

# Organizing Contingent Academic Labor

A Labor-Force Appropriate Strategy

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# Organizing Contingent Academic Labor

## A Labor Force-Appropriate Strategy

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**NAFFE ♦ NORTH AMERICAN ALLIANCE FOR FAIR EMPLOYMENT**

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## Introduction

The period since the 1970s has witnessed a massive change in the teaching workforce in higher education. Colleges, universities, post-secondary and adult education generally are among the employers making greatest use of contingent and formerly non-standard employment practices, with over fifty percent of all people hired to teach college classes falling in that category. This sector of the academic workforce falls outside the traditional protections of tenure (or any job security at all) or academic freedom. Most of these teachers presently do not have the protection of collective bargaining agreements and they also frequently lack living wages, health and pension benefits and most of the other traditional perquisites of academic life.

This growth has not been accidental. Before the mid-seventies, it was assumed that decision making in higher education was driven by more service-oriented, and even democratic, criteria than in corporations. Since the mid-seventies, this assumption has ceased to hold. Rather than being a way to employ the specialized skills of a few practicing professionals, or to get over a temporary financial hump or employment upswing as in the past, the use of contingent faculty has become the very economic motor of the teaching component of higher education.

As in the economy as a whole, casualization in higher education is linked to broader changes. Probably the most significant being the increased power of corporate capital to dictate institutional policy. Corporatization includes both the mimicking of corporate practices internally and the restructuring to more directly externally serve the corporations and the interests of capital generally -- corporations are seen as the primary clients and to whom students are then "sold" as product.

The casualization of faculty encompasses both aspects of this corporatization. Internally, by mimicking the recent employment practices of the corporate workforce, institutions gain the attendant savings on the bottom line, through lesser wages and benefits and also the increased "just-in-time" flexibility. Externally, casualization and the "just-in-time" faculty greatly increases the ability of higher education institutions to quickly respond to any corporate desires. Now, with the majority of its faculty in this weakened and dependent position without living wages and benefits, job security, tenure, academic freedom, or power within the institutions, the likelihood of effective faculty resistance to corporate goals is greatly reduced.

As in the labor force as a whole, this increasingly casualized workforce has responded by building a movement to organize itself, both in traditional and less traditional ways. Most faculty do not work in Ph.D. granting institutions; in fact, the largest proportion work in public community colleges where we find both the highest rates of unionization and, after the for-profit sector, the highest proportion of contingent faculty. A number of markers denote this movement's development. First, the simple numbers of contingent faculty now represented by traditional (AFT, NEA, AAUP) and

non-traditional higher education unions may be approaching 80,000, though still less than a fifth of the total. Another marker is that contingent faculty themselves have sparked a series of conferences, under the banner of the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor (COCAL) that have grown progressively larger and more assertive. These conferences have also spawned a third benchmark, namely the capacity to generate a national activity (that include Canada as well), Campus Equity Week (CEW), which drew and draws attention to the issues of contingent faculty. Finally, another marker is that out of these conferences and Campus Equity Week a continental leadership has cohered that is more than just an occasional meeting of local and regional leaders but actually constitutes the beginnings of a collective strategic leadership, from the movement itself.

This continental movement and its leadership have generated a number of creative organizing forms and tactics specific to the particular context of contingent faculty. These have included statewide legislative initiatives, metropolitan labor force organizing strategies, the development of intermediary organizations such as COCAL chapters, and the practical elaboration of an inside-outside strategy in relation to the existing unions and labor movement.

These developments should be of interest to more than those involved directly in higher education, although those numbers in the United States of 2004 are quite large. The success or failure of organizing among contingent faculty will be important not just for higher education but for the labor movement and society as a whole. For the labor movement, contingent faculty organizing represents a successful beginning effort of self-organizing in one of the first economic sectors to have been majority-casualized. This demonstrates that even when casual workers become the majority of a sector, they are still organizable, and in fact, can be the major instruments in their own organization. They also are a workforce traditionally unorganized, largely female, and mostly made up of individuals whose history personally did not bring them into contact with trade unionism before. These all represent important lessons that the labor movement must absorb if it is to grow and prosper in this and other “new economy” environments.

Finally, in a society where upwards of fifty percent of the population has some contact with post-secondary and higher education, what happens to those who deliver this education and how they do it and under what conditions becomes a matter of mass concern and not merely the gossip of elite academics. Just as the contingent majority of college teachers can now be arguably considered members of the working class, so too are now the majority of students in post-secondary and adult education part of the working class. This underlines not only the importance of higher education today but also a new potential. If the new majority faculty can be successfully organized under the banner of progressive social unionism broadly defined, they can have an impact well beyond their already considerable numbers. The ideas that they carry into the classrooms, hallways, lounges, parking lots, offices, cafeterias, and all other places

where they interact with students, have a tremendous influence on the way those students view unions, social struggle, and the society generally. Together, contingent faculty and their students, along with other allies, are very likely the only force that can successfully resist and then re-shape the trend toward corporatization in higher education. While like many other issues, the transformation of higher education is too important to be left merely to the educators, it is the educators, now a majority contingent faculty, who have the duty collectively to lead and inform the struggle for that transformation.

This paper considers the strategic questions facing contingent faculty and their organizers. It provides a brief outline for a national and continental strategy and then illustrates what this may look like in a metropolitan context. To provide the kind of textured description that organizers need to strategize, the paper uses the example of the Chicago area. A companion paper, "The Rise of Contingent Academic Labor," provides more background information on the historical, legal, class and social context of higher education.

## **The Need for a Strategy**

In the largest sense, the need for a strategy to organize contingent faculty is self-evident. We are now the majority and unless we organize to improve our conditions and combat our very contingency, faculty as a whole will continue to lose out as higher education is more and more directly put at the service of capital. More specifically, though, we need an explicit strategy and even more important an active national, even continental, democratic discussion about strategy, because the old patterns of faculty organization have been found lacking.

## ***Obstacles to Strategizing***

A question worth addressing briefly is why, after thirty years of substantial increase in the number and percentage of contingent faculty, we are only now having something resembling the needed discussion. Part of the reason, certainly, is that organizations unless they are in deep crisis, and sometimes even then, tend to resist thoroughgoing discussion of strategic alternatives especially if those alternatives might result in radical internal transformation. The traditional unions in higher education (National Education Association, NEA; American Federation of Teachers, AFT; American Association of University Professors, AAUP) were not generally in crisis during this period and in fact were growing in most years despite the opposite trend in the union movement as a whole. To many in organizations, that constitutes a powerful argument for not changing course. Unfortunately, as the experience of much of the rest of the union movement may suggest, by the time the demand for re-examination, internal transformation and a change of course is inescapable, it may well be too late to make

the necessary changes within the existing organizational structures. While somewhere between 50,000 and 100,000 contingent faculty have in fact been organized, mostly in these three organizations, that still represents less than twenty percent of a rapidly growing total.

Another reason for the lack of a broad strategy discussion has been the relatively tiny percentage of contingent faculty themselves who have occupied positions of leadership at a sufficient rank to force this discussion forward. This means that to the extent that it has proceeded, it has been carried by sympathetic full-time, tenure-track (FTTT) faculty who are and have been the historic leaders of these organizations at all levels from local to national. These FTTT leaders including both those still in the classroom or department chairmanships and those who have made the transition to full-time union office, have both personal, organizational and cultural interests that are not identical to those of the new majority faculty. Clearly, their discomfort in engaging in discussion, especially strategic discussion with contingent faculty as equals is part of the reason that this discourse has languished.

