

## CHAPTER 3

# AN APOLOGIA AND A WAY FORWARD: IN DEFENSE OF THE LECTURER LINE IN WRITING PROGRAMS

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Threads: Organizing Within and Across Ranks; Professionalizing and Developing in Complex Contexts; Local Changes to Workload, Pay, and Working Conditions

To pursue educational reform is thus to work in an impure space, where intractable material conditions always threaten to expose rhetorics of change as delusional or deliberately deceptive; it is also to insist that bureaucracies don't simply impede change; they are the social instruments that make change possible.

– Richard Miller, *As If Learning Mattered: Reforming Higher Education*

To date, the critical (and criticizing) discourse of contingent labor in writing programs has thoroughly charted the exploitation of part-time instructors, and the curricular and programmatic consequences such hiring practices have on reformed approaches to writing (Aronowitz; Bradley; Bousquet et al.; McMahon & Greene). Additional research indicates that reliance upon adjunct faculty has a direct impact on student learning, retention, and achievement (Baldwin). While part-time faculty provide a diverse and talented group of expert practitioners, their tenuous and marginalized positions in the university prevent them from a fully-integrated commitment to program development and ongoing instructional improvement. Adjunct faculty juggle differing curricular criteria from the varying programs where they teach, rarely receive pay for hours other than “teaching time,” and often are not around long enough to fully invest in

their departments because enrollment-dependent employment is unpredictable. While the research cited above analyzes adjunct labor in numerous disciplinary departments, part-time teaching causes extra collateral damage in first-year writing where incoming freshmen first learn new literacy expectations of the university, and where doing poorly can spell doom for their future college careers.

Meanwhile, largely relying upon these disempowered and underpaid contingent instructors, writing program administrators (WPAs) face persistent injunctions from upper-level administrators to improve student writing outcomes. Though WPAs may value adjunct instructors for their versatility and innovation, the university system for which the WPA administers treats these teachers as dispensable—an institutional inconsistency that places both the disenfranchised adjunct faculty and the compromised administrator in an awkward relationship of codependency and confrontation. As the semester-by-semester hiring wheel turns, writing program administrators grapple daily with the debilitating consequences of contingent labor practices and their resulting impact on writing program success, for which they are held responsible. Elizabeth Wardle laments the dependence on transient part-time faculty and its relationship to writing program performance in “Intractable Writing Program Problems.” She states:

This set of problems can be paralyzing, preventing composition courses and programs from moving forward and acting on the knowledge of our field in both their curricula and their employment practices. How can we act on the knowledge of our field in our composition curricula, particularly when that knowledge suggests multiple paths forward, and when so many of those actually in composition classrooms are not necessarily familiar with any of it? How can we work against entrenched labor practices and material conditions in order to make changes?

While scholars have exposed the financial and political forces that enable the ill treatment of educational laborers, and while they have detailed the limiting instructional outcomes for such labor practices, too often the solutions offered are limited to calls for complete labor revolutions or line-in-the-sand workplace uprisings. However, since the adjunct labor challenge impacts everything that WPAs must achieve, the irresolute question of how to untangle the relationship of part-time faculty exploitation and the goals of writing program administrators cannot wait for a moment of complete academic labor upheaval. Instead, we would argue, the reliance on part-time faculty in writing programs has caused such systemic breakdowns that the “winds of change” have already begun to blow (Hairston 76).

In this chapter we explain our local labor situation at a mid-sized, public, urban college-writing program, where part-time faculty taught more than 95 percent of the first-year writing courses. We analyze how creating and implementing a new curriculum provided an opportunity for reform in the hiring practices of writing faculty that concurrently improved the working conditions of part-time faculty and enabled a wider-ranging cohort of full-time faculty in our program. Miller asserts that “all teaching occurs within the context of a deeply entrenched bureaucratic system that exercises any number of material constraints on what must take place in the classroom, on who and what may be allowed in that space, and on how those entities and materials may interact” (19). Within this constraint-driven decision making, the WPA’s goals cannot simply resist bureaucratic imperatives, but must alternatively re-envision judicious solutions to them, even if not legibly revolutionary. Exceeding a pessimistic critique of labor issues that induces only inertia, this apologia of administrative policy-making details how WPAs can enable hiring practices that take into account the often conflicted objectives of the institution, the labor union, the writing program, the full-time/adjunct faculty, and the writing student. Our workable resolution to writing program labor contingency sits somewhere between purposeful accommodation and a building block for imagining a progressive (and progressing) future for writing program labor practices.

