



Casual Nation

The American system of higher education faces an unprecedented crisis: half of all college teachers work for inadequate pay and benefits and have no institutional voice.

A REPORT BY THE COALITION OF GRADUATE EMPLOYEE UNIONS

For more information about graduate employee unions, see www.cgeu.org

Summary

The American system of higher education faces an unprecedented crisis: half of all college teachers work for inadequate pay, have little or no benefits and no institutional voice.

Universities increasingly rely on graduate students and adjunct faculty to teach every branch of the curriculum. As a result, there is a mushrooming group of “casual” teachers at all universities, who work without job security and without academic freedom. These casual teachers include:

- Graduate teachers who teach lectures, labs, seminars, and discussion sections;
- Part-time faculty who piece together a living by teaching courses at several institutions;
- Full-time lecturers and instructors who are shut out from the tenure track and are reappointed on an annual basis;

This report shows that:

- The percent of part-time faculty has grown from 22% in 1970 to 41% in 1995.
- Universities award more new PhDs than they hire each year—one-third more in 1995.
- Women and people of color comprise 58% of all full-time temporary instructors, but only 25% of senior professors.¹

The trend, casualization, harms both educators and the education they provide because teachers lack a voice in their working conditions. Without such a voice, they cannot protect the quality of education by advocating for limits on workloads and class sizes or for increased teacher training and support.

There is hope, however. In response to casualization, faculty and graduate students are organizing unions to give themselves a stronger voice. As of 2000 there are 26 recognized graduate student unions in the United States on 62 campuses and another 20 in Canada.² As casual teachers shoulder greater responsibility for the quality of university education, they are organizing to uphold the integrity of their work and their work environments.

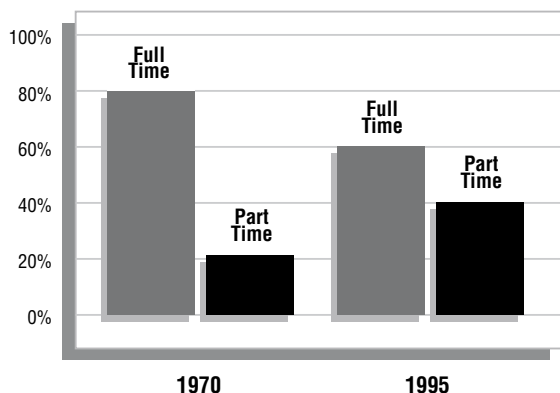
Universities Shift to Casual Teachers

One way to assess the shift to casual teachers is to compare the number of teachers who have part-time positions to the number who are full-time faculty.

The chart below demonstrates how, in the past 25 years, universities have radically shrunk the percentage of full-time faculty members they employ³ and replaced them with part-time faculty who lack representation and job security. Even among the full-time faculty, many are lecturers or instructors who have one or two-year appointments without job security.

Measuring faculty positions ignores a significant source of teaching: graduate teachers. When included, they make up about 18% of university teachers. Part-time

Increasing Portion of Faculty Jobs are Part Time



faculty are about 32%. Thus, only half of all university teachers are full-time faculty.⁴

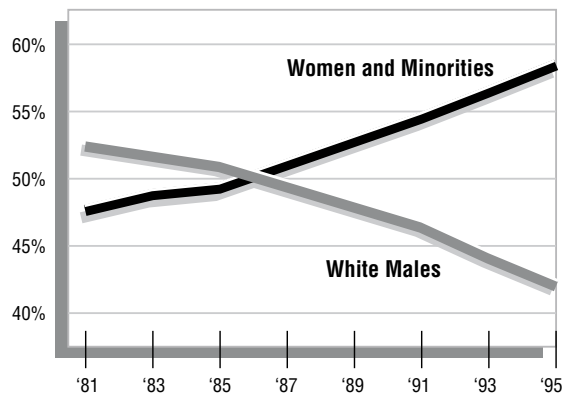
These numbers do not reveal the full extent of the problem. Counting the types of positions says nothing about each position's teaching load. Counting "Contact Hours"—the number of hours that a teacher is standing in front of a classroom—is the most accurate and simple measure. Data collected from several major universities suggest that currently 50-70% of all contact hours are performed by graduate students and contingent faculty.⁵

