OMNI CAMPUS EQUITY WEEK NEWSLETTER #1, OCT. 28-NOV. 2, 2013. Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace and Justice.

CAMPUS EQUITY WEEK: WHAT STUDENTS PAY, WHAT CONTINGENT FACULTY RECEIVE

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OCTOBER 30, 3:30, KIMPEL 313

Hi Robyn, Dick, and Gladys,
I have gotten a grant to bring "For Profit" to campus for one 24 hour period on Oct. 30. It's a one-hour filmed version of a play about student loan exploitation—and it is being seen across the US during CEW, Oct. 28-Nov. 2.

On Oct. 30, students and faculty are asked to wear red (Scarlet A) in support of those teachers who are contingent labor in the university systems—labor that is not compensated in relation to the amount of tuition students are paying.

I have reserved a room--Kimpel 313 from 3:30 to 10 pm--and I am hoping that OMNI and OMNI UA will support this justice program. I am planning on purchasing and serving Fair Trade in Higher Education coffee—if that sweetens the deal.
The injustice of the loan system and the disconnect between what students pay for and what actually gets paid will be topic for discussion before and after the short film.

KAREN MADISON

Below are several articles that are about contingent labor or Campus Equity Week. The one at the bottom is about the death of an adjunct and her treatment prior to that death. The story has raised a firestorm about ethical hiring practices. So if you have time to read just one article, that might be the best one.

Karen

New post on Campus Equity Week

Campus Equity Week in the news

by admin

Campus Equity Week is getting coverage in the media -- and more is coming from several national media outlets. Links to coverage we have seen so far are below.

You can also find additional links to media coverage of adjunct equity issues nationwide on our News page.


• NEO Today. Campus Equity Week: Help Improve Adjunct Faculty Working Conditions. Oct. 18, 2013

Mentioned in the article: Campus Equity Week 2013
Adjunct Mary Margaret Vojtko's death raises questions on college campuses all across Pittsburgh

The 83-year-old French instructor's fate is "a symbol of how extreme the situation has become for a lot of adjuncts."

by Lauren Daley, Chris Potter and Alex Zimmerman @AGZimmerman
By Daniel Kovalik's account, even Adult Protective Services was surprised to learn that Mary Margaret Vojtko was a college professor. Professors are, after all, supposed to have lifetime tenure and academic freedom. But when Vojtko died at age 83, she'd been laid off from Duquesne University as a part-time French instructor after 25 years. And when she succumbed to cancer, she was "penniless and on the verge of being turned over to Orphan's Court," wrote Kovalik, an attorney for the United Steelworkers, in a Sept. 18 op-ed for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

Kovalik's piece touched off coverage from national media like NPR, and expressions of shock from faculty, students and alumni. ("My mind, heart and spirit couldn't be more ashamed right now," one student posted on Duquesne's Facebook page.)
But for Clint Benjamin, Vojtko's story was depressingly familiar. "This wasn't an isolated anomaly," he says. "This is potentially my future." And, he adds, the future of adjunct faculty across the country: part-time employees with few benefits, little compensation and zero job security.

Benjamin, 36, teaches composition as an adjunct at Duquesne and the Community College of Allegheny County. Separated from his wife and trying to support a 3-year-old daughter, he's teaching five courses a semester, a workload that amounts to 55 hours a week. Earning $2,250 per course at CCAC and $3,500 from Duquesne, he says, "My adjunct rule is: Teach as many classes as you can."

Still, he says he's lucky if he can earn $30,000 a year. He's uninsured, and says his course load at both schools has been reduced — in part to keep him below a 30-hour-per-week threshold that, under the Obama administration's Affordable Care Act, would require the schools to offer him insurance. Benjamin pays about $130 a month for catastrophic health insurance in case "I get stabbed in the kidney."

"It's not like a salt mine, but it's death by a thousand cuts," he says. "I wanted to get into academia, and this was the position that was really available."

In a city that prides itself on trading in steel mills for hospitals and colleges, Benjamin is not alone. And despite the current furor, which partly stems from a bid by Kovalik and the Steelworkers to unionize Duquesne's adjuncts, neither is Duquesne.

