

Addressing Contingency in REEES Fields

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Contingent academics make up almost 75% of the faculty in US higher education.¹ Identified as “essential workers” by the US Department of Homeland Security and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, they have faced the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic crisis with lower salaries, little job security, and few parental or medical benefits.² In November, a Pew study reported that public colleges and universities suffered a 13.7% drop in employment, second only to the leisure and hospitality industry.³ Soon,

1. The Association of American University Professors defines contingent academics as full-time non-tenure track faculty, part-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and graduate student teachers. See also the journal of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU), for example: Maria Maisto and Steve Street, “Confronting Contingency: Faculty Equity and the Goals of Academic Democracy,” *Liberal Education* 97 no.1 (Winter 2011): 6–13, at www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/confronting-contingency-faculty-equity-and-goals-academic (accessed November 1, 2021). The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System excluded graduate student instructors from their definition of contingent instructors and put the figure at 71.6% in 2011: United States Government Accountability Office, “Contingent Workforce: Size, Characteristics, Compensation, and Work Experiences of Adjunct and Other Non-Tenure-Track Faculty,” Washington, DC, GAO, October 2017, at www.gao.gov/assets/gao-18-49.pdf (accessed November 1, 2021).

2. US Department of Homeland Security, “Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce: Ensuring Community and National Resilience in COVID-19 Response,” Washington, DC, 2020, at www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ECIW_4.0_Guidance_on_Essential_Critical_Infrastructure_Workers_Final_508_0.pdf (accessed November 1, 2021). Center for Disease Control and Prevention, “Interim List of Categories of Essential Workers Mapped to Standardized Industry Codes and Titles,” at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/categories-essential-workers.html (accessed November 1, 2021). See also Colleen Flaherty, “Next-Level Precarity,” *Inside Higher Ed*, April 10, 2020, at www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/10/next-level-precarity-non-tenure-track-professors-and-covid-19 (accessed November 1, 2021). The American Federation of Teachers contends that its February 2020 survey of 3,076 contingent academics conclusively shows “alarming poverty among adjunct faculty,” with 40% reporting “trouble covering basic expenses” and one third reporting earnings under \$25,000. The AFT’s part-time survey respondents were majority female (63%), and 64% are fifty or older—indicating significant gender and age-based inequalities in pay and benefits. A smaller survey recently found that 62% of its 467 survey respondents earned less than \$20,000 per year as adjuncts. See in: Bettina Chang, “Survey: The State of Adjunct Professors,” *Pacific Standard*, at psmag.com/economics/2015-survey-state-of-adjunct-professors (accessed November 1, 2021). A 2012 survey of over 10,000 part-time faculty members by the Coalition on the Academic Workforce found a low median pay per course of \$2,700, or \$24,000 for a full course load: “A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members: A Summary of Findings on Part-Time Faculty Respondents to the Coalition on the Academic Workforce Survey of Contingent Faculty Members and Instructors,” at www.academicworkforce.org/CAW_portrait_2012.pdf (accessed March 24, 2021).

3. Barb Rosewicz and Mike Maciag, “Nearly All States Suffer Declines in Education Jobs,” *Pew Trusts*, November 10, 2020, at www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/

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tenure-stream faculty confronted their own precarity, too. Universities and colleges went beyond declaring freezes on hiring and salary raises, easing rules for firing tenure-stream faculty in a move described as cancelling tenure altogether.⁴ They sought to reopen campuses against the advice of their own experts and in spite of protest.⁵

The economic crisis made itself felt in REEES and Slavic Studies. Most colleges and universities advertised only temporary positions. Several universities laid off small or single-person Russian programs as part of large-scale austerity cuts, as Rebecca Mitchell and Steven Seegel reported.⁶ At the same time, however, REEES groups sprang into action. The Working Group for Solidarity in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, an ASEES Affiliate Group, formed to connect contingent academics, tenure-track, and tenured faculty in a common effort to support those engaged in contingent academic labor. This past summer, it conducted initial research on best practices for institutions to protect researchers from COVID-19 austerity. A letter with this list was endorsed by over one hundred REEES scholars.⁷ Several of its suggestions were adopted by REEES institutions. NYU's Jordan Center announced additional postdoctoral positions. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center and Slavic Reference Service offered remote library access and short-term research grants

[articles/2020/11/10/nearly-all-states-suffer-declines-in-education-jobs](#) (accessed November 1, 2021).