Everyone is affected by casualization,

but it disproportionately affects women and minority teachers:

Each year the proportion of women

Women and Minorities in F-T Temporary Jobs



and people of color in the casual academic workforce increases.⁶ While women and minority scholars comprise 40% of recent PhDs, they make up 58% of the temporary faculty and only 30% of ladder faculty.⁷

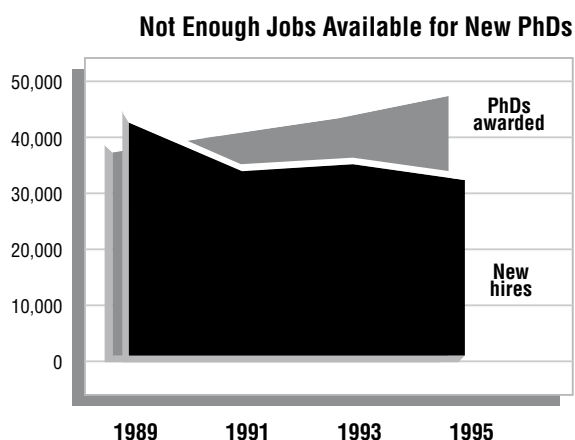
Universities have committed themselves to diversifying the academy. But the presence of qualified female and minority scholars and teachers has not led to a diversified professoriate. Sexism and racism in hiring and promotion practices force many women and people of color into casual jobs.

Each measure of university educators reaches the same conclusion: universities have shifted teaching jobs to ones that lack power and financial security, often hiring traditionally underrepresented workers to fill those positions. This situation has created the current crisis in higher education the consequences of which we examine in the rest of this report.

Educators Suffer

Traditionally, graduate students have been viewed as a privileged class who can afford to work for a few years at low wages until they complete their training, then move on to higher paid, more prestigious faculty jobs. Graduate scholars, a growing proportion of whom are women and people of diverse class and ethnic backgrounds, no longer fit this stereotype. The increasing reliance on graduate assistants and adjuncts means that secure faculty positions are more and more out of reach for thousands of graduate students.

In the 1990's, the number of new PhDs has outstripped the number of new hires.⁸



More and more graduate students find that when they finish 5-9 years of “apprenticeship” there are no jobs for them in the academy.⁹ There are currently 200,000 graduate teachers, but only 114,000 junior faculty.¹⁰ Every year the job market becomes more competitive as the candidates who have not found positions in previous years re-enter the market.

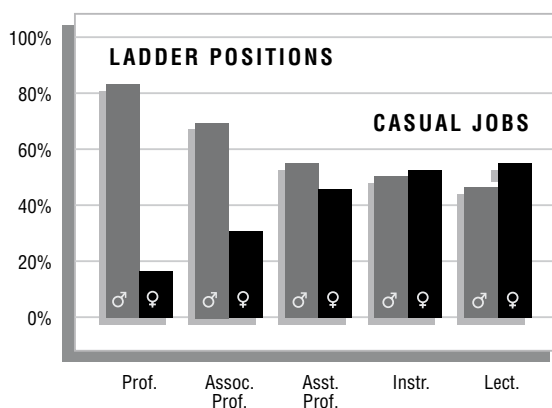
Since most doctoral candidates serve as graduate teachers, the more PhD candidates there are, the more graduate teachers there are. And the more graduate teachers there are, the fewer faculty a university needs for teaching undergraduates.

The reliance on casual teachers has

increased significance for international students. The university is often the only employer allowed by their visa, yet frequently the university does not provide access to affordable housing and family healthcare for its casual teachers.

As we have previously shown, casualization disproportionately harms women and people of color. Academic positions with good pay and job security still overwhelmingly go to white men. The chart below shows how men continued to occu-

Who Gets to Climb the Ladder?



