

Defining the Professional Expectations of Faculty  
De Anza College  
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The theme of this conference, Defining the Professional Expectations of Faculty, is crucial. The misuse and abuse of contingent academic assignments, especially in the context of two-year teaching institutions, is a central concern of those who would clarify the essence of higher education. The Board of Governors of California Community Colleges should be applauded for addressing the employment practices in the 71 districts. No other system of higher education approaches the California system with its 1.8 million students and 108 colleges. The Board's equal concern for the quality of these students' education should be honored by the work we embark on here today.

It is not an accident that the First Amendment guarantees free speech. It is not an accident that the incident that impelled John Dewey and Arthur Lovejoy to found the AAUP involved the denial of academic free speech. Nor is it an accident that the first of AAUP's committees is the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure. Rather, these are testimony to the primacy of unfettered speech in the continuing struggle to maintain individual liberties and academic integrity in the face of increasingly vicious attacks on tenure and academic freedom.

In the words of the AAUP's 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, "Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good, .... The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition. Academic freedom is essential to these purposes and applies to both teaching and research."

Those who impose a corporate model on academic institutions would severely limit, if not eliminate, faculty prerogatives and academic freedom, in the name of efficiency and cost cutting. The nurturing of an independent human mind is a demanding and delicate process requiring career professionals who have the security to develop within an academic community where they are welcomed, respected, and accorded the academic freedom without which authentic teaching and learning cannot take place. The collegial dialogue of free and inquisitive minds must be inclusive, reaching from our newly entering first year students to our most prestigious senior professors.

Now, after 40 years of failed experimentation with contingent academic appointments, fully 50% of undergraduate teaching is assigned to faculty who are marginalized by the contingent nature of their employment. In 1970, part-time faculty comprised only 22% of the professorate. In 1995 the figure had risen to 41%. In 1998 the figure had risen still more to 49%. Even more telling is the percentage of full-time faculty who are off the tenure track. According to the U.S. Department of Education, in 1998, the most recent year for which we have data, the overwhelming majority, 62%, of the professorate was contingent and exploited. In the last decade 54% of all new full-time faculty hires in the United States were off the tenure track. I repeat, 54% of all new full-time faculty hires were off the tenure track.

You know the facts of this marginalization. Some contingent faculty may be better or worse off than others, with better or worse pay, better or worse working conditions, better or worse security. However, underlying nearly all contingent academic labor is the naked reality of

their untenured and untenurable status. Without the protection of tenure, academic freedom is fragile and imperiled.

As professionals, contingent faculty have been shunted off the professional career track onto a dead-end siding. They are typically hired haphazardly, provided little mentoring or professional development, little in the way of constructive evaluation by other faculty, and little role in shared governance. In short, lacking integration into the academic community, contingent faculty are seldom seen as full professionals, even in the eyes of their tenure track colleagues. As a result, they are forced into the position of hourly wage laborers, doing the work of professional educators, held accountable in their own minds and by the standards of the profession, yet excluded and unsupported to an extent that makes fulfilling their professional expectations virtually impossible. Without collegiality, without mutual respect, without full professional participation, without academic freedom and all it implies, contingent faculty become wage slaves whose students receive not an education, but expensive and narrow job training for their future role as wage slaves for the consumer economy. I hope that today we do not take the easy way out and assume that our profession can be fragmented and parceled out to contingent workers with less than full integration into the academic community. The status quo is not viable and we need to say it.

Tenured faculty committed to academic freedom and shared governance must work for the conversion of part-time, contingent positions to full-time, tenure-track ones, dying at our desks unless we have a written guarantee that we will be replaced by someone on the tenure track. Above all, tenured faculty must participate in the governance of their institutions and exercise academic freedom or risk losing it. The price of tenure is a continuing and life-long moral obligation to exercise its privileges. We are not always right when we speak out, but we are always wrong when we do not.