

# Academic Labor: Research and Artistry

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Working Conditions of Contingent Faculty in  
Composition and Technical and Professional  
Communication*

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## Results and Findings from the Survey

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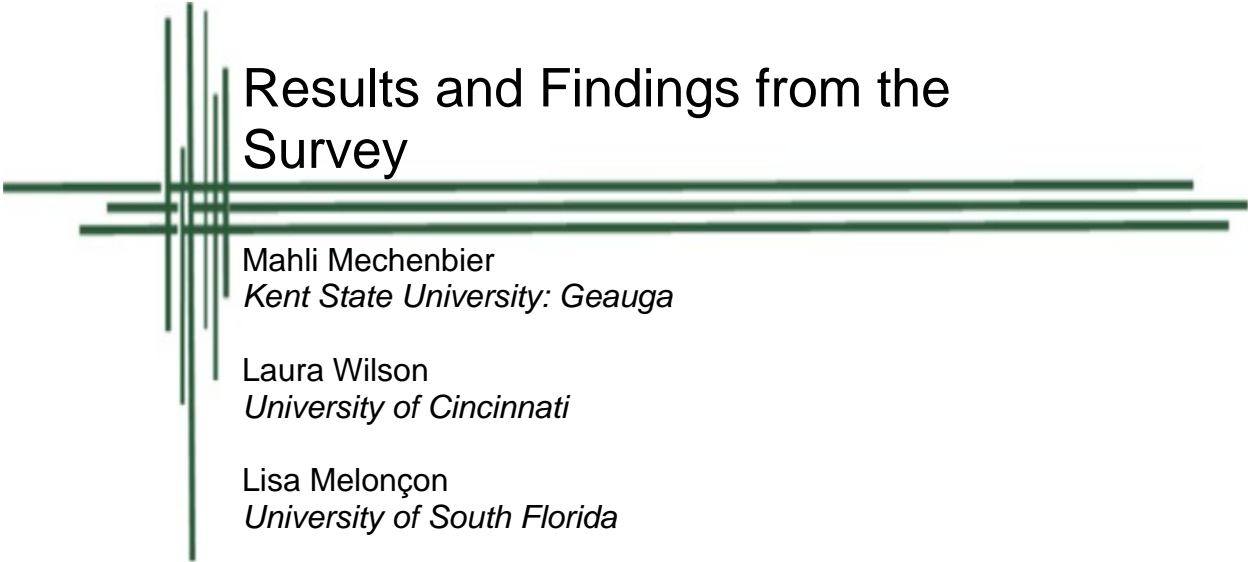
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## Results and Findings from the Survey

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Laura Wilson has an MA in English with a concentration in Scientific and Technical Communication from Bowling Green State University. She has worked as a technical writer and editor and has taught technical, professional, and business writing at the University of Cincinnati since 2005, where she is an Associate Professor Educator. Laura is passionate about her work and her students; beyond technical writing, she enjoys teaching courses on social media, rhetoric, and web authoring.

Lisa Melonçon is a professor of technical communication at the University of South Florida. Her teaching and research focuses on the programmatic and professionalization dimensions of technical and professional communication, research methodologies, and the rhetoric of health and medicine.

*"I consider myself to be a writer and a teacher and a researcher.  
On a good day they all work together."*

Study Participant

In what follows, we provide a descriptive overview of the results from a U.S. survey of contingent faculty in first-year composition (FYC) and technical and professional communication (TPC). The overview of the data contains basic descriptive statistics to provide information on the bulk of the survey data. The survey had 41 questions, and the majority of those questions' responses will be presented in this section.

We present the data in ways that we hope will allow readers to understand the material work lives of respondents; resultantly, we are grouping questions differently than the way they appeared in the survey. We do include the question number and question to place the data into its appropriate context; readers can refer to the survey instrument and the raw data that is included in the Appendix. The final survey included  $N = 313$  participants, and the responses from the two faculty groups are fairly similar with an  $n = 168$  for TPC faculty and an  $n = 145$  for FYC faculty. Not all faculty completed all questions (which is not unusual for a survey of this length), so the  $N$  varies for each question and will be specified within the caption to the visual or the accompanying text. The question number refers to the question in the survey. We have also rounded up numbers to a whole percentage. We present the data in the following sections:

- Basic Demographics
- Current Position
- Material Work Conditions
- Compensation
- Teacher Training
- Professional Development
- Reappointment
- Satisfaction

### **Basic Demographics**

Demographic data provides insights into the backgrounds of those contingent faculty who completed the survey. The information in this section is broken down into sub-sections on:

- Gender, Race, and Ethnicity
- Participant's Institution Type
- Departments in Which Contingent Faculty Work
- Education

*Gender, Race, and Ethnicity*

The basic demographics of this study's respondents are important to start a critical discussion about the representation of contingent faculty. Question 32 asked, "Please indicate your gender," and Question 33 asked, "Please indicate your race/ethnicity." Table 1 summarizes those results.

**Table 1: Gender (*n* = 294), Race, and Ethnicity (*n* = 288)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>% of participants (<i>n</i> = 294)</b>
Male	27% ( <i>n</i> = 78)
Female	70% ( <i>n</i> = 206)
Other	1% ( <i>n</i> = 2)
I would rather not say	3% ( <i>n</i> = 8)
<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>	<b>% of participants (<i>n</i> = 288)</b>
American Indian	0
Asian	1% ( <i>n</i> = 3)
Black/African American	1% ( <i>n</i> = 3)
Caucasian/White	93% ( <i>n</i> = 268)
Hispanic or Latinx	2% ( <i>n</i> = 7)
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0
Multiracial	2% ( <i>n</i> = 7)

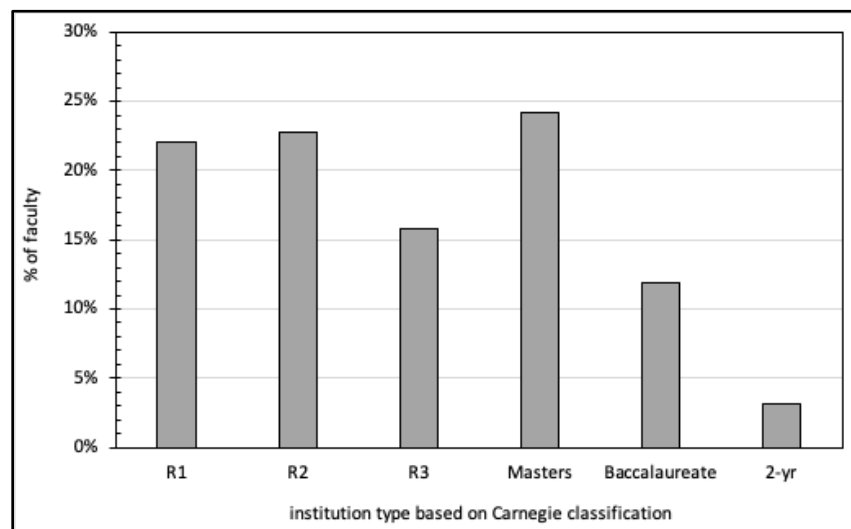
The gender findings from our survey correspond to existing national research that indicates "women have become the new majority among non-tenure-track full-time employees" (Finkelstein, Conley, & Schuster 5). We do acknowledge that in future research more precision needs to be made with the gender categories for selection since the categories at the time of this survey did not take into account more recent moves in survey research to ask more inclusive questions regarding gender.

Additionally, 93% of respondents identify as Caucasian. There is little data in FYC and TPC that provide accurate, field-wide information on racial and ethnic backgrounds of faculty, and, more specifically, of contingent faculty. However, data from TPC (Melonçon "Administrators") show TPC PAs are primarily women, at 55%, and overwhelmingly white, at 93%. The most recent national study about faculty diversity identified that "among full-time non-tenure-track appointments, the substantial ratio of whites to URMs [underrepresented minorities] persists—initially 10.2:1 in 1993 and more recently 6.8:1 in

2013” (Finkelstein, Conley, & Schuster 5). Thus, our data reflect a greater number of white faculty than national trends. We also recognize that Question 33 was poorly configured and worded, and we encourage others to be more mindful of a better construction.

#### *Participant’s Institution Type*

Question 34 asked, “In which type of institution, i.e., Carnegie classification, do you teach?” See <http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/> for more information; this standard classification identifies types of institutions and is also used by institutions themselves to help benchmark peer and aspirational institutions. (The data are based on the 2016 classifications. The latest update was released in early 2019, which reflects changes to some institutions’ status that may not be reflected here.) Figure 1 represents institutional classifications.



**Figure 1: Type of Institution Where Contingent Faculty Work ( $n = 285$ )**

As explained in the methodology, methods, and practices, the sampling of faculty was designed to get a generalizable snapshot based on the proportion of locations where TPC programs are housed. While not wholly generalizable to composition, this sampling method did ensure that faculty from a wide variety of institutions were represented. As seen in Figure 1, participants are closely distributed across R1 (22%  $n = 63$ ), R2 (23%  $n = 65$ ), and master’s (24%  $n = 69$ ) institutions, as well as a close alignment in R3 (16%  $n = 45$ ), and baccalaureate (12%  $n = 34$ ). In this case, we were quite happy with the distribution across institution types, except with community college representation. However, data indicate that two-year colleges employ high percentages of part-time faculty, and since only 3% ( $n = 9$ ) of our respondents identify as two-year college faculty, it is

difficult to draw any sort of conclusions outside of the fact that more research is needed—and greater attention to innovative recruitment methods is additionally necessary—to find and contact faculty at community colleges. The need for more innovative recruitment methods is also necessary to encourage more adjuncts to participate in this type of research.

While not wholly comparable because of the way our data was gathered, it is beneficial to benchmark data specific to composition and to TPC when examining larger national trends such as data from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) (<https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/10112018%20Data%20Snapshot%20Tenure.pdf>) or the American Federation of Teachers (<https://www.aft.org/highered/resources/army-temp>). Understanding that the material work lives of faculty varies little across institutions is a valuable data point because it underscores that the majority of contingent faculty are hired to take on substantial teaching no matter the institution type.

#### *Departments in Which Contingent Faculty Work*

In both composition (see e.g., O'Neill, Crow, & Burton; Mallonee) and in TPC (see e.g., Melonçon “Curricular”; Yeats & Thompson), an interest remains in the departmental or administrative structure that houses TPC and FYC programs. In question 35, we asked, “What is the name of the department?” Table 2 displays those results.