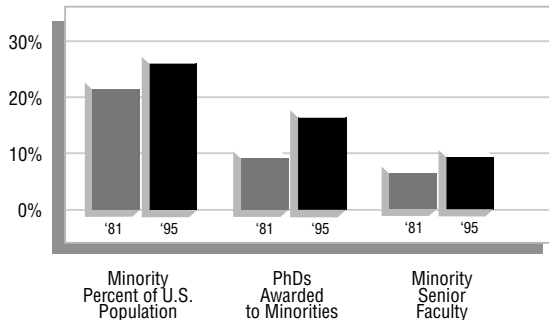
py the vast majority of tenure-track faculty jobs in 1995.¹¹

Women's later access to higher education does not account for the disparity in job placement:

- In 1986, women earned 26% of PhDs in science and engineering, increasing to over 30% by 1994. Yet in 1995, they comprised only 12.5% of associate professors under age 35.¹²
- In the field of chemistry, for example, women earned 23% of PhDs at top 10 schools between 1989 and 1993. At the same time, they accounted for only 13% of hires at those same schools from that pool of candidates.¹³

These data support the conclusions of a study by the Ford and Spencer Foundations of accomplished recently-minted PhDs which showed that women and people of color are less actively

Slow Growth in Minority Senior Faculty, 1981-1995



recruited than their white, male peers.¹⁴

As shown in the chart above, the number of minority professors is not growing as quickly as the number of minority PhDs.¹⁵

While people of color account for 9.6% of senior faculty, they make up 17.6% of non-ladder faculty.¹⁶ Relative to the number of PhDs produced, people of color are increasingly overrepresented among non-ladder faculty, just as they are underrepresented among tenured faculty.

Data indicate the cost savings a university can realize by shifting the teaching load onto casual teachers. Consider the average salary ranges of different types of teachers:¹⁷

Senior Faculty	\$80 K
Junior Faculty	\$47-56 K
Casual Faculty	\$12-37 K
Graduate teachers	\$5-20 K

The result of these trends is clear: graduate teachers provide valuable teaching as students but are increasingly forced into other casual positions when they graduate. The result is without unions, they are denied a voice in their work the entire time.

Education Suffers

When teachers have no say in the conditions under which they teach, education suffers in a variety of ways:

- **insufficient support for teaching:** class sizes grow, teacher training is neglected,

and English language training (ESL) is under-funded.

- **overworked teachers:** large classes and insufficient teaching income prevent teachers from devoting time to every student for the best education possible.
- **lack of academic freedom:** when a teacher's job depends on an administrator's support, innovative teaching and scholarship can be stifled.
- **corporate-style governance:** as institutions hire more people without a voice, power is concentrated in the central administration, thus moving further away from the ideal of faculty-governed universities.

The fact that a disproportionate number of women and people of color occupy temporary and casual positions also has negative consequences for education. Traditionally underrepresented scholars most need the protections of academic freedom and fair hiring practices achieved by collective bargaining. Without academic freedom they cannot advocate for a voice in the direction scholarship takes at their respective institutions.

Already marginalized teachers do not have the protections enjoyed by ladder faculty, such as a grievance procedure. Without contracts that protect their academic freedom, these scholars are discouraged from pursuing innovative and challenging scholarship and teaching.

The crisis comes into focus when we see that the academy, like other sectors of the economy, relies on a two-tier workforce. The segregated academy ensures that the voice of marginalized scholars is muted through the threat of punishment or dismissal.

Only by transforming all academic jobs into stable positions with academic freedom and institutional power will women and people of color, along with all casual teachers, be able to participate equally in the life of their universities.

