents noted that their own care for students and quality of instruction greatly outweighed the institution’s focus on care and quality. As such, one respondent explained

that they had taken a significant pay cut in order to offer quality instruction. This is also an issue that the institution must address in that 100% full-time equivalent (FTE) does not always translate to equitable working conditions or quality instruction. In addition, we must also note that several responses show how the adjunct position can lead to an inability to move up at any institution as instructors in these positions are unstable and underpaid and are typically in workloads in which they cannot conduct the research needed to move into higher paying positions.

In the following section, we draw from both our quantitative and qualitative data analysis to develop recommendations and suggestions for supporting contingent/NTT faculty.

## Discussion

Based on our quantitative and qualitative data and our recursive, collaborative analysis of this data viewed via RT and an ethics of care lens within a transformative framework, we discuss possibility and hope for the future in this section. Utilizing the themes (individual, departmental, institutional) that we identified in the data, we present here tangible steps and suggestions for readers to take at each of those levels.

### **Recommendations and Suggestions for Support at Three Levels**

Before we can make recommendations, however, we must consider the nature of the contingent/NTT labor issue. First, we must address the “rhetoric of despair” mentality that is often associated with it. “Rhetoric of despair” refers to the belief that we do not hold the power needed to create real change (Nardo & Heifferon, 2020). This feeling is an understandable one given the immensity and complexity of this issue. Labor reform is certainly a “wicked problem” (Murray, 2019). However, instead of falling into a rhetoric of despair and accepting current conditions because we view them as too large to solve or because we feel that we do not have enough power in our positions, we follow the efforts of Kahn et al. (2020) to provide “concrete steps to fight the exploitation of contingent faculty” (p. 7). Therefore, we provide here tangible steps—both small and large—for program directors, department chairs, TT allies, deans, higher-level administrators, and contingent/NTT laborers ourselves/themselves to employ. As Mark McBeth and Tim McCormack (2020) noted, when solutions are presented, they often call for revolutions and uprisings that are challenging to implement. We, therefore, take up the call to resist bureaucratic imperatives and search for concrete, judicious solutions, even if they are not “legibly revolutionary” (McBeth & McCormack, 2020, p. 43). We believe that

even small change is worthwhile.

Second, in an effort to understand and address the nature of the labor issue in academia, we argue for RT at all levels and through multiple modalities. Not only is this concept useful and necessary in research methodology, as we have discussed above, but it is also an imperative tool for the entire issue at hand. RT can lead to change and strategic decision-making in departments and institutions through the sharing of information, resources, processes, limitations, and more.

As an example, Sarah experienced a lack of RT during a faculty meeting at an R1/D1 university where she was employed as contingent/NTT faculty. During the meeting, NTT and TT faculty discussed the need to hire two additional NTT positions. When a contingent/NTT faculty member questioned why these positions could not be transferred into a TT position, the department chair casually/dismissively indicated that it is not possible to simply transfer positions across various lines and went ahead with the meeting. While it is true that a simple transferring of titles is not possible, that numerous approvals and budgetary concerns apply, and that the chair is not the person who decides such things, the response to this question could have utilized radical transparency in order to not only allow the many contingent/NTT laborers in that meeting to better understand the inner workings of their job and feel heard but also to create a base for reform if needed. How can contingent/NTT faculty (and allies) work toward reforming the labor system in higher education if they are not aware of how the university system works?

While this is one small example of an opportunity for RT, we argue that it is a necessity among all levels of academic institutions. RT is an overarching recommendation within this study as we contend that those who are responsible for implementing support and making decisions must be willing to share the successes, struggles, and failures contingent/NTT individuals experience at every level. Doing so creates a more equitable workplace and creates a foundation on which to build reform. In addition to and within the RT umbrella, we offer a number of additional, tangible steps for support. In the following sections, we discuss suggestions for support at the individual, department/program, and institutional levels.

### **Individual Level: Suggestions for Support**

While issues relating to both collegiality and value are likely a result of larger systemic issues, they are also among the most easily addressed. There are innumerable ways to show support to contingent/NTT faculty, whether through departmental awards/recognition in meetings or casual conversations/emails that acknowledge the additional work

that contingent faculty do. Offering support without belittling and acknowledgement without patronizing may go a long way to ensuring that individual contingent/NTT faculty feel collegiality and value from their colleagues.

As our survey shows, contingent/NTT faculty are often caregivers who have more than one job and may be pursuing another degree while they are being systematically marginalized and grossly underpaid. Additionally, many respondents indicated a lack of respect from TT faculty in our open-ended questions and, in our quantitative data, less than 30% marked that they felt respected by TT colleagues.

Our first suggestion for support is simply to have empathy for co-workers who are paid much less to teach many of the same classes/loads that TT faculty do.

### **Program/Departmental Level: Suggestions for Support**

Due to the readership of *Programmatic Perspectives*, we focus much of our discussion of support at the department and program levels in an effort to help improve the conditions of contingent/NTT faculty. Beyond the individual level, programs and departments have opportunities to create tangible support systems for contingent/NTT faculty.

Firstly, department chairs and all allies should be actively fighting for equitable representation and voting rights for contingent/NTT faculty. At no institution should professional instructors be disenfranchised within their own departments, yet our survey indicated that only 23% of respondents were included in faculty governance. Even if instructors only operate within that program or department for one semester or year, all contingent/NTT laborers—including GTAs (who were 46% of our total survey respondents)—should be involved in shared governance and given opportunities to participate in developing policies, practices, and more as all are directly impacted by these decisions. We suggest that individual departments develop opportunities for all contingent/NTT faculty to at least have representation—perhaps through one or more elected spokespersons—in program and/or departmental meetings where decisions are being made. Not doing so is a social justice issue. We cannot discuss the social justice turn in TPC or in the wider Writing Studies field while actively abusing contingent faculty. We must practice what we teach.

Secondly, we call for additional work toward balance. Those who run departments and programs are responsible for ensuring that contingent/NTT faculty are not given more labor—especially with no additional compensation. However, as our survey shows, over half of contingent/NTT laborers participated in service without pay over the course of the year. At the same time, we suggest that contingent/

NTT faculty who may be seeking full-time or TT employment should be given the option to add to their CV. This balance may be difficult to achieve, but it is necessary in order to create a more equitable program and department. For example, 94% of our survey respondents indicated that they would participate in professional development if it were offered. Many, however, are not offered such opportunities, perhaps due to issues of equity or because directors or chairs do not wish to further burden contingent/NTT faculty. We suggest that individual departments and programs develop tools for determining the needs and goals of all faculty and develop enrichment opportunities accordingly. In Appendix C, we provide a guide for department chairs and program directors that may aid in creating materials that survey all faculty members. Departments and programs can create opportunities that work toward balance and create equitable opportunities that are hopefully paid and are at least acknowledged.