**Table 2: Department in Which Contingent Faculty Work ( $n = 279$ )**

Name of Department	% of faculty
Communication + some other term (e.g., Communication and Mass Media)	4% ( $n = 11$ )
English	60% ( $n = 167$ )
English + some other term (e.g., English and Comparative Literature)	15% ( $n = 41$ )
Writing Department	15% ( $n = 43$ )
Humanities	3% ( $n = 8$ )
Engineering	3% ( $n = 9$ )

It is not surprising that most of the respondents (75%,  $n = 208$ ) report that they work in English departments. Research has shown that TPC degree programs are not predominantly housed in English departments (Melonçon and Henschel), yet other types of degree programs such as emphasis degrees, minors, and certificate programs are still primarily found in English departments (Melonçon “Curricular”). The writing department (15%,  $n = 43$ ) is the category for what composition scholars have called independent writing departments (see e.g., Everett and

Hanganu-Bresch) and is still a small but not insubstantial marker for where writing programs are housed.

### *Education*

Question 36 asked, “Please select the highest degree YOU have obtained.” Table 3 shows the results.

**Table 3: Highest Degree Obtained by Contingent Faculty ( $n = 224$ )**

Type of Degree	% of faculty ( $n = 224$ )
MA: English	49% ( $n = 109$ )
MA/MS: English with a specialization in TPC	10% ( $n = 23$ )
MA: Rhetoric & Composition	8% ( $n = 19$ )
MA/MS: TPC	5% ( $n = 11$ )
PhD: English	15% ( $n = 34$ )
PhD: TPC	3% ( $n = 6$ )
PhD: Rhetoric & Composition	5% ( $n = 12$ )
PhD: Rhetoric & Composition with a specialization in TPC	4% ( $n = 10$ )

Our data show that only 27% ( $n = 62$ ) of respondents have the terminal degree, which by that fact alone would limit the other 73% ( $n = 162$ ) from ever obtaining a tenure-track line. Even though the master’s degree does qualify contingent faculty to teach, the lack of a terminal degree is a significant hurdle to achieving respect and community for some respondents. For example, “*It was made clear to me when I went up for promotion that several faculty members voted against me because I did not have my PhD, even though our RPT document does not require a terminal degree for promotion at the contingent level. So even though there are documents in place to ‘protect’ contingent faculty from this kind of bias, it certainly still exists.*”

The data also show that most adjuncts have earned the MA in English, which is a generalized English degree with a literature focus. Few respondents possess specializations in TPC, yet most are teaching TPC courses (see below). This situation reflects departments’ dismissiveness regarding contingent faculty qualifications in teaching TPC—as long as there is an MA-possessing body instructing the course, the specificity of the degree is negligible. This point was underscored by several interviewees not only in their conversations, but also when they openly stated they had to learn what they know about teaching FYC and TPC through trial and error since the degree they hold is not related (for more information, including quotations from respondents, see “Data Takeaways” article in this special issue).

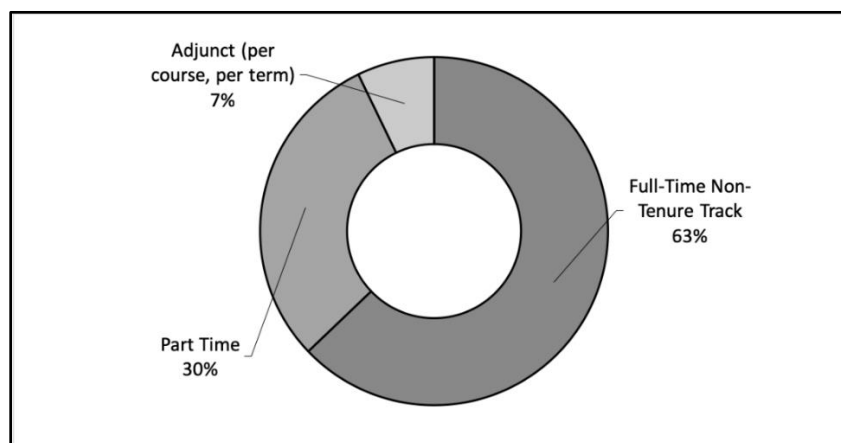
### Current Position

One of the goals of this project is to provide more precision to conversations about contingency. Rather than general statements that cross disciplines and often conflate terms and terminology, we wanted to learn more about specifics of contingent faculty's material work conditions. In an effort to gain more insight into current FYC and TPC positions, we asked three questions related to the following categories:

- Type of Current Contract
- Length of Current Contract
- Length of Employment at Current Position

#### *Type of Current Contract*

Our research questions were only focused on contingent faculty, that is, we excluded tenure-track faculty and graduate students. Question 1 asked, "What is your current position?" Respondents had three choices to designate their current type of contract: full-time non-tenure track, part-time contract with an option for renewal, and adjunct, which was defined as per course, per term. Although we did offer an open-ended option if respondents wanted to provide additional information, the information that was provided confirmed that these three options captured the main categories of employment for those working off the tenure-track. See Figure 2.



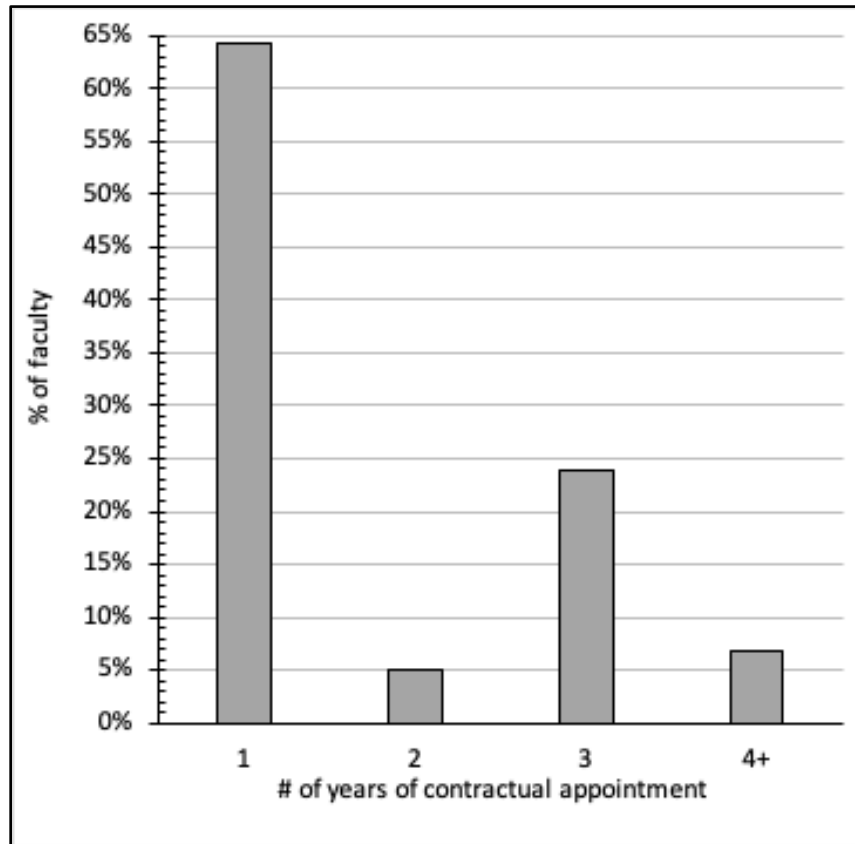
**Figure 2: Current Position ( $N = 307$ ; FT NTT,  $n = 193$ ; Part time,  $n = 22$ ; Adjunct,  $n = 92$ )**

Most of our respondents are FT NTT faculty, and although these faculty members are still contingent, our data is reflective of respondents who may benefit from full-time privileges which are not afforded to part-time faculty.



*Length of Current Contract*

Uncertainty regarding renewal or limited renewal terms is a major concern for contingent faculty, who predominantly teach on annual contracts. Question 17 was asked to get a better sense of the length of contractual appointments: “What is the average term of your contractual appointment?” See Figure 3.



**Figure 3: Average Term of the Contractual Appointment ( $N = 218$ )**

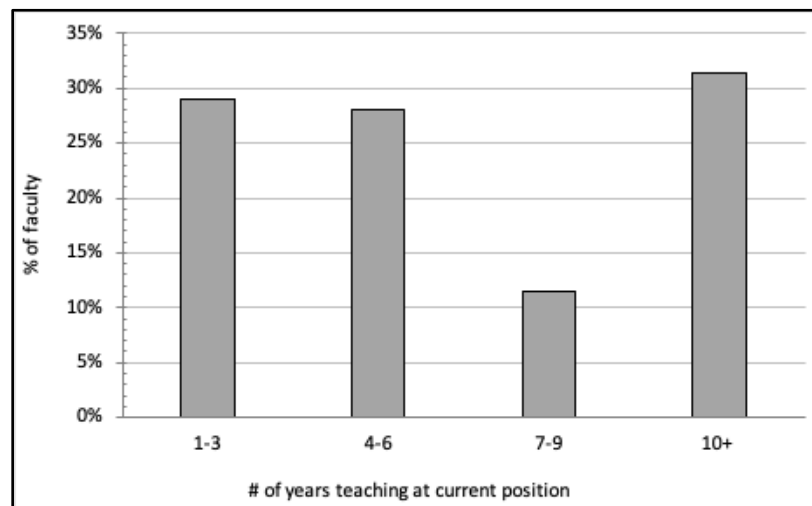
The data in Figure 3 align with the findings of the AAUP at the national level. That is, the vast majority of FT NTT faculty are given annual contracts or multi-year contracts that are renewable indefinitely. The terms of renewal vary based on institutional context, but we can generalize from the data and interviews to say that annual renewals are most often based on a combination of a short self-evaluation and student end-of-term evaluations. The process of renewal is no more or less cumbersome, from a paperwork perspective, than the annual review process for tenure-line faculty. At some locations, the renewal process may move to longer terms (e.g., from one year to three), and the renewals can run indefinitely. From the qualitative responses, we learned there are

many nuances in the type of contracts and renewals (which varied from semester to semester): rolling contracts, contracts with limits (not renewable after five years, for instance), and relatively permanent (no limitations to contract renewal).