Yet another reason for the absence of this needed discussion are the historic rifts, often militantly sectarian, dividing the organizations themselves. Even more important than the occasional raids, contested elections and occasional substantial policy differences regarding higher education, has been the culture of rivalry, parochialism, gossip and backbiting that actively discouraged local and mid-level leaders from seeking out their counterparts in other organizations. Thankfully, this has begun to change in many areas of the country and at a national level. But the legacy of this culture remains to plague the movement in the form of habits of suspicion, exclusion, mistrust and often outright slander. This is a heritage most contingent faculty find bizarre and very frustrating. Most contingent activists support the idea that there is plenty of blame to go around regarding the history of their treatment and care little which union they end up in - if it will seriously fight for our issues and is democratic.

Given this context, cooperation in a discussion of possible change in strategic organizing orientation was nearly unthinkable. Organizing itself and the strategic discussion around it, if any, is one of the most closely guarded royal secrets in any union, generally. And among those secrets a critical evaluation, especially of weaknesses and failures, are talked about openly only at great risk. The growth of some cooperation, joint affiliations, mergers and other unifying behavior on the part of these three organizations and their sub-units is encouraging and to be encouraged. However, few of these projects have included joint organizing and virtually none have included open debate and discussion about organizing strategy with contingent faculty themselves.

Partly as a result of the historic organizational splits and partly because of the very nature of contingent faculty themselves having more than one source of income, of

necessity, and therefore a somewhat split personality *vis-à-vis* their own occupational and economic interests, contingent faculty themselves have been slow to develop the sort of national network that could produce a national leadership of their own that could in turn kindle and tend the fire of the needed strategy discussion. Divided by organizations ourselves, seldom at levels in our unions where those contacts with other organizations took place, short on time and money for the sort of travel and communications that building a national network and discussion entails, and not encouraged by any outside forces to do this, nonetheless it remains what needs to be done. The last five years have demonstrated that it is also what is beginning to be done.

We have seen the growth of the COCAL (Conference of Contingent Academic Labor) meetings, Campus Equity (CEW) weeks, the NAFFE Campus Action Group, and the emergence of linked national activity on behalf of contingent faculty within the existing unions and professional associations. Out of this beginning have emerged some truly creative strategic organizing ideas. They have appeared unevenly and they often struggle to even be expressed in a mutually intelligible language to contingent faculty in other states and localities, much less other nations. But a common language to conduct this discourse is slowly being built around the concept of contingency being our core problem and the core problem for the profession, and perhaps even the core problem for organizing workers well beyond academia.

### ***Finding an Appropriate Strategy***

If contingency is the core reality of this workforce, then it must be at the core of any successful strategy. Contingency means that many of us have, of necessity, weaker ties to a particular institution, department, or even particular sub-sector of higher education (non-profit, community college, public, for-profit, etc.) than their traditional FT colleagues. While substantial gains have been made in a minority of locations, using variations of traditional bargaining unit organizing strategies, especially those where productive combination between contingent and tenure track faculty has evolved, these examples remain the shining tips of the icebergs above the surface of the sea that hides the vast majority. There are, to be sure, important strategic lessons for organizing as well as for bargaining, to be learned from the best of the “traditional” formations. While always risking the omission of an important one, the examples would certainly include the Professional Staff Congress (PSC/AFT) in the City University of New York (CUNY), the California Faculty Association (NEA/AAUP among other affiliations), and the Faculty and Staff Union (FSU-NEA) at University of Massachusetts, as well as instances among the community colleges in California, Washington State and elsewhere. Nevertheless, these examples tend to be limited to major statewide systems in relatively pro-union environments in relatively wealthy states with long and strong histories of educational unionism and unionism in general. Unfortunately, this is not the context in which most contingent faculty do their work.

The appropriate strategy for organizing most of the remaining unorganized contingent faculty, as well as the likely strategy for activating a higher percentage of those technically represented by unions already, must include elements of traditional bargaining unit organizing, lessons learned in the social movements of the sixties and seventies and later, and also a recovery of the broad social movement unionism of the earlier twentieth century. Combining these factors in proper proportion and mixing in creative touches from the specific situation of contingent faculty today is a much easier prescription to write than to fill. Nevertheless, if the diagnosis of the previous pages is at all on the mark, some version of the treatment here described is probably essential. What follows is an attempt to suggest how this might be done.

### ***The Inside-Outside Strategy***

If the key element of our position as contingent faculty is our contingency, often toward our employers, our specific institutional colleagues, in some cases local bargaining unit organizations and even our own relative standard of living, then a strategy has to adaptively address this variable over time. Flowing from this fact of our contingency and our historic second-class status in the institutions in which we work, as well as in most of the full-time tenure track-led existing unions, the experience of the last thirty years of organizing has suggested that the “inside-outside” strategy toward existing organizations and institutions best fits our needs.

What this means is that no matter what the organizational forms available to us, we need to always work within any existing organizational form, be they existing unions, professional associations, institutional governance bodies such as senates and recognized governance committees, and we should do this in such a way as to maximize our contacts with our non-contingent colleagues and to unite and build upon all of the positive aspects and openings that exist within those institutions that they have created over the past years. To ignore these opportunities is to hand away a good deal of our potential power to make change. This is the inside aspect of the strategy. We must be good and principled colleagues and fellow-unionists if we are to maximize our support.

### ***Independent Organizations***

Conversely, and at the same time, we must organize ourselves under our own self-selected leadership to speak in our own name in whatever context is possible. Where we are already technically unionized and represented, this may mean building caucuses or committees within the existing organization while at the same time maintaining the capacity for independent (intermediate) formation not bounded by the edges of the full-time tenure track-led and dominated organizations. Frankly speaking, the implied threat is that if we are not taken seriously and our issues dealt with respectfully we could proceed to organize ourselves independently -- this implied threat must never be allowed to wither and die. If the past thirty years' experience demonstrated anything, it is that numbers count -- that is, organized and mobilized numbers count. Like all other

oppressed and submerged groups, we will make progress only to the extent that we organize and speak for ourselves and thereby gain both the respect, social weight and political presence necessary to attract real allies on something resembling a basis of equality. Until then, we will have the occasional favors of paternalism rather than the potential justice of solidarity.

Depending on the context, this independent organization can and has taken many forms. In the example of the City University of New York, the organization CUNY Adjuncts Unite! has been both an independent outside organization of CUNY adjuncts and also came to function as part of a caucus inside the PSC union. This eventually resulted in a successful change in leadership and a radical improvement in the priority placed upon adjunct issues. This pattern of an independent group functioning inside the union as well as having the capacity to speak outside the union in its own voice is one that has been approximated in many other local unions. It is not particularly important whether the body is called a caucus of a union, a committee of a union, or an independent organization that functions in that way. The important thing is that the body is beholden primarily to the interests of contingent faculty and does not dogmatically restrict itself to operating either inside or outside the existing organization. The same principle would apply to work within disciplinary organizations (such as Teachers of English as a Second Language, TESOL, the disciplinary organization with the longest track record of contingent activism). The principles would also apply with changes to working in the more restrictive environments of administration-recognized academic senates, departmental committees, etc.

### ***Intermediate Organizations***

Yet another example of the inside-outside strategy in practice are the intermediate organizations that have sprung up, some under the title of COCAL and some with other names. These groupings in Boston, Chicago, Western New York and now state-wide in California have sought in their various and varied contexts to reach out to contingent faculty across existing organizational lines and also to reach out to those who are not yet organized. These formations of course look different in a place like California where a majority of contingents are in the public sector and that majority is unionized, albeit in multiple unions, than in Boston or Chicago where the vast majority of contingent faculty remain outside of unions. The principle, however, remains the same: these groups all seek to, on the one hand, maintain the best possible relations with exiting faculty unions while on the other hand seeking to enhance the power of contingents within those organizations. They also work to draw together contingent faculty in presently unorganized institutions, providing them a context of political support and practical advice that can help them build activist committees leading to broader organization on the campuses. Finally, these intermediate organizations seek to speak directly to those outside the institutions: legislatures and other politicians, the

public, and the media with a clear message of what has happened inside higher education and the needs and concerns of the new majority contingent faculty.

