

# NEA Higher Education Advocate

VOL. 30, NO. 1 JANUARY 2013



## Using Assessment Wisely



The story behind WWU's phenomenal faculty contract

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Your solutions to the crazy costs of textbooks

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The conservative politics of contingent labor

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Forget email: Learn how to lobby more effectively

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## BUILDING A BARGAIN 3

The story behind Western Washington's new faculty contract.

## THRIVING IN ACADEME 6

How a more transparent class can help students and faculty.

## WHY I AM A MEMBER 10

Meet Ed Votes' top activist.

## THOUGHT & ACTION 12

The politics of contingency.

## THE STATE OF HIGHER ED 13

Differential tuition? Please, no.

## DIALOGUE 14

Instead of assigning expensive textbooks, consider the options.

## CASE STUDIES 15

What's new with voter rights?

## OP-ED 16

It's time for you to call your state legislator.

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# Headline News

## Try this: Your guide to supporting contingent faculty colleagues



**YOU KNOW THE NUMBER OF CONTINGENT** faculty on your campus is growing by leaps, right? And you may also believe that this over-reliance on non-tenure track faculty is a dangerous trend that contributes to the degradation of shared governance, the erosion of academic freedom, a lack of support for student learning, and so on. Well, that's all true—

but if you want to do something about it, you'll need data to make the case for changing campus policies. To that end, two new guides from the Delphi Project, a collaborative effort that includes NEA, aim to help faculty and staff examine non-tenure track faculty practices and issues at the campus level. Each guide, one for campus task forces, the other for academic departments or programs, provides questions around a variety of topics: hiring and employment practices, compensation, curriculum, office spaces, etc. (For example, "Are non-tenure track faculty invited or encouraged to attend faculty meetings?" or "What are the criteria for non-tenure track faculty to be eligible for promotion?") The Delphi tool-kits do not include lists of recommended changes, but rather guide participants to their own conclusions. "You can't have a one-size-fits-all approach," said Adrianna Kezar, Delphi Project director, to *Inside Higher Ed*. To learn more or download the guides, visit [www.thechangingfaculty.org](http://www.thechangingfaculty.org).

## NEA Higher Ed to meet in March



**THE NEA HIGHER ED CONFERENCE** will be held March 22-24 at the Portland Marriott Downtown Waterfront in Portland, Oregon. This year's conference theme, "Faculty, Students, and the Common Good," asks, "As our nation becomes increasingly partisan and polarized, especially between rich and poor, and as public education becomes increasingly underfunded and targeted by anti-egalitarian forces, what is the role of faculty, academic professionals, higher education support professionals and students in creating a more democratic, more decent society? What is the public good, and what does it mean to fight for it?" More information is available at [www.nea.org/he](http://www.nea.org/he).

## You're not too late! Keep writing!

**THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS** to NEA's peer-reviewed journal of higher education, *Thought & Action*, is January 31. Keep in mind that submissions also will be considered for the \$2,500 Excellence in the Academy awards. For guidelines, visit [www.nea.org/thoughtandaction](http://www.nea.org/thoughtandaction).

## MISSED SOMETHING?

READ PREVIOUS ARTICLES ON OUR WEBSITE

### NEW OPTIONS FOR IN-DEBT STUDENTS

The federal Pay as You Earn program seeks to relieve the student loan debt burden of recent graduates and current students.

[www.educationvotes.nea.org/2012/11/14/](http://www.educationvotes.nea.org/2012/11/14/)

### OBAMA AND HBCUS: MORE THAN WORDS

With more than \$220 million in federal grants to HBCUs, President Obama has shown his strong support for their mission and programs.

[www.educationvotes.nea.org/2012/11/03/](http://www.educationvotes.nea.org/2012/11/03/)

### NEA PRESIDENT TALKS ABOUT FUNDING

As the fiscal cliff loomed late last year, NEA President Dennis Van Roekel took to the airwaves to make the case for educators and students.

[www.educationvotes.nea.org/2012/11/15/](http://www.educationvotes.nea.org/2012/11/15/)

### HOW TO HELP YOUR COLLEAGUES IN NJ

The NJEA (New Jersey Education Association) Back to School Fund will be used to support member volunteer efforts in the communities hardest hit by Hurricane Sandy. Find out how you can help too.

[www.njea.org](http://www.njea.org)





HOW DO YOU GET A REALLY GREAT CONTRACT?

# BUILDING THE Best Bargain

When the United Faculty of Western Washington ratified their new contract last summer, they hit the mark on almost every page: academic freedom, intellectual property, job security for contingent faculty, ownership of online work, and salary too. “You are a model for leading the profession in higher education,” applauded NEA President Dennis Van Roekel. “Is this the best new contract in America?” asked the *NEA Advocate* in September. But the more useful question to pose, especially as many staff and faculty unions prepare for the bargaining table this spring, is this: How the heck did they do it?

**T**he story of Western Washington’s contract begins long before Kevin Leonard, chair of the faculty bargaining team, sat down with his teammates at the table last January. If this contract is like a lighthouse, shining a hopeful beam for faculty across the country, it’s because it was built on the bedrock of basic union principles, which United Faculty of Western Washington (UFWW) leaders first struck when they ratified their union in 2006 and then dug deeper during the bargaining around their first contract.