In the wake of Vojtko's death, City Paper spoke to adjuncts at several local schools, some of whom were afraid to be quoted by name, citing a lack of job security. They included:

* Luke Niebler, who teaches four composition classes at CCAC and Point Park University — jobs that total 35 hours a week, but offer no health insurance."
Niebler says.

* Josh Zelesnick, who has taught English composition and writing at Duquesne and Pitt, and is active in the Duquesne unionization drive. This year, he's on a one–year contract as a "visiting lecturer" at Pitt — a full–time post he says is "rare." But uncertainty is the rule, he says: In 2009, under–enrollment slashed his teaching load from four courses to just one. "I scrambled to get a job," he said, and found one ... at Trader Joe's.

* One local teacher, who has adjuncted in the humanities for 20–plus years, teaches four classes and works two part–time jobs. "I have to," she says. "When you have four kids and you're paying four tuitions, it's necessary."

Vojtko's death is "a symbol of how extreme the situation has become for a lot of adjuncts," says Mayra Besosa, who chairs an American Association of University Professors' committee dedicated to adjuncts and other part–time faculty.

"I think it's a warning that if the working conditions don't improve, more people are going to be Margaret."

The use of adjuncts across Western Pennsylvania schools varies. At Indiana University of Pennsylvania, temporary faculty teach less than one–fifth of classes. Closer to Pittsburgh, at Robert Morris University, Carlow University and Duquesne, temporary faculty teach around 40 percent of the classes, according to statistics from each school.

Treatment also varies from school to school — and even from department to department. For example, sources say Carnegie Mellon University seems to make little use of adjuncts, while Community College of Allegheny County relies on them heavily. American Federation of Teachers Local 2067 President John Dziak, who
represents full-time instructors and other CCAC employees, says roughly 2,000 adjuncts teach at CCAC each semester. Only about half of those teach for-credit courses (as opposed to classes like cooking), but even so, they dwarf Dziak's membership by nearly 3-to-1.

At the University of Pittsburgh's Oakland campus, meanwhile, part-time instructors make up 818 of nearly 5,000 faculty teaching in the fall 2012 semester, according to the school's 2013 Fact Book. But at Pitt as elsewhere, adjuncts tend to be concentrated in the humanities, rather than in engineering, medicine or other more technical fields. Nearly one-third of instructors at Pitt's Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences were part-time; only one-tenth of the faculty at its engineering school were.

Compensation ranges widely as well. At Duquesne, for example, minimum pay for adjuncts starts at $3,500 per three-credit course, though spokesperson Bridget Fare says instructors in some departments — like law, business or pharmacy — can earn more. At Robert Morris University, part-time faculty earn between $1,950 and $2,550 for most courses; as at Duquesne, they aren't eligible for other employee benefits. Pitt adjuncts are eligible for health benefits, though in departments like English, starting salaries can actually be lower than at Duquesne, say sources.

Pitt, Chatham, CMU and several other schools did not respond to requests for comment on their use of adjuncts. But schools that did respond say adjuncts offer flexibility, and can provide real-world experience to students.

Hiring temporary faculty "allows us to be agile in our personnel decisions and in getting qualified faculty who offer special expertise and skills to meet the needs of our students," says Indiana University of Pennsylvania spokesperson Michelle Fryling. And as faculty vacancies occur, "It allows the departments to really assess their faculty needs and to do a thorough and thoughtful search for the right faculty with the right teaching skill set and experiences."
"Many part–time faculty members are employed in fields in which we offer degrees, so the students get the benefit of current real–world, practical experience," says Jonathan Potts, senior director of public relations at Robert Morris University.

But across academia, that sort of part–timer is the exception rather than the rule. Since the late 1960s, the ratio of temporary to full–time faculty has increased to the point where temporary faculty account for almost three–quarters of the teaching workforce. According to a survey by the Coalition on the Academic Workforce, as of 2009, 75 percent of instructional staff members held contingent positions — such as adjunct, full–time non–tenure–track or graduate student teaching–assistant jobs.

CMU adjunct Heather Steffen, whose own scholarship has concerned the history of academic labor, says that Reagan–era cuts in education funding constrained budgets, while legislation like 1980’s Bayh–Dole Act allowed universities to profit from discoveries patented on their campus. The effect was "to pull back funding for universities, by saying they could create their own revenues by producing research," Steffen says.