Already, these intermediate organizations have proved their worth and the worth of the inside-outside strategy in both sides of the equation. These local and statewide groups, together with a series of COCAL conferences, have been a major factor in changing the behavior of the major unions. They now take more seriously in practice the positive positions that they have adopted since the 1970s, and changing many of their practices at the local level, where most bargaining and organizing actually occurs.

### **Gains**

On the other side of the equation, these intermediate organizations have sparked direct action and voice on behalf of contingent faculty in a way that has substantially altered the political and media terrain in which we are conducting this struggle. One example was Action 2000 Part-time Equity Week, sparked by the California Part-Time Faculty Association and developing a broad coalition of all of the unions, senates, etc. in the community colleges there in 2000. This resulted in over \$60 million being budgeted from the State Legislature for more equitable pay. This same general push in coalition also yielded statewide legislative gains in health insurance and paid office hours. Similar statewide efforts have resulted in legal gains in Washington State and Illinois, and others are under way. In Washington the gains were in health insurance and pension reform. In Illinois legal changes effectively re-opened the door to organizing the thousands of community college part-timers: specifically, the first change abolished the requirement that employees have “reasonable assurance of re-employment” in order to be covered by labor law. The second amended the historic requirement that only part-timers teaching six credit hours or more could organize under the law. There is little doubt that without political push of Campus Equity Week and other efforts by intermediate groups, these would not have taken place.

As important as the victories that this strategy has won already is the fact that through the development of this independent movement, a leadership network has emerged that now knows about and can learn from these experiences around the country and even now, has begun to internationalize itself. The most recent COCAL conference 2003 in Montreal hosted by an independent part-timer union there at Concordia University appears to have pushed forward similar inter-organizational cooperation and discussion among the almost-equally fractionalized higher education unions across Canada.

### **Towards a National Strategy**

Because of such obvious diversity and unevenness across the country, no single local or regional strategy will possibly be successful if the goal is really to organize all who could be organized, rather than merely skim off those who are easiest or most accessible to organize. So below is presented a list of guides and lessons for organizing strategy

drawn from the experience of the movement so far and from particularly intensive research into past organizing campaigns in the Chicago area. Following that will be one example of a possible application of these principles and guides in a largely unorganized metropolitan area, namely Chicago.

1. A national strategy must be focused primarily but not exclusively on movement-building, not organizational growth. This is properly reflective of the stage we are in now when movement-building should be primary.
2. A national strategy must take into account the importance of both the lack of job security and the lesser economic power of contingent faculty relative to FT and the resulting fear and fatalism as a factor in contingent faculty consciousness and behavior.
3. A national strategy must recognize that the “new majority” faculty are now part of the working class and that their concerns include both economic and job security equity as well as the desire to defend and improve education for their largely working class students.
4. A national strategy must understand that contingent faculty are part of a casualized workforce and must be organized as a whole workforce and that can have a particularly important role in opening the door to essential coalitions on and off campus because of the social and ideological nature of their work.
5. The organizational forms that the movement should create must be allowed to be varied, fluid and not necessarily reflective of only the present trade union structures.
6. A national strategy must be democratic in form, content and activity, as participatory as possible, and with a leadership that reflects the base in all aspects.
7. A national strategy must be “inside-outside”, recognizing the need for independent organization, in whatever form, of contingent faculty, as well as the need for solidarity with FT, reflected in as high a level of organizational unity as possible.

### ***Lessons from Organizers***

Here are the more specific lessons drawn from the experiences of the organizers through interview research (see note on sources, page ##).

1. Attract and build upon activists with organizing experience and a broader, often radical, social and political perspective.
2. Raise issues that connect concern for education with personal economic needs and job security, all under the general heading of “respect.”

3. Fighting for oneself can be good, not necessarily “selfish” if done collectively.
4. Remember the importance of setting an example of modeling good bold organizer behavior.
5. Project a welcome to new recruits, unlike the history of many full-time led unions, and a sufficient autonomy combined with real assistance and support.
6. Value every tactic that involves rank and file activity. Then prioritize resources but remember that activity itself increases the human resources available.
7. Exercise honesty, consistency, perseverance, and attentive listening. Value all direct contacts as precious and utilize all gatherings no matter who calls them.
8. For the future development of the union, insider organizers are always best. They must be nurtured and trained to be the real decision makers in the union.
9. The fear factor is massive and must be strategized for and never underestimated, no matter what people themselves say.
10. All kinds of communication can work (phone, print, email and web, in person). The key is flexibility, perseverance, and regularity.
11. Learn the politics and political context of the institution and then use all levers, internal and external, to effect power.
12. Alliances are essential, on the campus especially, including students, full-time tenure track faculty, clericals, service workers, their unions (if present), and even some lower-level administrators.
13. Use the employer’s predictable underestimation of us to our strategic advantage. Answer all of his/her insulting and condescending arguments.
14. Build collective leadership. There is always a need for a committee, even if only of two, but a small committee can accomplish a lot.
15. Successful organizing requires the transformation of the union that people are being organized into.
16. Outside staff should be advisors, not the leaders. Keep a rank and file activist orientation even after the election. Members must own their union.
17. Keep fighting even after a victory. The administration never quits.

18. Don't make the mistake of underestimating ourselves, the way the administration and too many FT faculty do. We *can* make a difference, even just a few of us.

19. Capitalize upon the added potential of women, Black and other minority faculty to be leaders and activists.

20. Remember that if we can bring up the pay, conditions and job security of contingents toward that of FT, (close the gap) we both improve our conditions directly and make the overuse of contingents less attractive to administrators.

## Applying the Strategy to Metro Chicago: An Example

As noted earlier, the application of an inside-outside strategy will appropriately look different in different contexts. In most, it will probably include the creation of some sort of intermediate organization as well as work within existing bodies. The structure of the appropriate intermediate organization may lean more toward the coalition of groups in those cases where most contingent faculty are already technically unionized (such as in California COCAL) or it may be mainly a network of organizers and activists in various institutions as Boston COCAL has evolved. It may be a membership organization within a particular substantial subsector, such as the California Part-Time Faculty Association within the 100-some college California community college system, where nearly all contingents are already unionized in various unions, mostly in joint units with FT faculty. A similar grouping has emerged in the Washington State community colleges.

In some contexts, the key factor may be the effective geographic area within which a labor force circulates, across and among sub-sectors and institutions within higher and post-secondary education. This perspective is generally referred to as "the metro strategy" and is not unique to higher education as an organizing perspective having been partially attempted recently in manufacturing, (the multi-union Los Angeles Manufacturing Action Project, MAP) and in the service trades (the SEIU's Justice for Janitors campaigns in many metropolitan areas). This version of the strategy is probably particularly appropriate in those cases where the vast majority of the labor force is not already organized and a broad net needs to be cast in order to catch the highest possible number of potential activists within the entire effective labor force. Boston COCAL's Boston Project has exemplified that perspective.

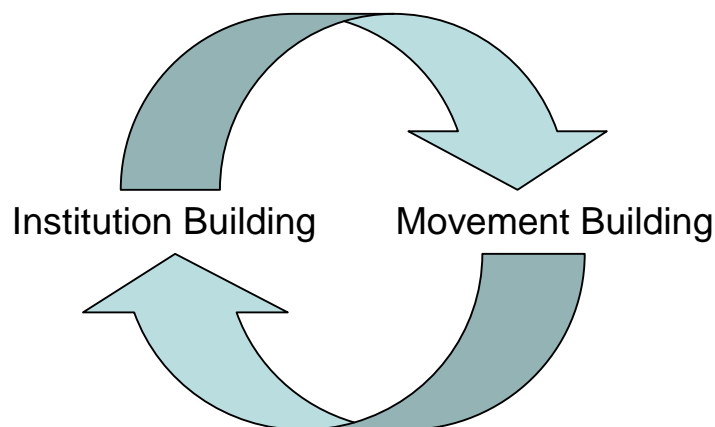
In other contexts, it may be that a statewide employer (like a state-wide university system) or coordinating body (like the CA community colleges, with their locally elected boards, but state Chancellor and state board as well) rather than the local labor force commuting area, provides the proper primary context for the development of an effective organization. In the statewide California State University system, which has

won some of the best conditions and pay for contingent faculty in the country, the vehicle has been a statewide lecturers' committee with elected representatives from each campus meeting as a council both to take independent action and to influence the statewide local union, California Faculty Association (CFA), which bargains for all faculty in the entire system. Activists in the CFA lecturers' committee have also participated in the development of a statewide multi-sector intermediate organization, California COCAL, along with representatives from community college faculty and their various unions, with the addition of contingent activists from the University of California's nine campuses, who are represented for bargaining statewide by an AFT council of locals.

