

# Academic Labor: Research and Artistry

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## From the Editors

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# Academic Labor: *Research & Artistry*

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* 3.1 (2019)

### ***From the Editors***

In this third issue of *Academic Labor: Research and Artistry* you will find discussions of invisible labor in the academy. The contributors here are calling back the constellation (Powell) of basement graders, hushed conversations, and back-room decision-making. In the process, they are helping to make the invisible visible (Warner) and reclaim spaces where academic laborers belong and insist upon being seen and heard. This issue's articles examine academic labor's effects on the identities of tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty, as well as graduate student employees and staff. The articles consider the lived realities of these many laboring parties and, in the process, reveal much about the unrecognized inner workings of higher education. Faculty, staff, and students regularly undertake activities that are not visible for awards, stipends, tenure and promotion, or grants—tangible accolades that are valued in higher education. This issue illuminates behind-the-scenes efforts that so many in academe tackle without recognition, and sometimes without consent, in the hopes that we will first understand and then do better.

**Natalie Selden Barnes'** art installation and artist's statement, "Honor the Precariat," depicting her celebrated 2017 Campus Equity Week (CEW) exhibit, begins the collection. Barnes' installation, which took place in the Directions Gallery in the Art and Art History Department of Colorado State University, participated in a national emphasis on arts activism for that year's CEW and was comprised of dangling plexiglass figures representing the over 700 contingent faculty on Barnes' home campus. In her artist's statement Barnes explains how the installation reflects her 20+ year struggle to come to terms with the value of a career in which she has been viewed as a second-class faculty citizen.

Following Barnes' piece is **Annah Krieg's** review of Barnes' installation in which she points out the exhibit's juxtaposition of data and image that creates an immersive experience for viewers who are invited to walk through and among the adjunct figures. Krieg writes that the project was designed to call attention to the significant contributions of non-tenure-track faculty while literally casting shadows on the walls of the academic exhibit space.

**Rachel O'Donnell's** essay "Care and University Scapegoating: Making Social Reproduction Visible in the Teaching of Writing" takes up the normalization of unpaid labor on which universities depend, positing that university economies connect to global political and economic systems that render too many people and too much of their labor invisible. Most insidiously, she suggests, is the fact that marginalized employees are then blamed (and sometimes blame themselves) for problems that are structural, with such characterizations of inferiority and scapegoating offering comfort and excuse to those who derive benefit from the marginalized labor of others.

In what might be seen as a particular example of the kind of high-demand, low-visibility instruction that O'Donnell talks about, **Jessica Rose Corey and Barbara George** take up the labor demands of various types of high-impact teaching and learning practices, which fall increasingly to contingent faculty and include such things as service learning and community-engaged projects. While these approaches are widely touted as valuable or even essential in today's college and university learning environments, they exact untold amounts of uncompensated and thus invisible labor from the most vulnerable of employees.

Furthering the examination of service learning, **Charisse S. Iglesias** takes up the contradictions between community-based, service-learning work and the social-justice commitment of institutions, pointing out the absence of real-world modeling of ethical community building among colleges and universities. Utilizing critical discourse analysis and content analysis to ground her theorization, Iglesias locates all-too-common institutional undermining of reciprocity despite a professed social-justice agenda.

The next two essays, by **Megan McIntyre** and **Zach Marburger**, explore the contexts of two distinct laboring groups in higher education who may be particularly susceptible to invisibility—writing program administrators and graduate workers. Importantly, however, these authors also offer suggestions for addressing and correcting the problems for the groups they discuss. McIntyre addresses writing program administration as a distinct and important form of work for many scholars of rhetoric and composition yet points out that this work often remains invisible to institutions and even to the home departments of composition's scholars. Demonstrating the complex political and communicative work of the WPA, McIntyre examines the use of a Twitter-based campaign that not only makes WPA work more visible but makes it possible for the WPA to be a better advocate for equity and anti-racist practices and pedagogy. Meanwhile, Zach Marburger points out the low degree to which graduate workers and their rights have been part of the national discourse on worker rights in higher education, perhaps due to longstanding perceptions of graduate workers as students and apprentices first and employees second. Marburger considers a case study of promise, discussing a recent effort to redefine graduate workers at the University of Colorado-Boulder.

Widening the net, **Daniel Scott and Adrianna Kezar** consider the historic divisions and hierarchies among employees in the higher education setting. These divisions and status differences, they argue, have enabled and contributed to the difficulty of organizing academic employees across employment types despite shared interests and concerns. Tracing the history of the splintering of organized labor alongside employment trends in higher education, Scott and Kezar recommend the advantages that would be afforded by the creation of alliances and collectives across various types of employment.

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Following this treatment is an essay by **Daniel J. Julius and Nicholas DiGiovanni**, a former provost and labor attorney, respectively, who discuss the past, present, and future of faculty unions through the lens of craft unionism. Beginning with academic unionization in the 1960s, Julius and DiGiovanni discuss the challenges of today's negotiation context in academic settings and offer insight into the management strategies that remain the most and least effective in organized environments.

And finally, **Steven Shulman's** paper analyzes data from every public and private non-profit college and university in the U.S. and discovers variations in instructional spending that resist easy explanation. Shulman finds that budgetary priorities explain some of the variation but not all. Reliance on non-tenure-track faculty, prevalence of students from low-income backgrounds, and tuition as a fraction of total revenue account for some decreases in instructional spending, but these factors do not account for all of the variation in instructional spending even among similar institutions.

As you will find, the articles in this issue range from art to data, but throughout we confront the difficult realities of invisible labor in our varied academic spaces. We hope that you find food for thought in these articles and learn from contexts different than your own. We deeply thank our contributors for sharing their knowledge and insight from their wide-ranging vantage points.

With that, we proudly present Issue 3 of *Academic Labor: Research and Artistry*. Please watch for two new issues in 2020, both of which will be guest edited. But don't let that be a discouragement! If you have an article to share or a special issue to propose, please send it in. We hope to share your work and *make it visible*. Never doubt that the world needs it, and that the world needs you.

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