



PSUFA

The Adjunct Experience,
Letters to the PSU Board of
Trustees

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY



PSUFA

DEAR PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES, IT IS AN HONOR TO SUBMIT THIS LETTER TO YOU

“I am asked to support students in many ways that are completely uncompensated but essential to university.”

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“The stress of living on less than 40 percent of the median income in Portland is killing.”

“Last quarter I drove over 300 miles a week to teach. This is not sustainable.”

“If we are serious about student success we need to be serious about supporting adjuncts.”

“I’m only secure for one term at a time.”

LETTERS TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dear Portland State University Board of Trustees,

It is an honor to submit this letter to you, the Board of Trustees of Portland State University. As members of the PSU Faculty Association (PSUFA), one of our most vital functions is to communicate our accounts and experiences at the front line of an essential public and democratic institution: **our public university.**

The narratives we are providing about our work and service in research and teaching parallel the continuance and vibrancy of our university.

Every dollar spent, every student enrolled, and every major and minor decision immediately impacts members of our PSU Faculty Association. At present, all members are considered contingent employees, teaching and serving in part-time capacities though required “unofficially” to be full members of campus life; and continual employment may be ended for any reason, any time, at the discretion of a Department Chair. Public universities across this region all rely on this essential relationship of labor to sustain their vital functions, even as it harms professors, educators, teachers, and researchers by capping their pay (salaries are capped at \$24,000 a year), and offering no benefits, no paid leave for any reason, nor providing departmental funding for career development.

Our faculty members are also tasked with developing their own individual retirement plans from already meager pay with no substantial contribution from our University, while faculty members still contribute into the sustainability of the Public Employment Retirement System for all. Significantly, none of this is permanent or irrevocable. For example, recent negotiated changes to our Collective Bargaining Agreement finally achieved hourly wages for non-teaching required departmental work, which for over 40 years went unpaid and noted by our University as service.

Adjunct faculty (all our union members) are considered by contract and spirit as dispensable to the University. Despite these obvious inequities and pressures on faculty, we resist this designation because, as of Fall 2016, almost half of all PSU faculty are adjunct faculty. We represent in excess of 1,500 faculty members over the course of an academic

year, and our day-to-day teaching is not supplemental to a university's mission—teaching, research, and relationships with students are the fundamental foundation of education and the essential function of colleges and universities. All students will formally and informally rely on adjunct faculty along the course of their career at PSU. It is not an exaggeration to note that our University's schools and colleges could not continue without our commitments and our labors.

In our efforts to represent our indispensable labor and to facilitate communication between our members and the Board of Trustees, members are documenting their experiences and their lives as adjunct faculty. Many of our members also offered to compose letters for you, the Board of Trustees, in support of your service by communicating the reality of our experiences to you and celebrating our commitment to our students and our University. We acknowledge your valuable

commitment to Portland State University and submit these letters in the spirit of promoting excellence in education, teaching, and research, while supporting ethical and sustainable labor conditions.

With sincerity,

The PSUFA Bargaining Team

Dear Board of Trustees,

Teaching as an adjunct is one of the most challenging jobs I've ever had over the course of my career; additionally, I feel very grateful that I can give back to my profession by teaching (and mentoring) emerging professionals. When I accepted the position, I knew that the time I would be spending would be measured beyond the stipend provided--It is very little money for what is expected of us. Luckily, I am in a privileged situation where I am able to donate hours and not be paid for them. However, many of my adjunct colleagues do not have this privilege, and are suffering without benefits and stability on a continuous basis.

“It would be very helpful to have some more stability as well: to know that the extra 80+ hours I've put in to updating the curriculum will bear additional fruit, if I'm able to teach other years' classes. I'm only secure for one term at a time.”

Teaching should not be relegated to a gig economy construct--our students and our own professions deserve more. I could do so much more if given a bit more funding and resources for teaching. As a full time professional, teaching is a different entity. In order to gain knowledge towards the process of teaching, I've self enrolled in the CICT, Certificate of Innovation in College Teaching with OIT. I have found this experience very valuable. None of my time associated with this pursuit is funded

in any manner--even though, at the end of the training, I'll be a better teacher, which will enable me to convey the topics and coursework to my students in a more effective way. It would be very helpful to have some more stability as well: to know that the extra 80+ hours I've put in to updating the curriculum will bear additional fruit, if I'm able to teach other years' classes. I'm only secure for one term at a time.

Lastly, to have the ability to network and hear from other adjuncts on a regular basis would mean a lot--to share questions and concerns with others who share a part time situation basis and who juggle other professional responsibilities would mean a great deal. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Adjunct Faculty

To the Portland State University Board of Trustees:

Most adjuncts love teaching and love the research, writing, or other work in their fields. And many, perhaps most adjuncts accept the fact that they will not have tenure-track positions. But it is hard to accept our low pay.

An adjunct teaching two courses in a quarter who also carries on research or production activities is doing a full-time job. That adjunct is paid “half-time pay” for the full-time job. But to say this is even half-time pay is an exaggeration. The pay is merely 25–33% of the pay appointed faculty receive per course or credit, even if the adjunct’s actual years of experience, accomplishments, and skills are equal to that of appointed faculty. In addition, the adjunct has no health care or similar benefits.

The ultimate answer is pay parity, but perhaps the best answer is to re-conceive the adjunct position. Because “adjunctification” is a widespread force and because it is harmful to the overall social, emotional, and intellectual well-being of universities and their communities, PSU could make a mark by re-conceiving faculty organization. It is a fair bet that if smart a re-conception is well executed, it will cost very little more. To find out if this is true and what the possibilities are, the matter has to be investigated with a creative and open mind. I hope you will set PSU on a course to taking the lead in this.

Here is my own case. I have four MA’s in relevant fields (history and philosophy) from distinguished institutions (including PSU), 30 years’ experience as a historian but in a commercial activity, and 50 years’ experience reading and studying philosophy. I’ve taught successfully at PSU for six years, re-imagining

the University Studies Sophomore Inquiries I teach. In those six years I’ve published one book, 14 peer-reviewed papers in my fields, and published a number of essays in these fields for general-interest magazines. I have an active on-going research program that has impact in my field. I bring this research straight into my classroom every day. I am paid \$21,000. per year.