Listing these variations now, within the criteria of an inside-outside strategy and the need for intermediate organization, is to place in context what is to follow, namely a description of a particular version of a metro strategy that might be applied in a largely unorganized metropolitan environment such as Chicago. The key point here is not to urge emulation of the details but to see detailed how the principles might be applied in one specific context and thereby better display how these principles might be applied in elsewhere. What follows is a cut down version of an actual, more detailed, proposal (see Note on Sources, page 25).

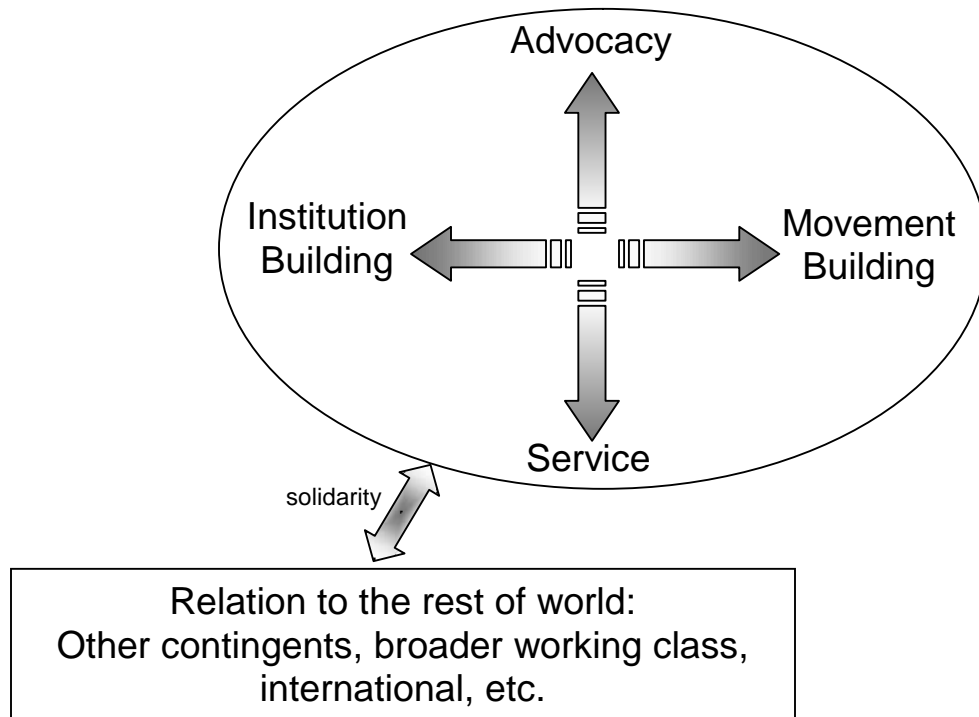
One way to visualize the application of the metro strategy and the above principles and lessons to the current situation among contingent faculty in Chicago is to view it as a circle, with one part labeled "movement-building," or "the movement" and an arrow pointing clockwise labeled "organization" with an arrow continuing clockwise back up. The idea here is that to be effective, the strategy must take the existing movement, build it, encourage it and out of it create organizational forms that can have more stability and institutional heft long-term than a movement by itself. These organizational forms should be structured and judged largely by how well they will build and rebuild the movement itself, hence the arrow back up clockwise. Therefore this is a relationship that is both symbiotic and dialectical.

Figure 1: Relationship between Institutions & the Movement



In a broader strategic sense, the proper movement building-organization building relationship can be seen as a part of a broader set of relationships in organizing that might be drawn as in the diagram below.

Figure 2: Broader Relationships Developed through Organizing



In this diagram, the movement-institution relationship is seen as a spectrum, with a second spectrum crossing it that is labeled service - advocacy at each end. It might also be labeled “individual” service - “collective” advocacy, though in real life these lines are not at all clear and there is usually collective service and individual advocacy as part of the functioning of a labor organization as well. The point is to highlight the spectrum of activities on the vertical axis and the future orientation on the horizontal axis. If one draws a circle around these axes, with an arrow pointing both inside and outside, we have the symbiotic relationship of solidarity to be built between the specific organizing context and the outside world, including all the potential allies from the campus to the community, from the local labor movement to the broader international working class.

### **Message**

Connected to the above models is the question of “message”. Since most of the following proposal will be largely functionalist in orientation, this is probably the place to briefly discuss content of communication. Naturally, the most important thing is that decisions, on which issues are to be raised and how they are to be communicated, be the

result of decision making that is as democratic and bottom up as possible. That said, the suggested emphasis should be on issues that can unite people, such as respect, job security, living wages and benefits, equity (with FTT) in all things. For instance, creation of FT jobs and priority for them for present contingents is a demand that is not of great concern to some contingents, but very important to others. It should be raised, but not as the primary demand coming from contingents themselves. It should be encouraged for FT faculty and their organizations to especially raise and fight for this since it is very much in their interest to retain and grow back the ranks of FT faculty. Finally, the message should be projected very broadly, to the whole sector, public and private, by the Metro Strategy Organization (MSO). Slogans such as: "Does any adult call you 'teacher'? Join the MSO," might be useful for broad outreach.

### **Research**

One of the first but also continuing tasks to implement a regional strategy would be to build upon the existing research to produce a clearer and more complete picture of the workforce, the employing institutions and the political economic context. Overall the research function should be seen as the kernel of the development of a contingent faculty think-tank that could conduct all of the aspects of research detailed below on a continuing basis, both for internal uses and for external public release of "white papers" and other publicity. This research should be conducted using a combination of professional researchers, probably including people from the local labor education programs, and participant action research done by activists in the movement at the various employing institutions. Contingent faculty have a great many research skills already that can be mobilized for this task if the organizational structure and goals are clear, especially if there is some funding for expenses, and preferably stipends to allow activists to defer acceptance of borderline additional courses and still be able to make their basic customary living expenses. This could have the effect of both getting better research data, "better" defined as more directly useful for organizing, as well as building the movement by the involvement on a substantive level by a great many more people. Another movement-building aspect of this practice would be that it would be a chance for contingent faculty to utilize hard-won skills and painfully gained knowledge, knowledge gained through experiences felt as injuries, in a context in which this same knowledge becomes a positive contribution to a respected collective effort.

Research object should include accurate counts of existing contingent faculty, existing pay, benefits and other conditions of employment and a contract bank of existing collective agreement provisions covering contingent faculty. Also important would be any institution-specific unique characteristics of the contingent faculty labor force, such as informal levels of organization, concentrations of activists, turnover rates, particular disciplines or fields and programs (credit transfer, vocational, adult education, continuing education, contract ed, corporate ed, etc.) that employ many or few contingents. Further demographic data would also be useful, to better give a picture of how contingent faculty vary and are alike across the area and within institutions.