The data indicate that the predominant number of contracts are one year. Even though some FT NTTs do benefit from health insurance, support resources from the university, and professional development opportunities and funding, the one-year contract is very unstable. If full-time contingent faculty are required to apply for renewal, this process may be viewed as an added burden not only to the applicants, but to the tenure-track faculty or program administrator who reviews these applications. Living year to year with hopes of renewal can undeniably result in emotional stress and pressure on contingent faculty who desire security within their positions. This instability also affects the quality of teaching in that contingent faculty on one-year contracts are “teaching for the evaluations,” which can be detrimental to both the students and the university. If universities allowed for longer contracts, contingent faculty would be able to focus their energy on quality instruction and service versus pleasing students to ensure positive student evaluations (which is often one of the deciding factors for reappointment).

#### *Length of Employment at Current Position*

Question 2 asked, “How long have you held this position?” Figure 4 illustrates the responses.



**Figure 4: Length of Time in Position (N = 313)**

We note that both part-time faculty and adjuncts are long-term instructors at institutions. As seen in Figure 4, the data show that the respondents who have been teaching for 1-3 years and those with 10+ years are closely equivalent. The majority of faculty, 67%, report being employed at the

same location for four or more years, with 44% being employed at the same location seven or more years. The data reflect that contingent faculty are, in effect, permanent faculty who are committed to the institution and who have invested energy and resources into departmental programs. “*As a contingent faculty in my 13<sup>th</sup> year of full-time employment at the same institution, I don’t always feel contingent. My contracts have gotten longer over the years, at this point only requiring reappointment every five years.*” This response shares characteristics with what we heard from a number of our interviewees and in the qualitative comments interspersed throughout the survey. Many contingent faculty do not feel different than their tenure-line colleagues, especially when viewed in light of their commitment to teaching and their place within their departments. As John Warner argued, contingent faculty are “still working in the majors.” Warner’s use of a baseball analogy emphasizes the qualifications and commitments of contingent faculty, and the fact that they are doing the same job as tenure line faculty.

What is obviously frustrating is the lack of consistency in contract lengths, and our data clearly exposes that it is an institution-by-institution scenario. This variation in contingent contracts is problematic for a myriad of reasons. Most importantly, contractual lengths and the variations within them undermine the importance of contingent faculty in the teaching mission of programs, departments, and institutions. There should not be such variation when someone with the same teaching responsibilities, expertise, and success in the classroom can be treated so differently—dependent only upon which institution the instructor is working for. What we can tentatively conclude is that contract lengths are something that can more easily be changed and should faculty (both tenure-line and contingent) work toward effecting this type of change, it would bring meaningful stability in both material and affective ways to contingent faculty. Universities and departments should address this precarious concern more forcefully through an increase in contract lengths, and, more importantly, through the implementation of a promotional ladder that contains clear requirements and assessment mechanisms. These changes can help to alleviate a core issue of contingency: doubt and uncertainty around employment length and possibilities. For instance, according to one survey respondent:

*At my university, certain departments fought several years ago for a promotional ladder for instructors: instructor, advanced instructor, senior instructor. Each advancement came with a small salary boost and a longer contract. Although this program was lauded and written about, in recent years, the university has hired more truly contingent faculty members, and our dean refuses to allow advancement at all for the last four instructors hired, all of whom have been here multiple years now and are integral to our core programs. They are all on one-year contracts.*

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*Last year and this year, we hired five more, all of whom are on one-year contracts.*

The fact that the structure for contingent faculty can change each time there is a change in leadership is a facet of precarity no one is talking about—and one that is unacceptable.

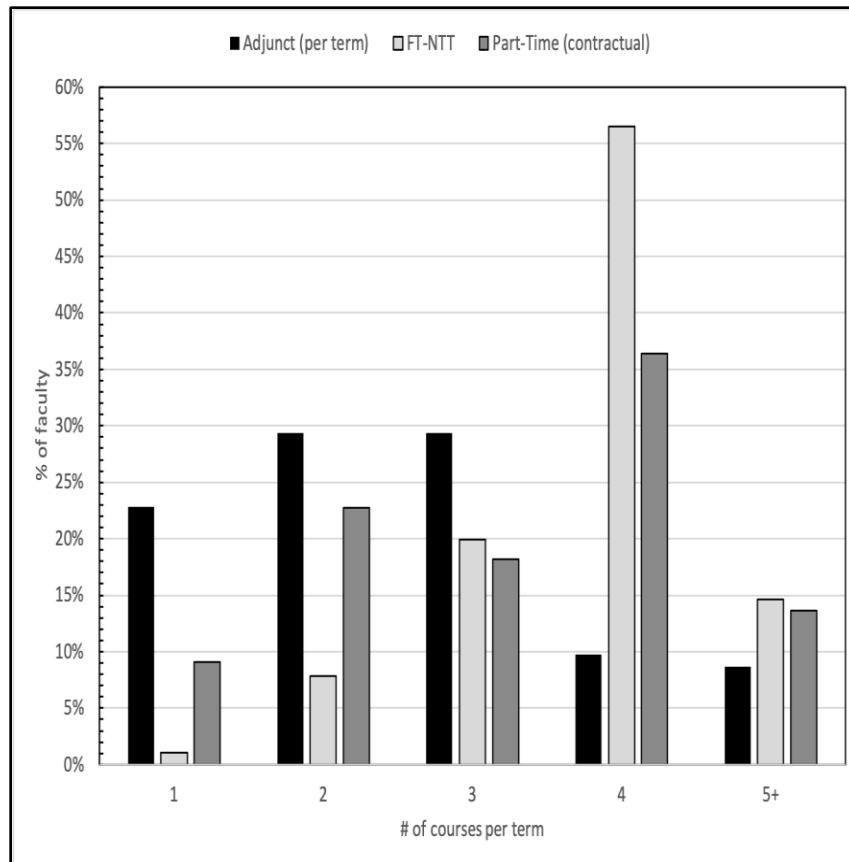
### **Material Work Conditions**

While all of the data collectively provides a comprehensive view of the material work conditions of contingent faculty, this section highlights the labor of teaching and the support faculty receive. We focus on four areas:

- Number of Courses Typically Taught in an Academic Year
- Designated Office Space with Computer
- Office Support
- Parking

#### *Number of Courses Typically Taught in an Academic Year*

Question 2 (composition) and Question 3 (TPC) asked, “How many courses do you typically teach in a term? We recognize that some locations have complex configurations of load based on credit hours and work hours. Pick the one that is closest to your situation and explain if necessary.” Figure 5 shows a comparison between the number of courses taught and the type of contract. This was one of the few questions where the differences in the type of writing became important to show more specifically. Thus, we felt we needed to split this data to give a more accurate representation of the teaching loads based on contract type.



**Figure 5: Courses Taught per Term by Contract Type**  
( $N = 305$ ; FT NTT,  $n = 191$ ; Part time,  $n = 22$ ; Adjunct,  $n = 92$ )

Most of these respondents carry a 4/4 load. Even though a 4/4 course load—especially with a high volume of lower-division students—is a heavy grading load, most contingent faculty will willingly welcome a 4/4 load (with insurance benefits) because the alternative, too often, is to be employed as an adjunct. As one survey respondent noted, “*Two [courses] at \*this\* school--three more elsewhere--would rather have them all in the same place, of course.*” As Figure 5 shows, adjuncts typically carry 1-3 courses per term, but what they responded qualitatively is that this is per institution, with many of them teaching at multiple institutions at the same time to make ends meet. “*I typically teach at more than one school during a term. Usually I have between 6 -10 courses a term.*” This is not a struggle felt only by term adjuncts either. Even when employed “full-time,” many contingent faculty feel exploited based on their load. According to one respondent:

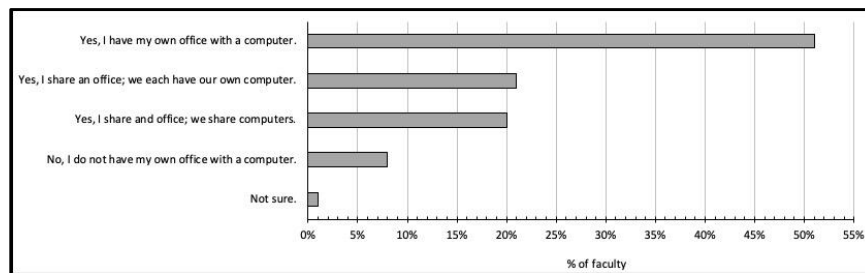
*Three years ago, lecturers' 4/4 load was adjusted to a 5/5 load with no increase in salary. (This amounts to a 25% reduction in*

*pay.) The ‘gentleman’s agreement’ when they told us the news was that we would only have 2-3 preps. and no committee work. They reneged on the committee promise within the first month. Since then I have had either 3 or 4 preps. (some of which = upper level, all of which = “writing intensive”) every semester. For comparison, the T/TT people are teaching a 3/4 load.*

Therefore, while the precarity of job security may be “missing” for FT NTT contingent faculty, they then suffer because of the instability of their load or responsibilities. The precarity and exploitation is then materialized when their loads and responsibilities can—and do—change with no notice, accommodation, or increase in salary.

#### *Designated Office Space with Computer*

An important aspect of being an employee in any organization is having a designated office space and materials, such as a computer, to do the work that is expected. Question 15 was included to accurately understand the availability of materials to contingent faculty to do their work. It asked, “Do you have a designated office space with a computer in that space?” Respondents had several options, which are represented in Figure 6.



**Figure 6: Availability of Designated Office and Computer Access**  
(*n* = 298, \*rounding up made the total 101%)

The literature and long-time stories about contingency typically focus on adjunct labor and the “freeway flyers” who work from their car and talk to students in hallways because they have no office. Data show that 92% (*n* = 278) of respondents have a designated office space and access to a computer, and just over half of respondents, 51% (*n* = 152), have their own office and computer.