Those changes compelled universities to become more entrepreneurial, more corporate. And too often, Steffen says, administrators made things worse. "University budgets are strapped, but they have been ever since Harvard opened," she says. And when administrators ask questions like "Are we going to invest in a new athletic facility, or in recognizing an adjuncts' union?" — it's often the adjuncts that lose.

"The use of adjuncts has been justified for economic reasons because there's an enormous cost savings," says Maria Maisto, president of the New Faculty Majority, a national nonprofit group that advocates for contingent faculty rights. "Once people experience that cost savings, it's like a drug they become addicted to, regardless [of] whether it's good for students or education."

And as common as adjuncts have become, they've found little strength in numbers.
For one thing, a lack of information makes it hard for adjuncts to negotiate on their own behalf. Maisto says that her organization estimates that 22 percent of adjuncts are unionized nationwide, though institutions aren't required to keep this information in a uniform way. And knowing how many temporary faculty are employed is even more difficult: The federal government doesn't keep track of adjunct employment, and many universities aren't eager to publicize information about adjunct employment.

In response, Josh Boldt, now an adjunct at the University of Georgia, launched an online effort last year to crowdsource compensation data, so adjuncts could figure out which universities paid what. Today, the Chronicle of Higher Education hosts Boldt's "The Adjunct Project" on its website and helps Boldt staff the effort. The site allows users to see what adjuncts are being paid at universities across the country.

The database includes reported compensation at nine Pittsburgh-area schools, where pay reported ranges from $1,600 at the Art Institute to $5,250 at CMU, per course. Most numbers reported to the site locally hover around $2,000, with Pitt ($3,200) and Duquesne ($3,000) above average. While these numbers are mostly submitted by faculty, Boldt notes "universities and administrators are allowed to add their own information. The fact that not many have done that suggests [the data are] fairly accurate."

Before the project got underway, "We were just so powerless," Boldt says. "If a school said, 'This is what we pay,' that's what you take. We had no way to compare."

Boldt says adjuncts are often devoted, quality teachers, but are often hampered by circumstances. "If a student can't meet with a professor in an office, that's a problem," Boldt says.

Adjuncting can be "an isolating type of work," adds Steffen. "People don't know anybody. You often don't have an office: There's literally no place where adjuncts
And while Steffen speaks warmly of her own CMU colleagues, "Academia is a dog-eat-dog world in a lot of ways. The ideology of meritocracy is everywhere: There's an argument that you should be able to 'publish your way out of anything' — even if you're a single mom trying to raise children while holding down classes."

What's more, adjuncts face more competition with every graduation ceremony. According to the Modern Language Association, the major professional group for English and other language departments, only one-third of recent English Ph.D.s will find tenure-track jobs. That leaves the majority at risk for an existence as precarious as Margaret Vojtko's, says Kellie Robertson, a former Pitt English professor who now directs job-placement efforts for English grad students at the University of Maryland.

With the rise of online classes and other changes, Robertson worries, "Labor conditions for both tenure track, tenured and adjunct employees will deteriorate. In the future, we may all be adjuncts."

Which raises some obvious questions: Why teach at all? Are adjuncts paying the price for ignoring economic realities?

"There's a misconception that we're unemployable," counters Luke Niebler, the adjunct who abandoned bike-riding for lack of insurance. But "[t]here's an increase in people going to college, and in the need for teachers. It's just that departments are choosing not to hire full-timers."

Indeed, the National Center for Education Statistics shows that between 1970 and 2010 — the same period that has witnessed an explosion of adjuncting — college enrollment has increased from 8.5 million to more than 21 million. And for a composition instructor like Niebler, writing "is one of the most valuable things
students can learn."

"You're given a gift," adds one local instructor with decades of experience adjuncting. "What good is a gift if you don't share it?"

Will Vojtko's death, which has brought so much attention to the plight of adjuncts, change their fate?

Weeks after Kovalik's piece in the Post-Gazette, details about Vojtko's life remain murky. Duquesne itself has largely confined itself to a Sept. 19 statement by administrator John Plante, which asserted that "individuals across the University community attempted to help Margaret Mary through her last trying days" — including by providing her temporary housing. Surviving relatives, meanwhile, describe her as private, and fiercely independent.