To say that first bargaining was long and hard would be an understatement. To describe it as acrimonious and exhausting gets closer to truth. But it also was valuable. Over the 19-month process, as union members rallied and union leaders grew more focused, they developed a deeply committed unit. Not every faculty member had wanted or voted for a union at WWU, but even those who had loudly opposed ratification picked up signs to support the bargaining team, recalled UFWW President Steven Garfinkle. At one point, UFWW gathered a petition of support that had more faculty signatures than the union had original votes.

## How did they do that?

**LESSON #1: OWN THE MISSION OF YOUR UNIVERSITY.** When the first bargaining team walked into the room and faced the most anti-union attorney that the college president could find, they had three primary goals: Protect workload, improve compensation, and sustain the quality of education provided to students at WWU, a school known for its teaching ability. “Under tremendous pressure, with incredible discipline, our bargaining

team maintained our goals,” Garfinkle said. And, in doing so, they demonstrated that the union wasn’t the thing that opponents had feared: it wasn’t about protecting mediocrity.

“We’ve been really successful in owning the mission of the university,” said Bill Lyne, president of the statewide United Faculty of Washington State, and a WWU professor of English. “That’s huge. You just keep coming back to them saying, ‘You want this to be a quality institution. If you really mean that, then this is where you have to put the money. We are how you guys recruit, retain, and graduate students.’”

This message wasn’t just delivered to administrators, it also was understood by students, parents, and the university’s trustees. “Anytime there’s a benefit to faculty there’s inherently a benefit for students,” said Ethan Glemaker, president of WWU’s student government. “That why I came to Western, because of the phenomenal caliber of the faculty.”

During this most recent bargaining, UFWW’s goals didn’t change—they were still all about faculty working conditions and students’ learning conditions. If anything, because of

current budgetary pressures to increase class sizes in some departments, the need to protect faculty workloads was even more intense, said Leonard, bargaining chair. But one significant factor had changed: the administration.

“When I first got here, I had people stopping me in the hallway and telling me, ‘Hey Bruce, you should know, *this union* is about excellence in the university,” recalled WWU President Bruce Shepard, who arrived on campus five years ago, just as the first bargain was reaching its end. “We knew this negotiation would be coming up. We’ve worked hard to make sure we have as positive a relationship as possible. That doesn’t mean making nice. It means being respectful and candid.”

Is that unusual? A college president who respects a campus union’s rights? Who thinks a strong union makes for a strong university? It’s a little bit of luck, acknowledged Lyne.

## But it’s not just luck. See Lesson #2.

**LESSON #2: HONOR YOUR STATUS AS A LEGAL EQUAL.** Gary McNeil, the Washington Education Association (WEA) organizer who has advised UFWW from the start, speaks convincingly about this basic principle of unionism. You need to respect yourself as a union. “It’s not about bluster. It’s not about ‘beating the man.’ It’s

about carrying yourself as an equal,” said McNeil. “What if you woke up one day and you were running the place? That’s what this is about. It’s very serious.” For faculty who are accustomed to shared governance, which confers the lesser power of recommendation, this is a change.

And what it looks like is this: A bargaining team comprised of some of the most highly respected faculty members on campus—people who have the confidence of both peers and administrators. It looks like stacks of notes, taken during months of preparation for the bargain, as team members examine each line of the existing contract. “Steven and Kevin always talk about being prepared,” said McNeil. “You’re not sloppy. You’re not late. You’re not flippant.”

“Within this group, there was tremendous respect,” said Sandra Alfors, associate professor and bargaining team member. “I don’t have experience with other bargains — this was my first— and maybe some others talk about the ‘other side,’ but it wasn’t like that. It was more like you had two sides working together. Listening skills were a big component of it.”

“We set ground rules right from the start,” said Leonard, and among them was the mutual acknowledgment that “both sides were deeply committed to the quality of the institution.”

One place where UFWW has been able to affirm its status as an equal to college administration is Olympia, the state capital. Over the past five years, state funding for public higher education has been cut 50 percent—“a dramatic disinvestment,” according to Bruce Shepard. But when it comes to flexing muscle in the offices of state legislators, there are few rivals to WEA, the largest labor union in the state. “We’ve been very cooperative in statewide political work—students, faculty, and administrators, and our administration has found that we’re much stronger when we work together,” Lyne said. “Our big success last year was that we had no new cuts in funding. I guess that shows how far down we are—that



**Top row:** Kevin Leonard, Steven Garfinkle, Bill Lyne; **Bottom row:** Ethan Glemaker, Bruce Shepard, Sandra Alfors



## REQUIRED READING

WEA organizer Gary McNeil has an assignment for you: Pick up and read *Tomorrow is Another Country*, by Allister Sparks. It’s the story of negotiations between Nelson Mandela’s African National Congress and senior officials in the apartheid government. You’ll see that Mandela walked into the room with self-respect and self-recognition of his equal status, and he walked out with his opponents’. So can you.

we’re calling that a success—but nobody suspected we’d be able to do it.”

## Is this the best new contract in America?

When the ink was dry and the bottom line revealed, it was the issue of compensation that claimed headlines. WWU’s team had agreed to 5.25 percent raises this year, 4.25 percent next year, and another 4.25 percent the year after. At the same time, more than \$1 million was set aside to fix salary compression—the problem you see when the salaries of long-time employees are overtaken by new hires.