“The stress of living on less than 40 percent of the median income in Portland is killing. Per four-credit course, I make less than half the salary of term-contract faculty and one-third or less the salary of higher faculty, no matter my actual accomplishments or abilities.”

I worry about paying the rent and about having food. After that, every necessary expense a crisis. For example, I worry about buying the new pair of shoes I need now because I cannot afford them. Summers are terrifying: my salary is too low to support my basic needs in one month if paid on a 12-month basis, so I do not arrange for that. Slight improvements in my apartment are rarely possible; vacations never are. I work more than 40 hours a week, studying and writing and teaching and advising seven days a week. I study and write through the summer, in order to produce scholarship.

And yet I am immensely lucky and grateful to be able to serve my students and to advance knowledge. Each day of teaching and academic work is a precious gift. How can I express to you together these two contrary aspects of the situation?

I am fortunate because I have good affordable health insurance due to MediCare and a number of other factors virtually unique to my situation. I am fortunate because University Studies treats its adjuncts in an exemplary manner: the program is run with exceptionally well-defined ideals, trong ethics, and with kindness. I am fortunate because PSUFA has very generously supported my research.

But the stress of living on less than 40% of the median income in Portland is killing. Per four-credit course I make less than half the salary of term-contract faculty and one-third or less the salary of higher faculty, no matter my actual accomplishments or abilities. These circumstances are mine, but they or worse are true of the vast majority of adjunct faculty.

Here are some suggestions for you to consider, short of absolute pay and benefits parity and apart from re-conceiving adjunctship overall:

1. Create two-thirds or three-quarters time positions. Teaching eight credits for the three principal quarters of the academic year would give a stable income. This action would also address the anomaly of the 2.5 credits (beyond five four-credit courses) that adjuncts are allowed but almost never can teach.
2. Establish a route for regular promotion of long-term adjuncts into appointed faculty, perhaps into “floating” interdisciplinary positions in some cases.
3. Offer 1–3 year-contract Visiting Assistant Professorships to selected current adjunct faculty at the pay rate at which such VAP posts are offered to outsiders.
4. Provide regular research and writing funding for adjuncts with demonstrated performance and need.
5. Support initiatives developed by departments and programs to re-calibrate or professionalize the work and status of adjunct faculty.
6. Attach substantial pay rises to advancement within adjunct ranks.

Sincerely,
Bennett Gilbert
Adjunct Senior Instructor,
University Studies

Chair Hinckley and members of the Board,

I am here today because at PSU, enrollment continues to decline, the costs of higher education continue to rise, and as an adjunct senior instructor, I am trying to survive.

I am an award-winning PSU educator in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning and an international public health research scholar. PSU school pays me \$4,000 per course to teach four core classes in the USP program per year, provides me with only up to 16 credit hours of work per year (\$16,000 a year in pay), and offers no health insurance or retirement benefits to me or my dependents. I must work at two other institutions (Chemeketa Community College and Pacific University) to survive. Last quarter I drove over 300 miles a week to teach. This is not sustainable.

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My students are eager scholars – future leaders – from around the world and from around the Pacific Northwest. They are parents, veterans, and members of marginalized and under-represented groups in Oregon that seek an education for social and economic mobility. They are here to learn. They are here to build their communities – socially and economically – in sustainable and equitable ways.

In having reviewed the last several years of Finance and Administration Committee meeting minutes, it's clear that:

Student enrollment has fallen steadily since 2010, down 10% from last year. You project that it will keep going down, at least until 2024/25. You anticipate a 2-3 year period of little to no growth in revenue (even with tuition increases). You have argued that expenditure growth is driven almost exclusively by “personnel costs,” and you think these costs “need to be contained

for a period of several years.” Previously, PSU administrators “closed the gap” between revenue growth and expenditures in 2012-15 by increasing tuition 6-9%, recruiting and adding more non-resident students, following a 2-year period of no compensation for ALL employees, and reducing retirement incentives.

“PSU pays me \$4,000 per course to teach four core classes in the USP program per year, provides me with only up to 16 credit hours of work per year (\$16,000 a year in pay), and offers no health insurance or retirement benefits to me or my dependents. I must work at two other institutions (Chemeketa Community College and Pacific University) to survive. Last quarter I drove over 300 miles a week to teach. This is not sustainable.”

The narrative that PSU administration has constructed is that we are preparing to lose a lot of money for the next five years because we aren't making enough, therefore we must raise tuition and not pay employees fair wages, or give them healthcare or retirement.

I have some thoughtful suggestions that may facilitate successful negotiations with faculty

unions at PSU currently bargaining with administration. Instead of taking the revenue generated from tuition dollars and saving it in a reserve fund for risk abatement (your goal is to take savings from 27% to 45% like UO):

Hire part time faculty who are already teaching classes to fill existing open lines. Put a hiring freeze on new hires (administrators and educators outside of PSU/the Oregon higher education system).

Think LOCAL. Hire LOCAL. Currently there are four open lines in my department and a pot of \$20,000 available for my unit manager (chair of department) to compensate part time faculty.

Consider PSU's excessive administrative personnel costs before chopping personnel costs from the bottom. I am one of over 1,500 adjuncts in this boat at PSU. We cannot keep this university afloat for much longer.

I offer to the Board these solutions because they will improve learning conditions for students, provide fair compensation for educators, and be profitable to PSU. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

**Sarah Chivers
Adjunct Faculty,
School of Urban Studies & Planning**

Dear members of our Board of Trustees,

My name is Ariana Jacob and I am an adjunct in the School of Art and Design, where I have taught regularly since 2014. I am also a member of the leadership council for PSUFA, our adjunct union. There are 2 main points I want to make today:

- 1. Adjuncts are absolutely essential to any effective strategy for increasing student success rates here at PSU.**
- 2. Adjuncts at PSU are currently too overlooked and underpaid.**

I'm going to start with my second point.

PSU is lucky to have been one of the places adjunct faculty unionized first in this country, we have been unionized for 40 years now, and yet in many ways we are still struggling to be recognized as an important part of the PSU community.