**Programmatic Change.** Additionally, we call for individuals within all programs to consider the responses collected here as they communicate with their contingent/NTT colleagues. To do so, we suggest that departments and programs utilize our guide for program directors and/or department chairs (Appendix C) in order to help recognize labor issues. We offer this guide as a questionnaire and survey that draws attention to items such as cost of living, salary and benefits, labor equity, professional development opportunities, and more. We intend for this guide to give contingent/NTT faculty more of a voice and also as a way to collect data that can be presented confidentially to university administration and/or used to create a balanced work environment. For example, program directors and department chairs might inquire which (if any) contingent/NTT faculty in their program/department are interested in service work, professional development, and other opportunities.

**Pedagogical Change.** We also suggest that contingent/NTT faculty, especially graduate students, need further exposure to alternative career paths. For graduate students, one step toward exposure could be re-imagining the dissertation committee to include interdisciplinary members from within and beyond the academy (Lueck & Boehm, 2019). Further, if academia refuses to make changes that would create a more equitable environment for contingent/NTT faculty, one option not often discussed is leaving academia. As one respondent wrote,

“I was on the alt-ac market for two months and received three job offers with six-figure salaries. My universities had convinced me I’m not worth much, until I went out there and confronted what real demand there is for my skills and experience. More NTT in writing

and literature need exposure to this so they can make informed decisions about labor practices.”

We contend with this call for “informed decisions.” Graduate students, for example, are often encouraged to pursue academic positions but are not made aware of the realities of the job market, labor practices, pay discrepancies, hierarchies, burnout, and other issues within academic institutions. The skills that TPC and Writing Studies graduates have, however, are often highly profitable elsewhere. We suggest that programs equip their graduates with information on alternative career paths as well as the realities of the field and institutional practices in order to avoid cohorts of future instructors who are faced with these same challenges.

### **Institutional Level: Suggestions for Support**

In this section, we speak to upper-level administrators who deny departmental or program requests for multi-year contracts or new TT positions or who limit salary increases. Like others, we argue that much change is needed at the institutional level. Higher pay is a necessity. Professional educators at colleges and universities should be earning (more than) a living wage and should have their basic needs met. Institutional systems currently in place, however, rely heavily on adjunct labor as well as graduate student and NTT labor without adequate compensation. While increases in pay may seem difficult in terms of budget, it is clear that these positions are needed and that instructors within these positions care for students and place a high value on quality instruction. We suggest that institutions work toward increasing care and support for contingent/NTT faculty members. For example, when crises erupt, institutions should provide materials (such as quality masks during a pandemic), services (such as free mental health services), and added support (such as modality options) for all faculty.

Additionally, we suggest that institutions work toward more equitable teaching loads and compensation. Many contingent/NTT instructors are faced with high course caps and teaching loads well beyond what is considered best practices in order to earn a living wage. For example, over half of our respondents were teaching at more than one institution and over half had multiple contracts. One individual stated that they were “teaching at 3 colleges for Fall 2021. 1st College: 5 classes: Basic Writing, 2 sections of Freshman Composition, Social Media Writing, Rhetoric and Workplace Writing. 2nd College: 2 sections of Freshman Composition. 3rd College: 2 sections of Freshman Writing.” Five courses across three institutions creates a heavy workload not only in terms of course preparation and grading but also expectations in terms of meetings, training, various learning management services,

transportation, and more. And, in this example, we have not taken personal characteristics into consideration. As mentioned previously, the majority of respondents were also caregivers. As a field, we must find ways of addressing the workload and compensation issue with upper-level administrators. Higher-level administrators in institutions must be made aware of these struggles and take action to create a healthier work environment for contingent faculty at all levels. We suggest that an anonymous survey of contingent/NTT faculty (see Appendix C) would create a data set and that aggregate data could be shared with administration. Included with such data could be narratives or other information from these individuals that may help to impact institutional decision-making processes.

**Activism at the Institutional Level: Unionization.** Finally, and because we do not wish to ignore the systemic problems, we argue that unionization and other sweeping, large-scale actions are vital. As one respondent noted in their discussion of their more equitable position, “All of the positives I’ve marked were only created as a result of a union contract: security, raises, current pay floor, professional development fund, earlier reappointment notices, TT starting to acknowledge me—none of these were created by the institution or department independently.”

Thus, we suggest that unionization and similar strategies are necessary in order to create any real change. The AAUP (2022b) provides an overview as well as specific steps for unionization. Additionally, those interested in forming a union can review the University Grad Workers of New Mexico (2022) website for an example petition and collective bargaining agreement as well as other resources. Again, we contend that the labor issues discussed here are social justice issues that must be approached in comprehensive ways. If institutions will not create more equitable practices, perhaps unionization is the best way forward.

## Conclusion

The results of our survey reveal a number of important issues that contingent/NTT faculty face in English departments. Additionally, we offer recommendations for individuals, program directors and chairs, and institutions of higher education to create better labor conditions for NTT/contingent laborers. We have included a *Guide for Program Directors and/or Department Chairs* in Appendix C and *Concrete Next Steps for Support* in Appendix D to assist with this process.

We acknowledge, however, that our research has limitations.



Information in this study was collected from a survey distributed to a number of listservs in the English/Writing Studies field. As such, the results presented here do not necessarily portray the entirety of the field accurately, as respondents were only those who were signed up for those listservs or were forwarded the request by someone who is a member. In addition, we can assume that respondents were only individuals with the time to complete a lengthy survey by the deadline, etc. While we do not claim to present a representative overview of the entire Writing Studies field or the TPC field here, we do suggest that our results offer unique insights into various perspectives from individuals who wanted to voice their experiences.

Beyond our study, further research on this subject is vital in order to create a clearer picture of the labor discrepancies in the Writing Studies field, particularly within TPC. Subfields and departments may replicate this survey in order to analyze labor issues specific to their branch of Writing Studies. Additionally, we suggest that additional research methods may be useful in order to locate possibilities and strategies. For example, case studies of specific programs or narratives regarding specific strategies being used to combat labor issues at various levels may be particularly beneficial.

Finally, we encourage program chairs, department chairs, institutional leaders, allies, and tenure/tenure track faculty to commit to identifying and implementing concrete solutions that will lead to a more equitable, more just working environments for contingent/NTT laborers in their department, at their university, and across the TPC and broader English/Writing Studies workforce.