For his part, Leonard doesn’t dwell on the salaries—“that’s a place where I have to give credit to the administration,” he said. His team staked its ground elsewhere. On the primary issue of faculty workload, new language makes sure it isn’t just about the number of classes, it’s also about the number of students in each class. On the growing issue of online courses, “this agreement makes very clear

that decisions about who teaches those courses will be made by faculty at the department level, and that those faculty will own their curriculum,” said Leonard.

Academic freedom was enhanced: Faculty now have the explicit right to criticize or comment on the internal operations of the university. Job security for contingent (or adjunct) faculty also was given a much-needed boost, and a new commitment to increase the number of tenure-track jobs was secured.

The contract was signed in June, after six months and 120-plus hours at the table. And when trustees put ink to the paper, student Ethan Glemaker was there. “It was this incredibly celebratory moment, this feeling that something really phenomenal had been accomplished,” he recalled. “I was just so stoked—because I feel really privileged to be here, with this faculty.”

**BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY**  
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# Thriving in Academe

## REFLECTIONS ON HELPING STUDENTS LEARN

Thriving in Academe is a joint project of NEA and the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education ([www.podnetwork.org](http://www.podnetwork.org)). For more information, contact the editor, Douglas Robertson ([drobert@fiu.edu](mailto:drobert@fiu.edu)) at Florida International University or Mary Ellen Flannery ([mflannery@nea.org](mailto:mflannery@nea.org)) at NEA.

## ■ Transparency in Learning and Teaching

Faculty and students benefit directly from a shared focus on the processes of learning and teaching.

**BY MARY-ANN  
WINKELMES**  
*University of Illinois*

### Using assessment data to improve teaching and learning

In this world of increasing accountability and shrinking resources, assessments of teaching performance and learning outcomes are commonplace on college and university campuses. But such assessments all too often produce data that all too rarely trickles down to sustainable improvements in learning and teaching practices. When was the last time assessment data actually informed your teaching? How many of your students understand how institutional assessments enhance their learning?

The Illinois Initiative on Transparency in Learning and Teaching is an innovative, grass-roots assessment program that helps teachers and students collaborate to improve their higher education teaching and learning experiences through two main activities:

- promoting students' conscious understanding of how they learn, and...
- enabling faculty to gather, share and promptly benefit from current student assessment data by coordinating their efforts across disciplines, institutions and countries.

The Initiative engages students and teachers in explicit (or transparent) conversation about beneficial learning and teaching practices. First, faculty and students experiment with various methods of examining learning/teaching processes (see Best Practices on page 8), and then they measure the results through a four-and-a-half-minute online survey, which asks students about the current and future learning benefits they are gaining. Their answers, which quickly point to the most effective learning and teaching methods for particular disciplines and student groups, can be shared and immediately acted upon.



## Meet Mary-Ann Winkelmes



**Mary-Ann Winkelmes** is Campus Coordinator for Programs on Teaching and Learning, an Administrative

Provost Fellow, and an affiliated member of the faculty in the College of Education at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, where she has responsibility for providing innovative professional development opportunities for new and veteran faculty members through fourteen discipline-based Teaching Academies. She recently completed an elected three-year term of service on the Board of Directors of the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network in Higher Education, and as chair of its research committee.

## Assessment Exhaustion?

Faculty, students and administrators all feel the strain of complying with mandated assessments. Unfortunately, so much attention to compliance can deplete our energy for applying any wisdom gained from assessment data. In a national assessment study conducted by the Wabash Institute, schools readily admitted that they didn't review assessment data for ways to improve students' learning. [Blaich and Wise 2011] But when institutions don't parse, summarize and share data in ways that benefit learning and teaching, instructors

are on their own with their course data. Consequently, their efforts are usually isolated from the larger context of information about learning practices that work best for students in similar courses in their discipline — the kind of bigger picture that makes their own evaluation results more meaningful. The process doesn't need to be so isolating and exhausting!

To combat these limitations, hundreds of instructors from the U.S. and abroad have begun using the Illinois Initiative for Transparency in Learning and Teaching to gather and share information about how students' learning experiences are improved by

teaching methods that promote their understanding of their own learning processes. The project also removes other common barriers to faculty participation in assessment, including lack of control over the process, lack of expertise, insufficient time, lack of short-term benefits to teaching and learning practices, and concerns about privacy. Participating instructors implement one of the suggested methods (see Best Practices) at their own discretion, and then

## TALES FROM REAL LIFE > THE PROCESS ORIENTED CLASSROOM

A priest, a lounge singer and a plumber walked into a classroom — my classroom, actually. Like many of their classmates, they were “non-traditional” students, ranging from all walks of life. What did they have in common? They all would be asked to work collaboratively to research and

produce a high-quality museum catalogue.

Pedagogical research told me they needed specific examples of what such work looked like. So I hunted down museum catalogue entries and articles and shared those with the students. Step by step, I identified the required tasks, in sequential

order. Despite my best efforts, the students floundered. What was standing in the way of their progress?

Publications on how novices and experts approach intellectual problems helped me understand that the students' thinking processes might be hindering their work.

And conversations with the students revealed overwhelming self-doubt in their ability to succeed at this sort of work. But it wasn't until we explicitly and frankly discussed how and why novice learners struggled in new disciplines, or how and why their learning processes might be different, that breakthroughs occurred.