Currently we have over 1400 adjunct faculty and researchers working at PSU each year. A significant portion of those adjuncts have been working at PSU for over a decade, and some for over 3 decades. For many of these people their work at PSU represents all or a major percentage of their total annual income, and currently the maximum an adjunct can make a year at PSU is around \$22,000, which in Portland means living in pretty dire poverty.

I recently met an adjunct who teaches in the chemistry department. He teaches upper division classes that are required for students entering pre-med. His classes have hundreds of students and on weeks when he gives exams he will receive upwards of 70 student emails a day asking him complex biochemistry questions.

He writes reference letters year round for his students who are applying to med school. He is working so hard to ensure our students succeed and yet he can't adequately support himself and his family.

Which leads me to my next point: If we are serious about student success we need to be serious about supporting adjuncts.

There is still a popular myth that adjunct faculty are a minor part of the life of universities, but according to College Factual 46 % of PSU's faculty are adjuncts. Adjuncts teach more classes than tenure track and tenured faculty at PSU.

What that means for our students is that their educational experience is largely shaped by adjunct faculty. And yet adjuncts have little to no chance to get a full sense of what is going on at PSU. The majority of adjunct faculty cannot attend their own department faculty meetings because their departments claim they don't have the funds to pay for adjuncts to attend. This year when PSU began the recent student success campaign many adjuncts who teach large intro survey classes were told they are now responsible for regularly evaluating whether their students might be at risk for failing due to mental health or other life crisis. But those adjuncts were not given any training or support for implementing this new program. Many adjuncts have never had any orientation to the resources PSU has to support struggling students, or to support faculty who must suddenly navigate students in crisis - such as the CARE team. Only this year for the first time did PSU offer any kind of orientation event for new adjunct faculty at all, and that was at the request of our union.

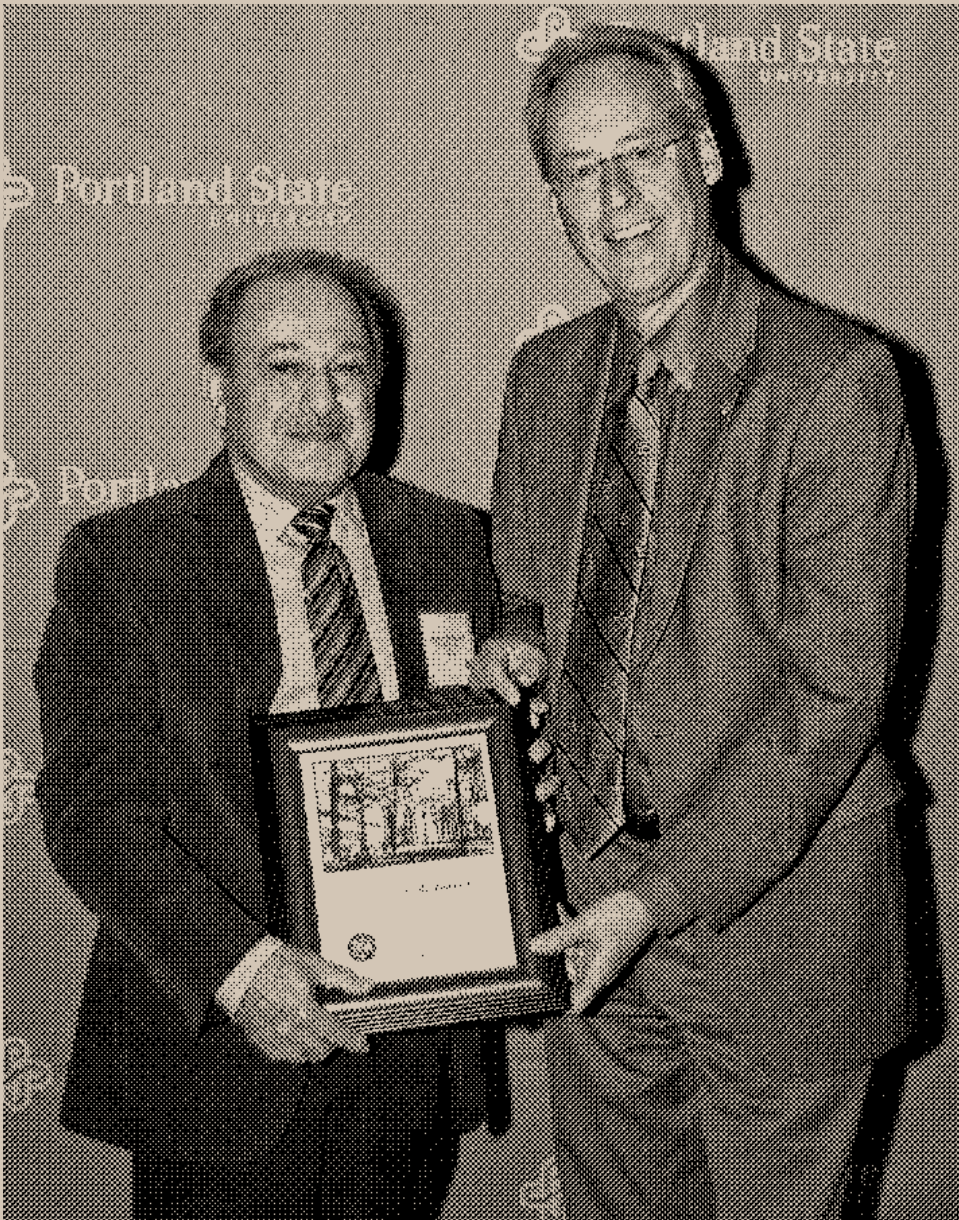
How are we going to guide students to feel included in the PSU community, and to take full advantage of PSU resources if most of the faculty they come into contact with have almost no opportunity to be informed and included at PSU themselves?

We need to support and include our adjuncts so that they, as the faculty who care for the majority of our students, can provide the best that PSU has to offer and ensure our students get what they need to succeed. Thank you for your time and attention.