## REDESIGNING A WRITING PROGRAM

In 2002, for the first time in more than a decade, John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY hired a Ph.D. in composition/rhetoric as a full-time, tenure-track faculty member to direct the writing program. In that role the English department asked him to upend a thirty-year-old composition curriculum, based in belletristic essay/writing-for-literature, and replace it with curricular and programmatic structures that represented the best new practices in the field. In just a few years, he designed a portfolio-driven, inquiry-based, and writing across the curriculum (WAC)-focused writing program grounded in the *WPA Outcomes Statement* and later reinforced by the *Framework for Success in Post-Secondary Writing*. Using scaffolded assignments, reflective writing, and a rhetorical focus, this curricular design engages students in deep revision as they compose for diverse audiences in diverse contexts. The three-course sequence (basic writing and two semesters of composition) offers a coherent and consistent curriculum, what we have come to call an equal opportunity writing curriculum—a common composing experience for all students, regardless of section, semester, or instructor.

The then lone-wolf WPA navigated the new curriculum through varying

committees of department, college, and university governance, and in 2006 the College Curriculum Committee and College Council both voted this theoretically-framed, post-secondary writing curriculum into institutional existence. Once approved, the WPA completed faculty training for the more than eighty-five part-time writing faculty, but with limited resources he slowly realized that curriculum change does not occur through institutional fiat, and that national organizations' guiding resolutions for curriculum design had not yet adequately articulated how to overcome a major curricular revision barrier: contingent labor.

During curricular conversion, adjunct faculty had little motivation to alter their already established course designs, and with only two hours per semester of paid part-time faculty development time in the union contract, we had no way to leverage instructor buy-in for the curricular changes. Prior to the curriculum restructuring, the lack of ongoing faculty development had not posed much of a quandary because faculty designed their individual courses to meet loosely articulated departmental guidelines, and no assessment process existed. In comparison, however, the new curriculum demanded that faculty learn new ways to teach writing, and required more consistency and cohesion across sections. In "Redefining Composition, Managing Change, and the Role of the WPA," Geoffrey Chase asserts that a writing program must, in fact, have programmatic "internal coherence," resting upon four components:

1. common goals, specific and detailed enough to be meaningful and useful;
2. common assignments;
3. standard methods for evaluation and assessment across multiple sections;  
and
4. a commitment to examining and discussing these shared features openly.

He later asserts that internal coherence is the area "over which we have the most control, and it is the facet of administration most directly linked to the training we receive as graduate students and junior faculty" (245). However, designing a coherent curriculum only accomplishes the first of Chase's stated components, leaving 2, 3, and 4 unrealized. Without funding for part-time faculty, a WPA is unable to introduce the new curriculum standards, develop common curricular assignments, assess the new curriculum's outcomes, nor collaboratively share faculty insights; thus, a new curriculum on paper does not convert to a new curriculum in action.

While most of our dedicated adjunct faculty saw how our new curriculum advanced students' college literacy and were willing to try it out, their implementation depended on a mixture of workload generosity and their particular expertise in understanding and translating the guidelines into course materi-

als. From their perspective, once again, the institution (including the WPA) wanted to improve the writing program by asking for more work and expertise, while maintaining the same low pay and low institutional status. Meanwhile, the WPA-boss had to decide between curricular innovation and contingent exploitation: an administrative stalemate.