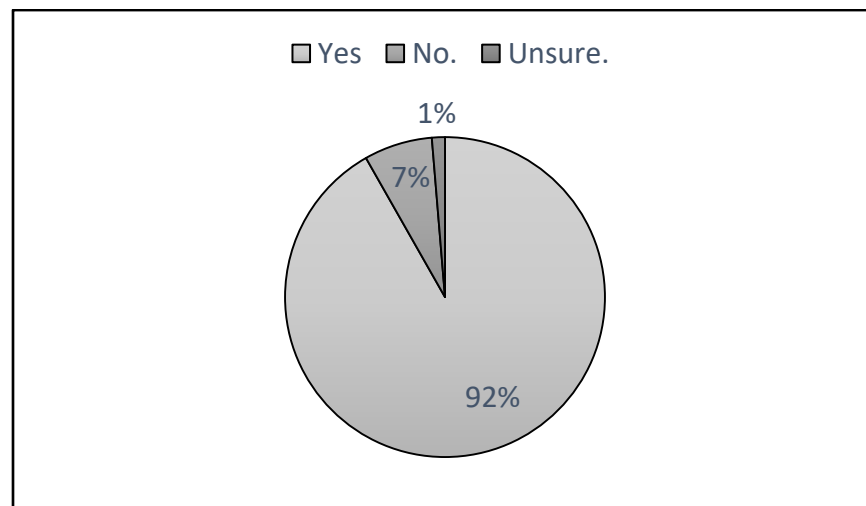
While 51% of respondents have their own computer—although positive—49% of respondents share or do not have access to a work computer. This workplace situation is problematic for multiple reasons, one being that those with the shared space have to attempt to stagger their schedules so they are not in the office/in need of the computer at the same time. Said one participant:

*When my colleague and I shared an office and computer, we would try to plan our coming semester so that she taught MWF and I taught T/TH and vice versa. It's hard to have student conferences/grade papers/even check your email when you are in a shared space. It was just one more thing I had to think about.*

Even if the 20% ( $n = 60$ ) of respondents who share a computer purchase and maintain their own laptops, which they carry with them into the shared office space, this issue raises concerns such as security, printing (hooking personal devices into a central department printer), and expenses related to software (especially for those faculty who teach courses online).

#### *Office Support*

Class preparation often includes time and labor spent on “housekeeping” duties such as copying and collating, as well as an actual cost investment of classroom supplies such as pens, paperclips, and staples. To uncover the material work conditions of office support, Question 13 asked, “Do you have access to office support staff for forms, copies, office supplies, and general assistance?” See Figure 7.

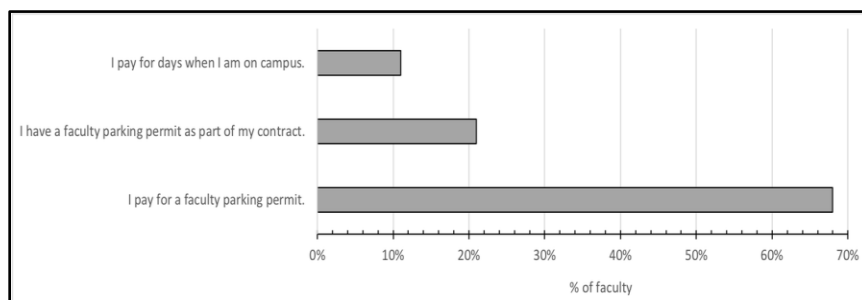


**Figure 7: Access to Office Support Staff for Forms, Copies, Office Supplies, and General Assistance ( $N = 304$ )**

A majority of respondents have access to support. However, even though 7% ( $n = 21$ ) is a low percentage, that number is not negligible. If 7% of the respondents to this survey are paying out-of-pocket to purchase standard supplies such as binder-clips, pens, folders, or dry-erase markers, when considering the already low salary of many contingent faculty, these supply costs are significant in relation to total income.

### *Parking*

Parking is a common complaint of all faculty because of its expense and limited availability. While this question was not included in the original pilot study, it was added because parking can impact contingent faculty in more material ways. Question 14 asked, “What best describes how you park (for when you teach face-to-face)?” Figure 8 shows the results.



**Figure 8: Parking ( $N = 269$ )**

We asked this question because we wanted to understand the costs and whether or not this was a cost to employment or a benefit. The data reflect that 68% ( $n = 183$ ) of respondents pay for parking. At universities—especially ones located in major cities—parking is often expensive. Although paying for parking is a standard practice both in and outside of academia, these additional costs add up for contingent faculty who may be employed at more than one university or are usually paid on a lower pay scale than tenure-line faculty.

### **Compensation**

Without doubt one of the most pressing concerns about contingent labor is compensation. Here we asked questions about:

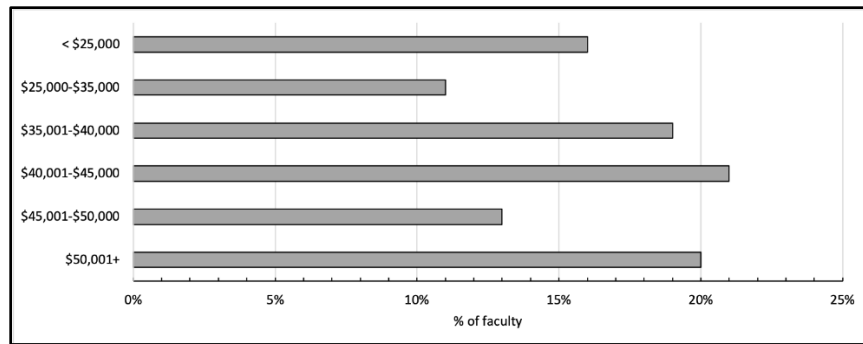
- Salary
- Benefits
- Union Representation

We take compensation to include both salary and benefits. We also include a question in this section we asked about union representation since it typically has a direct effect on compensation.

### *Salary*

Question 16 asked, “What is your salary range?” Because of the differences in FT NTT and adjunct salary, we present the data for these two groups separately. Figure 9 and Table 4 illustrate FT NTT salary.





**Figure 9: Salary Range for FT NTT ( $N = 255$ )**

Figure 9 provides a look at annual salary ranges for FT NTT. The respondents are split fairly evenly across salary ranges with 32% ( $n = 84$ ) reporting an annual salary of \$45,001 and over, but an almost equal number 28% ( $n = 74$ ) report a salary of less than \$35,000. The most common salary range, \$40,001-\$45,000, was reported by 21% ( $n = 54$ ). What is missing from Figure 9 is the additional context of the annual salary in relation to the cost of living in certain locations. That additional data could help with understanding these numbers, but the fact that so many FT NTT faculty make less than \$40,000 a year paints a discouraging picture. Since so much national data often reports on contingent faculty earnings as per course, Table 4 examines annual salary in relation to courses taught per term.

**Table 4: FT NTT Faculty Salary Range with Courses Taught per Term ( $N = 254$ )**

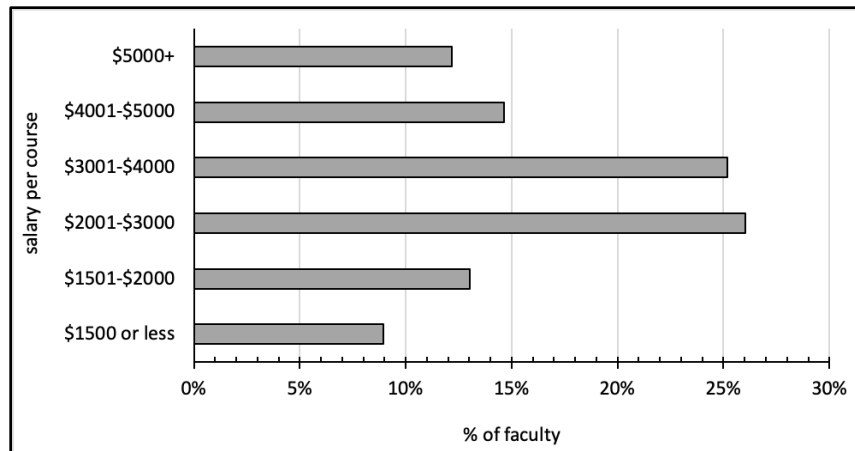
<b>less than \$25,000</b>	<b>42</b>
1 course per term	10
2 courses per term	16
3 courses per term	10
4 courses per term	3
4+ courses a term	3
<b>\$25,000-\$35,000</b>	<b>28</b>
2 courses per term	1
3 courses per term	9
4 courses per term	17
4+ courses a term	1
<b>\$35,001-\$40,000</b>	<b>49</b>
2 courses per term	2
3 courses per term	5

4 courses per term	34
4+ courses a term	8
<b>\$40,001-\$45,000</b>	<b>54</b>
1 course per term	1
2 courses per term	1
3 courses per term	6
4 courses per term	38
4+ courses a term	8
<b>\$45,001-\$50,000</b>	<b>32</b>
2 courses per term	2
3 courses per term	7
4 courses per term	19
4+ courses a term	4
<b>\$50,000+</b>	<b>49</b>
1 course per term	2
2 courses per term	11
3 courses per term	13
4 courses per term	14
4+ courses a term	9

The average pay per course for FT NTTs ranges from \$3,125 to \$6,250, while the mode—the categories with the highest cluster of respondents—is \$4,687 to \$5,312 per course. The rare faculty who teach one or two courses per semester may be classified as research NTT faculty.

#### *Adjuncts*

Compensation for adjunct instructors (term-to-term) often determines how many courses instructors seek and how many institutions an instructor commutes between in order to earn a living wage. Question 19 asked, “What are you paid per course?” See Figure 10 and Table 5, which are two ways to view the data based on per course compensation.



**Figure 10: Adjunct Compensation per Course (N = 123)**

Right at half of the adjuncts (51%,  $n = 64$ ) report earning between \$2,001 and \$4,000, with 26%, ( $n = 32$ ) reporting \$2,001-\$3,000, and 25% ( $n = 31$ ) reporting \$3,001-\$4,000 per course. Table 5 illustrates the data with a comparison between salary per course and how many courses respondents were teaching.