Ariana Jacob
Adjunct Faculty,
School of Art + Design
Chair of Bargaining PSUFA

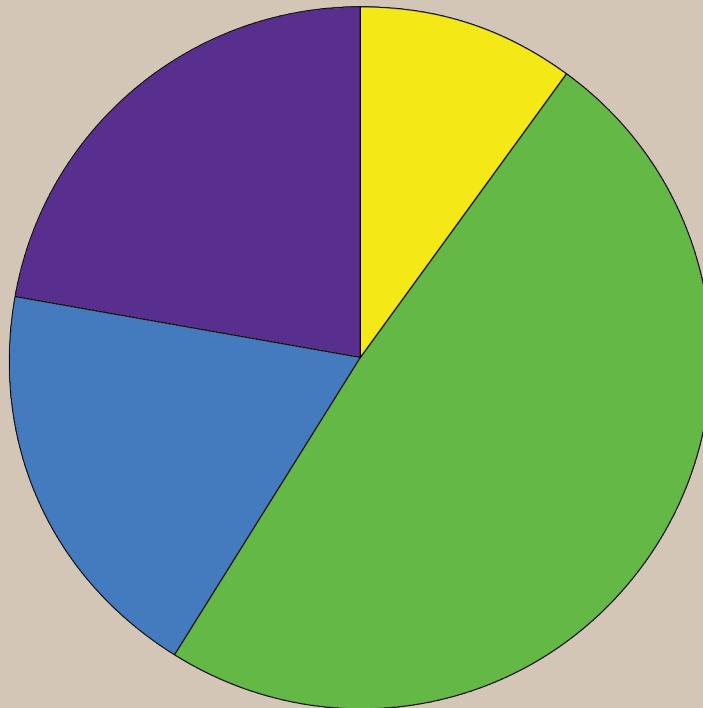
“If we are serious about student success we need to be serious about supporting adjuncts.”

PSU ADJUNCT EXPERIENCE



Khalil Zonoozy,
Adjunct Faculty
The School of Urban Studies &
Planning
2020 Adjunct Faculty Teaching
Excellence Awardee
Receiving milestone recognition
for 30 years of service from then
President Wim Wiewel, March
2015

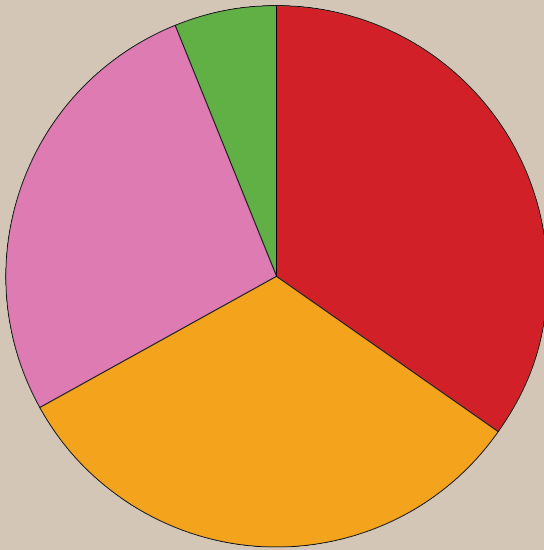
ADJUNCTS ARE LONG-TERM MEMBERS OF THE PSU COMMUNITY*



- 10% are in their 1st year at PSU
- 49% have worked at PSU for 2-5 years
- 19% have worked at PSU for 6-10 years
- 22% have worked at PSU for 11 or more years, including several adjuncts who have taught for more than 2 decades, and at least 1 who has taught for 3.5 decades.

*According to PSUFA Bargaining Survey conducted Fall 2019

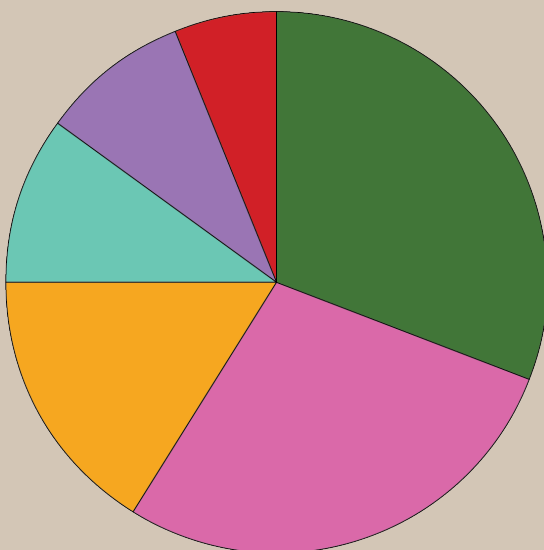
MOST ADJUNCTS LIVE CLOSE TO POVERTY*



- 35% Make less than \$25,000 total income/year
- 32% Make between \$25,001 and \$40,000 total income/year
- 27% Make between \$40,001 and \$100,000 total income/year
- 6% Make above \$100,000 total income/year

*According to PSUFA Bargaining Survey conducted Fall 2019

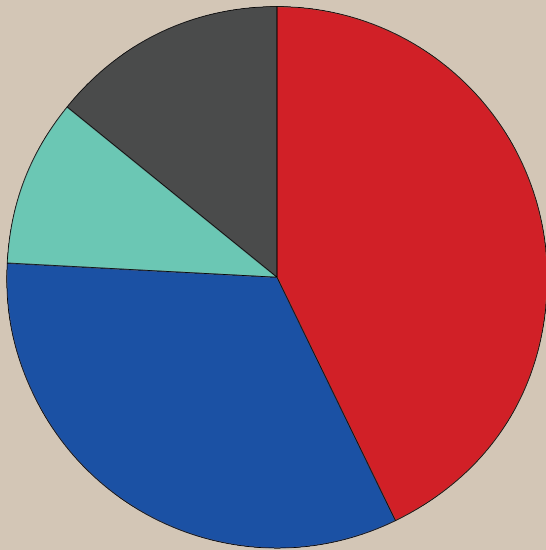
ACCESSING HEALTH INSURANCE WORRIES MOST ADJUNCTS*



- 31% of adjuncts are accessing health insurance through healthcare.gov or private insurance
- 28% of adjuncts are reliant on family member's insurance
- 16% of adjuncts access health insurance through another employer
- 10% of adjuncts are on OHP/Medicaid
- 9% of adjuncts are using Medicare
- 6% of adjuncts are uninsured