At this problematic juncture for the John Jay Writing Program, the upper administration of the college agreed to hire four tenure-track composition/rhetoric faculty over a three-year cycle. Each new comp/rhet Ph.D. hire brought their particular beneficial talents to the new curriculum (i.e., basic writing, rhetoric, and applied linguistics), and all of them contributed to faculty development, program assessment, and co-curricular initiatives. However, these tenure-track hires did not solve our curricular coherence problems because new faculty needed to negotiate their “publish-or-perish” imperatives, as well as contribute to a variety of literacy-based initiatives at the college, which inevitably pulled them away from teaching in the first-year writing program. Even with combined course loads of these freshly hired full-time composition faculty (each teaching seven courses per year), eighty percent of composition courses were still taught by part-time faculty. To achieve the full benefits of the new curriculum design, the program needed to devise a divergent type of teaching staff; cautiously, we approached our department with the idea of full-time lecturers. With historically-based, well-reasoned rationales, the faculty opposed the plan, fearing that lecturers would create a “two-tier” system of “lesser-status” instructors. Weighing our colleagues’ disinclinations alongside curricular advantages, we began a research process to change their minds.

## THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

In 1986 the AAUP released a report, “On Full-Time Non-Tenure-Track Appointments”<sup>1</sup> that warned against “the scope and extent of the problem” of FT-

1 In “Why Hire Non-Tenure Track Faculty?” Cross and Goldenberg (2002) further elaborated upon the institutional controls of these positions:

Whereas the appointment of tenure-track faculty is always closely monitored by university administrations, non-tenure-track appointments are usually governed by decentralized decision-making that is almost invisible at the university level . . . leading to collective decisions that may be wholly inconsistent with overall university priorities. These two factors—growing numbers and lack of awareness—create a context within which the nature of the professoriate can change in ways directly contradictory to the educational preferences of university leaders. (27)

Their critique of such hiring conditions underscored the ad hoc nature that often defines FT-NTT faculty positions, not only creating brutal working conditions for faculty, but often mitigating the learning goals of the program in favor of an easy fix for increasing full-time faculty to student ratios.

NTT positions, and concluded that these “tenure-ineligible full-time faculty appointments are without merit and that, for the sake of higher education. . . the abuse of these appointments should be stopped” (92). A somewhat softened position appeared in the *NEA 2008 Almanac of Higher Education* where Rhoades and Maitland examined the “best practices” and guidelines for institutions to hire FTNTT faculty: they suggested explicit parameters of employment, such as “defined dates and process for appointment, renewal, or termination; evaluations, with explicit criteria; equitable salaries; [and] equitable benefits” (72). Unfortunately, the explosion in hiring of FTNTT faculty in the last decade has often occurred without addressing these best practices.

At CUNY the lecturer title had existed for many years and, per status quo, our university followed less-than-fair norms for lecturer lines, such as high teaching loads (five to four per annum), hiring descriptions that did not match job expectations, underestimated status in departments, ill-defined service responsibilities, and restrictive “gen-ed”-only teaching assignments. In its own contradictory way, our union had long argued against the “devaluing of tenure” by hiring lecturer lines, while simultaneously championing the need for more stable, better rewarded adjunct faculty positions. Serendipitously, in 2008, the union tried to solve this inconsistency by creating “conversion lines” where colleges could approve full time, non-tenure-track lines, as long as long-time adjunct faculty filled the positions. In a 2010 PSC (Professional Staff Congress, a CUNY union)/CUNY update on “Adjunct Rights and Benefits,” a section sub-titled “Full-time Lecturer Positions” further articulated this position:

. . . 100 new full-time lecturer positions were created, for which the hiring pool will be restricted to experienced CUNY adjuncts. To be eligible to apply, you must have taught in the department in which the position is offered or have taught a related course in a different department of the same college for 8 of the 10 most recent semesters (excluding summers), and in 7 of those 10 semesters, you must have taught at least 6 classroom hours including the semester in which the search is conducted. As with regular full-time lines, specific hiring criteria are established by each department.