Another area of necessary research would be corporate or employer research, looking at each employing institution as well as those associations and links between them. This corporate research would include both the informal and formal power structures of these institutions; profile of the student body; student organizations or history of student activism; legal ownership and control; funding sources; major contractors and vendors; major sources of contracts; institutional history; past and present industrial relations, past and present other unions and personal histories of leading administrators, “owners” and board members. The general question is: “What are the levers of power, and who holds them?” This could be considered reverse strategic planning, or SWOT analysis.

Another focus of research would be to assemble collections of journalistic and other published pieces that have been done on contingent faculty, their work and the implications of the change in employment situation in higher education. This collection would have value as an orientation for media people, new activists and others. This resource center would help in labor education of members and might broaden to other contingent and campus workers.

Another major area of research, both initial and continuing, would be to assemble lists of contingent faculty with as much complete personal data as possible, both home and employment data, and to update that list to a high level of accuracy over an extended time. This list would have two major separate characteristics and uses. One would be the coding of activists or potential activists who would be called upon for assistance in various ways when a need or activity arose that matched their availability and interest. Second, the more general list would include all of those actually working in the sector and, as time passed, those who had worked in the sector and might well return. The obvious usefulness of both these lists hardly needs to be explained in the context of organizing.

Another research effort, through interviews and documents, would be to develop a more complete and balanced view of the history of organizing campaigns in the area and the people who led them would have a number of important values. Many of those people are re-activatable. The mining of this data can produce lessons to help guide subsequent organizing. The compilation of such a history, in various forms -- perhaps ultimately as a short book or pamphlet and/or video, could serve a number of useful organizing and educational purposes.

Finally, yet another area of research necessary is political/legal. It would be necessary to bring together the best information existing on the legal status not only of bargaining rights and organizing protections for contingent faculty in all of the various subsectors, but also legal and political research on their other individual and collective rights as employees. This should include keeping up on the changing legal climate regarding the

rights of contingents to “concerted activity for mutual aid and protection” in the NLRA and state laws, even for those not currently represented by board certified unions. Further, based upon the demographic data assembled, legal research should investigate possible civil rights claims based upon discrimination against contingents constituting actual discrimination against women or other protected groups.

In all of these research functions, the project should also utilize the research function so as to build alliances and relationships that will be needed in other aspects of the work. Included especially within this are other contingent worker groups, national and local; all unions and other organizations of any employees at any institutions employing contingent faculty. These are just the two most obvious examples. The general rule here is that research should be approached not primarily as a technical function, but as organizing function in itself, subject to the same goals, constraints and allocation of resources as any other aspect of organizing and that it should be viewed *itself* as organizing. If data is gathered at the expense of hurting future sources of solidarity internally or externally, then the research is counterproductive.

### **A “Contingent Faculty Center”: virtual and actual**

One of the aspects of recent organizing research and practice that has been most encouraging and successful in the United States has been the rise of the Workers’ Center concept as a focal point for organization of workers not merely vis a vis their immediate employer of the moment but also as a way for them to come together and collectively speak to a much wider range of their needs as working people in their communities.

#### **The virtual center**

Recent organizing in Chicago, especially the examples of Roosevelt and College of DuPage, and the emerging experience in the City Colleges of Chicago have shown that web pages, Email, a cyber version of a printed newsletter, and listserv communications can fill communications gaps that otherwise might be, if not insurmountable, at least certainly very difficult to overcome. The fact that nearly all contingent faculty today possess Email accounts, many of them personal accounts as well as accounts through their employer(s), gives us the opportunity to conduct virtual participatory democracy organizationally as well as informationally to a level that simply was not logistically possible before. Perhaps this is the completing of the circle from the days decades ago when most workers lived within walking distance of their work, within walking distance of their meeting halls, and people could meet together in person to make the decisions that were necessary to further their organization. That is a loss that I propose is now partially recoverable on the basis of computerized communications and by taking advantage of both the mobility and the need for a continuous regular center of contingent faculty. It could be also used to mobilize support for actions, via the listserv, to take polls, to have discussions, to provide class resources for people like guest speakers or emergency substitutes in class. This virtual center could also be a vehicle for many direct services that I will discuss in the next section.

## **The physical center**

The other aspect of this center would be a physical location, probably near downtown Chicago initially and perhaps with satellites in other places as the movement progresses. Perhaps in one of the vacant union halls on the Near West Side near both University of Illinois at Chicago and Malcolm X College. This would be a combination service, social, organizing and educational center. Possible services that could be physically present at this center would be basic office services (fax, computers for secure Email and web access, voicemail and phones, printers, copy machine, a place where people could receive packages like books that only get delivered during the day and have to be signed for). This aspect of the service at the center would be significant and probably would serve to draw people physically into the facility who might not otherwise come by.

Another aspect of the physical center would be to serve as an office for the organization, a place that files could be kept centrally, databases maintained and updated, phone calls made, and generally provide a physical organizational center, which while not absolutely necessary for a living, breathing organization, is very advantageous. However, this aspect of the center should never become primary. If it becomes mainly the “office” of the organization and the habitation of staff people, then it has lost its most important character.

It could be a place for the production of a periodic newsletter, both in print and electronic forms, along with other literature. Other aspects of the center would be as a site for meetings of medium or small size, in a comfortable, clean, respectful meeting room, with requisite facilities and hopefully capabilities for light cooking and provision for childcare.

Yet another aspect for the center would be as a social center, using “social” in the broadest possible term, meaning a physically safe place where contingent faculty can come together and talk without fear. This would be a place where refreshments would routinely be kept and an open door to socializing would be maintained along with a facility for more organized and formal social events.

Another use of this center would be as a physical location for the information and resources accumulated by the research function mentioned above. This would then dovetail into another function of the center which would be as a site for labor education. Experience with this very fearful group as well as general experience as a labor educator, teaching in many different physical locations, confirms to me that a physical location like this center as a site for labor education, broadly defined, is essential, both to stimulate broad discussion and to provide an opportunity for much-needed leadership to emerge from the ranks. This could be a place where information about the whole movement locally and nationally was centralized. Included could be not just unionizing information, but also information about activity in and by professional and

disciplinary organizations. Likewise, information here could serve to connect contingent faculty to the broader labor movement through literature and the use of local labor education programs, contributing to broader solidarity and consciousness.

Finally, this site would be a physical location that would be a node of solidarity, for meetings and as a meeting place for planning actions by the organization but also as a physical location that others in the community, in the labor movement, on campuses and the press would come to know as the place where the new majority college teachers, as a whole metropolitan group, could be contacted for information, for assistance, or for any other purpose.

As the movement develops, there are undoubtedly other aspects and functions that a center such as this will perform but without the location, both on line and in a physical place, those new ideas and uses might never emerge.

### **Services**

One of the principles of successful mass organization and especially union organization is the necessity to integrate individual and collective services in an immediate and direct sense with the organizing of people to engage in advocacy and struggle for changes in the system in which they find themselves. This is particularly important if the goal is to have a membership and an activist core that is fully representative of the workforce as a whole. This proposal suggests that the organization developed should strive to engage in a variety of services falling into generally two categories: professional services and personal services.

#### **Professional services**

One of the most important professional services would be regarding employment itself. This could initially be a job bank created by soliciting, and pressuring, as many employers as possible to list all their openings, contingent and tenure track, with the organization, to be accessed by members. As strength is gained, and leverage is accumulated, such a bank could evolve into an actual hiring hall with referral agreements with employers under various kinds of contractual arrangements. One of the ways to begin to develop that strength is to provide as many employment services as possible as soon as possible. Another employment service that could be provided would be a collection of ratings and reports on the conditions in various schools and departments as a guide for applying for work where conditions were best.

Other aspects of professional services that could be developed might be the sponsorship of professional development classes, especially those that focused on various aspects of pedagogy (or andragogy), teaching on an interdisciplinary basis that would be of interest to a whole range of contingent faculty. It could result in the creation of a teaching network from the base up rather than controlled by FT faculty and employers. Other professional services could include assistance in preparing portfolios and

CV's/resumes, a listing to employers of people available for work, along with credentials and fields, listing of people available for substituting, a member directory and assistance in attending conferences in one's field.