Conclusions

By gaining union representation, graduate employees and adjunct faculty gain, first and foremost, the legal right to a voice on the job. For workers with little or no control over the most basic elements of their working lives—salary, job security, health insurance—the right to bargain collectively holds the solution to the current crisis in academic labor. Under the law, unionized employees and their employers meet with equal rights at the bargaining table to negotiate wages, benefits, and working conditions.¹⁸

Graduate student and adjunct unions have been influential in improving the quality of education at their institutions:

- Some contracts provide for department-specific TA training and strict upper limits on class size.¹⁹
- In order to improve the quality of teaching at their institutions, adjunct unions have negotiated entry and evaluation requirements for part-time faculty. As a result, unionized part-timers receive more formal employment evaluations than other part-time faculty.²⁰
- They have also arranged more office hours and been able to regulate workload.²¹

When graduate employees and adjunct faculty organize, they make concrete and impressive improvements across the board that affect educators, education, and diversity. Frequently, dramatic progress is made in the very first contract.

- Graduate students and part-time faculty with minimal or no health care coverage have either won benefits or improved their benefits through union contracts.²²
- They have secured raises and tuition remission for graduate teachers, enabling scholars from diverse economic backgrounds to pursue academic careers.²³
- International graduate students have won more affordable ESL training and

in some cases funding for room and board for summer ESL programs.²⁴

- At the University of Massachusetts, graduate teachers negotiated a contract that includes provisions for childcare, allowing graduate teachers with children the opportunity to complete their degrees.²⁵
- In addition, part-time faculty have won job security²⁶ and pro-rated salaries.²⁷

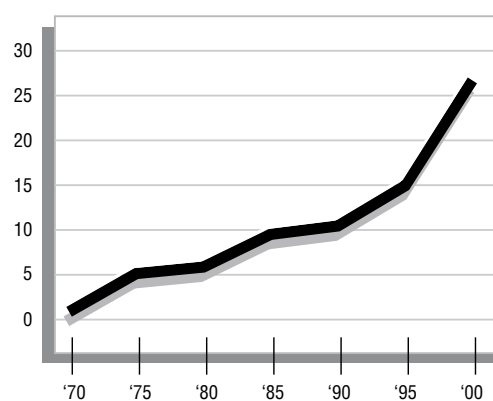
Graduate employee unions combat issues of discrimination. They have negotiated contract language that protects employees from discrimination based on race, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, political affiliation, and union activity.

Through a union contract, international students have protections that they would not otherwise have. Their voices have helped achieve more affordable ESL and other material gains.

Graduate employees who face discrimination have an independent grievance procedure with a guaranteed right of union representation, without the daunting time and cost of a lawsuit.²⁸ At the University of Michigan, the union contract established a committee to insure diversity among the TA's employed there.²⁹

Graduate students and adjunct faculty across the country are realizing that unions can substantially address some of the problems caused by casualization. The number of graduate student unions has dramatically increased in the past 15 years.³⁰

Number of Graduate Teachers' Unions



Teachers fight against casualization on campuses across the country. When they create working conditions that enable them to provide quality education for their students, everyone wins. Teachers need adequate pay, health benefits, job security, and protection from discrimination to improve the education they pro-

vide. Union contracts are an effective means of creating the conditions that enable universities to live up to their potential—educating people so they can live better lives, insuring competitiveness in the new economy and performing the research necessary to improve the world.