**Table 5: Adjunct Pay per Course with Courses per Term. (N = 85)**

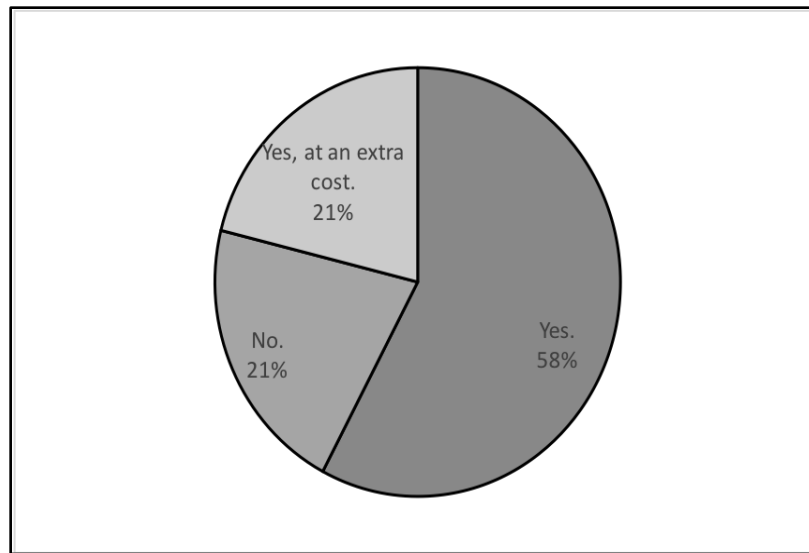
<b>\$1,500 or less</b>	<b>8</b>
1 course per term	2
2 courses per term	2
3 courses per term	3
more than 4 courses a term	1
<b>\$1,501-\$2,000</b>	<b>14</b>
1 course per term	2
2 courses per term	3
3 courses per term	5
4 courses per term	1
more than 4 courses a term	3
<b>\$2,001-\$3,000</b>	<b>25</b>
1 course per term	6
2 courses per term	8
3 courses per term	7
4 courses per term	2

more than 4 courses a term	2
<b>\$3,001-\$4,000</b>	<b>23</b>
1 course per term	7
2 courses per term	7
3 courses per term	5
4 courses per term	4
<b>\$4,001-\$5,000</b>	<b>10</b>
1 course per term	2
2 courses per term	5
3 courses per term	1
4 courses per term	1
more than 4 courses a term	1
<b>\$5,000+</b>	<b>5</b>
1 course per term	1
3 courses per term	3
4 courses per term	1

The two questions on salary do not align identically to the types-of-contract question, which means our question was not as clear as we had hoped. “What is your salary range” was meant to be for all faculty on any sort of contract (but we did not make that clear), while the “what are you paid per course” was intended for term-to-term adjuncts. Even with the confusion around the question, the data is valuable because respondents do provide insights into how contingent faculty describe their salary. The fact that 9% of respondents make \$1,500 or less per course directly correlates to the precarity of their positions. With another 26% earning \$2,000 or less per course, almost a quarter of the contingent faculty who responded, even with a 4/4 load teaching load, would make less than \$16,000 annually—which requires them to either teach at other institutions simultaneously, seek outside work, or live just above the poverty line (assuming, of course, that they live alone and have no family <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>). Although the higher end of adjunct per-course salary is within the low-end average for NTTs, many adjunct faculty lack health insurance and comparable retirement plans.

### *Benefits*

A notable difference between FT NTTs and adjuncts is the possibility of benefits. Question 20, depicted in Figure 11, asked, “Are benefits included in your compensation package?”



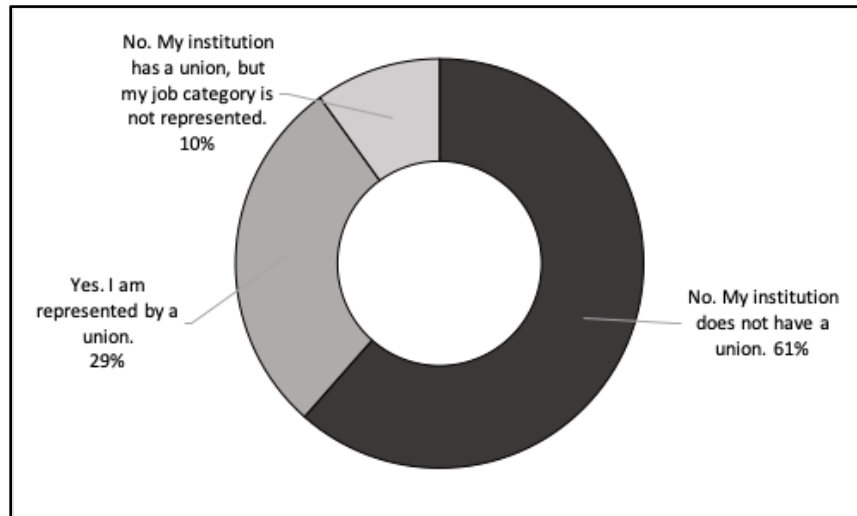
**Figure 11: Inclusion of Benefits in the Compensation Package ( $N = 302$ )**

Based on the information for salary discussed above, the fact that 42% ( $n = 127$ ) of respondents either do not receive benefits (such as healthcare and life insurance) or have to pay extra for it emphasizes the poor state of contingent faculty in our nation. Since 63% ( $n = 193$ ) of our respondents identified as FT NTTs, and the data from this question indicates 58% ( $n = 175$ ) have benefits, we conclude that not all FT NTTs have benefits. Forty percent of respondents are part-time/adjuncts, which aligns with this question's result that 42% ( $n = 127$ ) of our respondents are uninsured.

Our qualitative responses reflected that the availability of benefits is entirely dependent on the institution and the policies in place at that institution. One respondent, who identified as an adjunct working part-time at two universities, noted that they received benefits at one institution but not the other. Another respondent commented on the limitations in place that preclude some contingent faculty from securing benefits: *"You have to teach ten credits which is impossible with either a 3 or 4 credit backbone. There are strict rules that no one can teach over ten credits so [it's] impossible to get benefits."* At institutions where adjuncts can qualify for benefits, some respondents noted the teaching load would be astronomical to qualify: *"Adjuncts who teach 6 or more units qualify for dental and vision, but I teach only 3–4 units per term."* Sadly, even at institutions where contingent faculty could opt into benefits out of their own pocket, they shared the injustice that *"I can access health care coverage but would pay much more than full-time."*

### *Union Representation*

Faculty unions have historically represented tenure-track faculty. A growing number of universities have union representation for FT NTTs, and a small number of locations offer union representation for adjuncts. Question 39 asked, “Are you represented by a faculty union?” See Figure 12.



**Figure 12: Faculty Union Representation ( $n = 291$ )**

Only 29% ( $n = 84$ ) of respondents work at institutions where they have union representation. Another 10% ( $n = 29$ ) worked at locations where there was a union, but their job category was not represented. However, unions are often separate for NTT and tenure-track units—which is necessary to protect the interests of each unit—but causes conflict in different ways when the tenure-track unit bargains to “stay ahead” of the NTT unit, especially regarding summer teaching, merit pay, constitution of committees, and priority of teaching assignments. Even in situations where contingent faculty have union representation, disparity still exists among faculty units. As Samuels and others have noted, union representation is one way to ensure better working conditions, but our data point to a greater need of increasing union representation—especially for those off the tenure track—on college campuses.

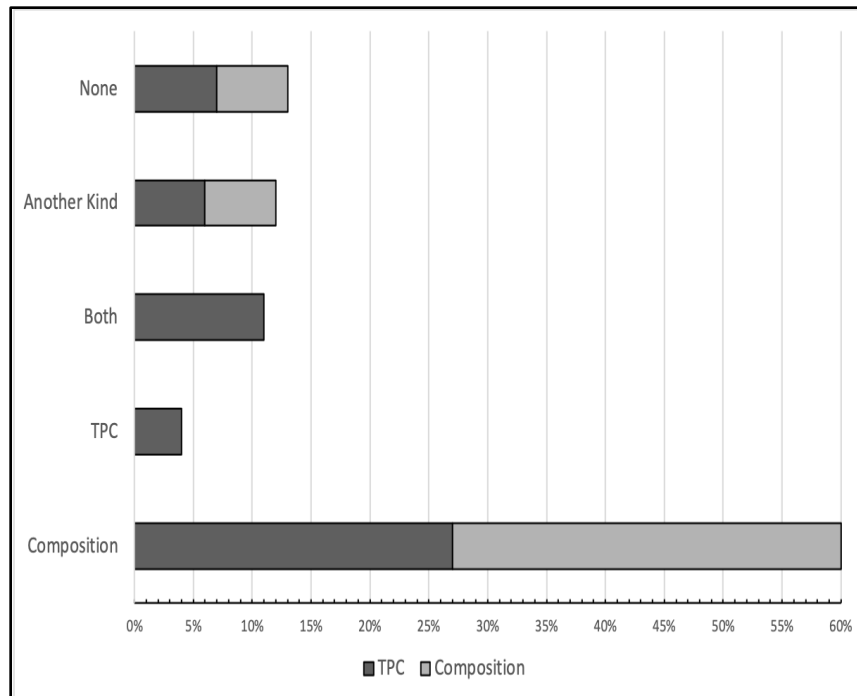
Having union representation is one way the voices of contingent faculty can be heard, and action can be taken to protect them. Many of the interviews following the survey suggested respondents were nervous to “overshare” because of the precarity of their positions. During one interview, a respondent was talking about a meeting they had attended for part-time faculty to share their views:

*I went to a meeting for [adjuncts]. We were supposed to be able to share our feelings, so I did. I had the feeling that I had stepped on lots of people's toes. I felt ostracized right away. Two people in charge of the session basically told me I shouldn't feel that way. I don't like being a 'non-essential' and that's how I refer to myself! At 4C's I attended a session for union-going to attempt to start a union. Have to tread carefully, because I'd still like to be employed, if you know what I mean.*

The desire to have a union to protect your employment conditions should not be one that is associated with the potential to lose the position. Some contingent faculty who do voice that desire are met with backlash: *"When I was PT, I was 'noisy' –trying to start a union, etc., and when I got made FT, someone said to me: 'They just hired you full-time just to shut you up' and 'they're appeasing you.' Very hurtful. Patronizing. Some tenure-track and many administrators, they talk about 'how much they value PT faculty for their value to the university' and it just feels patronizing."* Having a union to back these precarious roles would allow NTT faculty to voice their concerns, demand better material work conditions, and not fear repercussions. One respondent, who is represented by a union, shows just how much pressure is taken off of contingent faculty with this representation: *"Because we're unionized, the pay and benefits are good, my workload has been constant despite the University System's attempts to increase temps' course load, and I'm represented in the event of a conflict with administration."*

### **Teacher Training**

Since contingent faculty are generally hired into teaching positions, we wanted to know what formal training they had in learning how to teach. Question 21 asked, "Have you ever taken a formal course on teaching? Please select the answer that best fits your background." See Figure 13 for the results, which specifically asked respondents to identify whether they had taken a practicum, a course in teaching composition, a course in teaching TPC, both, another kind of teaching course, or none.