*According to PSU/PSUFA Health Care Survey conducted Fall 2019

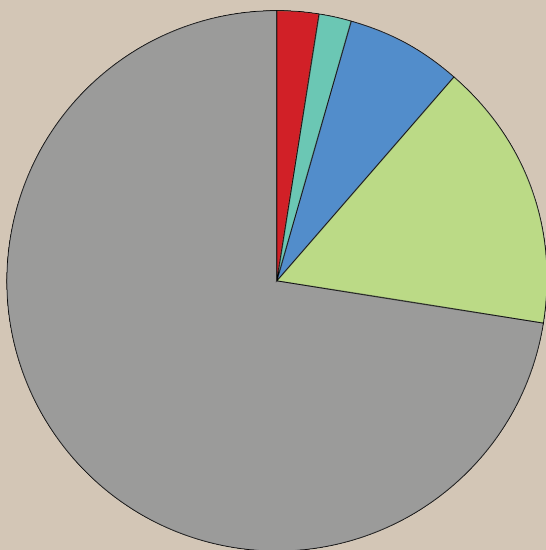
ADJUNCTS TEACH THE MOST CLASSES AT PSU*



- 43% of classes taught by adjuncts
- 33% of classes taught by full-time fixed term faculty
- 10% of classes taught by graduate teaching assistants
- 14% of classes taught by tenure track faculty

*Undergraduate classes in 2018 according to PSU OIRP data

ADJUNCTS ARE NOT COMPENSATED COMMENSURATELY*



- 2.5% of PSU's budget goes to adjunct salaries & benefits
- 2% of PSU's budget goes to graduate employees salary & benefits
- 7% of PSU's budget goes to full-time fixed term faculty salary & benefits
- 16% of PSU's budget goes to tenure track faculty salary & benefits
- 72.5% of PSU's budget goes to other costs

*According to PSU Cognos data from AY19

To the Portland State University Board of Trustees,

I am writing to offer one more view from the lowliest academic position so that you will know what it is like to live down here. I want you to know this perspective because ultimately I need you each to make a decision for me and when you make this decision I want you to make it with my personhood in mind. Your opinions may very well differ among yourselves but collectively you will make a choice and that is how I will know how you feel in aggregate.

I need you to decide what you think an acceptable relationship between the university and its adjuncts can look like.

18 **“I want to be included in departmental decisions. I want to get paid the same amount as my full-time colleagues for the same work. I want a job that can sustain a modest lifestyle. I want you to acknowledge that your reliance on poorly treated adjunct faculty is a problem. I want my employer to act in accordance with their values. I don’t want to feel like a second-class employee.”**

I work in the Fariborz Maseeh Department of Mathematics + Statistics and, because I was hired as an adjunct slightly sooner than a number of my colleagues, I enjoy regular

employment. I feel comfortable expecting 1 class per term for gross yearly earnings of just over \$12,000. My office is a converted conference room with 5 desks shared with 13 other adjuncts. I know the desk I prefer is available on the days that I teach. Next term I will be more confident about coming into the office to do prep work on days that I do not teach because only 8 adjuncts will be working for the math department.

The subject of space is a personal one to many in the math department. As you know, Neuberger Hall was recently renovated at the cost of \$71 million. I have heard second hand that full-time faculty have expressed discontent with the renovation because there is less overall space. My news is second hand because as a part-time faculty member, I am not invited to department meetings. It is at those meetings where I would also express my discontent with the renovation. My office is not in the new Fariborz Maseeh Hall with the rest of the math department. Just over a month before the Fall 2019 term began, I was told that the adjuncts would not have a place in the newly renovated building and we would instead be moved from the basement of Campus Public Safety to East Hall (where the math department had been temporarily housed and we were at the time excluded) because there was no room committed to adjuncts. The irony that \$5 million of the renovation came from the man whose name prefixes my department should not be lost.

Adjuncts are teaching 20 courses in the math department this term. How could there not have been a definite plan for where we would work? You can pursue the lame reasoning behind that outcome. The tragedy is that the news did not

shock me. It had been ingrained into my being that this was natural. Clearly, I thought, the adjuncts would only have been included in the departmental space if everything had worked out perfectly. A rounding error occurred and we were, of course, the first to be cut out. Being the lowest on the priority list and shouldering that burden is a part of my job.

The point of this letter is not to highlight the specific disrespects visited upon me or my fellow adjuncts in the math department although they have been plentiful: when us adjuncts were moved into East Hall, the corridors were full of the detritus left by the math department faculty departing to Fariborz Maseeh Hall; I encountered an HVAC mechanic who would have turned the heat off to the floor we work on had I not been there that day; my colleague was assailed by a community member who was apparently squatting in what they must have assumed was now an abandoned building (East Hall); most students who have been to my office comment on the unexpectedness of my worksite.

The point of this letter is still for you to make a decision for me and for the rest of the adjuncts who work at our university. The themes of my experience echo in the lives of the other adjuncts. You have to make this decision because we don't have the authority. The decision is yours. You need to set the parameters of our relationship with this institution. I can only write this letter and request that you either follow the values listed on your website or if you decide not to follow them, delete them. I have reprinted the full list of values below and added emphasis to those that are most relevant.

Our Values

- **We promote access, inclusion and equity as pillars of excellence.**
- **We commit to curiosity, collaboration, stewardship and sustainability.**
- **We strive for excellence and innovation that solves problems.**
- **We believe everyone should be treated with integrity and respect.**

I want to be included in departmental decisions. I want to get paid the same amount as my full time colleagues for the same work. I want a job that can sustain a modest lifestyle. I want you to acknowledge that your reliance on poorly treated adjunct faculty is a problem. I want my employer to act in accordance with their values. I don't want to feel like a second class employee.

It is not my preference that the decisions regarding this relationship are mostly out of my hand but it is the truth of the matter. Please take an honest look at our relationship. Does it match your preference? I await your decision.