One outcome was a scholarly museum catalogue—the goal of the course. The other, more important outcome was my own learning about the benefits of being transparent with students about the hows and whys of the learning and teaching process.

measure the impact on students' learning experiences with an online survey that takes students about four and a half minutes to complete. Time-consuming tasks like conducting data analysis and obtaining ethical research approvals are completed by Transparency staff, so faculty can focus their time on students. Since 2010, this grassroots project has involved more than 18,000 students at twelve institutions in five countries.

Because participating faculty share their results quickly and broadly (and anonymously, with appropriate approvals), it is already possible to identify ways that an explicit focus on learning and teaching methods can benefit students in specific disciplines at the introductory, intermediate and advanced levels.

## In the Social Sciences

In introductory, undergraduate social science courses, at least three methods have shown statistically significant benefits ( $p < .01$ ) for student learning. They are: discussing the assignment's learning goals and design rationale before students begin; using in-class peer work to gauge students' under-

standing of new concepts; and conducting in-class discussions about graded tests and assignments.

However, their efficacy depends in class size. As class size grows from 66 to 300, the second method, "peer work," seems to become less effective, while the first grows more so. In classes above 300, "debriefing" seems most effective.

## AN EXPLICIT FOCUS ON LEARNING AND TEACHING METHODS CAN BENEFIT STUDENTS.

At the intermediate level in social science courses with 30 or fewer students, another method seems beneficial. That is explicitly connecting the data around "how people learn" to course activities at difficult transition points. (For examples, see Bass, Bloom, Bransford, Gregorc, Light, Perry at: [www.teachingandlearning.illinois.edu/components\\_of\\_transparency.html](http://www.teachingandlearning.illinois.edu/components_of_transparency.html).)

In courses at this level, students also report that "gauging of students' understanding" is

significantly less helpful. This suggests that explicit discussions about understanding at the intermediate level may be redundant and unnecessary. For graduate students, "debriefing" appears to be the most effective method for enhancing learning value.

## In the Physical Sciences

Here in the U.S. in introductory, undergraduate physical courses, some of those same methods also work well. Specifically, they are: explicitly connecting "how people learn" data with course activities at difficult transition points, and discussing an assignment's learning goals and design rationale before students begin those assignments.

In introductory physical science courses, students also report benefits from the method of "gauging students' understanding," but less so when class size tops 300.

## Current and Future Learning Benefits

Last weekend, a colleague bumped into a former student who said, "Your course was so hard, I dreaded it. But now I use what I

## ■ BEST PRACTICES > SOME TRANSPARENT METHODS WITH PROMISING RESULTS

### Discuss assignments' learning goals before students begin each assignment

- Chart out the skills students will practice in each assignment in the course.
- Begin each assignment by defining the learning benefits to students: skills practiced, content knowledge gained.
- Provide criteria for success in advance.
- Offer examples of successful work, and annotate them to indicate how criteria apply. This discourages copying and encourages original work.

### Gauge students' understanding during class via peer work on questions that require students to apply the concepts you've taught

- Create scenarios/applications to test their understanding of key concepts during class.
- Allow discussion in pairs, instructor's feedback, and more discussion.

- Provide explicit assessment of students' real-time understanding, with further explanation if needed, before moving on to teach the next concept.

### Engage students in applying the grading criteria that you'll use on their work

- Share criteria for success and examples of good work (as above in #1), then ask students to apply these criteria in written feedback on peers' drafts.

### Explicitly connect "how people learn" data with course activities when students struggle at difficult transition points

- Offer research-based explanations about concepts or tasks that students often struggle to master in your discipline.



See additional methods at [www.teachingandlearning.illinois.edu/components\\_of\\_transparency.html](http://www.teachingandlearning.illinois.edu/components_of_transparency.html)



learned from you all the time!” Wouldn’t we all like to measure students’ views of our courses years later? Like my colleague, many of us wish we could measure students’ views of our course years later. Well, now we’re in luck — almost. The Transparency Initiative has indicated two benefits that its recommended methods can offer: 1) current value of the students’ learning experience, and 2) future learning benefits (based on students’ identification of lifelong learning skills they gained from a course). The latter provides a

“win-win” for teachers and students.

While instructors get a satisfying indicator of their long-term impact, students gain awareness of how the skills they are practicing in class assignments may benefit them long after course completion. Those long-term skills include communication and collaboration, as well as analytical thinking, synthetic thinking and making evaluative judgments about ideas and evidence.

## Changing How Size Matters

Most instructors notice that as class sizes increase, the quality of students’ engagement and learning often decreases. But in courses with 300-plus students where instructors built awareness of the teaching and learning process, students felt more valued by instructors than students in much smaller classes where transparency methods weren’t implemented. For example, in large social science courses at the introductory level, students exposed to the method of “in-class debriefing discussions” responded significantly more positively than students in control group courses to the question, “How much does the instructor value you as a student?” Results are similar in intermediate and advanced physical science courses using the debriefing and other transparency methods. Even in very large classes, explicit discussion of the learning and teaching methods can make students feel like they matter.

## Promoting Best Practices

Not only does the Transparency Initiative share data that informs teaching/learning practices, it also implements good practice while it collects that data. This makes the process of researching the methods valuable even before the findings are shared.