### **Personal services**

Under the category of personal services, clearly the most pressing is to collect a sufficiently large group to try to gain health and retirement benefits and then other traditional supplements to salary that are enjoyed by regular employees. In the short term, up to date listings and referrals to free, inexpensive or sliding scale health services would be an assist to a great many of our members, but in the long run, the effort to directly provide health insurance, either through a Taft-Hartley trust with multiple employers signing on or through other sorts of provisions, is a major service goal. Additionally, by bringing people together around this issue and their own personal needs, this can well be a spark to help in the organizing of political pressure for national health care and a close and continuing relationship with the existing movement for universal health care which already has organizational expression here in Chicago and some history of alliance with contingent faculty struggles.

Another personal service that can be both an organizing magnet as well as a very valuable economic assist is help with filing for unemployment and in assisting members on unemployment appeals when that is necessary. In Illinois, contingent faculty, since they are "without reasonable assurance of reemployment" by definition are eligible for unemployment insurance based on their previous employment. This eligibility exists any time they are between semesters or if they have no work over a period of time, like a summer or a regular semester. The vast majority of contingent faculty, not surprisingly given their unorganized state, are completely ignorant of their eligibility to collect unemployment. The same model could be applied, at least as far as legal referrals, for worker compensation problems. Likewise other employment law rights could be better enforced if the MSO center assisted, such as OSHA, civil rights laws, ADA, FMLA. Unfortunately FLSA mainly does not apply to contingent faculty at this time, but there may be other laws at the state level that do, as further research could reveal.

There are, without a doubt, other personal services such as discounts, buying clubs, group legal and child care services, credit union, and the whole assortment of member services that many unions offer their members that could be provided through the organization, either through affiliation with a national union or by direct negotiation by the MSO. Locally these could include discounts on computers and software, office supplies and equipment, books and subscriptions, access to fee-based on line data bases and research tools, and other items contingent faculty typically have to purchase. Treated in the right context, these can be union-building services and not merely the development of consumerism or "clientelist" relations.

### ***Assistance for organizing***

The previous research demonstrates clearly that some of the main obstacles to self-organization among contingent faculty on the campuses are fear, fatalism, and ignorance, which of course are deeply related to each other. The experience of the 1997 Teamster/UPS strike with its ringing public demand of “A Part-Time America Won’t Work” and more importantly, its generation of clear majority public support for this basic equity demand, probably did more to revitalize the contingent faculty movement than anything else in the last decade. It did this in two ways. One, it generated massive positive publicity for the struggle against the inequities of casualized part-time labor. How to continue and build on that positive publicity is the subject of the section following this one. The other way that strike assisted organization in this sector was by breaking down the feelings of fear and fatalism, especially fatalism, by showing a massive national popular victory, and one that involved many of our own working-class students directly, to boot. Even without the documented (Wolf 2002) example that the strike was a direct inspiration for the Columbia College campaign in Chicago, it would still be a key event to learn from. Drawing from this, the assistance for organizing that the MSO can try to provide should be directed toward giving people on the campus the confidence to overcome fatalism, the courage to act in spite of their fear, and solid information and previous examples to dispel their ignorance. In a word, what the MSO should do is give people a sense that they are part of a movement that is growing, developing, and welcoming.

Obviously, one thing is a safe, comfortable, accessible and confidential place for people to meet and begin the process of getting to know each other and forming viable campus committees. It is also a place where people could bring the specific problems that emerge, collective and individual, that need to be acted upon if possible, as the local committee begins to act like a union, even long before bargaining rights can be achieved. This would be easier for those committees to do if they have the backing of the MSO supporting, advising and educating them. Some of these committees may well remain essentially minority unions for a good long time. Others may be able to move toward direct bargaining campaigns relatively quickly, but all need to be nurtured, assisted, and their activists supported and educated in the metropolitan wide social unionism embodied in this strategy. Similar activities, already underway, could be fostered in various professional organizations.

Other aspects of concrete assistance to organizing, besides a physical place to meet and general inspiration and support of being in a movement, would be collective access to the services and resources mentioned above: labor education, legal resources, other information in the resource center gathered about contingent faculty, samples of materials used in other schools, information on the state of contingent faculty elsewhere -- all of these are key assistance to organizing.

Another concrete assistance for organizing and one in which the metropolitan strategy has already demonstrated its effectiveness, in Boston COCAL, is its ability to provide actual activists on site to staff picket lines, pass out leaflets, and do other initial public activities that might be difficult for the committee itself to do or do by itself in the early stages of the campaign. The capacity to bring people could also be used in support of direct action tactics if they are utilized on a campus.

Another form of assistance for organizing would be freeing initial organizing committees from total dependence on outside staff organizers from major unions, and would give them greater autonomy, freedom of motion and ability, as it were, to have a little more bargaining power when the time came to decide on union affiliation. The history of organizing in Chicago demonstrates that committees would be strengthened with this kind of assistance. Materially, this sort of assistance could take the form of being able to produce leaflets cheaply, on their own; being able to assemble a database independently, being able to create letterhead, logos and buttons, and run phone banks. All of these are things that demand resources and the need for them is a significant factor in making people feel that they have to affiliate right away with a national union. This will strengthen the movement by allowing local leadership a chance to develop, grow, learn and build respect among their own base before giving up the amount of authority that is always compromised by the affiliation agreement in exchange for the resources that such an agreement brings. Enlightened state and national union leadership should see this independent movement and leadership building as advantageous in the long run since it makes for stronger local unions who are more likely to help with organizing and other later efforts elsewhere.

### ***Regional publicity***

As mentioned above, generating a constant stream of publicity about contingent faculty, positive attention to the organizing movement, and a critical pro-“new majority” faculty view toward what is going on in higher education, would be another major function of the organization. So the first requirement for publicity is that the organization be a steady beacon light in the community that says, “Contingent faculty information HERE, “ and includes our take on higher education and all the issues surrounding it.

Clearly, though, that is a minimal publicity function, and much more is both needed and possible. When events occur that impact contingent faculty, whether budget cuts, tuition increases, administrative restructuring, privatization, contracting out, proposed mergers, etc. the organization should be in a position to issue press releases effectively. The organization should be in a position to effectively comment authoritatively -- not in a sectarian fashion in competition with other existing organizations -- but with the particular slant that no one else specifically has, common to contingent faculty, on all issues that arise.

Besides the obvious value of helping to build public support and alliances, this sort of activity has a major role in breaking down the fear and fatalism felt by contingent faculty. To see their own issues reflected back at them in the public sphere, with their own pro-faculty, pro-working-class twist, is still rare enough that it causes instant comment among contingent faculty, and the evidence is frequently immediately posted upon office doors and walls. Just as in political campaigns, when the purpose of lawn signs is not so much to change people's minds as to activate those who are favorable to act on their opinions, likewise one of the key reasons to inform generate public publicity is to encourage, solidify and embolden the ranks.

Final point on publicity: This function, along with internal communications, is frequently an area where unions find their democratic processes at their weakest. The fear of having a self appointed "loose cannon" spokesman say the wrong thing or go off-message is deep in most organizational leader's hearts. I would argue that the MSO should try and avoid that fear by encouraging, and training, every activist to be a spokesperson. If any group of workers ever existed who had the capacity, if educated on the issues and techniques, to speak for themselves and be self-activated, contingent faculty have got to be the one.

### ***Direct demands and advocacy***

Along with being a center for publicity and organizing, the function where those two aspects would come together most pointedly would be when the organization is mature enough to begin to make direct demands upon area employers and upon the political system (which in some cases is also the employer, especially in mayoral Chicago). The regional publicity generated could gradually create a change in public climate, already begun, that would make it possible to not just publicize struggles at particular campuses or the "plight" of contingent faculty in general, but also make regional demands, as with SEIU's Justice for Janitors, on groups of employers, such as perhaps the multiple private sector colleges in the Loop in Chicago.