## References

- American Association of University Professors (AAUP). (2020a). *Background facts on contingent faculty positions*. <https://www.aaup.org/issues/contingency/background-facts>
- American Association of University Professors (AAUP). (2020b). *Contingent appointments and the academic profession*. <<https://www.aaup.org/report/contingent-appointments-and-academic-profession>>
- American Association of University Professors (AAUP). (2022a). *Faculty compensation survey*. <<https://www.aaup.org/our-work/research/FCS>>
- American Association of University Professors (AAUP). (2022b). *Forming a union chapter*. <<https://www.aaup.org/chapter-resources/forming-new-union>>
- Bartholomae, David. (2011). Teaching on and off the tenure track: Highlights from the ADE survey of staffing patterns in English. *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture*, 11(1), 7–32. <<https://doi.org/10.1215/15314200-2010-012>>
- Chang, Heewon; Ngunjiri, Faith; & Hernandez, Kathy-Ann C. (2013). *Collaborative autoethnography: Developing qualitative inquiry*. Routledge.
- Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW). (2012). *A portrait of part-time faculty members: A summary of findings on part-time faculty respondents to the coalition on the academic workforce survey of contingent faculty members and instructors (2012)*. <<http://www.academicworkforce.org/survey.html>>
- Colby, Richard, & Colby, Rebekah S. (2020). Real faculty but not: the full-time, non-tenure-track position as contingent labor. In Seth Kahn, William B. Lalicker, & Amy Lynch-Binieck (Eds.), *Contingency, exploitation, and solidarity: Labor and action in English composition* (pp. 57–70). The WAC Clearinghouse. <<https://wac.colostate.edu/books/perspectives/contingency/>>
- Creswell, John W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Doe, Sue; Barnes, Natalie; Bowen, David; Gilkey, David; Smoak, Ginger G.; Ryan, Sarah; Sarell, Kirk; Thomas, Laura H.; Troup, Lucy J.; & Palmquist, Mike. (2011). Discourse of the firetenders: Considering contingent faculty through the lens of activity theory. *College English*, 73(4), 428–449. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23052350>>
- Dorfeld, Natalie M. (2015). National adjunct walkout: Now what? *Col-*

- lege *Composition and Communication*, 64(1), A8–A13.
- Evans, Chad G. (2018). *Working off-track: Adjunct labor in higher education*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Pennsylvania.
- Flaherty, Colleen. (2020). Barely getting by: New report on adjuncts says many make less than \$3,500 per course and live in poverty. *Inside Higher Ed*. <<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/20/new-report-says-many-adjuncts-make-less-3500-course-and-25000-year>>
- Gonzales, Laura; Leon, Kendall; & Shivers-McNair, Ann. (2020). Testimonios from faculty developing technical & professional writing programs at Hispanic-serving institutions. *Programmatic Perspectives*, 11(2), 67–92.
- Kaezer, Adrianna, & Sam, Cecile. (2010). Understanding the new majority of non-tenure-track faculty in higher education: Demographics, experiences, and plans of action. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 36(4), 1–133.
- Kahn, Seth. (2017). Anyone can teach writing. In Cheryl E. Ball & Drew M. Loewe (Eds.), *Bad ideas about writing* (pp. 363–368). Digital Publishing Institute. <<https://textbooks.lib.wvu.edu/badideas/badideasaboutwriting-book.pdf>>
- Khan, Seth. (2020). We value teaching too much to keep devaluing it. *College English*, 82(6), 591–611. <<https://library.ncte.org/journals/ce/issues/v82-6/30805>>
- Kahn, Seth; Lalicker, William B.; & Lynch-Binieck, Amy. (2020). *Contingency, exploitation, and solidarity: Labor and action in English composition*. The WAC Clearinghouse. <<https://wac.colostate.edu/books/perspectives/contingency/>>
- Lueck, Amy J., & Boehm, Beth. (2019). Beginning at the end: Reimagining the dissertation committee, reimagining careers. *Composition Studies*, 47(1), 135–153.
- Mazurek, Raymond A. (2011). Academic labor is a class issue: Professional organizations confront the exploitation of contingent faculty. *Journal of Workplace Rights*, 16(3–4), 353–366.
- McBeth, Mark, & McCormack, Tim. (2020). An apologia and a way forward: In defense of the lecturer line in writing programs. In Seth Kahn, William B. Lalicker, & Amy Lynch-Binieck (Eds.), *Contingency, exploitation, and solidarity: Labor and action in English composition* (pp. 41–56). The WAC Clearinghouse. <<https://wac.colostate.edu/books/perspectives/contingency/>>
- Melonçon, Lisa. (2017). Contingent faculty, online writing instruction, and professional development in technical and professional

- communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 3, 256–272. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2017.1339489>>
- Melonçon, Lisa, & England, Peter. (2011). The current status of contingent faculty in technical and professional communication. *College English*, 73(4), 396–408. <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23052348>>
- Melonçon, Lisa; Mechenbier, Mahli X.; & Wilson, Laura. (2020). A national snapshot of the material working conditions of contingent faculty in composition and technical and professional writing. *Academic Labor: Research and Artistry*, 4(1).
- Melonçon, Lisa, & St. Amant, Kirk. (2018). Empirical research in technical and professional communication: A 5-year examination of research methods and a call for research sustainability. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 49(2), 128–155. <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0047281618764611>>
- Mertens, Donna M. (2009). *Transformative research and evaluation*. The Guilford Press.
- Micciche, Laura R. (2002). More than a feeling: Disappointment and WPA work. *College English*, 64(4), 432–458. <<https://doi.org/10.2307/3250746>>
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). (2022) *Living wage calculator*. <<https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/40119>>
- Murray, Darrin S. (2019). The precarious new faculty majority: Communication and instruction research and contingent labor in higher education. *Communication Education*, 68(2), 235–245. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2019.1568512>>
- Nardo, Anna K., & Heifferon, Barbara. (2020). Despair is not a strategy. In Seth Kahn, William B. Lalicker, & Amy Lynch-Binieck (Eds.), *Contingency, exploitation, and solidarity: Labor and action in English composition* (pp. 27–40). The WAC Clearinghouse. <<https://wac.colostate.edu/books/perspectives/contingency/>>
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2020). *Characteristics of postsecondary faculty*. <<https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/csc>>
- Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE). (2023). *2023 poverty guidelines*. <<https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>>
- Ogilvie, Craig; Brooks, Thomas R.; Ellis, Colter; Gowen, Garrett; Knight, Kelly; Perez, Rosemary J.; Rodriguez, Sarah L.; Schweppe, Nina; Smith, Laura L.; & Smith, Rachel A. (2020). *NSF RAPID: Graduate student experiences of support and stress during the COVID-19 pandemic*. (Grant No. 2030313). National Science Foundation. <[https://www.montana.edu/covid19\\_rapid/new%20NSF\\_RAPID\\_Graduat](https://www.montana.edu/covid19_rapid/new%20NSF_RAPID_Graduat)>