## ISSUES TO CONSIDER

### TAKE CHARGE! MAKE ASSESSMENT BENEFIT YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS

#### CAN FACULTY HAVE MORE POWER OVER ASSESSMENT?

Absolutely! And the right time is now. Six of the seven regional accrediting bodies in the U.S. have codified the necessity for faculty involvement in assessment, especially to connect assessment with educational improvement. [Provezis 2010] Representatives from three major national faculty unions — American Association of University Professors (AAUP), American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Education Association (NEA) — have agreed that faculty

must be included in deciding how to assess students’ learning outcomes and how to use assessment results. [Gold, et al. 2011] And eighty percent of chief academic officers surveyed at U.S. research universities cited “more faculty engagement” as the top priority for improving assessment efforts on their campuses. [Kuh and Ikenberry 2009]

#### WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?

You can stay informed of the most recent discoveries by the Transparency Initiative, and make those tiny adjustments to your courses that have the greatest benefits for students in your discipline at your students’ level(s) of expertise. Updated findings are posted continually



on the project’s website. You can also join hundreds of your colleagues to help the Transparency Initiative’s current focus on a question of crucial importance to higher education: how to promote retention and graduation rates for all students, and especially non-traditional and underrepresented undergraduate students. Find out more about the Transparency Initiative here ([www.teachingandlearning.illinois.edu/transparency.html](http://www.teachingandlearning.illinois.edu/transparency.html)), where you can join the project and invite your own students to complete the 5-minute online survey.

The recommended methods (see Best Practices) are compatible with the “Principles of Excellence,” “Essential Learning Outcomes” and “High Impact Practices” defined by the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ Liberal Education and America’s Promise initiative, and with research on learning and teaching practices. [Ambrose 2010, Nilson 2010]

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## WHY I'M A MEMBER

### ■ KUDOS

#### Professors of the Year

NEA Higher Ed applauds all of the state and national winners of the U.S. Professors of the Year program, sponsored by CASE and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advance of Teaching. They include:



**MICHAEL W. MORROW**, a professor of biology at University of Montana—Western, arrived on campus in 2002. Since then, a fantastic experiment has taken place: What happens when one

professor brings his enormous passion for research (the “ultimate experiential learning experience”), mixes it into UMW’s unique block schedule, and adds a few hundred thousand dollars in new federal research dollars? You get an invigorated biology program that has grown from just five students in 2002 to nearly 130 during Morrow’s tenure.



**REES SHAD** is coordinator of the media design programs at Hostos Community College in New York, and also an accomplished musician and producer. His program, which he put

together, offers AAS degrees in graphic design, animation, music production, audio engineering and game design. Recently, he helped win a \$610,000 grant from the National Science Foundation around multimedia game design, which will help engage media design students in STEM subjects. In a statement, Shad said he was honored by the award, calling it a testament to his students who “strive to compete in the new digital world we live in.”



#### John Jackson

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY, OHIO

We can thank Ohio Gov. John Kasich, the architect of the most anti-worker bill of 2011, for turning John Jackson into the most active member of the NEA Education Votes network this year. Not only did Jackson participate in more than a dozen phone banks and nearly as many voter registration drives, but he also canvassed homes, knocking on doors and talking to voters, on a whopping 51 days in late 2012. “Senate Bill 5 (Kasich’s bill) was the turning point for me,” he recalled. “It was the first time my government had attacked me!” The organic chemistry professor was moved to get involved—and stay involved. “Once you start, once you break that ‘activation barrier,’ it gets easier,” said Jackson. “Sure, you can say you’re too busy. But the question is, what are you willing to sacrifice?” This year, Jackson was much more willing to sacrifice his time than his rights. And, while his well-worn walking shoes aren’t likely to stand up to another election, Jackson already is looking ahead to the state legislative sessions of 2013 and the Ohio governor’s race of 2014. “It took something that directly affected me to get me involved... But I’ll say it’s added up to the most rewarding experience of my life.”

# The Terms of Accountability

Colleges and universities are facing additional pressures to **BECOME MORE ACCOUNTABLE** to state legislatures and the federal government for resources provided to them, and also to **BECOME MORE RESPONSIVE** to the human capital needs of the economy. This reflects the sweeping up of the public discourse of higher education funding into a larger social and media movement towards viewing public institutions almost entirely in terms of their **SERVICE TO ECONOMIC MARKETS**, and has led to attacks on traditional forms of shared governance among boards, administrative leaders, and faculty, on tenured or tenure-track faculty positions, and on collective bargaining.

While the public discourse focuses on simplistic calls for increased “accountability,” the concept **ENCOMPASSES A HOST OF QUESTIONS**: who is going to be accountable to whom and for what processes and outcomes? To clarify the issues, Alicia C. Dowd and Linda Taing Shieh delineate the political terms used to justify the various types of accountability in their upcoming article in the *NEA Higher Education Almanac*, “Community College Financing: Equity, Efficiency, and Accountability.”

## EXAMPLES OF ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS, BY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT AND THE KEY TERMS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE

	Bureaucratic	Market	Professional
LOCAL	Performance reporting to governing boards	Contract funding Extension (non-credit; recreational) courses	Shared governance Tenure and promotion standards
STATE	Performance reporting to governing boards Performance funding (emphasis on efficiency and equity in access)	Performance funding (emphasis on employers’ needs for human capital in high demand fields)	Shared governance
FEDERAL	Annual reports required for receipt of operating grants	Institutional responsibility for student loan default rates Semester time restrictions on use of Pell grants IPEDS data Student Right to Know (SRTK) Act	Accreditation
TERMS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE	Rules Regulations Compliance Instructional delivery	Human capital. Responsiveness. Customer. Client. Flexibility. Transparency.	Expertise Peer review Inquiry Community of Practice Best practices

Adapted from Tables in “Community College Financing: Equity, Efficiency, and Accountability,” by Alicia C. Dowd and Linda Taing Shieh. *NEA Higher Education Almanac*, to be published in March 2013.