4. Emma Pettit, "Kansas Regents Make It Easier to Dismiss Tenured Professors," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 21, 2021, at www.chronicle.com/article/kansas-regents-allow-spiced-up-dismissals-of-tenured-faculty-members?cid2=gen_login_refresh&cid=gen_sign_in (accessed November 1, 2021). The AACU revealed in its survey of college and university presidents that 83% anticipated hiring freezes in response to COVID-19 in July 2020, with 43% anticipating cutting academic programs and faculty positions. "Responding to the Ongoing COVID-19 Crisis and to Calls for Racial Justice: A Survey of College and University Presidents," AACU, at www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/research/AACU_ABC_PTSurvey_Report_Findings__updated.pdf (accessed March 24, 2021). A crowd-sourced list hosted by *The Professor Is In* collected anonymous input on hiring freezes at colleges and universities across the country, including offers withdrawn from finalists in job searches, "Incomplete/Unofficial/Unconfirmed List of Schools That Have Announced Hiring Freezes or Pauses," *The Professor Is In*, at docs.google.com/document/d/1KohP4xZdN8BZy10MeXCAGagswvUOWpOws72eDKpBhI4/edit# (accessed March 24, 2021).

5. See faculty views in Colleen Flaherty, "Faculty Pandemic Stress Is Now Chronic," *Inside Higher Ed*, November 19, 2020, at www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/11/19/faculty-pandemic-stress-now-chronic (accessed November 1, 2021); Carl T. Bergstrom, "The CDC Is Wrong: Testing is Essential for Colleges to Reopen Safely," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 14, 2020, at www.chronicle.com/article/the-cdc-is-wrong-testing-is-essential-for-colleges-to-reopen-safely (accessed November 1, 2021); Maggie Levantovskaya, "Faculty Are Not Cannon Fodder: Administrators Don't Really Know Who is Vulnerable to the Virus," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 30, 2020, at www.chronicle.com/article/faculty-are-not-cannon-fodder (accessed November 1, 2021).

6. "The 2020 Professor Purges in Retrospect: ASEES Concerns and Advocacy Plans," *NewsNet* 61, no. 1 (January 2021): 7–9, at www.aseees.org/news-events/aseees-blog-feed/2020-professor-purges-retrospect-aseees-concerns-and-advocacy-plans (accessed November 1, 2021).

7. Working Group for Solidarity in REEES, "Anti-Contingency Best Practices List," at docs.google.com/document/d/1NEucvIYWFyV1IUOFRPjzuWZDQTMhmvVtoqSp8HDjUdg/edit?usp=sharing (accessed November 1, 2021).

to an expanded cohort of applicants for Research Laboratory programs, supported by the US Department of State (Title VIII). The Yale Emerging Voices in REEES Colloquium paid generous speaking fees to scholars off the tenure track who gave research presentations. There have likely been more instances, unknown to this author, of tenured REEES scholars supporting their contingent and graduate student colleagues through institutional means during the crisis.

As the proliferation of temporary jobs on last year's job market suggests, the ongoing recession has exacerbated the casualization of academic labor—that is, the conversion of stable, well-paying jobs into temporary ones. In a small humanities discipline such as Slavic Studies, faculty, whether tenured or untenured, are particularly vulnerable to university budget cuts. Yet the many instances of pandemic-era solidarity between contingent and tenured academics also indicate that the crisis provides a moment of opportunity. The purpose of this essay is to highlight Best Practices used by non-REEES institutions that may be particularly salient in addressing contingency within REEES fields, particularly in Slavic.

Employment Data and Ethics Standards

Due to their cross-disciplinary constituency, professional associations such as ASEES, American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL), Association for Women in Slavic Studies (AWSS), American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR), and others have opportunities to lead in researching, criticizing, and countering contingency as it affects our community and our profession. For example, the American Historical Association (AHA) conducted a study that tracked the career trajectories of over 5,000 historians who earned history PhDs from 2004 to 2013.⁸ It could serve as a model for a study of career outcomes for REEES specialists, which would need to shed light on the specific concerns of REEES scholars, such as the professional fate of specialists in less commonly taught languages and the prevalence of women in contingent language-teaching positions—a research design problem that would be best addressed by consulting (or employing on the research team) diverse scholars at different career stages and institutions. As in many cases where such research has been undertaken by a professional association, a grant would need to be secured to fund the study.