These regional demands of employers could start with basic services, such as a demand that they all send all of their job announcements, full-time, part-time, temporary and permanent, to the organization. The next step would be, of course, to get them to agree to entertain referrals from the organization directly. And of course from then the next step is on to a hiring hall. Other issues as well could be subject to the standard-setting pressure of such organizational activity. These regional demands could of course be connected to regional publicity campaigns and coordinated with existing organizing efforts going on particular campuses at any given time. The capacity to strategically plan such efforts, and then execute them, would be one of the major advantages of the MSO and which no existing organization is capable of locally at this time or in the foreseeable future. Campus Equity Week in Chicago gave a glimmer of what might be possible.

The same vehicle, used in different ways perhaps, could be a form for placing demands upon the political system. Publicly elected boards, other local officials, state government, and through participation in the national movement, even the federal government through local Senators and Representatives could be pressured. This pressure, and this agreement for solidarity in action in the political realm, will only come when there is sufficient pressure from the base among contingent faculty themselves to force existing political and union organizations, with their lobbyists and staff, to drop their sectarian divisions and move together.

### ***Alliances, coalitions and external solidarity***

One of the elements repeated by organizers in their interviews as something they wished they had done more of, or had the resources to do more of, was building ties with other potentially supportive groups on campus and off. The metro strategy organization could play a key role in accomplishing this. One of the limitations of even the best local union that includes contingent faculty at a particular institution is that they get so taken up with the minutiae of daily operations, with their own administration, their own members, and their own affiliate relationships, that the need to develop and nurture relationships with allies goes unmet. Then the crisis comes and the need becomes crucial, but many of the seeds may have died for lack of water in the intervening period. The MSO can play an ongoing coalitional role as a beacon of contingent faculty interests in the broader labor and progressive movement, even when individual organizations and local unions may have to drop back from this sort of activity periodically. This could be an aspect of delegated movement democracy at its best, rather than at its most bureaucratic.

These alliances like all good alliance strategies, need to start close to home, with the other unions and organizations on the campuses themselves. Here again the more advanced experience in Boston provides some examples. Their University Organizing Project has brought together campus labor groups with student labor support and political organizations to support organizing on campuses all over the Boston area among workers of all sorts, not merely contingent faculty. Likewise, the metro strategy embodied in Boston COCAL, has led to participation by contingent faculty in the regional Campaign on Contingent Work (CCW) which is a coalition body of contingent worker organizations and advocacy bodies.

On the campuses, efforts should be made to especially create the best possible relations with FT faculty and their unions, if organized. This may often be difficult but experience has shown that persistence, even over a period of years, can pay big results. Alliances with other campus unions are often easier and those with clerical, service workers and technical workers are worth cultivating. Alliances with students are especially important in this period because of the growing need and demand for higher education among students and potential students, given the state of the economy, and at the same time, the increased tuition and budget cuts resulting in less actual

accessibility to higher education. This is one context in which Paul Johnston's concept of public service unionism especially in its anti-corporate, anti-commercial characteristics, can be important. It can help to unify contingent faculty and at the same time place potential alliances with students, other workers on the campus and elements off the campus on a more principled basis. Another aspect particular to contingent faculty in this regard is the need to make explicit the inherent feminist, pro-woman and anti-sexist content of contingent faculty demands, given the disproportionate number of women occupying contingent positions as opposed to tenure track positions. This means pointing out at every opportunity that discrimination that differential treatment of contingent faculty is, among other things, discrimination against women, economically and otherwise. This opens the door to alliances with women's groups on campus and off.

Another special characteristic of contingent faculty, also noted by Johnston, that can be exploited to build alliances, is our placement as a bridge between working class students, especially vocational students, and the jobs that they are going to assume, which in many cases instructors have come from themselves, or still perform. Especially now, with the proletarianization of contingent faculty, this strategic position opens up possibilities for alliances throughout the regional labor force that the students will go into.

Yet another area for alliances that could be exploited and assisted by the MSO is the emerging national network, not only of contingent faculty activists and organizations, but of contingent worker activists and organizations, especially under the umbrella of the North American Alliance for Fair Employment (NAFFE).

In summary, the MSO can play an important role maintaining, developing and initiating necessary alliances for the movement that any local union would have difficulty doing itself.

### ***Alternatives in sponsorship and organizational structure***

One of the key problems in any effort to organize an entire geographic area, even within a single employment sector, are the varying organizational interests in and around the labor movement that already exists. The difficulties of making one's way through the minefield of jurisdictional claims, historic prejudices, and simple parochialism and careerism are well known. One goal in making this proposal to any organization or group of organizations is to maintain to the maximum extent possible positive relations with existing groups and still sustain a sufficient degree of relative autonomy for the project so as to maintain the essential character of the proposal. Any union or group of unions accepting this proposal or a version of it would need to be prepared for some degree of transformation, since the successful organization of this large number of people in Metro Chicago would definitely alter the balance of forces in the unions involved and in the labor movement locally. Any sponsorship or

combination of sponsorships would impact questions of staffing, budget, organizational structure, dues, affiliations, and other organizational matters for the MSO.

In spite of the foregoing, of the possible sponsorships imaginable, clearly the preferable one would be a coalition or consortium of unions, probably the IFT and IEA and both of their national affiliates and perhaps including AAUP, perhaps under the umbrella of their national higher ed joint project agreement that now stands in the place of the failed merger proposal of some year ago. Added to that could be, optimally, the Chicago Federation of Labor and the Illinois Federation of Labor. A consortium of unions could then appoint trustees for the project, but then allow sufficient autonomy for operational leadership to emerge democratically from the base with the understanding that ultimately, as bargaining units were formed, there would be joint agreement as to who got the affiliation where, or joint affiliation, which is becoming more common in educational unionism anyway. Given enough political will, this idea is the most attractive because it provides the basis for the most substantial allocation of funds for a sufficient period of time to really test the model. This would probably be a minimum of two years, but preferably longer.

A second scenario could very easily be combined with the first or might be forced to stand on its own. This would be for the existing Chicago COCAL to constitute itself as the kernel of a new MSO and, through the auspices of NAFFE, and its foundation funding and other contacts with foundations, establish itself financially on that basis. This would not necessarily imply that the MSO was going to become an independent union, but rather, through the exercise of ongoing solidarity, the project would hope to develop positive relations with both individuals and organizations to make effective movement building throughout the sector possible. This would, certainly, result in the growth of existing unions and in new units being created.

Less attractive alternatives, of course, are that this project would be taken on independently by IEA/NEA or by IFT/AFT. (I assume that AAUP is not a possibility since it has a little organizational strength in the area and no CB units.) This would probably mean less funding, more sectarian inter-organizational difficulties, and would virtually ensure contested elections down the road and organizational activities that were not geared toward broader movement-building.

It is possible that the national AFL-CIO might, through its organizing department, be prevailed upon to exercise some influence here given the substantial size of this sector nationally and its potential for organizing in the relatively near term. Serious AFL-CIO support would make a crucial political difference, not only with the state and local federations of labor, but perhaps in being an "honest broker" vis-à-vis the teachers' unions.

One structural question, though, that will require changes by whoever sponsors this, will be the acceptance of organizational membership by individuals long before collective bargaining is achieved. Whether that membership is in MSO alone or also in affiliate unions, how much the dues would be, how they would be collected, are all matters subject to negotiation. If we wait until we can clear the legal barriers to majority-status exclusive representation as the only way to organize this, or many other sectors of contingent and other unorganized workers, then it is very unlikely that it will happen in our lifetimes. In education especially, the heritage of minority unions is explicit and strong and we should build on it and learn from it.