# The Politics of Contingent Academic Labor

By Claire Goldstene

The conditions of academic labor reflect the mission of universities. Should they be defined by a commitment to intellectual inquiry—sites to explore the nature of knowing, to acknowledge and then endeavor to clarify the complexities of the natural and social worlds, to expose students to alternative perspectives and to propose new ways of thinking—all of which requires

academic freedom, a freedom historically protected by tenure? Or, should universities be defined according to corporate values, that is, their ability to attract “customers,” increase endowment funds, reduce labor costs, and act as businesses in a market-driven economy? This latter, neoliberal view, increasingly embraced by a growing cadre of administrators, has yoked corporate values to a longer-term conservative assault against tenure protections manifested, in major part, through a greater dependence on adjunct and contract faculty.

In this brave new world of contingent faculty, threats to tenure and its complement, academic freedom, are occasionally overt and frequently subtle, but with similarly disturbing consequences. Some administrators have sought to eliminate tenure altogether, notably Charles Reed when he served, from 1986 to 1998, as chancellor for the State University System of Florida, an effort that ultimately failed. Many newly formed, non-profit universities do not offer tenure and the ballooning number of for-profit colleges typically offer only part-time faculty appointments. A 2011 survey of college presidents conducted by the Pew Research Center in association with *The Chronicle of Higher Education* found that 69 percent of respondents would prefer to govern a university comprised of mostly contract, non-tenured faculty.

Yet less direct administrative maneuvers also undermine tenure and academic freedom. A growing number of academics are employed

on a year-to-year or multi-year basis, either as term faculty or post-docs, and occupy a middle ground between adjunct and tenure-track/tenured faculty. Essentially, this group of contingent faculty fulfill the requirements associated with achieving tenure without the possibility of attaining not only its economic security but, more importantly, those political protections that encourage and support academic freedom.

## The political fallout

While these new realities of academic life most immediately affect job seekers, contingent faculty, and their students, the long-term consequences permeate the atmosphere of the university. Though conservative critics have overplayed the perceived liberal bias of university faculty and curriculum, they have correctly identified higher education as contested political terrain. Education should provoke skepticism and promote exposure to viewpoints that question traditional ways of thinking. Given this, for those dedicated to protecting existing inequalities of power the stakes are quite high. Adjunct and contingent academic labor are integral to this larger political drama. Current trends in academic labor are not merely a response to an immediate economic crisis. The expansion of contingent faculty corresponds to a decades-long effort to abolish tenure and curtail academic freedom in the interests of advancing a conservative political agenda. These are crucial matters of power.

### EDITOR'S NOTE:

This is an excerpt of a new *Thought & Action* article by Claire Goldstene, a lecturer at American University. For this work, Goldstene recently won the **NEA New Scholar Prize**, a 2013 Excellence in the Academy Award. To read the article in its entirety, and also to view the journal's current call for papers, visit [www.nea.org/thoughtandaction](http://www.nea.org/thoughtandaction).



# THE STATE OF HIGHER ED

## California

In a major victory for students, after months of work by California Faculty Association and Community College Association members, voters opted to raise state income taxes on the wealthiest residents and temporarily increase the state sales tax. Without this new revenue, public schools and colleges would have faced another \$6 billion in cuts this year, on top of \$20 billion over the past four.

## Florida

Faculty members at the University of Florida are protesting a differential tuition plan proposed by Gov. Rick Scott's task force on state higher education. Under their plan, students would pay more if they majored in "non-strategic" majors, presumably humanities, and less if they majored in "high-skill, high-wage, high-demand" programs, such as STEM or health programs. "In the short term, I think we run the risk of demolishing our prestige as an institution," said UF associate professor Lillian Guerra to *Inside Higher Ed*. In the long term, such a move likely would decimate liberal arts in Florida and the essen-

tial (and transferrable) skills taught in those subjects. To join your Florida colleagues in virtual protest, go here: [www.change.org/petitions/governor-rick-scott-protect-higher-education-in-florida](http://www.change.org/petitions/governor-rick-scott-protect-higher-education-in-florida).

At the same time, Scott also has followed Texas by recently calling on Florida's public institutions to provide a bachelor's degree for \$10,000 or less, including books.

## Michigan

So-called "Right to Work" legislation was rammed through the state legislature in early December. These laws, which undermine the ability of unions to organize and represent their members, also have been shown to correlate with decreased state productivity and increased poverty. To support your colleagues at the Michigan Education Association, visit [www.mea.org](http://www.mea.org).

## New York

Your colleagues at the City University of New York (CUNY) are asking for your support in protesting "Pathways," a system of moving students through the college more quickly, to

be implemented in the fall of 2013. Basically, its effect would be to cut class requirements and student time with faculty, endangering the traditional quality of a CUNY education. To sign the Professional Staff Congress' petition of protest, go to <http://action.aft.org/c/521/p/dia/action3/common/public/>.

## Wisconsin

After suffering a 30 percent budget cut last year, Wisconsin's technical colleges surely need a boost. And with the state projecting an additional \$1.5 billion in revenues over the next two years, they hope to get it. "Schools have done their part to get through times of economic downturn, even though there's no better return on taxpayer dollars than education," said WEAC President Mary Bell. But at a speech in November, Gov. Scott Walker said he plans for major changes in higher ed funding. The number of students or degrees awarded shouldn't matter, he said. Instead, funding should be tied to job placement rates.