Although research will help to demystify career outcomes for PhDs in Slavic and REEES, some problems become obvious during each job season. Each job season brings the advertisement of exploitative contingent positions (which, it is presumed, upset those forced to advertise them as much as job candidates themselves). While the nonprofit status of our professional associations prohibits them from censuring universities and departments that advertise exploitative positions, our associations nevertheless have a role to play in setting standards, advertising them widely, and garnering buy-in from faculty and administrators who have a say over the terms of a new

8. *American Historical Association*, “Where Historians Work: An Interactive Database of History PhD Career Outcomes,” at www.historians.org/wherehistorianswork (accessed March 24, 2021).

position. The guidelines of the Modern Languages Association (MLA) for hiring and postdoctoral selection committees have already been reiterated by AATSEEL—a step in the right direction.⁹ The MLA urges hiring committees to scale back their demands of candidates prior to first-round interviews, to adhere to the widely accepted practice of staggering and limiting the timelines of tenure-track and temporary searches, and so on. These guidelines should be adjusted for REEES fields, aggressively advertised, and consistently shared with hiring committee chairs in the field and with their deans. The AHA's extensive guidelines for the discipline concerning hiring, affirmative action, publication, and other matters may serve as a model for standards in REEES.¹⁰ However, standards must be paired with a concerted advertising effort as well as a public letter to gather commitments from chairs and program directors to these standards.

Standards set in other disciplines by professional associations have focused on how adjunctification affects freedom of speech and diversity. The Association of American University Professors (AAUP) has long argued that adjunctification curtails academic freedom of expression.¹¹ REEES scholars, too, have suggested that adjunctification disproportionately affects women.¹² Given that the mandate of ASEES and other professional associations covers academic freedom, diversity, equity, and inclusion, it is imperative that these organizations craft a robust and consistent response to the adjunctification crisis. In recent years, professional associations inaugurated a new era of advocacy in higher education that should, it is hoped, see its leadership shift from issuing solidarity statements to making lasting structural changes. In the humanities, professional associations adopted new policies in light of the 2017–18 MeToo movement and Black Lives Matter protests of summer 2020. Some associations have opted for a whistleblower policy paired with a harassment policy.¹³ Still others include enforceability mechanisms in their codes

9. MLA Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities, "Guidelines for Search Committees and Job Seekers on Entry-Level Faculty Recruitment and Hiring as well as Postdoctoral Applications," *Modern Language Association*, at www.mla.org/Resources/Career/Career-Resources/Guidelines-for-Search-Committees-and-Job-Seekers-on-Entry-Level-Faculty-Recruitment-and-Hiring-as-well-as-Postdoctoral-Applications (accessed November 1, 2021).

10. "Statements, Standards, and Guidelines for the Discipline," *American Historical Association*, at www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-standards-and-guidelines-of-the-discipline (accessed March 24, 2021).

11. "Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession," *American Association of University Professors*, at www.aaup.org/report/contingent-appointments-and-academic-profession (accessed November 3, 2021).

12. Sharon A. Kowalsky, "Contingent Faculty and Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies: A Report by the ASEES Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession," *NewsNet* 57, no. 2 (March 2017): 12–14, at www.asees.org/sites/default/files/downloads/march%202017%20print.pdf (accessed November 3, 2021).

13. See, for instance: *American Anthropological Association*, "Policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault," June 15, 2018, at s3.amazonaws.com/rdcms-aaa/files/production/public/AAA_SH_Policy_2018.pdf (accessed November 3, 2021); *Association for Jewish Studies*, "Procedures for Addressing Complaints of Violations of the AJS Sexual Misconduct Policy," at www.associationforjewishstudies.org/docs/default-source/smc/ajs-sexual-misconduct-procedures-12-4-2019-docx.pdf?sfvrsn=25889606_10 (no longer

of conduct or ethics, with egregious offenses punishable by a ban from the association and its journal (helpfully, these standards also define improper complaints).¹⁴

REEES associations, too, have taken tentative steps toward establishing ethical standards for professionals. In 2019 ASEEEES announced an anti-harassment policy, a code of conduct for its conventions, and a professional convention ombudsperson.¹⁵ ASEEEES has expanded the range of issues on which it advocates.¹⁶ AWSS, which has a longstanding commitment to advocacy, officially endorsed the Anti-Contingency Best Practices advanced by the Working Group for Solidarity in REEES, which include discouraging discrimination in the form of, for example, disparaging statements about affirmative action.¹⁷ Thus, professional associations that set out to promote common ethics standards and develop mechanisms for enforcing them are not sailing into uncharted waters. In fact, they have lagged behind Title IX and other policies at universities—and behind the changing demographics and attitudes of the scholarly community.