While this circuitously-articulated hiring statement emphasizes the amount (and frequency) of time that an eligible adjunct professor had to work within a department, it leaves the pedagogical qualifications (and job description) to the department’s discretion. In this union proposal, we recognized an open invitation to define the hiring practices and job descriptions for FTNTT faculty. With a carefully proposed articulation of the FTNTT position, we could increase the

full-time faculty-to-student ratios under the conditions of the CUNY contract and still prevent the same-policy-as-usual exploitations of faculty. While some in our department considered non-tenure-track faculty a risky compromise, writing program faculty saw this strategic organizational move as an opportunity that we could control: by further defining the hiring process, job description and faculty status of FTNTT lecturers, we could turn perceived accommodation into a progressive solution.

Seizing this kairotic administrative moment,<sup>2</sup> we drafted a proposal to not only hire the two lines “requested” from upper administration but, additionally, to hire eight programmatically-assigned lecturers. We realized, somewhat intuitively, that the stakeholders (i.e., the writing program, the department, the college administration, the union, and the university’s central offices) could all achieve their seemingly disparate goals, and with added full-time faculty for our new curriculum, we would make an immediate and dramatic impact on student learning. Despite our university’s misguided history in hiring FTNTT positions as well as our own discipline’s complicity in the contingent labor problem (see Anderson & Cara-Fals; Jacoby), we strove to re-envision how lecturers could contribute to our programmatic initiatives, while also enhancing their status, livelihood, and career track.

## **DEFINING A LOCAL LECTURER POSITION**

Taking into consideration the skeptical views about FTNNT positions, and our own goals to have long-term, invested FT faculty, we immediately rejected the following models of lectureships:

1. The “turnover lecturer model,” where a department hires lecturer faculty for a few years and then returns them to the contingent labor pool. This post-doc model cannot offer the writing program the invested stability to enhance a new curriculum;
2. The “teaching only model,” where lecturer faculty members teach courses but don’t participate in faculty life. As a mere “doubling down” on the current adjunct faculty practice, this position benefits adjunct faculty by paying minimally more and increasing stability, but ultimately minimizes the influence these talented faculty could contribute to a writing program;
3. The “graduate student model of lectureships,” where graduate students teach in a writing program while they earn advanced degrees. Though graduate programs may benefit by offering their students paid learn-

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2 See Wardle’s description of kairotic administrative moments.

as-you-go placements, and graduate students gain teaching experience, inevitably such positions exploit emerging members of our profession during the vulnerable graduate school career moment. In addition, their degree-related workload prevents them from programmatic service, and they only stay until their degree's completion, so this model doesn't foster continuing writing program development;

4. The "freshman-composition-only model," where lecturers teach only in the composition sequence while ignoring their other areas of expertise (i.e., creative writing, professional writing, digital rhetoric, etc.). In this case, lectureships become mono-modal, second-tier teaching positions, under-utilizing FT faculty capabilities for developing a vertically-driven writing program.

After rejecting these models, we reviewed related scholarship in the field, interviewed our adjunct and full-time faculty colleagues, and sought advice from our union to formulate a freshly-conceived lectureship. We then drafted a single-spaced, eight-page proposal to hire ten lecturer lines over the next five years. Along with a statement of need and a general job description, we included detailed sections on the following:

- hiring processes of lecturers;
- lecturers' contributions to faculty life in the department and the college;
- personnel evaluations for promotion of lecturers;
- pedagogical and administrative challenges of lecturers; and
- detailed timelines of these positions' implementation and contractual advancement.

From the very beginning of our proposal process, we aimed for affirmative conditions that could benefit not only the writing program and the college but also most importantly our lecturers and their students. We made sure to define lecturer lines as positions of not just need but expertise:

The addition of ten lecturers would provide curricular, programmatic, and staffing stability for the John Jay Writing Program. Lecturers could enhance the teaching in the core composition classes, provide energy and expertise for the existing literacy initiatives at the college, and create new literacy programs for our students.

In other words, these positions reach well beyond the teaching work-horse models described above and, instead, look to create faculty lines that professionalized



these teaching career tracks.