## TWO-MINUTE INTERVIEW > U.S. REP. JOHN TIERNEY



U.S. REP. JOHN TIERNEY of Massachusetts recently won reelection to the House, where he serves on the education and labor committee—and now he's got some work to do. This year, Congress may reauthorize the Higher Education Act and the Workforce Investment Act. In November, during a tele-town hall co-hosted by MTA and NEA, Tierney answered these questions.

### I teach at a public college and our budget has been savaged. What do you see Congress doing about it?

When I was at Salem State University [a public four-year college in Massachusetts], I contributed about 20 to 30 percent of the cost of my education, and the rest was paid by tax dollars. Those percentages are flipped now, and it means students are carrying around

an enormous amount of debt. In last year's Student Loan Affordability Act, I insisted that states must maintain their efforts. They can't just take federal money and send theirs out the back door.

### Speaking of student debt...

When Democrats were in the majority from 2007-2010, we cut interest rates in half for Stafford loans. We need

to do that for other federal student loans. We shouldn't be filling the Treasury with student payments. We already made sure we increased Pell Grants... but there are some people who want to take that in the other direction and that's going to be a serious problem.

### What can you tell us about job training efforts?

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 is long overdue for a reauthorization—times have changed, technology has new impact. I was glad to put together the Democratic version [of the

proposed reauthorization]. Unfortunately we didn't get it done last year, but I think we'll get back to it. What we're looking at is identifying industries that are going to have jobs in a particular region, and then working with community colleges to get people the skills they'll need to get those jobs and move up the ladder.

### What do you think about unions for graduate students?

They don't get paid well and they don't get a lot of benefits. It makes perfect sense to me!

# The crazy costs of textbooks: Are there less expensive alternatives for your students?

In a recent issue of *The NEA Advocate*, San Diego State lecturer Gordon Clanton remarked on the “major scandal of our times,” the rising costs of textbooks, which provide yet another stumbling block for poor students on their way to degrees. While every student should have their own text, Clanton suggested professors can reduce textbook costs for students without reducing the number of pages students read by (1) assigning an earlier edition of a textbook, (2) teaching from three or four short paperback books, and (3) constructing customized course readers. Since then, we have heard several additional ideas from NEA Higher Ed members.

**ALINE SOULES:** Gordon Clanton is rightly scandalized by the cost of textbooks; however, I take exception to his proposed solutions, which all cost something. Instead I propose these:

Find some good articles in your library’s databases and provide students with instructions on how to access them. (Your librarian will be happy to help.)

Develop your own open-source “textbook.” To find sources, try the library (databases, e-books, etc.), MERLOT (merlot.org), Scholar Google, or other Web sources. If you are in doubt about the reliability of the materials, once again, consult your librarian.

For some examples, visit the CSU East Bay website for the alternative textbook project at [alltextcsueb.wordpress.com](http://alltextcsueb.wordpress.com).

All it takes is a little investigation.

**MICHAEL ASH:** I agree with much of what Gordon Clanton writes, but it’s essential to be clear about the causes of the problem. There has been enormous consolidation in the textbook market. This is obvious from the long, hyphenated names, such as Addison-Wesley-Longman-Pearson. We’re also seeing high consumer prices

for products that have very low production costs, frequent model changes (13th editions!), aggressive bundling of books and workbooks, and the profusion of “special editions” —all signs that monopoly is the proximate cause of high textbook prices.

The underlying reason, which underpins the monopoly, is the intellectual property (IP) regime of copyright. Copyright rules have been repeatedly expanded to the benefit of the few at the expense of the many. Academics and their libraries have been intimidated from invoking the fair-use doctrine for the educational uses of texts. The result is an IP regime that makes monopoly and associated practices an attractive strategy for publishers.

Although monopoly is a serious policy matter, the government response has been anything but serious. And, in most cases, individual efforts are a drop in the bucket.

Collective action is needed. Share modules and course materials that you have written. Join open textbook projects, such as the Open Learning Initiative ([oli.cmu.edu](http://oli.cmu.edu).)

Finally, we can use our collective

power as a union to lobby elected officials to take real action. In the short run, we can take on the monopolies, regulating prices as needed. In the longer run, we can make fair use and open source fundamental counterweights to the copyright-monopoly regime.

**PETER ARVANITES:** When I started to teach statistics again a few years ago, I was planning to give open-book exams, but many students informed me that they could not afford to buy the textbook. So I accommodated the students by allowing them to bring one sheet of paper to the exams with formulas written on it. This seems to be working fine. I am not sure where the blame lies for the dramatic increase in textbook prices, but I know that revising textbooks every three years or less is not helping. Especially in mathematics, there is no need to revise a textbook every three years.

**PETER LOEHR:** I began using trade books which cover the same aspects of leadership that textbooks do—at a fraction of the costs. Texts may be \$120, while trade books might be \$30—and even far less at Half.com or Amazon.com. Plus, the trade books are more enjoyable to read because they are written to be read, rather than just sold.



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This discussion took place on an NEA Higher Ed discussion board. If you want to add to the conversation, visit it at <http://public-groups.nea.org/discussion/topic/show/541904>.