Given the current attention to issues diversity, equity, and inclusion and emerging discussions of decolonization's relevance to Slavic Studies, professional associations should develop a REEES-wide collection of data on equity in the profession, a code of ethics, including hiring ethics, and a grievance committee. Strong models already exist in the American Sociological Association (ASA) and American Historical Association (AHA) and should be adopted and adapted by our professional associations in coordination with each other to make our fields more inclusive. Ethics research, standards, and enforcement will help to challenge adjunctification and discrimination, which particularly impact women faculty and faculty of color.¹⁸

A Network of Research Centers

With input from past and current directors of REEES research centers, discussions of the Working Group for Solidarity pointed out the potentially stabilizing effect of a strong network of research centers.

The elimination of the Title VIII grant program and cuts to Title VI programs in 2013–14 are evidence of a dire need for increased, coordinated

available); *American Society for 18th Century Studies*, “Policy on Harassment,” June 28, 2020 at [5a6f0c4a-6896-4292-a494-72f07a565f1b.filesusr.com/ugd/acf0d2_3a8cf2ae86b54b24a50a804bd276f0d1.pdf](https://www.filesusr.com/ugd/acf0d2_3a8cf2ae86b54b24a50a804bd276f0d1.pdf) (accessed November 3, 2021).

14. See, for instance: *American Sociological Association*, “Code of Ethics,” June 2018, at www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/asa_code_of_ethics-june2018.pdf (accessed November 3, 2021); Society of American Archivists, “Code of Conduct,” at www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-code-of-conduct (accessed November 3, 2021).

15. “ASEEEES Code of Conduct,” November 23, 2019, at www.aseees.org/convention/code-conduct (accessed November 3, 2021)

16. ASEEEES signed or released 17 statements in 2020 versus 9 statements in 2017, “ASEEEES Advocacy,” at www.aseees.org/advocacy (accessed November 3, 2021).

17. “Advocacy,” at awsshome.org/advocacy/ (accessed March 24, 2021).

18. Colleen Flaherty, “More Faculty Diversity, Not on Tenure Track,” *Inside Higher Ed*, August 22, 2016, at www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/08/22/study-finds-gains-faculty-diversity-not-tenure-track (accessed November 3, 2021).

advocacy with decision-makers, as Laura Adams reported in 2013.¹⁹ While funding was restored at reduced rates, the cuts destabilized programs and alarmed researchers.²⁰ Despite their federal woes, the twenty-one US centers dedicated to REEES research have a unique opportunity to coordinate a response to the contingency crisis. As institutions that bridge individuals across disciplines, ranks, and countries based on their common objective of investing in REEES scholarship, research centers have potential for coordinating responses that could strengthen individual advocacy efforts. Moreover, REEES research centers are less susceptible to university-wide cutbacks and may overall play a stabilizing role during intra-institutional policy shifts.

REEES research centers, it was suggested, should institute an annual directors' meeting to define common points of unity and corresponding best practices. Coordination among centers can make a more compelling argument to sponsors that their mandate of advancing foreign language and area studies scholarship includes responding to adjunctification, which threatens institutional memory and expertise. Such a coordinated network can also share valuable resources despite fierce competition for funding. Principal among research centers' points of unity must be the defense of quality jobs for faculty in research center-based MA programs as well as support for social science in REEES, identified as a priority by recent studies.²¹ Furthermore, collaboration among research centers may provide a more effective response to what researchers identified in informal surveys and discussions conducted by the Working Group for Solidarity in REEES as a dire need: immigration visa assistance for international researchers; reduction of application requirements for grant and fellowship applicants; a commitment to affirmative action; and library privileges for researchers without an academic affiliation.

Slavic Departments, DEI, and Contingency

There is no data on the extent to which Slavic departments and programs rely on contingent (graduate, part-time, and non-tenure track) employment in order to provide instruction. Only one small survey, done in 2000 by Richard Robin, attempted to quantify part-time employment as a portion of overall employment in Slavic.²² In the nine Slavic departments he surveyed, Robin

19. Laura L. Adams, "The Crisis of Funding for Area Studies," *NewsNet* 53, no. 2 (March 2013): 1–6, at www.aseees.org/sites/default/files/downloads/2013-03.pdf (accessed November 3, 2021).