Until then,

**James Sauls
Adjunct Senior Instructor,
Fariborz Maseeh Department of
Mathematics + Statistics**

Chair Hinckley and members of the Board,

My name is Eli Ronick and I have taught first, second, and third-year Spanish courses in the World Languages & Literatures Department as an adjunct since 2016. I am also the Chair of Membership for PSUFA. I feel a great honor in holding this position that represents my fellow adjuncts, many of whom I have been blessed to meet and get to know over the years. Being an adjunct can be an isolating experience: more than once I have met a colleague working at PSU for over a decade who had never met a peer adjunct until I arrived one day to shake their hand. I also feel a great responsibility in doing all I can to help my coworkers. Having met a great many adjuncts across a variety of schools and departments there is perhaps some unique knowledge that I may be able to offer the board.

²⁰ Though I relish my work at PSUFA, it can be difficult at times. Much of my job is to seek out adjuncts in order to gauge what is important to them and how we might use collective bargaining as a channel to improve our working conditions. I begin each conversation by asking them what it has been like to work at PSU. I often hear my fellow adjuncts expound on teaching and research passions that drive them to become better educators and connect with their students. These discourses tend to veer after to financial difficulties that permeate their daily lives and the lives of their families. It is not uncommon, in fact, it occurs quite frequently that adjuncts communicate to me that they rely heavily on SNAP (food stamps) benefits, Medicaid, SSI, or TANF (Temporary Assistance to Need Families). Many adjuncts voice that despite government assistance, if they are lucky enough to receive it, they still struggle to pay rent, feed their families, and pay off student loan interests. They voice nearly unanimously that the pay they receive is not commensurate

with the work they provide. Many adjuncts have required class times for 4 hours/week but because they teach 1-credit courses, are only paid per credit, roughly \$500/month before taxes. Other adjuncts have 12 hours/week of assigned class time but are paid the same as if they taught a 4-credit class. During my tenure as chair, I have met several adjuncts who dejectedly report that if a class were to be cancelled due to, say, low enrollment, they don't know how they'd pay rent. One recently, after several one-on-one visits, told me they may have to live out of their car after the term ends because they'd been given no classes the following term. Such stories are common, far too common.

I have been in education for 14 years. I am young for academia, 36 years old, but I have worked at many institutions throughout this city including the University of Portland, Eastern Oregon University, and several local high schools. One thing that I have learned is that the treatment of the workforce at an institution cannot be uncoupled from the quality of education provided. If the university truly values the education of their students, they would be wise to improve the tenuous and precarious situation of the 1,400-1,500 adjuncts who comprise far and away the largest teaching faculty on campus. Increased pay on par with comparable Oregon institutions in which adjuncts are allowed to teach nine courses per academic year, such as PCC and the University of Oregon, would allow PSU adjuncts to focus more fully on their work at PSU. In order to make up for the low pay, a great many of my peers are forced to seek income elsewhere. Some work at up to four Portland-area universities simultaneously, that is, if they are lucky enough to find that much work. Instead of spending their weekends preparing classes and grading,

many adjuncts spend their already-spare free time making ends meet as bartenders, waiters, and ride-share drivers. This reality is a blight, the dark underbelly of this institution I so enjoy teaching at.

Sadly, the refrain I hear repeated most when I visit my peers is that they are planning to leave PSU. Rarely do they communicate to me that this is something they want to do but instead that they are forced to because the pay at PSU is far from catching up to the rising cost of living in Portland. Many of those who leave are beloved by their students and departments. Their loss to PSU cannot be quantified. Students pick majors largely because they are inspired to do so by a professor. Until we receive pay or working conditions proportionate to our peer institutions, PSU will continue to function as a revolving door for underpaid and desperate adjuncts, the students and the quality of teaching byproducts that suffer despite the great efforts of my dedicated peers.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and feel free to reach out to me with any and all questions.

Sincerely,

Eli Ronick
Adjunct Faculty,
Department of World Languages &
Literatures
Chair of Membership PSUFA

“I have experienced financial insecurity for the entire 12 years as an adjunct due to the low pay and large amount of unpaid course-planning time. I have worked for multiple agencies as a contractor to meet my financials needs, all work that offers no benefits or job security.”

Dear Board of Trustees,

I have been an adjunct instructor for 12 years and received my departments first Excellence in Teaching Award. I work to support my students as they near graduation, writing letters of recommendations. meeting with them to support them and connect them with professionals in their field. I have experienced financial insecurity for the entire 12 years as an adjunct due to the low pay and large amount of unpaid course planning time. I have worked for multiple agencies as a contractor to meet my financials needs, all work that offers no benefits or job security. I have not had a paid vacation in 12 years. In order to attend workshops, continuing education or department meetings, I have to take unpaid leave from other work as a contractor.

Adjunct Faculty

Dear Board of Trustees,

I'm a new adjunct instructor at PSU. While I love my classes and my students, I spend several hours/week searching for other work and I plan to leave as soon as possible because the compensation is insufficient. Many other adjuncts are in the same position. Even with high quality adjuncts in the area, this constant turnover inevitably erodes the student experience because new instructors typically hit their stride after teaching a class a few times, which is often less than the turnover period of employment here. In addition, the heavy reliance on adjuncts puts an undue burden on permanent staff as they are constantly trying to hire new adjuncts, reassign their teaching schedules, and fill last minute vacancies.

²² Teaching should not be relegated to a gig economy construct--our students and our own professions deserve more. I could do so much more if given a bit more funding and resources for teaching. As a full time professional, teaching is a different entity. In order to gain knowledge towards the process of teaching, I've self enrolled in the CICT, Certificate of Innovation in College Teaching with OIT. I have found this experience very valuable. None of my time associated with this pursuit is funded.

“While I love my classes and my students, I spend several hours/week searching for other work and I plan to leave as soon as possible because the compensation is insufficient.”

Ultimately, the state and the university must change their funding and employment model by reducing the number of adjunct positions and transitioning them to full-time, benefit-granting positions that pay a competitive wage. Such an investment would more than pay for itself with increased student recruitment and retention.