- eStudentExperiences\_Covid19\_White\_Paper.pdf>
- Phelps, Johanna L. (2021). The transformative paradigm: Equipping technical communication researchers for socially just work. *Technical Communication Quarterly* 30:2, 204-215. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2020.1803412>>
- Reid, John, & Rout, Matthew. (2020). Developing sustainability indicators: The need for radical transparency. *Ecological Indicators*, 110, 10594. <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolind.2019.105941>>
- Royster, Jacqueline J., & Kirsch., Gesa E. (2012). *Feminist rhetorical practices: New horizons for rhetoric, composition, and literary studies*. Southern Illinois University Press.
- Saldaña, Johnny. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Schreyer, Jessica. (2012). Inviting the “outsiders” in: Local efforts to improve adjunct working conditions. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 31(2), 83–102. <<https://doi.org/10.37514/JPW-J.2012.31.2.05>>
- Schuster, Jack H., & Finkelstein, Martin J. (2006). *The restructuring of academic work and careers: The American faculty*. The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Scott, Susan. (2011). *The case for radical transparency* [YouTube]. TEDx Talks. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVKaXUB4EFg>>
- University Grad Workers of New Mexico. (2022). *UNM works because we do*. <<https://unmgrads.ueunion.org/>>
- Walton, Rebecca; Moore, Kristen; & Jones, Natasha. (2019). *Technical communication after the social justice turn: Building coalitions for action*. Routledge.
- Wright, Allison L. (2017). The rhetoric of excellence and the erasure of graduate labor. In Seth Khan, William B. Lalicker, & Amy Lynch-Binieck (Eds.), *Contingency, exploitation, and solidarity: Labor and action in English composition* (pp. 271–278). The WAC Clearinghouse. <<https://wac.colostate.edu/books/perspectives/contingency/>>

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Our Personal Experiences

#### ***Katie Rieger, PhD***

I served in contingent/NTT roles from 2015–2022. These roles include GTA, writing center consultant, assistant director, research assistant, adjunct, 3/4 NTT assistant professor, and others. My 3/4 contingent position turned into a TT position, which I stayed in for a year before I transitioned into an alt-ac career.

For me (and I'm sure many others), issues related to finances, family sacrifices, and health issues while in contingent/NTT roles were very difficult. During all my times of contingent laboring, there was never a time where I did not work 2+ other jobs in addition to my "main" contingent role. These roles started when I was a GTA in my master's program. In 2016, I made roughly \$908/month (9-month contract) without health insurance. To make ends meet (paying rent, bills, student loans), I always lived with roommates and contracted myself out as a substitute teacher for K-12 schools, working on the days I didn't teach at the college and working morning and weekend shifts at a bank. My PhD stipend paid roughly \$1700 (9-month contract) with health insurance. The summer between my master's and my PhD I got married, and my spouse became a "trailing spouse" and looked for careers in the city of my PhD program. He found one, where he was underpaid for his master's degree at \$33,000, but it allowed us to be in the same city together and make ends meet. I am still immensely grateful for his choice to financially support us during this time and recognize that he did most of the house tasks while I was studying and grading, and I want to recognize the partners, family members, and loved ones who often do the same.

Even though he never shared anything but support, my not being able to contribute much bothered me. In an effort to try to try and support us more, I contracted myself out to even more jobs. During my last semester of PhD coursework, I worked 20 hours for the university, received approval for an overload to work four hours in another department, taught 2–3 courses/semester at a community college, and taught 1–2 courses/semester at my alma mater. It was during this time that my mental and physical health started to deteriorate. That semester, I started looking for full-time jobs to cut down on some of the hours and was lucky to secure a 3/4 NTT position that would cover health insurance, pay more than all my part-time jobs combined (total was ~\$45,000), and be closer to extended family.

During my 3/4 NTT position, I taught a 4/3 load with an additional

2-3 overloads a year, served on several committees, and started the foundation for a writing center. I, like many other folks in contingent positions, tried to root myself in the school in the hopes of being offered a FTT position. I still worked as an adjunct at other universities, but I worked significantly less than I had previously, and I was able to dedicate more time to my graduate studies. I received awards for teaching, high evaluations from colleagues and students, developed a TPC course, presented at conferences, published peer-reviewed articles, and secured grants. While I felt overwhelmed at times, I more so felt thankful for having a position and more financial security. The second semester during my first year in this position (2020), COVID-19 began. Again, worried about the precarious nature of my role, I offered to build instructional materials and support faculty as we transitioned for the “two-weeks” online. I continued this service throughout the pandemic, largely unpaid for these additional roles. However, at the end of the 2020 academic year, a key administrator approached me with thanks and offered me a full-time, tenure track position. While this position was what I wanted, it turned out to not be exactly what I expected. The administrator let me know she would not be able to pay me a full-time wage—but that through a series of years she would add small bonuses to get me to a full-time salary. I would continue doing the same level of work I had been doing alongside additional duties of developing a writing center and a writing across the curriculum (WAC) program. For several reasons (many surrounding stability and security), I accepted the position. I want to take a moment to recognize that many contingent/NTT faculty root themselves in university system(s), win awards, publish, secure grants, take on several extra duties, etc., in hopes of securing an offer for a stable position. In other words, I want to recognize that this change in status from contingent/NTT to TT is an exception rather than the norm that many higher education laborers face.

From the time of starting this project to now, I have since moved to an alt-ac job. There were many reasons surrounding this change, most of them surrounding finances, family, and health. The experience of translating skills and learning new ones in the alt-ac realm has been extremely rewarding. I am very thankful for the work I do, for warm colleagues, for the ability to work remotely, for the ability to stay connected in research, and to feel fairly compensated for my time/labor. I miss teaching, the writing center, the students, and the day-to-day duties in academia, but for the first time in a long time, I feel relaxed and at peace.

***Christina Lane, PhD***

My experience as an educator has been extremely varied over the past 15 years in terms of what and whom I taught. Part of that variety is due to personal circumstances (like my desire to see the world after graduating college and my partner completing medical school and residency in different cities). But a major reason for my varied experience is because I love learning about new things and how to teach in new ways. In contrast to Katie, Sarah, and Lydia, for my first eight years as an educator, I primarily taught full-time at the secondary level, rather than in higher education. Here's the rundown of my diverse jobs during this time. Upon graduation from undergrad, I began as an EFL instructor at a private language school in Bangkok, Thailand; shifted to teaching sheltered and mainstream English classes in a Title I high school in Oklahoma City; coordinated and taught in the northside Oklahoma City Public Schools Refugee, Asylee, and Immigrant Center located in that same high school; moved to a reading and writing RTI (response to intervention) facilitator position and then sixth grade language arts position in an IB (international baccalaureate) middle school in Texas; and finally ended in an English and history position in a private Christian school in Texas. During my first two years back in the US while teaching full-time in Oklahoma City, I also completed a master's in TESL/bilingual education at night and in the summer.

When I had the opportunity to go back to school for a PhD in 2015, I decided to focus on my schooling and work in the contingent positions offered through a graduate assistantship, rather than continuing to work in a full-time secondary position. So, like Katie, Sarah, and Lydia, I have also served in a variety of contingent roles at the university level: writing center consultant, graduate teaching instructor, assistant director of a FYC program, and adjunct. But because my partner has had a well-paying and stable job since 2015, I have been privileged to not have to worry about whether these contingent roles paid well (they haven't), provided health insurance (the adjunct jobs haven't), or offered additional benefits like retirement, a laptop, office supplies, etc. (they haven't).