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# Voting Rights

## Was this recent election the last of its kind?

BY JASON WALTA

**IN THE WAKE OF A NATIONAL ELECTION** fraught with transparent efforts to suppress minority voting—from discriminatory redistricting in Texas, to voter-registration purges in Florida, to early-voting restrictions in Ohio—the protections of the Voting Rights Acts (VRA) are as relevant as ever. But three years ago, in *Northwest Austin Municipal Utility District #1 v. Holder* (“*NAMUDNO*”), the Supreme Court put a key provision of the VRA on life-support. Now, with the announcement that it will hear the case *Shelby County v. Holder*, the Court appears ready to pull the plug entirely.

Congress passed the VRA in 1965 to deal with massive and violent suppression of Black voters. Section 5 of the VRA—the provision at issue in both *NAMUDNO* and *Shelby County*—specifically targets certain recalcitrant jurisdictions, particularly in the South, that resisted enfranchising minority voters, by singling out these “covered jurisdictions” and requiring any changes to voting rules in those places to be cleared by the Justice Department before taking effect. In 2006, Congress reauthorized Section 5, with overwhelming support in both the Senate and House, and left intact the same list of covered jurisdictions that has existed since 1982.

In both *NAMUDNO* and *Shelby County*, the plaintiffs argued that Section 5 is unconstitutional because it imposes burdens on covered jurisdictions that are not justified by an ongoing threat of increased discrimination in those places. In *NAMUDNO*, the Court punted on that issue by making it easier for jurisdictions to obtain an exemption—or “bailout”—from covered status. But in reaching that result, the Court questioned Section 5’s ongoing vitality by observing that “Things have changed in the South,” and that “The evil that [Section] 5 is meant to address may no longer be concentrated in the jurisdictions singled out for preclearance.”

Now, in *Shelby County*, the constitutional issue is unavoidable because the plaintiff is not eligible for bailout. If the Court concludes that Section 5 is unconstitutional,

its ruling will be based on two pieces of legal dogma that consistently guide the Court’s conservative majority.

The first is a deep mistrust of Congressional authority to enact civil rights laws. Although the Constitution specifically authorizes Congress to pass legislation enforcing the Fourteenth Amendment’s right to “equal protection of the laws” and the Fifteenth Amendment’s guarantee that the “right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged ... on account of race,” the Court has imposed rigid limits on that authority. In just about any other area, federal legislation need only have a minimally rational connection to some conceivable problem. But the Court has required legislation enacted under Congress’s civil rights authority to be justified by an extensive record of Congressional findings and a showing that the law is a narrow (or, in the Court’s phrasing, “congruent and proportional”) solution to a specific problem.

The second dogma that could jeopardize the VRA is the elevation of the interests of non-persons—such as states and corporations—over the rights of living, breathing Americans. A glaring example of this is *Citizens United*, where the Court held that the “speech” rights of corporations trumps the rights of actual voters to elections that are free from the corrupting influence of corporate spending. Similarly, the VRA’s opponents argue that the rights of historically disenfranchised minority voters should yield to the desire of state and local governments to operate without additional federal oversight.

It is an audacious argument, especially considering the vital role the VRA has played in fighting voter suppression. Yet, ironically enough, it may be the dramatic results of the 2012 election—where, despite efforts to suppress turnout, minority voters successfully mobilized in record numbers to re-elect the nation’s first Black president—that give the Court’s conservative majority just enough cover to reach an audacious result.

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# How to talk to your legislator

**THEY DECIDE HOW MUCH TO FIND HIGHER EDUCATION.** They make rules about how we are to behave in the workplace. They shape the details of our fate. They are our state legislators. How can we approach these elected leaders effectively?

For some faculty members this means leaving a comfort zone for how contacts and arguments are made. Faculty often use email to make long, carefully constructed arguments they hope will prevail. Unfortunately, with lawmakers this tactic is useless. A staff member reads emails and merely tallies the results (pro and con).

Building relationships through personal contact is what it is all about. It begins with a brief visit to the local district office. Legislators need to know that you and perhaps one or two other faculty members who are with you are constituents—that you live or teach in their legislative district.

Legislators want to know what constituents think, and you are there to convey what faculty care about. Keep it pleasant: state just one issue on your mind, and leave quickly. Never make threats. You have all the power you need by being a constituent. Combine the gravitas of a faculty member with the friendliness of someone they like. You are making a connection that you can refer to later when an issue comes up. Make sure every faculty member stays on message.

Focus on expressing concerns about the quality of the education students are

receiving and give examples of what threatens this quality. Every argument is about what is good for students or for the state's economic growth. A losing strategy is to focus on why something is bad for faculty.

When the legislature is in session, they will have only a few minutes for you to say what you care about. In office visits, be ready to say it in three minutes. Hand the legislator a single sheet with data and talking points on the issue of the next week.

Email your colleagues and ask them to contact their legislators by phone (a 30 second call) to say what matters to them. (They should say their names and where they live or work in the district.) In one sentence tell the receptionist what they support or oppose that week. Less effective, but better than nothing, is to email one sentence to the legislator.

Other points: 1) Discard assumptions about Republicans and Democrats. Legislators do not want to be seen this way by constituents. Showing respect for their willingness to do the right thing is persuasive. (2) Within the limits of the law, enlist student organizations in contacting legislators.



**Tom Auxter** is president of the United Faculty of Florida, and professor of philosophy at the University of Florida.