Thank you for your consideration,

**Adjunct Faculty,
Environmental Science & Management**

Dear Board of Trustees,

This is my 14th year supervising teacher candidates in their student teaching practicums through the GTEP program in the College of Education. As a retired English teacher of twenty-two years, I have loved offering my knowledge and experience coaching and mentoring soon-to-be teachers as they learn through practical experience to become the best new teachers they can be. But I want to mention a revelation I had recently when we discovered mole hills in our lawn. I called a mole removal service and this is what I discovered about a comparison of responsibilities and compensation for mole removal vs. responsibilities and compensation for teacher candidate supervision. Mole Removal: Prerequisites: education and training unknown Responsibilities: Representative comes out, places 4 traps in mole holes and leaves (30 minutes) Representative comes out once per week for 30 days to check the traps (15 minutes per visit) Representative removes dead mole (if one is caught). No guarantees, but you can extend the contract for an additional \$250. Total compensation for four 15 minute visits = \$250. Supervision of teacher candidate in GTEP at PSU: Prerequisites: Hold a Master's degree Hold or have held an Oregon teaching license in the content area to be supervised Have fingerprints or background check on file with the PSU Field Placement Office Have a minimum of three years teaching experience. Responsibilities: (hours are approximate, sometimes less, sometimes more) Attend supervisor professional learning meetings twice per term (3-4 hours each) Attend co-teaching professional training session once per year (2 hours) Attend diversity/inclusion/implicit bias training session (2-3 hours) Attend initial 3-way meetings at field placement locations with teacher candidate, cooperating

teacher and school principal, if available (1 hour, plus travel time for each candidate) Conduct 3 observations of teacher candidates per term (2-4 hours for each candidate per term, depending on length of class). Many are 90 minutes classes, plus 20-30 minute debriefs with candidates and cooperating teachers. Send observation notes to teacher candidates and progress reports to cohort leaders (varies) Conduct mid-term conference and final evaluation conference with candidates and cooperating teachers (1 hr per candidate) Post mid-term conference and final evaluation scores, summaries and goals to tk20 (once per term for each candidate supervised. Conduct necessary support meetings for struggling candidates. (time and frequency varies) Write letters of reference for teacher candidates (2-3 hours) Attend mock interview sessions (optional 2-3 hours) Attend scholarship review trainings and sessions (optional 2-3 hours) Total compensation for 13 weeks of supervision: \$425. per candidate I find this comparison a sad truth. Is this how much we value teacher-training?

Sincerely,

**Debra Holland Drummonds
Adjunct Faculty,
Graduate Teacher Education Program
College of Education**

Dear Chair Hinckley and members of the Board of Trustees,

As university systems and teaching are changing rapidly, adjunct faculty at PSU need additional support in order to be able to help the university retain students and achieve the missions of delivering a high-quality and cost-effective academic programs.

As an adjunct out of the College of Urban and Public Affairs, I am responsible for teaching undergraduate classes in both Urban Studies and Planning and University Studies. Each year, I work with over 200 students. PSU is paying me for my time in the classroom. However, it is essential to recognize that the tasks of adjunct faculty are not just the teaching you see on campus. What I bring to PSU goes beyond the classroom and makes the university stronger, more connected to the community, and more engaging to students. All of these skills and resources I bring to PSU are uncompensated and take significantly more time.

“In addition to all the tasks it takes to be prepared as an instructor, I am asked to support students in many ways that are completely uncompensated but essential to university. ... Towards the shared goals of student retention, and high-quality academic programs, adjunct instructors need your support.”

- As an adjunct faculty, I bring in the expertise and relationships built with community partners so that our students are able to participate in meaningful community based experiences. For our students to work with local non-profits, community groups, and government agencies – I need to attend many meetings and develop a wide network of individuals throughout Portland who can provide opportunities to students.
- My uncompensated time is spent coordinating with other instructors across the university to build robust courses and programs that engage students in interdisciplinary ways and encouraging lifelong learning. To ensure students reach graduation, it is important that this type of planning occurs.
- I am also not compensated for the time I spend staying up-to-date in my field. I attend conferences and professional development events and continue to strive to stay aware of a changing body of knowledge and laws that I am responsible for passing on to students.
- As a reflective practitioner and good instructor, I do not just give the same lectures, facilitate the same discussions, and grade the same assignments each term. I change my courses each term (and sometimes during the term) to meet the needs of the students enrolled in that group. This means customized readings, materials, community partners, and continuously striving to improve my instruction. While course design is part of the compensation, the constant need to redesign is not often thought of in the adjunct assignment process.

- Over the last 5 years, I have contacted legislators, wrote letters, made phone calls, testified, and lobbied in both Salem and Washington DC for better educational funding and to prevent further cuts to higher education.
- I also am asked, without compensation, to stay on top of the latest from the Office of Academic Innovation and pedagogical delivery to ensure that I am meeting students' needs and helping them gain still needed after graduation in the changing professional landscape.

In addition to all the tasks it takes to be prepared as an instructor, I am asked to support students in many ways that are completely uncompensated but essential to university. Every term, I help students understand the classes and registration process; write letters of recommendation for scholarships and graduate school; serve as academic references for employment, and mentor students who are interested in pursuing a career in community development. Each term, I commit significant emotional labor and hours of my time as I support, advocate for, and sit with students who are experiencing mental health crisis, houselessness, personal trauma, and financial stressors. I am flexible offering support to ensure my classroom can be accommodating of students who experience disability; students who learn with different modalities; students with recent brain injuries; and students who just need additional time to talk through the material to understand. Those hours of meetings in my office or checking in after class do not end at the end of my 10-week term or my 9-month contract. Students reach out all year, needing support academically, personally, and professional. Adjuncts are their instructors and so adjuncts are providing that support and pastoral care.

Towards the shared goals of student retention, and high quality academic programs, adjunct instructors need your support. I ask that as the team negotiates the new contracts they consider:

1. Increasing base pay and create a pay structure in the new contract that allows adjunct faculty a wage that would support the level of expertise and education these positions require. Support all of the uncompensated work that goes into being an adjunct instructor.
2. Honor contracts with existing adjunct faculty members across the university.
3. Use a hiring process that prioritizes hiring from the existing pool of employees allowing adjunct faculty who have a proven record within a department an opportunity for additional work. This work needs to include options to go beyond part-time; options to be compensated for administrative & research and not teaching tasks, and options for upward professional mobility.
4. Support additional health care options for adjunct faculty.