During the 2020–2021 school year, when other fellow Rhetoric and Writing Studies PhD student colleagues were seeking jobs in anticipation of graduating in May, I was taking care of my newborn son and worrying about my husband, who works in healthcare. So, I didn't apply to any full-time TT or NTT jobs. I decided to adjunct part-time for a community college and a four-year public university: two online courses for the university and one face-to-face course for the college. However, I was only able to do so because my recently retired parents



who live nearby took care of my son while I taught.

Although the opportunity to apply to a TT position came up at the community college during the 2021–2022 school year, I decided to not apply and remain part-time in order to be able to be at home with my toddler as much as I can. Fortunately, my supervisor at the community college I'm continuing to work at is understanding of my situation. Over the past two semesters, he has consistently offered a class at the location and times that I have childcare. And I am grateful. But despite spending a significant amount of time building curriculum for these classes, both semesters I have been unsure until one week before class began that I would be teaching that class. Why? For reasons that are the same or similar to most contingent laborers. One, the amount of students in each class needs to hit a certain number. Two, classes can be shifted last minute to a TT professor if they need an additional course (like if their class didn't hit the required minimum).

**Sarah Lonelodge, PhD**

Like Katie, Christina, and Lydia, I have had varied experiences in higher education as a contingent/NTT instructor. Two weeks before my first semester as an MA student in 2011, I was offered a graduate teaching assistantship, which I immediately accepted. I found out later that the position paid \$955 per month for teaching two courses and did not include insurance coverage. While I did receive a tuition waiver, I was responsible for paying for fees, books, and other necessities. Rent was over half of my monthly income even in the smaller town I lived in, which was nearly an hour commute to the university, and moving closer was impossible. In other words, I was not paid enough to live near my place of work. Therefore, instead of leaving the employment I was in before graduate school, I moved into a part-time position. This meant that I worked in an office for four hours each weekday morning, drove an hour, taught two courses, attended my graduate courses, held office hours, and commuted home another hour. During my "off" time, I created lesson plans, gave feedback on student writing, conferred with students, and much more.

I worked almost constantly to finish my MA degree in two years and was ready to begin my career. At that time, I had very little understanding of TT versus NTT positions, yearly contracts, adjunct laborer conditions, or much else. I wrongly assumed that professor positions were steady and abundant and would be located somewhere I wanted to live. I quickly realized that most permanent, full-time positions required or preferred a PhD. What was available to me were mostly adjunct positions or full-time, non-permanent positions in different states that would require me to uproot my husband and our children.

This option seemed impossible since we had little to no savings after two years of graduate school.

I, therefore, applied for and was offered an adjunct position at the university where I received my MA. I was paid \$700 per credit hour, which for four classes was about \$1900 per month. I had no insurance, and I still could not afford to live near the university. Although my income was higher, I was essentially teaching a 4/4 load and being paid about 50% less than FT faculty teaching the same load. Eventually, expenses, including student loans, accumulated, and I took on an additional adjunct position at a community college. This position paid \$660 per credit hour and added three courses to the four I was teaching. It also required more commuting and additional planning and grading due to differing program requirements.

After two years of adjuncting at two—and because adjuncts are not paid in the summer, eventually three—different institutions and increasingly feeling burnout, I applied and was accepted to a PhD program. It offered a stipend of about \$1700 per month, included health insurance and a tuition waiver, and offered a scholarship for the first semester. Although the pay was low, I was able to publish and get needed experience in teaching upper division courses and in administrative work as an assistant director of first year composition (FYC).

Upon completion of my PhD program, I secured a full-time teaching assistant professor position that included adequate pay, though the cost for insurance and other resources were significant and no funding for moving expenses was provided. Although it was a one-year-renewable contract, the stability and income were a significant step up from adjunct and graduate student work. During my time as a teaching assistant professor, I applied for several TT jobs in hopes of securing a stable position with more resources and more support within the department, and I have accepted a TT position for the upcoming academic year.

**Lydia Welker, MA**

When I received my acceptance letter to my MA program, I also received an offer to be both a GTA and a digital publishing research assistant (RA). In return, I would receive a tuition waiver and a stipend of \$15,900.

During my first year (2015–2016), I split my time between the two opportunities, meaning I taught one course each semester and also worked 10 hours per week as an RA. I especially thrived as an RA; the position was academically challenging, allowed me to grow as a professional, and helped me further develop skills that would benefit me outside of academia. I continued working as an RA throughout the

summer of 2016 as well. From 2016–2017, I accepted a new graduate RA position in the college research office, where I helped arts and sciences faculty create competitive grant proposals and secure funding for their research.

I'm extremely grateful for these research and teaching assistantship opportunities—without them, I wouldn't have been able to attend graduate school at all—but even though I lived in a state and city with a comparatively low cost of living, I still struggled to cover living expenses and other bills. Fortunately, I was young enough to stay covered by my parents' health insurance plan, which cut down on some costs, and I was flexible enough to be able to live in cheaper housing with other graduate students that, while not close to campus, included free bus transportation to the university.

To supplement my income during my second year, I held additional paid positions. Not only did I continue working on some long-term projects as a digital publishing RA alongside my assistantship in the research office, but I also worked as the English Department's assistant technology coordinator for an additional stipend. I occasionally freelanced in the industry as a technical writer and editor, too.

I love researching, and I thrive as a teacher. But, after I graduated with my MA, I didn't seek out nor expect to find full-time work in higher education because I knew that all the well-paying jobs require a PhD—something I did not and do not have. Although it interests me, I have many reasons for not applying to PhD programs right now, many of which are covered in the results of this survey and paper (significant lack of stable/equitable hiring opportunities, high program costs with low stipend offers, lack of support, etc.).

Currently, I work as a technical writer, editor, and digital marketer. However, because I do so love to teach technical communication, I am also a per-course adjunct instructor at my undergraduate alma mater. Each fall semester for the last few years, I have taught a course for seniors and graduate students. I love teaching the class, and I'm grateful to the professional writing program for hiring me; I have control over the course material, I get to work with both undergraduate and graduate students, and I can prepare my students to do some truly fascinating work in the technical communication field. But, comparing the stipend I receive to how much time it takes to plan and teach the course every year, one thing is clear: I don't teach for the money. It's for the love of teaching.

## Appendix B: Survey Questions

Below include the questions that were asked on the survey. Please note that most of these questions were multiple choice/multiple answers. The answers are not provided in an effort to consolidate the length of this article.