20. Lynda Pak, "Title VIII Funding Returns," ASEEES.org, April 10, 2015, at www.aseees.org/news-events/aseees-news-feed/title-viii-funding-returns (accessed November 3, 2021).

21. Theodore Gerber, "The State of Russian Studies in the United States: An Assessment by the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies" ASEEES, July 2015, at www.aseees.org/sites/default/files/downloads/FINAL-ASEEES-assessment-report_0.pdf (accessed November 3, 2021); Andrew Kuchins and Jesse Mitchell, "The State of M.A. Russia/Eurasia Programs in the United States," CERES/Carnegie, 2020, at ceres.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2020/02/CarnegieReport.pdf (accessed November 3, 2021).

22. Richard Robin, "Working with Lecturers and Part-Time Faculty: A Case Study of Russian in the National Capital Area," in Benjamin Rifkin, ed., *Mentoring Foreign*

found that part-time employees made up over 51% of the teaching staff, a figure that compared unfavorably with the nationwide rate in 2000 of 37% employees hired part-time in foreign language departments. We can confidently assume that since then, the rate of contingent employment in Slavic Studies has grown along with all such employment in foreign languages. The MLA's annual survey of job advertisements on its Foreign Language Job Information List demonstrates the rapid increase of non-tenure track positions, from just over 21% of job listings in 2007–08 to over 51% of listings in 2016–17.²³ Some analysts have explained these trends by pointing to the overall decline in enrollments due to declining birthrates. However, declining enrollments and shrinking college-age populations justify a drop in overall hiring and employment—not, specifically, in the casualization of employment, as MLA and AAUP have argued. Both organizations have instead pointed to steep declines in funding as state governments have withdrawn significant financial support from private and public universities.²⁴ In the case of Slavic programs, further cuts to Title VIII compounded the effect. Given the added impact of the Great Recession and the current coronavirus-induced crisis, contingent jobs will likely continue to replace tenure-track jobs in Slavic departments. Without data, this process will be harder to challenge.

Although we may feel that contingent positions are “better than nothing,” the possibility looms that an increasingly disempowered and marginalized faculty will not be able to support professional associations, journals, and other research activities—or advocate for the continued existence of Slavic programs. To avoid this bleak future, faculty of all ranks should join existing efforts to challenge contingency, particularly those at their institutions. Discussions of the Working Group for Solidarity in REEES have touched on how certain Slavic programs have already challenged adjunctification by involving contingent instructors in decision-making and negotiating with administrators to prevent rank stratification and instability (including, for example, by coordinating sabbatical leaves to produce a multiyear job opening).

We must confront contingency as a significant obstacle to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the field. The question of DEI in Slavic loomed large this academic year in popular virtual series such as the “Race in Focus” and “Teaching Language through the Lens of Social Justice.” Likewise, the *Slavic and East European Journal* published a symposium titled “Working Toward Equity in Slavic Languages and Literatures Programs: Experiences from the United States,” featuring suggestions for revising syllabi, study abroad

Language Teaching Assistants, Lecturers, and Adjunct Faculty (Boston, 2001): 173–89.

23. Natalia Lusin, “Preliminary Report on the MLA Job Information List, 2017–2018,” at mlaresearch.mla.hcommons.org/ (accessed March 24, 2021). The MLA's survey is keyword-based and cannot distinguish positions called visiting assistant professorships or non-tenure track assistant professorships from tenure-track assistant professorships. As these positions increase, the survey will become increasingly unreliable, allowing institutions to evade scrutiny for replacing tenured positions with temporary ones.

24. AAUP further argued that “. . . states that increased their funding for two-year public institutions saw a substantial drop in average net price tuition,” John Barnshaw and Samuel Dunietz, “Busting the Myth: The Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession, 2014–15,” AAUP, at www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/files/2015salarysurvey/zreport.pdf (accessed March 24, 2021).

curricula, and other academic programs to make them more inclusive to students and faculty of color.²⁵ However, while we revise programs to attract more diverse scholars, the jobs available to them will be increasingly exploitative and fewer in number. The point is made powerfully by Louis Porter in the pages of this journal: “Instead of eliminating racial hierarchy, the recruitment of Black students to the field of Slavic studies without addressing the problem of contingency risks creating a diverse but exploited majority whose cheap labor lightens the teaching loads of a shrinking tenured and tenure-track elite.”²⁶ In our conversations, petitions, public commitments, and negotiations with administrators regarding DEI programming, we must first and foremost refuse adjunctification.