To ensure the success of these positions, our proposal delineated the specific requirements that the college would need to guarantee:

- Lecturers hold full-time positions within the English department, with the potential of a Certificate of Continued Employment [hereafter, CCE] in their fifth year, as provided by the union contract;
- Lecturers earn one course of reassigned time in their first year to take a teaching practicum seminar;
- Lecturers have a constructive and progressive agenda of service to the writing program, the department, and the college;
- Lecturers will go through faculty review and promotion processes of annual review by the chair and submission of a Form C; however, these evaluations will focus only on teaching and service;
- Lecturers are assessed by the P&B committee based on their teaching observations, their student evaluations, their pedagogical and curricular contributions, and their service to the writing program, department, or college;
- Lecturers are eligible for promotional steps to associate and full lecturer (discussed more fully below);
- Lecturers may apply for sabbaticals after attaining the CCE and 6 years of full-time service;
- Lecturers have departmental voting rights, office space, and travel funds in the same way that tenure-track faculty do;
- Lecturers are eligible for the same reassigned time as tenure-track faculty, based on service contributions to the writing program, the department, or the college;
- Lecturers can apply for fellowships, grants, and other non-teaching opportunities and have access to reassigned time for college or departmental service in the same manner as full-time faculty.

By listing specific work criteria and explicit benefits, we defined the positions as equal to tenure-track positions; lecturers would have additional teaching and service contributions in place of the scholarship and publishing responsibilities of TT faculty. By outlining lecturers' equal access to the benefits and opportunities of full-time faculty, we also circumvented concerns of our tenure-track colleagues who worried about a two-caste full-time professoriate.

We took great pains to identify the potential pitfalls in creating a writing program staffed with lecturer lines, and to preemptively offer solutions before bureaucratic controls interceded. For example, in the proposal we discuss the issue of teaching "burnout" and subsequently, the need for promotional steps

in these positions:

- With a teaching load of 4/4, mostly in the composition sequence, there is the potential for lecturers in the Writing Program to be unable to handle the crush of students (close to one hundred students per semester). In a program that requires individual student conferences for each student and thorough feedback on students' written work there is a potential for lecturers to be overwhelmed. In addition, this teaching load over a number of semesters may lead to "burnout" of these faculty colleagues. The following steps will be taken to reduce the potential for "burnout" and to maintain the quality of their teaching: lecturers should consider teaching one of their courses over the winter intersession; lecturers should be eligible for reassigned time; lecturers should teach one course per year outside the writing sequence; lecturers should be given preferential scheduling.
- *Three-step Lectureships*. Promotional steps for lecturers are not part of our current CUNY-PSC contract. They are, however, crucial to our vision of this position. Steps will provide incentive for lecturers to continue growing and contributing professionally even after they receive their CCE [Certificate of Continuous Employment]; steps will further increase the comparability of lecturer and faculty lines; and steps will reinforce to lecturers that these positions are as close as possible to the equivalent of tenured professorial lines.

By forthrightly acknowledging the potential problems, we gained support from both our departmental colleagues and our upper administration. Union contractual limitations precluded certain possibilities of our proposal, such as how lecturers could divide their course load over a fiscal year (aka, not being allowed to spread their course load over the summer session if they wished).<sup>3</sup> Our early recognition of locally-contextualized obstacles kept us vigilant about these challenges and led us to make other workload accommodations in their stead.

To further allay the perception that there is a two-tier faculty, and as a means to insure a competitive hiring process, we asked applicants to meet rigorous candidacy requirements equal to our tenure-track hires. Each applicant submitted a philosophy of teaching, a course syllabus they had taught, and a prospective course they could teach, as well as examples of their teaching practice. All candidates completed a qualifying interview, and a full-day campus visit. For lecturer candidates, the job talk consisted of a "curriculum" presentation where they

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<sup>3</sup> In fact, the provision to have "three step lectureships" was not allowed by the union contract, but we have continued to argue for it in each succeeding contract, with the college's support.

tackled a literacy issue and how they addressed it in their teaching. All members of the English department—both comp/rhet and literature faculty alike—attended these presentations and then weighed in on the quality of the candidates. In the process of hiring lecturers, departmental faculty understood the valuable contributions that these candidates could bring to pedagogical, curricular, and administrative functions of the writing program, even if they didn't increase our research agenda.