### **Overview of Support & Labor**

- What are your area(s) of expertise? This could relate to your degree(s) and/or emphases you have in addition to your degree title.
  - Rhetoric, composition, technical/professional writing, linguistics, ESL/TESOL, literature, creative writing, Writing Studies, other
- How many institutions do you currently work at (either in TT or NTT/contingent roles)?
  - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5+
- How many NTT/contingent roles do you currently have? In other words, how many contingent “contracts” do you have? (For example: One may have a contract for a grad assistant position in the English dept., and they may have a research contract for another dept.)
  - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5+
- From 2015–2020, describe your teaching load (i.e., sections taught, number of institutions, etc.).
  - Short answer text
- Please describe your current teaching load for Fall 2021 (i.e., sections taught, number of institutions, etc.).
  - Short answer text
- How would you categorize your NTT/contingent role(s)? Select all that apply.
  - Graduate student instructor, Per-course/Adjunct instructor, NTT, other
- If you are in a contingent/NTT position, are you employed outside of academia? If so, how many additional jobs do you have?
  - Not employed outside of academia, 1 outside job, 2 outside jobs, 3 outside jobs, 4 outside jobs, 5+ outside jobs
- Is your full-time professional career outside of academia?
  - Yes/No
- How would you describe the contingent/NTT institution (or one of the institutions) you are employed at? Select all that apply.
  - Tribal college, associate-granting, special focus, baccalaureate-granting, masters-granting, doctorate-granting, R1 institu-

tion, R2 institution, liberal arts institution, HBCU, faith-based, private, public, small (0-4,999), medium (5,000-14,999), large (15,000+)

- What are your position(s) at these institutions?
  - Per-course/adjunct, graduate student, lecturer, visiting assistant professor, other NTT teaching position, NTT/contingent research position, NTT/contingent administrative position, other
  - If you selected other, please provide the title of those positions here.
- How long have you worked at this institution? If you have changed positions and are still in NTT/contingent roles, please count previous roles' time.
  - Less than 1 year, 1-2 years, 3-4 years, 5-6 years, 7-8 years, 9-10 years, more than 10 years
- If this position were to become TT, would you be interested in applying to the TT position?
  - Yes, no, maybe
  - If you chose maybe, please explain.
- For the current term, how far in advance of the term starting did you receive your course assignments?
  - Less than 1 week, 1-2 weeks, 3-4 weeks, 1-3 months, more than 3 months
- Have you sought a TT-position at any of these or other institutions?
  - No, yes/currently seeking a position, yes/within the last year, yes/1-2 years ago, yes/3-5 years ago, yes/5+ years ago
- In considering your reasons for teaching in your roles, please indicate whether you agree with these statements. Check all that apply.
  - My contingent/NTT position(s) is/are an important source of income for me, Compensation is not a major consideration in my decision to teach part time, NTT/contingent teaching is a stepping-stone to a TT position, My NTT/contingent position provides benefits (health insurance, retirement) that I need, TT positions were not available, My expertise in my chosen profession is relevant to the course(s) I teach

### **Resources & Compensation**

- Please select the following office resources that you are provided with in your current role.
  - "Welcome" materials to orient you to the dept., class, HR needs, etc.; shared office; private office; shared computer; private computer; shared phone; private phone; limited printing/

- copying capabilities; unlimited printing/copying capabilities; limited access to library resources (databases, ILL, checking out texts, etc.; unlimited access to library resources; professional development funds; an email account
- How much are you paid per course (3-hour credit) at each institution?
    - Less than 500 per course, 500-999, 1000-1499, 1500-1999, 2000-2499, 2500-2999, 3000-3499, 3500-3999, 4000-4499, 4500-4999, 5000+
    - If you selected less than 500 for an institution or 5000 or more, please provide your per-course compensation.
  - How much was your total salary from each institution for this academic year?
    - Less than 5000, 5000-9999, 10000-14999, 15000-19999, 20000-24999, 25000-29999, 30000-34999, 35000-39999, 40000-44999, 45000-49999, 50000+
  - Outside of your per course payment or salary, are you provided with any of the following?
    - Health insurance, compensated/semesterly trainings, raise in the past two years, other additional monetary compensation, other
    - If you selected other, please explain.
  - Please select which statements you agree with:
    - I am offered specific training before teaching, I am responsible for primarily introductory courses, I have no guarantee of employment security, I am offered professional development opportunities once a semester, I am offered professional development opportunities more than once a semester, TT colleagues collaborate/interact with me, TT colleagues do not interact/ collaborate with me, I'm required to attend meetings, I feel respected by TT faculty, I do not feel respected by TT faculty, I'm paid fairly, I have input in course designs, I am included in faculty governance
  - If you are provided with professional development opportunities, which are the most beneficial to you?
    - Short answer text
  - What type of professional development opportunities would you be most interested in?
    - Social justice workshops, labor-based assessment strategies, feedback strategies, useful classroom tools, lesson planning, field-related theories/research, pedagogy theory & tips, research/publishing workshops, job materials workshop &

feedback

- Thinking of your time, if professional development opportunities were offered throughout the semester, how much time would you want to give to these opportunities throughout the semester?
  - I would not be interested, 30/min semester, 1 hr/semester, 2-3 hrs/semester, 4-5 hrs/semester, 6-7 hrs/semester, 8-9 hrs/semester, 10+hrs/semester
- How would you like these opportunities presented?
  - In-person, hybrid (online and in-person), virtual recording, regularly (issued multi-semester) newsletters, emails, other

### **Demographic Information**

- Personally, how important (to you) is
  - Research, teaching, service
  - Likert scale (essential, very important, somewhat important, not important)
- How many courses are you teaching this term (including all the institutions you teach at)?
  - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more
- Select the aspects of your job(s) that you are satisfied with. Select all that apply.
  - Salary, health benefits, retirement benefits, opportunity for scholarly pursuits, teaching load, departmental support for work/life balance, institutional support for work/life balance, prospects for career advancements, flexibility in relation to personal/familial/other emergencies, leave policies, overall job
- In the past year have you
  - Considered leaving academia for another job, considered leave a (or multiple) institutions for another academia job, engaged in service without pay, received a job elsewhere, sought a promotion
- Please mark the highest degree you have earned:
  - Bachelor's (BA, BS, etc.), master's (MA/MS), terminal master's (MFA, MBA, etc.), JD, PhD, professional doctorate (EdD, PsyD, etc.), none, other
- Please mark the degree you are currently working on, if any.
  - Bachelor's (BA, BS, etc.), master's (MA/MS), terminal master's (MFA, MBA, etc.), JD, PhD, professional doctorate (EdD, PsyD, etc.), none, other
- What gender do you identify with?
  - Female, male, prefer not to say, other
- How would you categorize your ethnicity?
  - Short answer text

- Are you a caregiver for anyone under the age of 18?
  - No, yes/1 person, yes/2, yes/3, yes/4+
- Are you a caregiver for anyone over the age of 18?
  - No, yes/1 person, yes/2, yes/3, yes/4+
- When were you born?
  - Before 1950, 1950-1959, 1960-1969, 1970-1979, 1980-1989, 1990-1999, 2000-2009