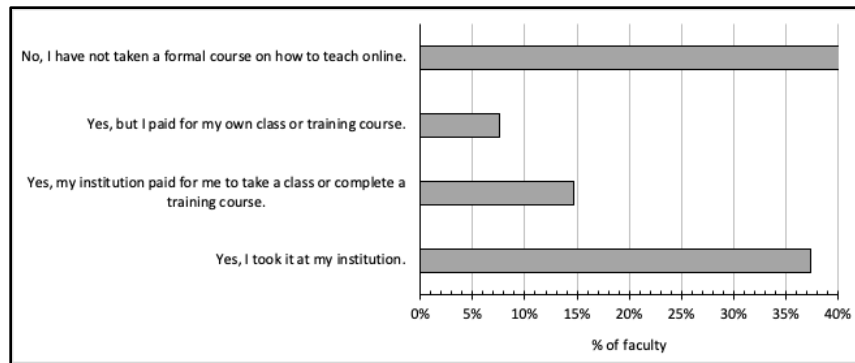


**Figure 13: Completion of and Type of Formal Teaching Practicum Course ( $n = 294$ )**

The good news is that the majority of contingent faculty who participated in the survey, 76% ( $n = 223$ ), have taken at least one course on how to teach. The majority selected that they had taken a course on composition as the most common form of training. For TPC contingent faculty, 12% ( $n = 29$ ) have taken both a practicum or teaching course in TPC and in composition. As far back as 2009, Lisa Melonçon (“Masters”) questioned whether a teaching composition course was adequate for teaching TPC. In addition, the teaching assignment and subsequent “how to teach” course were based around composition. Instructors may have had training as a technical writer or worked as a technical writer, but they were never formally trained to teach technical writing.

With the growth of online courses and programs (see Martinez, Mechenbier, Hewett, Melonçon, & Harris), we also asked in Question 22, “Have you ever taken a formal course on teaching online? Select the answer that best fits your situation.” Figure 14 illustrates the results of online teacher training.





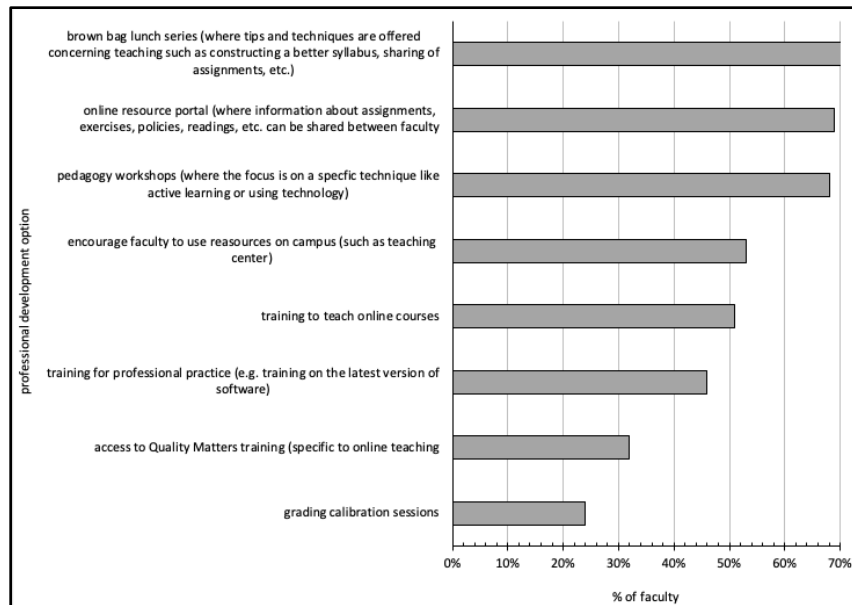
**Figure 14: Online Teacher Training ( $N = 238$ )**

The answers here may correlate with the fact that respondents are contingent faculty (and are more likely to teach online than tenure-track faculty). Additionally, depending on the year the respondent's master's degree was conferred, universities may not have offered training to teach online as part of the degree program.

For contingent faculty, online teacher training is sparse, and even though this number, 60% ( $n = 143$ ), is somewhat encouraging, it does not take into account how training courses offered at many institutions are focused on teaching online using the institution's learning management system and are not actually about *teaching* online. Current research (Harris et al.) highlights the lack of training in teaching online and adds to a slim body of existing research focused on the necessity for training faculty in online pedagogical practices (Cargile, Cook, & Grant-Davie; Hewett). If you teach the course face-to-face, "*there is an assumption that you can teach online... [I had to] [figure out on the fly how to teach,*" which is a representative view of many contingent faculty in our study who teach online (see also Melonçon "Contingent").

### Professional Development

The options respondents could select for professional development were determined by the pilot study (Melonçon, England, & Ilyasova), additional information from the participants of the pilot study, and an understanding of what types of opportunities are available at most locations. We asked three questions about professional development. The first question was specific to professional development within the institution where there is no cost to attend. Question 25 asked, "What professional development opportunities are available to you? Check all that apply." See Figure 15.



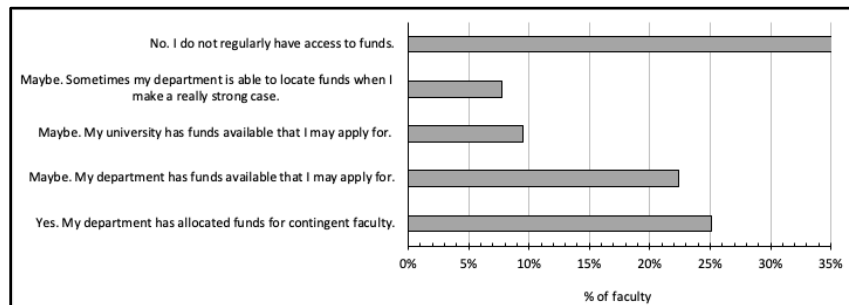
**Figure 15: Professional Development Opportunities**  
(*N* = 285; average 4.2 responses)

The most commonly offered professional development opportunities are brown bag lunch series, online resource portals, and pedagogy workshops—all of which are low cost to the institution. Quality Matters is a membership based company that provides professional development opportunities for faculty, and as become something of the de facto “standard” for minimum online course development. (See <https://www.qualitymatters.org/> for more information.) Thus, Quality Matters training falls on the low end of opportunities/access because of the cost of training/certification. (A university may hesitate to invest \$250 to certify an instructor to teach online if the faculty member is not permanent and can use those skills at another institution.)

Cost analysis needs to be considered when thinking through these sorts of opportunities. That is, the cheaper training is in terms of time and labor and supplies, the more often participation is available and encouraged. What the data does not tell us, however, is how often contingent faculty take advantage of professional development opportunities. One respondent disclosed that when they were a novice online instructor, no professional development opportunities were available to them. However, currently, as an experienced instructor, they feel constrained because they are required to teach online using a pre-designed course. It is important to note that numerous respondents shared that while professional development opportunities were available, they simply lacked the time or desire (seeing no point, as they were not permanent faculty) to participate. Also, there were no specific comments either in the qualitative survey responses or the interviews that indicated

faculty were paid for their professional development time, or that paying contingent faculty to participate in professional development would increase their participation. This data suggests further research is needed to examine methods which will prioritize professional development for contingent faculty and make the investment of professional development worthwhile for FT NTTs and adjuncts.

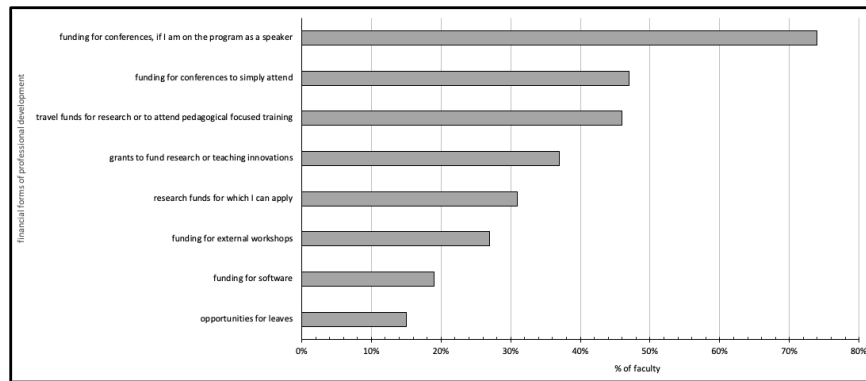
The second question about professional development was one focused on monetary resources available to contingent faculty. Question 26 asked, “Do you have regular access to money for professional development? Please select the answer that best applies to your situation.” See Figure 16.



**Figure 16: Access to Funding for Professional Development ( $N = 295$ )**

The goal of professional development is to ensure faculty have access to current trends and techniques in teaching and to reinvigorate instructors, allowing them opportunities to interact and share ideas. With 35% ( $n = 103$ ) responding that they have no access to funding for professional development, and only 25% ( $n = 74$ ) having secure funding specifically for contingent faculty, professional development opportunities are largely inadequate.

The final professional development question was specific to financial forms of professional development where the institution paid or reimbursed faculty members for participating. Question 27 asked, “If you do have access to financial forms for faculty development, what are they? Check all that apply.” See Figure 17.

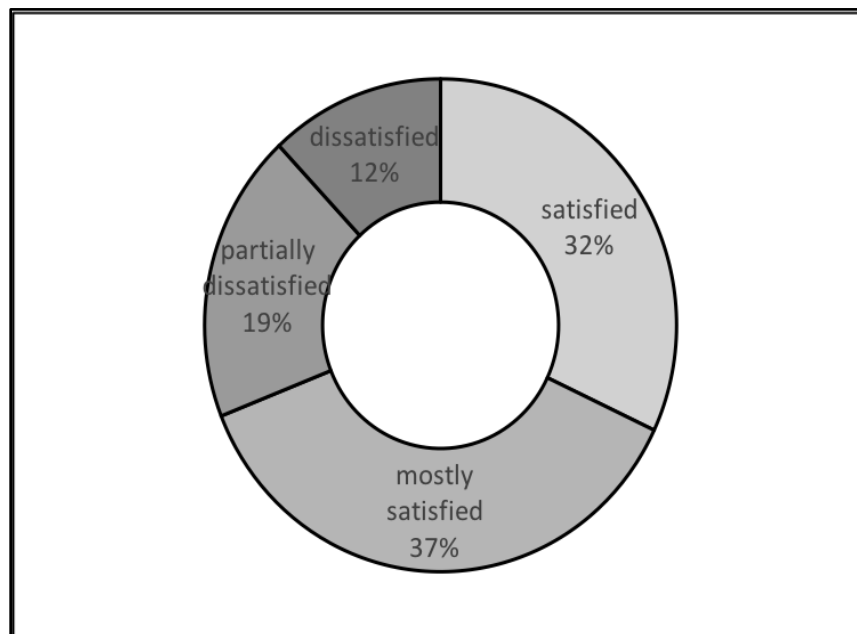


**Figure 17: Faculty Development Opportunities ( $N = 200$ ; average 2.9 responses)**

Our results find that under 50% ( $n = 100$ ) of faculty have access to funding for most activities, which leaves the other half of faculty without resources for professional development. In times of financial distress or tightened budgets such as seen in higher education in recent years, funding for both faculty travel to conferences and professional development have been significantly cut or frozen (Mrig et al.) Most FT NTTs and adjuncts lack resources to attend conferences and access professional development on their own. “While . . . senior faculty members . . . can afford to personally cover what they are not reimbursed for or be without funds while awaiting reimbursement, . . . [spending personal funds is] not [an option] for newer, lower-paid professors and adjuncts” (Flaherty). Concerns with funding contingent faculty include: a department could fund an adjunct for a conference, but the adjunct may not teach for that department the following semester, and the limited money available is reserved for tenure-track positions.