"She liked and wanted to do things on her own," says nephew John Vojtko, who lives in Munhall, not far from her Homestead home. "She would accept help, but only on her terms."

Vojtko isn't even sure his aunt would have welcomed the notoriety she has found. "I don't think she'd like it, to be honest."

Colleagues say, however, that she backed the unionization drive at Duquesne; some recall meeting her at labor events. But the lasting impact of Kovalik's portrayal of her in the Post-Gazette remains unclear.

"In the past, [Duquesne] just refused to communicate with us in any form," says adjunct Robin Sowards, who has been active in the union bid. While the university was originally willing to meet with organizers last year, it later argued that its Catholic affiliation should exempt it from the jurisdiction of the National Labor Relations Board. That dispute is ongoing, but Sowards says that at a Sept. 25
meeting, Provost Timothy Austin acknowledged that the adjuncts are raising legitimate issues.

Adjuncts at CCAC, meanwhile, have discussed their own unionization drive, though union head John Dziak says Vojtko's death will "probably not" change the dynamic there. The school announced in 2012 that it was curtailing hours for some 200 adjuncts to below 30 hours a week in a bid to avoid health-coverage requirements under "Obamacare." But unionizing will require clearing "a number of hurdles," Dziak says, including the fact that adjuncts are scattered across four different campuses, and don't all share the same priorities.

Even union faculty is feeling the pinch, Dziak adds.

"When the economy gets better, enrollment starts going down," he says. "We're very close to activating the displacement article in our contract" — laying off staff that do have union cards. Similar steps appear to be in the offing at some state-funded universities like Clarion, where enrollment and financial support from the state are tapering.

Vojtko's death may be felt more acutely during Campus Equity Week, a nationwide campaign to improve working conditions on campus. Held between Oct. 27 and Nov. 2, events locally will likely include a concert by musicians who work as adjuncts, and street-theater events intended to raise awareness of the plight of adjuncts, grad students and others.

"I haven't seen a lot of efforts to connect until Duquesne [adjuncts] started organizing," Steffen says. "There's a sense now of this starting to be a community."
1. **Campus Equity Week | October 28 – November 2, 2013**
   www.campusequityweek.org/

   Some states require more lead time than others, but you may still be able to get a proclamation in time for this year's **Campus Equity Week**, Oct. 28-Nov. 2.

2. **Resources | Campus Equity Week**
   www.campusequityweek.org/2013/resources/

   Order CEW T-shirts, buttons: **Campus Equity Week** will provide two free T-shirts and 50 buttons per campus, standard shipping included. Additional quantities ...

3. **NFM | Campus Equity Week**
   www.campusequityweek.org/2013/tag/nfm/

   Oct 17, 2013 - “Part-time” contingent faculty, along with “part-time” workers across the nation, are being directly affected by the implementation of the ...

4. **October | 2013 | Campus Equity Week**
   www.campusequityweek.org/2013/2013/10/

   2 days ago - President's Address Pie Slices. **Campus Equity Week** has licensed this cartoon for use on our site. Don't be a pirate! For information on ...

5. **Uncategorized | Campus Equity Week**
   www.campusequityweek.org/2013/category/uncategorized/

   3 days ago - Support **Campus Equity Week** by using online resources and social media to raise awareness about the week, its issues and its events.

6. **[PDF]**
   **Campus Equity Week 2013 Flier**

   CMSUS EQUITY. NOW! Stand up! Speak out! Organize! **Campus Equity Week** is October 28 - November 6, 2013. •75% of higher education faculty work as ...

7. **Event Listing By Date | Campus Equity Week**
   www.campusequityweek.org/2013/events/event-listing/

   **Campus Equity Week** events will be added as they are submitted. To submit an event your organization, group or campus has planned for **Campus Equity Week**, ...

8. **Call to action | Campus Equity Week**
   www.campusequityweek.org/2013/about/

   **Campus Equity Week** (CEW) is a week of education and activism that draws attention to the working conditions of faculty working on temporary, low-paid ...

9. **Events | Campus Equity Week**
   www.campusequityweek.org/2013/category/events/

   2 days ago - Watch the trailer for the new documentary Con Job: Stories of Adjunct and Contingent Labor by producers and directors Megan Fulwiler and ...

10. **[PDF]**
Campus Equity Week 2013 Flier

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