**Frustrations/Other Thoughts**

- With your position(s), what are (if any) frustrations do you have related to this position(s)?
  - Short answer text
- With your position(s), what office resources (not just those included above) would make your position better?
  - Long answer text
- With your position(s), what monetary resources (not just those included above) would make your position better?
  - Long answer text
- With your position(s), what professional development opportunities (not just those included above) would make your position better?
  - Long answer text
- With your position(s), what other resources (not just those included above) would make your position better?
  - Long answer text
- Are there any other items/compensation/opportunities that would better support you in these position(s)?
  - Long answer text
- Are there helpful initiatives (mentoring, course shells, etc.) or development (specific training, workshops, etc.) that you receive from your institution/department?
  - Long answer text
- Are there any additional thoughts you wish to convey about the support (or lack thereof) in your position(s)?
  - Long answer text
- Are there any other thoughts you would like to provide that were not covered in the survey?
  - Long answer text

**Optional Follow-Up**

If you would like to be considered with follow-up opportunities (such as follow-up of questions and possibly supplying a narrative of your experience as a contingent/NTT laborer, please supply your email. If you add your email here, it will not be used in conjunction with any



data you supplied in the questionnaire. In other words, your email will be stripped from data before it is reviewed.

- I would like to be considered for follow-up opportunities to share your experiences. Please provide your email.
  - Short answer text

## Appendix C: Guide for Program Directors and/or Department Chairs

In an effort to provide tangible takeaways from our study, we present here a worksheet for program directors and/or department chairs in Writing Studies. The goal of this worksheet is to assess contingent faculty's labor and quality of life. In doing so, the data collected from this worksheet can be used to determine if/what changes are needed and to provide data to university administrators when calling for change. If you make a survey, we strongly encourage making it anonymous and not collecting any identifiable data, to protect contingent/NTT individuals and to get honest answers.

### **Part 1: Program Director/Department Chair Worksheet**

The goal of this worksheet is to assess contingent faculty's labor and quality of life. In doing so, the data collected from this worksheet can be used to determine if/what changes are needed and to provide data to university administrators when calling for change.

#### *Demographics*

What contingent/NTT positions make up your program/department?	
How many contingent/NTT faculty are in each position?	
What is the average number of courses taught by these individuals?	
What is the average number of students served by these individuals?	
Are the number of contingent positions, the number of courses taught, and the number of students served relatively consistent each year?	
Do the above numbers indicate that a promotion system/multi-year contracts is warranted and/or should be expanded?	

*Salary and Benefits*

- Taking into account annual pay after taxes, insurance benefits, tuition (for GTAs), additional fees (parking, university fees, supplies, etc.), what is the estimated take-home pay each year for contingent faculty of various ranks?
- What is the estimated living wage for your county (see <https://livingwage.mit.edu/>)?

Sample: Oklahoma State University

Rank and Load	Annual Pay After Taxes*	Insurance Benefits	Tuition Waiver	Additional Fees	Estimated Take-Home Pay	Living Wage After Taxes for Payne County
GTA (2/2)	\$17,773	Yes	Yes	Parking (-\$150) University Fees (-\$450) Text-books (-\$200)	\$16,973	\$27,180
Adjunct (4/4)	\$23,414	No (-\$500)	n/a	Parking (-\$150)	\$22,764	\$27,180

\*<https://salaryaftertax.com/us/salary-calculator>

- What is the difference between take-home pay and living wage for each rank?
  - Sample: GTA: (-\$10,207); adjunct: (-\$4,416)
- Do GTAs in the program/department receive tuition waivers? If not, deduct tuition costs from the take-home salary.

Based on the take-home pay of contingent faculty in my department and according to the MIT living wage calculator, are all faculty in my department are earning a living wage?

- If not, how much additional pay is needed for each rank to reach a living wage?
- Other than or in addition to salary increase, are other options for increasing take-home pay possible (e.g., free parking, insurance

benefits, etc.)?

*Support*

- Do faculty of all ranks in my department have access to the following resources?
  - Sample syllabi
  - Lessons and activities
  - Rubrics
  - Assignment sheets/prompts
  - Fully editable and fully optional course shells
- Does my department have professional development opportunities available to faculty of all ranks each semester?
  - If so, are these opportunities advertised to NTT faculty?
  - Does my department make an effort to schedule professional development opportunities at a time convenient for NTT faculty?
  - Are NTT faculty invited to collaborate on creating professional development opportunities?
- Does my department offer equal voting rights and/or input from contingent faculty on department/program issues, such as curriculum development, policies, etc.?
- Does my department provide guides for new faculty, such as how to submit startup paperwork, who to contact in human resources, etc.?
- How quickly are faculty given access to computer systems, learning management systems (LMS), etc.?
- What office supplies do contingent faculty have access to (computers, printers, copiers, etc.)?
- What office or lounge space do contingent faculty have access to?
- Is research (publications, conferences, etc.) required, encouraged, or used as a metric in any way for renewal of this position?
  - If so, is this metric communicated effectively to NTT faculty?
  - If so, does the university/department provide NTT faculty with funding?
  - If funding is offered, is reimbursement the only option for funding?
  - Is additional support provided for research (course release, reduced service, etc.)?
- Does my department host non-professional events (lunch, holiday events, etc.) welcoming faculty of all ranks?
- How early are contingent/NTT individuals notified if courses are canceled due to enrollment?

- Are courses taken from contingent/NTT and given to TT individuals?

*Program Focus*

- My program/department prepares graduate students for possible careers outside academia.
  - Courses that facilitate this alt-ac focus:
  - Job advertisements we have reviewed include the following skills:
  - Courses teaching these skills:
- Thesis/dissertation committee members may be outside of academia.
- My program/department has resources available to graduate students pursuing alt-ac careers.
  - List of resources available:

**Part 2: Sample Survey Questions**

Equally or perhaps more important than program director/department chair insight is inviting input from contingent/NTT faculty. The following questions are sample survey questions that directors/chairs could use to develop surveys or questionnaires.

We strongly suggest that the survey remain anonymous and that it does not include questions that would identify respondents, such as gender, ethnicity, etc., unless such items are absolutely necessary for doing advocacy work.

*Demographic Information (Open-Ended)*

- What is your current job title?
- What is your education level?
- How long have you been a faculty member at this institution?
- Are you a caregiver/do you have dependents?
- If you are an international worker, have you received adequate visa assistance?
- If you are an international worker, have you received assistance with finding housing?

*Service (Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)*

- Are you interested in service work? If yes, what kind?
- Are you interested in having a mentor? If yes, what content should be provided?
- Are you interested in serving as a mentor? If yes, what content should be provided?

*Support: Teaching (Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)*

- My department has an adequate repository of sample syllabi,

lessons and activities, assignment sheets/prompts, rubrics, course shells, etc.