### Reappointment

Since reappointment is so important for contingent faculty, who are unsure of continuing contracts, we wanted to highlight this information. Reappointment was one part of Question 29 where we asked respondents to rank their satisfaction with certain aspects of their jobs. See Figure 18.



**Figure 18: Satisfaction with Reappointment Process ( $N = 298$ )**

Approximately one-third of respondents (31%,  $n = 92$ ) expressed dissatisfaction with the reappointment process. Factors which affect the answers to this question may include inflexible one-year contracts versus the opportunity for multi-year reappointments and the extensiveness of the review process (electronic files, the manner in which student evaluations are used, peer review requirements, etc.). Moreover, the inability to be promoted in rank (with a salary increment) and therefore earn seniority may result in dissatisfaction regarding reappointment.

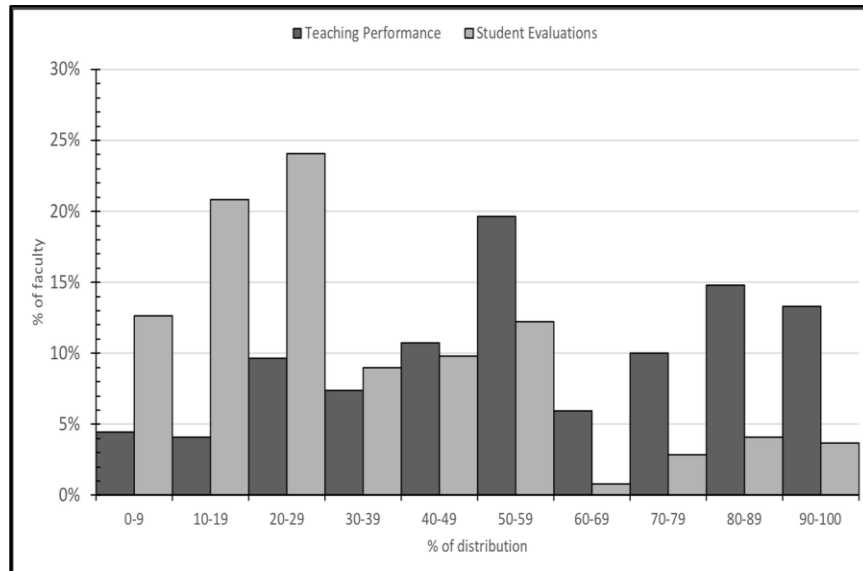
Many NTTs (69%,  $n = 203$ ) may be satisfied or mostly satisfied because they realize that at least they have the opportunity to be reappointed. FT NTTs who responded may have answered that their full-time, non-permanent status provides more benefits than an adjunct status, which makes FT NTTs “satisfied.” Jordan Schneider encourages universities to:

[c]reate a new faculty tier of “super adjuncts” who would teach three classes a semester and be paid around \$20,000 to \$25,000 for the term—more than what adjuncts now make, but still less than a full-timer. Give “super adjuncts” a vote in departmental and faculty matters, require them to be involved in some modest sway [sic] in the academic life of the department (through mentoring, scholarship, research, or faculty development), and make sure they have some measure of real, contractual job security.

Although this proposal establishes yet another category of non-permanent, term-contract faculty, these super adjuncts would have more opportunities to be involved in the department which may increase overall satisfaction among adjunct faculty.

#### *Criteria for reappointment*

Figure 19 and Tables 6-7 are the visual representations to Question 18: “Estimate the weight of importance given to the following when it comes time for reappointment or contract renewal. Use a number that represents a percent of total effort. All your answers should add up to 100%.”



**Figure 19: The Weight of Teaching Performance and Student Evaluation in the Reappointment Process**  
( $n = 270$  performance;  $n = 245$  student evaluations)

Admittedly, in hindsight, we would definitely ask this question a different way. Unfortunately, the question did not ask for an explanation of “other.” (Should someone replicate or expand this work, we hope they would gather more details.)

The most common responses (and therefore the most weighted) point to teaching performance and student evaluations as indicators of reappointment. Even though the responses provide important insights into how contingent faculty are perceived to be assessed, additional factors that impact reappointment should be considered, but we did not include those in this question.

Many contingent faculty—because they are teaching faculty—fear student evaluations because they are the primary factor in reappointment. “Much of the debate on student evaluations is . . . whether

the current instruments are reliable and valid, and whether they should be used in high-stake decisions” (Kogan, Schoenfeld-Tacher, and Hellyer 624). As all instructors are aware, comments on student evaluations often correlate to student satisfaction with their grades. Moreover, tenure-line faculty often do not take the time to know the department’s contingent faculty (or lack opportunities—or desire—to socialize with them), so the blind sense of evaluation does become dependent on student perceptions (see “Politics of Service” article in this special issue for additional analysis regarding evaluations).

**Table 6: Weight of Importance Given to Publications and Conference Presentations at Reappointment or Contract Renewal**

% of job	Publications, Peer Review	Publications, Other	Conference Presentations	Other
	<i>n</i> = 133	<i>n</i> = 130	<i>n</i> = 145	<i>n</i> = 140
0-9	120	123	117	102
10-19	10	6	26	9
20-29	2	1	2	12
30-39	0	0	0	2
40-49	1	0	0	1
50-59	0	0	0	3
60-69	0	0	0	0
70-79	0	0	0	1
80-89	0	0	0	1
90-100	0	0	0	8

As seen in Table 6, the majority of contingent faculty feel publications and conferences comprise 0 – 9% of their jobs, yet in interviews with us, respondents express an awareness that publications and conference participation are often what separate tenure-track faculty from contingent faculty. These contradictions underlie the lines of demarcation which outline the boundaries between contingent faculty and tenure-track faculty. However, “efforts to improve... [FT NTT work conditions] may be impeded by divergent interests, a lack of cooperation, or a multiplicity of views” among faculty groups and administrators (Maxey and Kezar 579). Table 7 continues the answer to Question 18 about what role certain job functions play in reappointment.

**Table 7: Weight of Importance Given to Service Obligations at Reappointment or Contract Renewal**

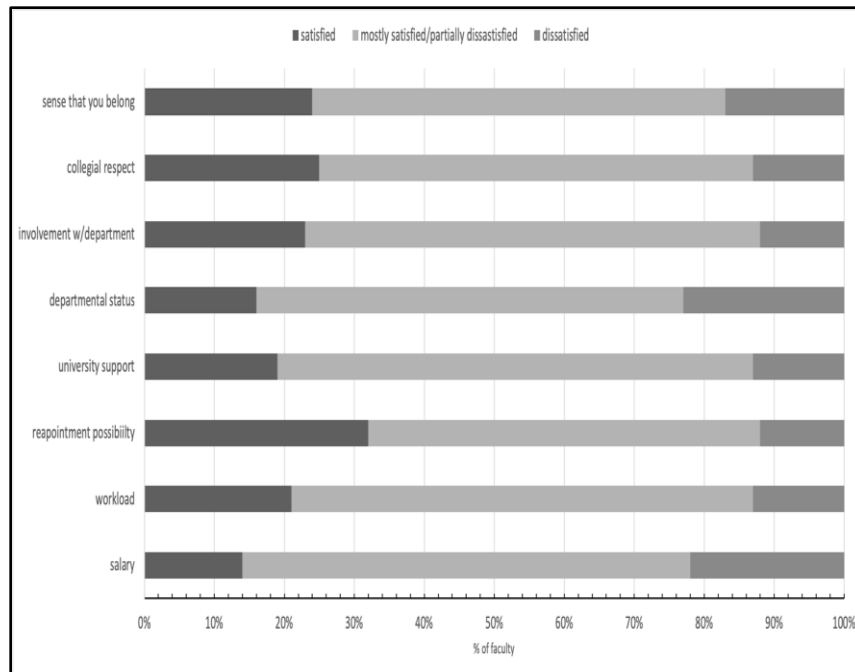
% of job	Advising	Department	University	Profession
	<i>n</i> = 154	<i>n</i> = 181	<i>n</i> = 196	<i>n</i> = 131
0-9	129	96	101	122
10-19	16	55	62	9
20-29	7	26	25	0
30-39	1	3	3	0
40-49	1	0	1	0
50-59	0	0	2	0
60-69	0	0	0	0
70-79	0	1	1	0
80-89	0	0	0	0
90-100	0	0	1	0

Again, the majority of respondents noted their job functions that include service at the student (advising), departmental, university, and professional levels bear little importance on their reappointment, and, yet, contingent faculty are overwhelmingly stepping up in these critical areas of service (see “Politics of Service” article in this special issue for additional analysis regarding service).

### Satisfaction

This section presents questions that asked about contingent faculty’s satisfaction with their jobs. Here we take satisfaction to mean that respondents are generally happy in their decision to take a contingent faculty job or to stay employed as contingent faculty. We presented a Likert scale question that rated a number of factors that have appeared in previous studies and/or in the literature related to job satisfaction (see “Introduction” to special issue for additional information). The satisfaction question was then followed by questions related to preference to be working on the tenure track. Question 29 asked, “Thinking of your current position, please rate your satisfaction with the [following].” See Figure 20.