Faculty Unionization

Few will disagree with the opinion of a College of Media and Communication dean who declared recently that “treating talented professionals badly is industrially foolish and budgetarily short-sighted,” and that we should strive to “convert as many variable and contingent positions as possible to full time faculty.”²⁷ However, barring sudden consensus among decision-makers, these reforms will have to be demanded by faculty, who stand to be most impacted by them. Indeed, a 2019 report co-written by an attorney who represents universities in labor negotiations and a former university provost concluded that unionization among contingent academics will continue to grow in response to labor casualization. Academics who led unionization efforts argue that it is the most directly transformative tool available to faculty, one by which adjuncts have secured, as one review summarized, “salary increases as high as 90 percent, greater job stability, paid parental leave, sick leave, dependent health care benefits, retirement benefits, caps on course sizes, fairer teaching evaluation processes, and substantial professional development funds.”²⁸

25. Anindita Banerjee and Gabriella Safran, “Working Toward Equity in Slavic Languages and Literatures Programs: Experiences from the United States,” *Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 64 no. 4 (Winter 2020): 573–76.

26. Louis Porter, “The Counter-Narrative on Race and Class in Slavic Studies,” *Slavic Review*, vol. 80, no. 2 (Summer 2021): 334–40.

27. David Perlmutter in “How to Fix the Adjunct Crisis: Four Views from the Tenure Track,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 30, 2018, at www.chronicle.com/article/how-to-fix-the-adjunct-crisis/ (accessed November 3, 2021). Ultimately, like other employers who abdicate the responsibility of paying decent salaries and providing benefits, universities merely shift the costs to taxpayers. A Democratic Party congressional report found that “A family of three in California relying solely on the median adjunct salary would qualify for, among other things, Medicaid, an earned income tax credit, a child tax credit and food stamps, costing taxpayers \$13,645 per year.” *House Committee on Education and the Workforce*, “The Just-In-Time Professor,” January 2014, at [edlabor.house.gov/imo/media/doc/1.24.14-AdjunctEforumReport.pdf](https://www.house.gov/imo/media/doc/1.24.14-AdjunctEforumReport.pdf) (accessed November 3, 2021). Some academics have suggested challenging the accreditation status of universities that rely on exploitative business practices. Earl Henry, “Looking the Other Way?” at www.aaup.org/report/looking-other-way-accreditation-standards-and-part-time-faculty (accessed March 24, 2021).

28. Charles Peterson, “Serfs of Academe,” *The New York Review of Books* (March 12, 2020), at www.nybooks.com/articles/2020/03/12/adjuncts-serfs-of-academe/ (accessed

Unionized graduate students have likewise reported securing higher salaries and “higher levels of personal and professional support.”²⁹

Universities have an array of studies and resources to draw upon for ideas on how to improve the life of contingent instructors. Where unionization is not possible, faculty have established AAUP chapters that negotiate on their behalf. Among moderate reformers, the Delphi Project honors universities that provide programs and incentives for their large contingent pools, such as increasing adjunct presence on committees, establishing promotion mechanisms, and providing professional development. Among more radical proposals is one advanced by the New Faculty Majority, which advocates “adapting the thriving example of the Vancouver Community College model, where, among other things, there is a single salary schedule and where all faculty have equal access to permanent status.”³⁰ Reports by the AAUP and the AACU generally suggest that administrations, faculty senates, and unions should increase faculty benefits, lobby for government support, and reduce stratification between faculty ranks.