- I receive my teaching schedule with adequate time for preparation for all my courses.
- I feel that I can reach out to colleagues with questions, concerns, etc. about teaching.
- I feel that my teaching is evaluated fairly by the department/program.

*Support: Professional Development (Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)*

- If a tenure-track position opened at this institution, I would apply for it.
- I feel that I would be a strong candidate for such a position.
- I am interested in professional development opportunities from the department/program.
- I would like to pursue professional development opportunities outside of the department/program.
- My program/department has offered support for positions outside of academia.
- My program/department has prepared me with skills to secure positions outside of academia.
- My program/department has provided me with knowledge about the nuances of the job market (not asking for salary, thank-you notes, etc.) and labor issues in my field.

*Support: Salary and Benefits (Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)*

- My current salary is enough to live on and support my household.
- I support my household through an additional job(s).
- My position offers adequate insurance benefits.
- I would prefer a multi-year contract for my position.
- My department provides opportunities for contingent/NTT faculty to be recognized.

*Other (Open-Ended)*

- What (if any) frustrations do you have related to your position(s)?
- What other resources (not just those included above) would make your position better?
- Are there other items/opportunities that would better support you?
- Do you feel that scheduling decisions are made in an ethical and equitable way?
- If scheduling changes are made, do you have adequate time to find other employment opportunities?

- Are there helpful initiatives (mentoring, course shells, etc.) the department or institution should provide?
- Are there helpful professional development opportunities (specific training, workshops, etc.) that our department or the institution should provide?
- In what areas do you feel your department chair is supporting you?
- In what areas do you wish your department chair could support you more?
- Are there any other thoughts you would like your department chair to know?

## Appendix D: Concrete Next Steps for Support

### ***Individual Level***

- Learn contingent/NTT laborers' names
- Connect with them (chats, etc.)
- Share pedagogical, professional, and, perhaps, personal resources
- Invite contingent/NTT to meetings, collaboration efforts, and publication opportunities
- Offer mentoring, not just advising
- Listen to their needs and advocate at the program/departmental (or institutional) level
- Recognize that contingent faculty may have unique experiences and expertise that can benefit the program/department
- Have conversations with students about labor and inequities in higher education
- Have radical transparency conversations as related to salaries/compensation/labor/etc.

### ***Program/Departmental Level***

- Provide a more equitable spread of heavy-load courses between contingent and NTT individuals (entry-level courses, service courses, general education courses, etc.)
- Provide a more equitable spread of service/adding service as a component that can go toward TT (allowing contingent/NTT to fill, if they desire)
- Provide course release/s to contingent/NTT individuals as necessary for personal or professional reasons
- Provide awards and recognition for contingent/NTT individuals both as a category themselves and with TT individuals
- Provide consistent department recognition (in meetings or conversations) to acknowledge the work contingent/NTT do
- Offer support by listening to their needs
- Allow contingent/NTT individuals to serve on departmental and university committees and governance (with voting rights)
- Provide a handout or guidebook of tasks (and how to complete those tasks) prior to starting work: HR paperwork, required training (Title 9, cybersecurity, teaching standards, etc.), where to submit syllabi, policy overview (attendance, grades, where to request textbooks), benefits that can be used with this position (printing, database access, parking, etc.), etc.
- Provide a list of resources (affordable housing opportunities in the area, food banks, healthcare resources, daycare resources, etc.)
- Provide free or greatly reduced parking fees or transit funds for



contingent/NTT individuals

- Provide sufficient office space with necessary supplies (computers, printers, copiers, staplers, etc.)
- Be flexible with office hours (modes, spaces, length, etc.)
- Make sure there is a contingent/NTT listserv that is updated each semester so individuals are connected to all key information
- Share key information with the contingent/NTT listserv
- Be transparent with the program/department budget
- Provide clear and consistent communication of promotion opportunities at the institution with clear steps and transparent criteria
- Reach out each semester to hear what professional development opportunities would be beneficial
- Record professional development opportunities and have a repository where all can access them
- Create course shells for heavy-labor courses (with ability to edit/alter them)
- Listen to contingent/NTT individuals about courses they want to teach and offer them opportunities to skill-up (if necessary) and teach those courses
- Work with upper-level administration to improve conditions for contingent faculty labor
- Provide more programmatic focus of opportunities outside of academia
- Provide a clear, ethical guide of the academic job market, labor practices, pay discrepancies, hierarchies, and other issues to undergraduate and graduate students to help them make informed decisions
- Provide encouragement and financial support for conferences
- Remove any non-competing clauses and/or clauses that hinder contingent/NTT individuals from working elsewhere
- Offer multiple modes for teaching (hybrid, online, in-person)
- Provide resources for mental health, work/life balance, etc.
- Institute longer contracts
- Support unionization efforts
- Have radical transparency conversations as related to salaries/compensation/labor/etc.

***Institutional Level***

- Offer pay that is equal to or more than the cost of living in the area for contingent/NTT individuals, including graduate students
- Provide services (mental health services, modality options, etc.) for all instructors
- Provide raises to contingent/NTT individuals

- Include clauses on syllabi templates that share compensation for teaching that course
- Amend policies that exclude NTT individuals from committee and other service opportunities, as appropriate
- Develop a system of promotion for NTT faculty (senior lecturer, teaching assistant professor, etc.)
- Provide tuition waivers for GTAs
- Support department chairs, program directors, etc., when they request that specific new positions have TT rank
- Have radical transparency conversations as related to salaries/compensation/labor/etc.

## **Author Information**

**Katie Rieger**, PhD, previously served as a TT assistant professor and writing center director. Recently, she has transitioned into an alt-ac position and serves as a proposal manager working on multi-million, interdisciplinary, and interinstitutional proposals. Her areas of research include labor issues in higher education, topics related to equity, and intercultural communication.

**Christina Lane**, PhD, is an adjunct instructor at Tulsa Community College. She completed her PhD in Rhetoric and Writing Studies at Oklahoma State University in 2021. Her areas of interest include environmental rhetoric and its intersections with religion and spirituality as well as community-engaged pedagogies in composition and technical/professional communication.

**Sarah Lonelodge**, PhD, is an assistant professor in the English Department at Eastern New Mexico University. She completed her PhD in Rhetoric and Writing Studies at Oklahoma State University in 2021. Her research interests include religious rhetoric, propaganda studies, and composition and technical/professional communication pedagogies, especially those centered on social justice.

**Lydia Welker**, MA, is a full-time technical writer and editor and an occasional per-course instructor in the professional writing program at Missouri State University. Her areas of interest include technical communication, social justice, and human rights, specifically concerning the prison industrial complex.

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the contingent/NTT folks who contributed to the survey, the contingent/NTT folks who have stopped to have conversations with us and share their stories, and the allies who support labor equity. We would also like to thank the CPTSC grant fund, for without that fund, this project would not be possible.