Not only did we explicitly define lecturer lines to our institutional stakeholders, but we reciprocally disclosed the parameters to the candidates throughout the hiring process. Without this transparency, a candidate could enter a job for all the wrong reasons, or later, be surprised by the specific workload of lecturer lines. We also forewarned candidates that these were not temporary, postdoctoral-style positions, nor stepping stones to tenure-track positions based in publishable scholarship. Quite frankly, applicants who stated a strong interest in purposefully pursuing scholarship did not make it to our interview list. We intended to hire people who placed teaching and curriculum-related service at the center of their careers. While some candidates held terminal doctoral degrees, the majority of the best applicants had M.A.s or M.F.A.s in a writing-related discipline.

The other stakeholders in this hiring process—our own longstanding and talented adjunct faculty—had an advantage when applying. Our faculty had helped us implement our new curriculum, knew our student body well, and brought a range of expertise in legal, business, and digital writing. Through a job ad that sounded familiar and reassuring to them, we encouraged these “natural candidates” to apply, and those who did out-performed the national candidates.<sup>4</sup> Though the hiring committee consisted of mostly non-writing faculty, who did not know our adjunct writing faculty well, seven of the nine lecturer positions we have currently filled went to long-time adjunct faculty from our department ranks.

## THE BENEFITS

Once hired, new lecturers earned one course of reassigned time in their first semester to participate in a practicum course that covered both current theories and praxis in the field of composition and rhetoric, and that analyzed how those perspectives related to the curriculum at John Jay. As a result of our comprehensive hiring practices, these selected colleagues had formidable teaching capabilities, but we wanted to ensure that they had composition-rhetoric theory to un-

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<sup>4</sup> Surprisingly, some of our best adjunct faculty did not apply; they divulged to us that a full-time commitment did not interest them because of conflicting artistic pursuits, reminding us that not all adjunct faculty seek full-time academic employment.

dergird their veteran teaching practices. Most importantly, their practicum work solidified and added another level of coherence to the writing program because, as a programmatic group, we could discuss issues from a collective foundation of knowledge. This theoretical initiation into the John Jay program didn't end all disagreements about how to approach the classroom. (We didn't serve a comp/rhet Kool-Aid during the practicum.) It did, however, create a community of practice and set the tone for open discussion about our writing program goals, pedagogical approaches, and future plans.

Participating in the practicum also allowed the writing program director to learn the strengths of each newly hired lecturer, thus acting as a means to career mentorship and program placement. After their first year, each lecturer, with the informed advice of the director, could choose a service contribution to the writing program. In this service they would learn the ropes of the program and, subsequently, would assume more responsibilities which would earn reassigned time. This process would define their service to the department, add to their accumulating vitae, and provide validation for their Certificate of Continuous Employment. Currently, we have a lecturer working in our writing across the curriculum program, another helping to direct first-year writing, another overseeing the writing minors in Journalism/Fiction writing, and yet another acting as a coordinator of testing and curriculum for our small number of Basic Writing students. Another lecturer (who holds a J.D.) has redesigned our legal writing courses, and our most recent hire works with our full-time ESL faculty to redesign the curriculum for English-language learners. Four of the nine lecturers have a semester's worth of reassigned time for these projects, reducing their course load to 4-3. Perhaps more importantly, the expertise of our lecturers has enriched our writing program, solidifying their roles in the department and the college.