An Emerging Slavic “Quit Lit”

Before he left Slavic academia to study law, Geoff Cebula wrote *Adjunct*, a horror comedy novel set in “Bellwether College.” In the novel, adjunct instructor of “Italian” Elena Malatesta realizes that the sudden disappearances of her adjunct colleagues may be related to the sinister budget cuts recently instituted by administrators and consultants. As Charles Petersen points out in his review of scholarly literature on adjunctification, Cebula’s novel may have been inspired by very real news stories of adjunct poverty and even death as a result of workplace conditions.³¹ Indeed, Cebula has said that he sought

November 3, 2021). This view is shared by the Association of American University Professors. Petersen’s summary of benefits won by unionized faculty reviews *Professors in the Gig Economy*, ed. Kim Tolley (Baltimore, 2018). See also Adrianna J. Kezar, Thomas DePaola, and Scott T. Daniel, *The Gig Academy: Mapping Labor in the Neoliberal University* (Baltimore, 2019). Timothy R. Cain, “Campus Unions: Organized Faculty and Graduate Students in U.S. Higher Education,” special issue, *ASHE Higher Education Report* 43, no. 3 (2017): 7–163; Rodrigo Dominguez-Villegas, Laurel Smith-Doerr, Henry Renski, and Laras Sekarasih, “Labor Unions and Equal Pay for Faculty: A Longitudinal Study of Gender Pay Gaps in a Unionized Institutional Context,” *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy* 11 (March 2020), at thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba/vol11/iss1/2 (accessed November 3, 2021). Cary Nelson, *No University is an Island: Saving Academic Freedom* (New York, 2011); David Weil, *The Fissured Workplace: Why Work Became So Bad for So Many and What Can Be Done to Improve It* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014), 254.

29. Sean Rogers, Adrienne Eaton, Paula Voos, “Effects of Unionization on Graduate Student Employees,” *The ILR Review* 66, no. 2 (April 2013): 487–510 (487), at smlr.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/documents/ILRR%20Effects%20of%20Unionization%20n%20Graduate%20Student%20Employees.pdf (accessed November 3, 2021).

30. Maria Maiisto and Steve Street, “Confronting Contingency,” *Association of American Colleges & Universities*, at www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/confronting-contingency-faculty-equity-and-goals-academic (accessed November 3, 2021).

31. Charles Petersen, “Serfs of Academe,” *The New York Review*, at www.nybooks.com/articles/2020/03/12/adjuncts-serfs-of-academe/ (accessed November 3, 2021).

to capture the general experience of academic precarity, one shared to some extent by nearly 75% of instructors in higher education.³² The novel is also informed, however, by Cebula's experiences on the Slavic job market and as a part-time Russian-language instructor. When he posted the full text of *Adjunct* in May of 2017, it generated keen discussion among Slavists on social media. The climate of dread in the horror comedy novel was immediately recognizable to its readers.

It was perhaps the first statement of Slavic "quit lit." Then, in October 2020, Sarah Valentine, a Princeton Slavic PhD, wrote a heartfelt op-ed for *The Faculty* titled "Time for Black Women to Leave Academia?"³³ She had asked the question in good faith. After publishing peer-reviewed articles, a book of translations, and a scholarly monograph, yet managing to secure only short-term positions, she wrote, "I felt as if I were waving my credentials in selection committees' faces, shouting 'Look! Here! I'm over here!' and they stared through me as if I were a ghost." Valentine's post referenced alarming new studies suggesting that "tenure-track jobs are disappearing just as the applicant pool is becoming more diverse."³⁴ Her pain was personal—as were the many small and large decisions that constituted the structural circumstances of exits like hers from academia.

The anguish of Valentine's question, "Do you want diversity, equity, and inclusion, or is it just a mission statement on your website?" was the result of innumerable decisions made behind closed doors. Whereas Cebula's horror novel offered humor, mystery, and absurdity as reprieve, Valentine's story left little doubt as to the actual impact of contingency in REEES.

Without data on employment, adjunctification in REEES is known to us only through personal anecdotes, speculations, and rumors. Data, however, is not enough. Without standards and due process, and without coordinated solidarity between REEES institutions and, ultimately, among scholars at all ranks, the departure of a majority of colleagues from the scholarly conversation, and the retention of some in highly demanding yet temporary positions, become a feature, not a bug in the design.

32. Eliot Borenstein, Geoff Cebula, "Talking with Geoff Cebula, Author of 'Adjunct,'" at jordanrussiacenter.org/news/talking-geoff-cebula-author-adjunct/#.YDFmW-BJITZ (accessed March 24, 2021).

33. Sarah Valentine, "Time for Black Women to Leave Academia?," *Medium*, at medium.com/the-faculty/time-for-black-women-to-leave-academia-4a97dcf3ed2f (accessed March 24, 2021).

34. Colleen Flaherty, "More Faculty Diversity, Not on Tenure Track," August 22, 2016, at <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/08/22/study-finds-gains-faculty-diversity-not-tenure-track> (accessed November 3, 2021).