**Figure 20: Satisfaction with Current Aspects of Their Job**  
 (salary,  $n = 297$ ; workload,  $n = 296$ ; reappointment,  $n = 298$ ;  
 university support,  $n = 298$ ; departmental status,  $n = 297$ ;  
 involvement with department,  $n = 298$ ; collegial respect,  $n = 297$ )

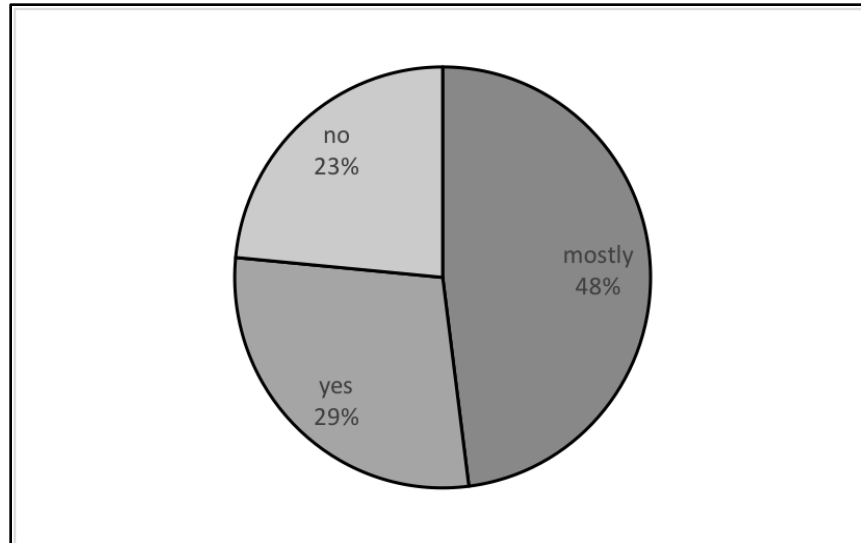
In Figure 20 we merged together the two middle Likert responses—mostly satisfied and partially dissatisfied. When we were discussing the data, we could not adequately create definitions that seemed to capture what was meant by the responses mostly satisfied and partially dissatisfied. In our discussions, we realized that the two responses meant basically the same thing, but respondents likely answered one or the other based on their own sense of being more positive or more negative about their job. Combining the data makes an important visual point that illustrates the majority of contingent faculty fall into the middle when discussing how satisfied they are with their jobs. By shifting the visual representation, we more adequately represent the large number of faculty who express some satisfaction with their job. Much like the opening epigram from the special issue introduction, “I love my job, but . . .,” shifting this visual representation powerfully illustrates that most contingent faculty are satisfied but perceive both positive and negative issues related to their positions.

Two categories with the largest dissatisfaction numbers are salary (22%,  $n = 66$ ) and departmental status (23%,  $n = 69$ ). Often, FT NTTs feel dismissed when tenure-track faculty fail to acknowledge their teaching—and often service and research—impact on the department. A respondent in a study by Alleman and Haviland stressed that FT NTTs “should be

valued for their contributions . . . [and] that they also should be *recognized* for their contributions” (Alleman 535). Recognition relates to rank and visibility, and the following quote from a faculty participant provides insights into many of the items listed in Figure 20 as they relate to the material work conditions of contingent faculty:

*My salary and office aren't my issues—I know I have it better than many people in those regards. It's the intangibles...the feeling that I've been in our department for 7 years and although I recognize all the tenured faculty, most of them don't know my name. I don't get asked to participate in some department activities that I would actually be willing to do. I don't feel like my administrators or most of my colleagues really know much about me or would particularly miss me if I left. I've never had a job like that—all my previous employers and coworkers had relationships with me and I consistently felt valued. I know in my current job, even though it's the job I've held the longest, I am replaceable and viewed as such.*

Even when contingent faculty are included, many still do not feel welcomed. Even if the structure changed, and contingent faculty were made “equals” across every institution, in a tenure-normative environment, inclusion remains a behavioral issue which is up to each department to enact. As one participant recounts: *“It is not the most uplifting experience. Faculty meetings may be attended, but one is looked at like a strange disease.”* In situations where contingent faculty feel they have status, their “work and contributions were valued not for the expertise they brought to the table, but for freeing up . . . [tenured-track faculty] to do other work (Haviland, Alleman, and Allen 517). See “Affective Investment” and “Politics of Service” articles in this special issue for more information. Question 30 asks, “Are you happy working as a contingent faculty member?” See Figure 21.

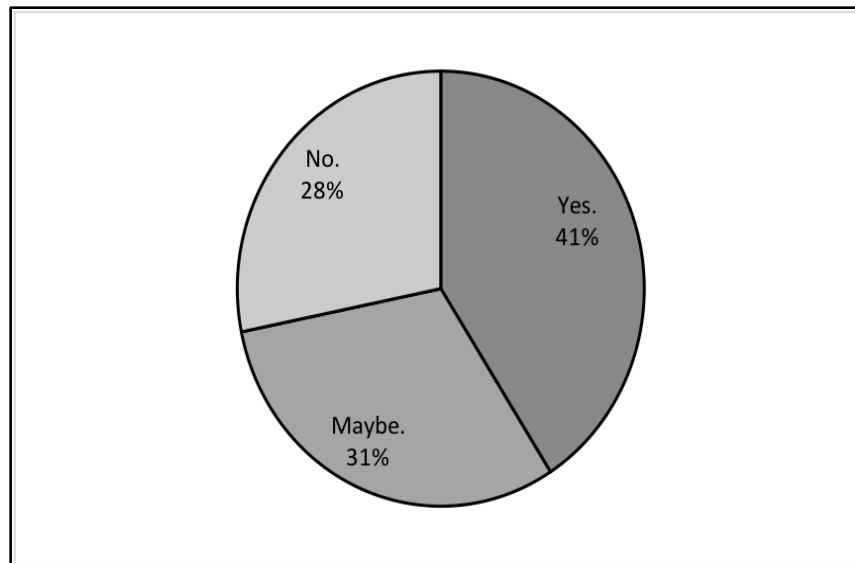


**Figure 21: Happiness in Position (N = 298)**

Figure 21 aligns with Figure 20 on satisfaction in that that almost half of the respondents (48%, n = 143) are mostly happy. Regarding career goals, “many . . . [FT NTTs] are invigorated by teaching and believe that their profession ‘fits’ what they want from their professional lives” (Waltman et al. 418). However, even though working with students is rewarding, structural politics within the university affect contentment with contingent teaching positions.

Satisfaction is discussed in more detail in the “Affective Investment” article in this special issue. Yet the issue of satisfaction and happiness on the job comes down to what many of our respondents echoed: someone has to do this work. Tenure lines are being continually cut, and the number of underemployed PhDs in English is growing. The result is an influx and continued rise in contingent faculty. We must share their stories so we can enact true change.

After breaking down contingent life into many separate components, our study sought to collect an overall sense of satisfaction with respondents. In this section, we provide the results to the question: “Would you rather be working on the tenure track?” Figure 22 represents how many would prefer to be on the tenure track.



**Figure 22: Would You Prefer to be on the Tenure Track? (N = 298)**

Many believe that people “settle” for contingent positions when tenure-line positions are unavailable, but that is not always the case. *“We have people who will choose a contingent job over a tenure job if only their salary was more competitive.”* Many reasons exist to choose contingent, the foremost being that some academics describe that they love being in the classroom. They enjoy devoting their lives to the pedagogy and the students. However, devoting your life to something when it will not allow you to pay your bills, or go to the doctor, or maintain your life outside of the classroom may not be the most logical decision. According to one survey respondent, *“As it is, I’m keeping an eye out for tenure-track work—not because I care much about tenure, but because I care about paying bills.”* Salary was certainly a top concern as it related to being satisfied as contingent and was also one of the motivators to preferring a tenure-track position (often stated in the same sentence as job security). *“I’m not sure too many people are happy being contingent if they have to work for a living. I also don’t think too many people who are contingent and already making much less than tenure-line faculty are too happy about having to use so much of their limited income to pay for their own professional development.”*

Yet even when contingent faculty are satisfied with their roles, they report being treated differently. *“I didn’t want to go tenure track with all the hassles. I had no part in the creation of my job status, yet it is held against me on a daily basis. Even though I have the experience in teaching and the terminal degree..., I am treated as if I am a second-class citizen because I am not seeking tenure.”* Unfortunately, the descriptions do not end at “second-class citizen.” Another respondent stated: *“I don’t see myself as an academic, and tenure-track really is not the best situation for*

*me. However, this seems to make me a different 'species' from my coworkers. While my workload and resources are pretty ideal, conversations and the general atmosphere at work make me feel like Milton from 'Office Space.'"*

For many contingent faculty it boils down to two issues: 1) passion (many contingent faculty would rather teach than research/publish): *"Frankly, they just seem to have different issues. Although they do get paid more and are viewed as more 'valuable' or 'integral' in those intangible ways... So I suppose in some ways yes, but in many ways no (because my passion IS teaching, not publishing). If I could be 'tenured' but with a 75%+ teaching-focused workload, then yes";* and 2) value: *"I'm not really interested in TT, but I want to be respected and fairly compensated for the very hard work I do. I also want my time to be valued and protected the way it is for TT faculty. Contingent faculty have to pick up extra work as administrators protect the time of TT faculty."* Respondents who are searching for tenure-track positions do so in order to attain status and respect which implies—even with the popularity of the “students first” mantra of many universities—teaching is secondary. “Common stereotypes that tenure-track faculty have about non-tenure-track faculty—that they are poor scholars who are unable to get a tenure-track job because of inferior credentials or corporate sell-outs in taking a position with no academic freedom—prevent change” (Kezar 11). With the increasing numbers of FT NTT and adjunct positions, we encourage faculty to acknowledge expertise among all ranks so that all faculty feel included and respected as members of the university.

### **Conclusion**

The findings and results of the survey data offer important insights into the material work conditions of contingent faculty in composition and TPC. The data provides WPAs and TPC PAs the opportunity to see how their local situations compare with national trends. To date, this is the largest set of data specific to writing faculty, and the data indicate that contingent faculty and their material work conditions are better than many of the sensational stories of adjuncts. However, the data also highlight that contingent faculty carry high teaching loads with salaries that could be improved. Since contingent faculty are vital to the teaching missions of composition and to the TPC degree programs, WPAs, TPC PAs, and tenure-line faculty should genuinely consider how to leverage this data to make improvements at their institutions. The next article in this issue offers a series of locally-based action items that can be observed and implemented to improve material work conditions for contingent faculty.

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