Beyond the investment in writing program initiatives, these lecturer lines have increased the number of first-year writing courses taught by full-time faculty: the percentage of courses taught by part time faculty has dropped from a high of ninety-nine percent in spring of 2007 to seventy percent in the current semester. With the full integration of our last two lecturer hires, we should reach a 50/50 split. As we had predicted, lecturer faculty enable our robust assessment practice, contribute to faculty development and mentoring for adjunct faculty, and provide veteran faculty for placement into special programs like Learning Communities. Perhaps most importantly, lecturer faculty advance our new curriculum through their semester-by-semester experiences teaching the courses and providing new innovations. If the original designer of this curriculum and the subsequent director previously espoused the theory-rich and research-based foundation of the college's writing curriculum (which often fell

on deaf ears and glazed eyes), these highly gifted and informed practitioners perpetuate curricular development by constantly showing and evolving the curriculum to its next stage.

## **MOVING ON: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF FULL-TIME NON-TENURED FACULTY**

In the MLA report “Education in the Balance: A Report on the Academic Workforce in English,” the committee vacillates between two contradictory ideas about NTTFT positions:

the concept of a non-tenure-track faculty is an illegitimate exercise of institutional authority; it is, and it ought to be, contested by whatever means available. . . . On the other hand . . . a multi-tiered system has been in place across the entire one-hundred-year-plus history of English departments and is likely to be for the foreseeable future. . . . We hope our report can newly inform the discussion of the academic labor market and assist efforts to bring respect and equity to all who are teaching on our campuses. (15)

In this vacillation, we see the mistake of manufacturing a binary labor division between fully-employed, happy tenure-track faculty and underemployed, unhappy, part-time faculty. At John Jay College, if we had retained this either-or vision, we would not have gained the qualified writing program faculty that we can boast today, and those faculty would have remained on the low-status spinning wheel of “adjunctland.” WPAs must interrogate the context (or predicament) of their programmatic staffing; analyze their institutional contexts and budgetary constraints, and institutional mission goals; and seize upon administrative moments where change is possible, to proactively address the too-of-ten-undiscussed status quo. As Richard Miller has advised:

If one is genuinely interested in improving both the working conditions of writing teachers and the quality of instruction undergraduates receive, it’s important to ask where the money will come from to support such improvements. It’s also important to know who is in a position to make the decisions that will actually bring about such changes. Who are the stakeholders? Who are the agents of change? Who are the allies that matter? Who can help with the problems that exist right here, right now? (“Opinion” 369)

At John Jay College, we heeded fair labor practices to hire full-time lecturers and fulfilled the “right here, right now” needs of our urban, public institution and its students. We listened to a wide-range of stakeholders whose valid input nuanced and strengthened our decision-making about NTTFT faculty, to eliminate their legitimate concerns.

After years of sitting on the borderlands of the academy as adjuncts, our current lecturers are fully “matriculated,” active department colleagues. One reported that she finally has found an academic home; another finally published the novel she had penned for years; a third went on a health leave for a semester, relieved that he did not lose the salary and job benefits he gained as a lecturer. Our lecturer lines are not perfect by any means, but in terms of incrementally “fairer and fairer” employment practice, we now have a point of departure upon which to improve.<sup>5</sup> It would serve all involved to re-envision the types of instructional positions we can create in our local institutions and, as a result, attempt to create equal opportunity writing programs that offer an equitable handshake to students, instructors, faculty members and, yes, even administrators (at least the intellectual bureaucrats who strive to support pedagogically-sound programming). While we should never end our scrutiny and resistance to oppressive labor practices, we also can’t sit idly year-after-year, waiting for wholesale revolution that never arrives. After all, our writing students who march along with us need the benefit of revisionary writing programs to develop their own voices of resistance.

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5 As Steve Street suggests in *Academe*, we need to move past this full-time/part-time divide to understand that we already have a professoriate that has a multiplicity of tiers: adjunct faculty (recently hired one course), adjunct faculty (long time/more than one course), graduate teaching fellows, faculty emeritus who still teach, tenure-track faculty, tenured faculty, emeritus faculty who do not teach, faculty chairs, lecturers, instructors, and teaching assistants. All faculty positions would benefit from the explicitly defined and carefully guarded job descriptions we have delineated for our lecturer lines.

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