Notes

1. U.S. Department of Education. *Digest of Education Statistics, 1999*, NCES 2000-031, by Thomas D. Snyder, et al. Washington, D.C.:2000, p. 264 (hereafter, *DES 1999*).
2. www.cgeu.org/FAQ/basics.html/
3. Ernst Benjamin, "Some Implications of Tenure for the Profession and Society", *Perspectives*, April 1997, p. 16.
4. U.S. Department of Education. *E.D. TABS: Fall Staff in Postsecondary Institutions, 1995*, NCES 98-228, by Stephen Roey and Rebecca Rak. Washington, D.C.: 1998, p. 22 (hereafter, *Fall Staff '95*).
5. Data on contact hours was provided by the graduate student unions at New York University, University of Illinois, University of Iowa, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, University of Washington and Yale University.
6. *DES 1999*, p. 264; U.S. Department of Education. *Digest of Education Statistics, 1997*, by Thomas D. Snyder et.al. Washington, D.C. 1997 (NCES 98-015), p. 239, 1995 (NCES 95-029), p. 230, 1992 (NCES 92-097), p. 224, 1988 (CS 88-600), p. 177, 1985-6 p. 113 (hereafter, *DES 1985-6*). For a discussion of part-time and adjunct faculty, see www.theaha.org/caw/index.htm.
7. *DES 1999*, p 318.
8. *DES 1999*, p. 294 and *Fall Staff '95*, p. 33.
9. At the universities we contacted the time to degree ranged from five to nine years.
10. Benjamin, p. 16.
11. *DES 1999*, p 264.
12. National Science Foundation. *Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering: 1998*. Arlington, VA, 1999. (NSF 99-338), p. 300 and National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Studies, *Science and Engineering Degrees: 1966-97*, NSF 00-310, Author, Susan T. Hill (Arlington, VA 2000), p. 15.
13. Daryle H. Busch, "Women Scientists in Academia: The Time to Act is Now," *Chemical & Engineering News*, Sept. 25, 2000, p. 58.
14. Daryl G. Smith, "Faculty Diversity When Jobs Are Scarce: Debunking the Myths," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Sept. 6, 1996.
15. *DES 1985-1986*, p. 113, *DES 1999*, p. 264, 318. Minor fluctuations in interim years have been smoothed.
16. *DES 1999*, p. 264.
17. *DES 1999*, p. 275. There is a range in the salaries of junior faculty because this category encompasses both assistant and associate professors. For casual faculty, the higher number comes from *DES 1999*, p. 275, while the lower number comes from Barbara Croft, "Road Scholar", *Ms. Magazine*, February/March 2000, p. 44. Croft estimates that an adjunct teaching a standard load of three courses per semester at the university where she worked, makes \$12,000—or \$2,000 per course. In the case of graduate teachers, there is no national average so we have reported the range from several different schools.
18. The NLRB extended this right to graduate students at private universities. 332 NLRB No. 111. Oct. 31, 2000

19. www.umich.edu/~umgeo/contract/currentcontract/index.html.
20. www.aft.org/higher_ed/reports/professor/part4a.html.
21. Several contracts have provisions for paid office hours and limits to class size. www.aft.org/higher_ed/reports/professor/part4a.html.
22. Graduate employees at the University of Kansas, Oregon State University, and University of California campuses had no health insurance prior to unionization; all four unions negotiated paid health insurance in the first contract. Graduate employees with health insurance have improved it through unionization. www.ukans.edu/~gtac/contract.htm, www.peak.org/~cge/contract/summary.html and <http://uaw2865.org/contracts.html>. Part-time faculty in Washington, California and New York have negotiated some form of health benefits for part-time employees. www.aft.org/higher_ed/reports/professor/part4a.html.
23. At the University of Iowa, the union of graduate employees negotiated a 19% raise in the minimum salary, while maintaining a cost-of-living increase for all TAs and RAs. www.cogs.org/ZCBA.htm. Graduate employees in the University of California system negotiated a full fee remission amounting to a gain of \$4000 over three years, a 50% raise for tutors over three years, and limits on workload. http://uaw2865.org/docs/contract_berkeley.pdf. The Graduate Employees Organization at the University of Michigan has negotiated an average raise of 4.2% per year over the last five years. In the most recent contract, they bargained an appointment upgrade for 500 Graduate Student Instructors, resulting in a 28% salary increase for those employees. www.umich.edu/~umgeo/contract/currentcontract/index.html.
24. www.umich.edu/~umgeo/contract/currentcontract/index.html.
25. www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~geo/contract.pdf.
26. Several unions have negotiated various forms of job security. www.aft.org/higher_ed/reports/professor/part4a.html.
27. Pro-rated salaries have been negotiated. www.aft.org/higher_ed/reports/professor/part4a.html.
28. For example, the contract at Berkeley http://uaw2865.org/docs/contract_berkeley.pdf pp. 17-18.
29. www.umich.edu/~umgeo/contract/currentcontract/index.html.
30. www.cgeu.org/FAQ/basics.html/.