Adjuncts are 46% of your total workforce and make up the majority of instructors at the undergraduate level. We are the teachers that students interact with most and the responsibility falls on us to respond to those students' needs, engage them in academic pursuits, and support them as they grow as learners. We are highly skilled, capable educators who are only able to support our students when we are respected members of the team. It is time PSU support the adjunct faculty.

Sincerely,
Norene Hough
Adjunct Faculty,
School of Urban Studies & Planning

Dear Chair Hinckley and members of the Board of Trustees,

We are in a time of great change, and in order to continue ensuring the high-quality training and development of our future leaders while staying financially solvent, our public universities must shift too. Universities, like all public schools, are community supports that can help buffer and protect students from adversity and hardship. In at least one estimate of food insecurity, 43 percent of surveyed students reported experiencing food insecurity at PSU, putting them at a higher risk of housing insecurity and homelessness¹. Further, recent research reveals that more than 40 percent of Americans cannot make ends meet with current earnings². These figures are indicators of systemic economic challenges that affect the capacity of students to learn, complete their degrees, and contribute to society. As a member of one of the front line supports for student leaders, I am writing to let you know that our current system is not adequately supporting people in adjunct faculty positions. Adjunct instructors, who currently comprise 46 percent of Portland State University's teaching staff, play a critical role in supporting students, although they are not compensated equitably.

Adjunct instructors have lower job security, limited health benefits, and lower pay than their tenure track colleagues. To support a modicum of job stability for the current adjunct faculty the University relies on, I ask you to:

1. Honor contracts with existing adjunct faculty members across the university.
2. Require all academic units to honor the highest adjunct rate and rank as earned in the adjunct's primary work unit.
3. Support additional health care options for adjunct instructors.
4. Use a hiring process that prioritizes hiring from the existing pool of employees allowing adjunct faculty with a proven record within a department options for additional work.
5. Research restructuring existing full time faculty positions, including the requirements of tenure, across the university to provide options for adjunct faculty to go beyond .49 parttime contracts; options to be compensated for administrative & research and non-teaching pursuits, and options for upward professional mobility.

“Each school year I have the opportunity and honor to work with more than 150 students through in-person and online formats. While each department contract focuses on the instruction I provide, it's important to realize that as a highly skilled instructor, I contribute in ways that are uncompensated.”

My name is Dr. Tia H. Ho and I have been teaching classes since 2015 at the intersection of community health and community development. My home unit is in the Urban Studies and Planning department and my courses are also offered through University Studies and the Criminology and Criminal Justice Department. Each school year I have the opportunity and honor to work with more than 150 students through in-person and online formats. While each department contract focuses on the instruction I provide, it's important to realize that as a highly skilled instructor, I contribute in ways that are uncompensated. Below are skills and resources I contribute to our future leaders.

Mental Health Support: As an instructor who is also a trauma survivor, I bring a trauma-informed approach including mindfulness and stress management practices into my classes. While these are optional activities, many students express appreciation based on how overwhelmed they are by course work, job demands, and concerns about their future. I contribute significant emotional and physical labor to students who ask for help navigating systems to get mental health care based on suicide ideation, potential for abuse in relationships, financial stressors, homelessness, personal trauma, and experience with a disability. My support role does not end with each 10-week term or 9-month contract. Students reach out all year asking for support in their academic, professional, and personal life challenges. While I am able to refer some situations to the CARE team and other non-campus supports, sometimes students simply want someone to listen without judgment or intervention. My saying yes to them means I say no to other things. While this is my choice, it is

one that should not be minimized.

Professional Development: Because I incorporate content from my various research and community projects, students recognize my professionalism and ask me to write them letters of recommendation for programs and scholarships; they ask me to provide them references for graduate school and job applications; and they ask for my insights about navigating the community development, urban planning and public health fields.

Curriculum Advancement: In addition to a PhD in Urban Studies focused on Community Development and Community Health and more than seven years in the field as a public health strategist, I have a Master's in Science Teaching from PSU focused on project-based learning. Each time I teach a class I revise the assignments, the in-class skill-building activities, and the lecture content to stay up to date in my field areas, and to address the interests and needs of each group. I often provide my syllabus and lectures to new adjuncts or graduate students so that they can also teach a similar course. This is my intellectual labor being gifted to colleagues for the good of the university system without compensation.

Today I ask you to reconsider how the structure of different teaching-related positions contribute to the needs of those you serve. To offset the costs of tenure-track lines, infrastructure, declining public funds, declining enrollment, and using higher pay to incentivize administrators, universities rely on lower-paid adjunct faculty along with graduate students. In parallel, people in tenure track positions are required to fulfill multiple roles at all times. I have more than one

colleague on the tenure track who has had to take medical leave in order to prevent burnout. Research indicates that in the last four decades the share of people holding full-time tenure-track positions nationwide has dropped by 50 percent³. Change is here. Adjunct instructors are part of a team of first-responders who engage and support our future leaders. We are highly skilled, capable educators who could be better supporting our students if we were better supported. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Tia H. Ho, PhD
Adjunct Faculty,
School of Urban Studies & Planning

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1 Miles, R., McBeath, B., Brockett, S. and P. Sorenson (2017). Prevalence and predictors of Social Work student food insecurity, *Journal of Social Work Education*, 53, 4, 651-663.

2 Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (2017). Financial well-being in America, https://consumerist.com/consumermediallc.files.wordpress.com/2017/09/201709_cfpb_financial-well-being-in-america.pdf

3 Shulman, S. ET al (2016). Higher Education at a Crossroads: The Economic Value of Tenure and the Security of the Profession, *Academe*, <https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/2015-16EconomicStatusReport.pdf>

“I’ve temporarily stopped adjuncting and I’m not sure when I’ll continue because the lack of pay makes my teaching expenses more than my salary. And my ratings were one of the best in the department. I also had to stop volunteering to help the students and the community because my expenses were not being met by my adjunct salary.”

-Anonymous Adjunct

We Are the Faculty

PSUFA

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY
FACULTY ASSOCIATION

ADJUNCTS UNITED

PSUFA, April 2020



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