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From the Editors

Editors of ALRA Academic Labor: Research and Artistry

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Academic Labor: *Research & Artistry*

Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 1.2 (2018)

From the Editors

In this second issue of *Academic Labor: Research & Artistry*, you will find a variety of perspectives on contingent academic labor. The articles presented here demonstrate how adjunct faculty working conditions have and have not changed over the course of the past century; how activism can take the form of slowing down and acting purposefully, or taking to the streets for a radical approach; how time factors into discussions about academic labor; how a task force is currently working toward adjunct faculty reform; and processes involved in labor organizing. Time is a common theme in this issue: examining how faculty spent their time in the past, how they are currently spending their time, and how their time can be more highly valued in the future. The contributors examine the complexities of higher education's economies of value, and how these values manifest in what gets said about faculty work and faculty lives.

Megan Condis and Courtney Adams Wooten in "Collegiality as Surveillance? Implementing Collegiality Statements in Institutions of Higher Education" examine the collegiality statement as a genre that indicates much about the regimes of value that shape faculty experiences. Condis and Wooten warn that discussions about collegiality can lead to surveillance and a reinforcement of homogeneity among the faculty. Condis and Wooten argue that we "must insist that tenure and promotion discussions be centered around an individual's capacity to contribute to a department and institution, not whether they conform to traditional expectations of how a faculty member should look, be, speak, or act."

The ramifications of overworking and burnout are examined in a historical context in Rebecca Gerdes-McClain's "Rhetorical Listening and Strategic Contemplation as Research Tools." In the early 20th century, Edwin Hopkins was among the first to collect and share data on the labor demands of composition instructors. Hopkins sought national reform on composition instructors' workload but had limited success. His data demonstrated that composition instructors had double the recommended workload, leading to health problems in exhausted and overworked faculty—a scenario as familiar today as it was 100 years ago.

In "Terms of Time for Composition: A Materialist Examination of Contingent Faculty Labor," Jesse Priest examines time as a construct in the discussion of faculty work. Priest argues that time should be treated separately from labor and critiqued as its own issue. In particular, he points out that there is a disconnect between the most time-consuming parts of the job (e.g., grading, meetings) and the parts that faculty find most valuable. And there is further disconnect between what faculty value about their work and what their supervisors value about their work.

The next articles in the issue examine ideas of the "slow professor" that have been popularized by work such as Berg and Seeber's *The Slow Professor*. Patricia Welsh Droz and Lorie Stagg Jacobs warn that those on the tenure-track could be professionally damaged by a slow

approach. They recommend FAST professing. FAST is an acronym for embracing the Fear of not publishing enough, Assessing your stress, Surviving that stress (with strategies such as streamlining assignments and grading practices, being selective about committee work, and setting deadlines and boundaries), and sprinting toward Tenure, knowing that once tenure is achieved the Slow Professor can then take over.

In “The Praxis of Deceleration: Recovery as ‘Inner Work, Public Act,’” Marisol Cortez details her journey in finding the value in decelerating herself—slowing down for the sake of her own survival and learning to live with intention and focus. Her journey is one of “reimagining the scale and temporality of resistance” in order to protect one’s health from the damage that can come from a constant focus on conflict and crises. Cortez suggests a form of activism that focuses on caring for the welfare of people and communities who have been undervalued and underpaid. Although she emphasizes a kind of care that is “liberatory,” that rejects the demand to produce endlessly. This is not self-care in order to be a more productive worker, but rather a slowing-down so that we are in a better position to live with intention.

Alexander Gallas, of the University of Kassel, Germany, explains features of precarious employment in German higher education in his article, “Precarious Academic Labour in Germany: Termed Contracts and a New Berufsverbot,” reprinted with permission from the January 2018 issue of the *Global Labour Journal (GLJ)*. Gallas illuminates the many similarities and dissimilarities of the German faculty hiring model to the U.S. model. As Gallas points out, so-called “mid-level” faculty members in Germany, who compare to tenure-track probationary faculty in the U.S., must develop a secondary area of expertise during the probationary period and then, even when successful in meeting those requirements, are generally not advanced to the next level or conferred the equivalent of U.S. tenure but instead must re-compete for their positions. This situation persists despite union presence, resulting in a grassroots effort from the Network for Decent Work in Academic (NCANiss), which is pushing back against limits to the period of time a mid-level faculty member can be kept under contract and recommending five other concrete solutions to precarity in higher education. Yet, Gallas points out, “As long as full professors are privileged through these institutions ... fundamental change is hard to envisage” (14).

The disconnect between faculty and supervisors can also be seen in Stephen Mumme’s article, “Instructor Impermanence and the Need for Community College Adjunct Faculty Reform in Colorado.” For this article we invited a forum of response and discussion that includes responses from two leading higher education administrators and a nationally renowned labor activist. Mumme points out that a lack of support and lack of incentives for adjunct faculty at Colorado community colleges serves to reinforce instructor impermanence. A CCCS task force offered recommendations for improving the adjunct experience, yet few changes in adjunct faculty working conditions have been implemented by the

CCCS Board. In her response, former CCCS President Nancy McCallin outlines that task force process in her review article, and the task force's recommendations are detailed in the AAUP policy letter within this issue.

Anne Wiegard's response to Mumme's article further supplies a case for the CCCS to implement the recommended policy measures offered by the task force. Wiegard argues for a "boots on the ground" approach in order to pressure politicians and administrators to reform adjunct faculty compensation and working conditions. She cites recent successes with the activists from the Parkland shooting and with teacher unions across the country. High-level administrators live in a bubble, says Wiegard, and it will take a radical approach to penetrate that bubble.

The final response to Mumme's article is written by Ken Lindblom, who provides his perspective as an administrator. He defends the position that administrators find themselves in, having to increasingly use adjunct faculty labor due to decreases in state funding and drops in student enrollment. While he would like to offer more professional development and training opportunities for adjunct faculty, he points out his reluctance to ask more of faculty without offering additional pay or incentives. Lindblom admits that there are currently few solutions to the adjunct faculty problem, but applauds Mumme and the AAUP and UUP for taking steps toward a solution.

This issue also contains our first book review. William Christopher Brown reviews Daniel Davis's *Contingent Academic Labor: Evaluating Conditions to Improve Student Outcomes* and Lisa del Rosso's *Confessions of an Accidental Professor*. These books, explains Brown, help to paint a comprehensive picture of adjunct faculty labor at both the macro level and micro level.

Finally, this issue offers our first curated interview with those working in the field, or as Anne Wiegard terms it, with "boots on the ground" in labor activism. Gordon Mantler and Rachel Riedner interview Seth Kahn and Kevin Mahoney who successfully organized the first strike of the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties (APSCUF) in response to a long series of activated and proposed degradations to faculty roles and agency. Mantler and Riedner explore how Kahn and Mahoney led efforts over a decade to create a culture of labor activism, where faculty came to see themselves as laborers. Their model, Mantler and Riedner suggest, demonstrates the long, difficult and essential work involved in organizing faculty for common cause across varied campuses and a wide geography.

We want each issue of *ALRA* to continue a conversation that will lead to meaningful change in higher education. We urge readers to consider the calls to action that our contributors forward. We thank the writers appearing in this second issue for being part of that work, and we again thank our generous peer reviewers. We hope you enjoy this second issue of *Academic Labor: Research and Artistry*! Coming up soon is a special topics issue on contingency in the technical communication context, edited by Lisa Melancon, as well as a call for proposals regarding

“end of career” among faculty and the implications of contingency on retirement, health, and financial stability.

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