### **Note on Sources**

For readability, most footnotes and sources have been omitted. However, nearly all of this material is drawn from the 2002 dissertation by Joe Berry, *Contingent Faculty in Higher Education: An Organizing Strategy and Chicago Area Proposal*, Union Institute and University. Available on the internet at <<http://www.chicagococal.org>> or <<http://www.fairjobs.org/fairjobs/organize/campus/dissertation/>>. Additionally, an earlier version of the vocabulary list appeared previously in Helena Worthen and Joe Berry, *Contingent Faculty in Public Higher Education in Pennsylvania, Spring 1999: Focus on the Community Colleges*. Keystone Research Center, 1999.

# Appendices

## 1. A Note on Vocabulary

A barrier in the way of successfully dealing with the issue of contingent labor in academia (and in the society generally) has been the constantly growing and changing vocabulary used to describe these workers. In hopes of clarifying the discussion, on the next page following is a list of many of the various terms used to describe the two main employment statuses in academia. Some terms have been known to cross columns depending on who is talking, which only adds to the confusion.

Regular	Contingent	
Full-time	Part-time	Fixed term
Tenured or tenure-track	Nontenure-track	External
Permanent	Visiting (various ranks)	Community-based
Senate	Temporary	Clinical
Ranked (as in academic rank)	Occasional	Applied
Voting	Non Senate	Non-regular
Department member	Unranked (as in academic rank)	Extension
Faculty	Adjunct	Continuing Education
Professor: Full, Assoc., or Assis.	Instructor	Non-academic
Core	Lecturer	Non-remunerated
Presidential appointment	Casual	Non-ladder
Traditional	Limited term	Wife or faculty wife
Standard	Dean's appointment	Emergency wife
Salaried	Student (graduate)	Emergency hire
Teacher-of-record	Peripheral	Ad hoc
Hard money	New model	Assistant
Line (as in having a budget line)	Nontraditional	Graduate assistant
Continuing	Nonstandard	Teaching assistant
Continuing contract	Hourly	Teaching associate
Standing	Section leader	Specialist
Internal	Sessional	Nonvoting
Academic	Yearly	Contract
Ladder	Soft money	Limited Contract
Contract	Grant-funded	
	Non-line (as in not having a budget line)	

## 2. Explanation of Acronyms

**AFT:** American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO affiliated education union. Has largest number of contingent faculty members of any union.

**AAUP:** American Association of University Professors, traditional professional association (unaffiliated) of professors, now also functioning as a bargaining agent in some places.

**CAUT:** Canadian Association of University Teachers, large unaffiliated union of Canadian professors, similar to AAUP in that they started as a non bargaining association and have become a union.

**CEW:** Campus Equity Week, born at COCAL IV in San Jose, a week of actions in October 2001 (and planned for 2003) across the US and Canada to draw attention to issues of contingent faculty. See <<http://www.cewaction.org>>.

**Coalition on the Academic Workforce:** group of disciplinary associations, mostly in humanities and social sciences, along with the AAUP, who published a major study on the use and conditions of contingent faculty, based on surveys to departments.

**COCAL:** The Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor, a series of floating conferences since 1997 (Washington, DC, NY, Boston, San Jose, Montreal and Chicago (COCAL VI, summer 2004) as well as a small group of local coalitions tying contingent faculty together across organizational lines (Boston, Western NY, Chicago, California)

**ESL:** English as a Second Language, the study and teaching of English to non-native speakers, also TESOL, the professional association, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

**FTE:** Full Time Equivalent, the amount of load (classes and other work) that goes into a full-time job. Can also be used as FTES, referring to full-time equivalent student enrollment in another context.

**FT:** Full-time tenure track, faculty who have tenure or on the road to it. The traditional status of college professors, now a minority.

**NAFFE:** North American Alliance for Fair Employment, alliance of contingent worker groups and their close allies/advocates, from day laborers to college teachers. Their Campus Action Group has functioned as an ongoing leadership discussion for the contingent faculty movement.

**NEA:** National Education Association, largest education union in the US. Not affiliated with AFL-CIO.

**NCES:** National Center for Education Statistics, of the US Dept. of Education, main source of statistical information on higher education staffing

**UAW:** United Automobile Workers, AFL-CIO. Historic auto union now organizing among professional workers and has major units among grad employees, and some other contingent academics, especially in CA, MA, and NY.

### **3. Selected annotated bibliography for further reading:**

A fuller list is available in the *Contingent Faculty in Higher Education* (dissertation noted above).

#### **A. Transformation of Higher Education**

This employment sector has become more important with the growth of the service economy and changes are taking place that many call the corporatization of the university (Aronowitz 2000; Nelson 1996, 1999; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; White, 2000; Soley, 1995) Along with other factors, this has led to higher education becoming a major site of labor struggle in the last fifteen years. These struggles have included, at one time or another, nearly all sections of the workforce, from custodians and food service workers to, in some cases, full-time tenured faculty. (Martin, 1998). So, higher education as a faculty employer has been the focus of a number of studies. The most comprehensive one, focusing upon unionized faculty and their collective bargaining contracts, is Gary Rhoades' (1998) *Managed Professionals: Unionized Faculty and Restructuring Academic Labor*. The rise of the openly for-profit corporate university is also a rising factor, both in market share and in exerting competitive pressure on traditional institutions to behave more like corporations. One book that summarizes and defends these changes from a managerial perspective is Hirsch and Luc (1999), *Challenges Facing Higher Education at the Millennium*. There is also developing a small literature about the rising graduate employee unionization movement, of which Nelson's *Will Teach for Food* (1997) is perhaps the best known.

#### **List**

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## **B. Rise of Contingency and organizing among contingent faculty**

While there has been a great deal of writing on the growth of the contingent faculty over the past thirty years, most of it has been purely descriptive and/or seemingly oriented toward the interests of administrators who hire or supervise contingent faculty (Gappa and Leslie, 1993). Recently there have also been books written or edited by contingent faculty themselves (Dubson, 2001; Schell and Stock, 2001, Herman and Schmid, 2003 and Johnson et al, 2003), with the latter two edited volumes have some discussion of both strategy and the broader political economy of higher education. While welcome, and not mainly directed toward higher education administrators and their problems as managers, these books and articles have generally remained descriptive in character. Some of them contain exceedingly realistic and outraged stories of abusive conditions, economic privation and gross disrespect. These pieces testify to both the material and political basis for a potential organizing movement among contingent faculty. They have generally not gone beyond, at most, case studies of a particular organized effort at a particular institution. The gradual accumulation of these case studies, predominantly from the East and West Coasts, is a useful, in fact essential, precondition to a more general strategic discussion. As a whole, the existing literature testifies to the fact that labor conditions of contingent academics have been much easier for academics to write about descriptively than to develop strategies to change those conditions. We are left with many words on paper and the vast majority of contingent academics still unorganized.

The development of organizing strategy has barely begun in public print (Moser 1999, 2000, Schell 2001, Zabel 2000, Suhrbur, 2002) but is beginning to take place at various conferences, most notably the national Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor gatherings. Among the key reasons for this state of affairs is that those in a position to write authoritatively have little time to learn about experiences around the nation and even less time to write synthetically and strategically about them. It is all most activists can do to keep ahead of the necessities of their own struggle locally, along with keeping body and soul together. This is doubly ironic since this group of activists and this workforce generally have the writing, research and other technical skills to theorize and strategize on paper about their own situation. In this they are different from most workers and union activists, who must depend on outside academics, other sympathetic intellectuals, the odd worker-intellectual, labor educator, or researcher. A recent symposium in *Thought and Action* indicates some directions this discussion might take with Kerchner, Cobble and others seriously searching the contemporary and historical record for precedents the might guide the development of strategy (Cobble 1999, Kechner 1999, Gray 1999).

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Also see web pages of AFT, NEA and AAUP:

<<http://www.aft.org>>

<<http://www.nea.org>>

<<http://www.aaup.org>>