

## **Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession Annual Report, 2011–12**

### **Background and Charge**

The committee was established in February 2009 and charged as follows:

The Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession is charged with considering a range of issues that affect teachers of modern languages and literatures in institutions of higher education who hold non-tenure-track appointments (e.g., salary and benefits, workplace issues and conditions of employment, demographics, participation in departmental and institutional governance, academic freedom, professional development). The committee should collect information useful to individuals and departments and identify effective policies and practices. The committee should organize convention sessions and should consider proposing association publications and other projects that will address the concerns of non-tenure-track faculty members and the departments that employ them. The committee will report annually to the Executive Council.

The following were members of the committee for 2011–12:

Beth Landers, University of Missouri, St. Louis (Chair)  
Sandra K. Baringer, University of California, Riverside  
Dorothea Heitsch, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (ex-officio)  
Douglas Hesse, University of Denver  
Karen Lentz Madison, University of Arkansas  
Glenn Levine, University of California, Irvine  
Maria Shine-Stewart, John Carroll University  
Nicolas Shumway, Rice University

### **Meetings and Activities**

The committee met at the MLA office on 15–16 September 2011 and by conference call on 21 November 2011, 13 February 2012, and 2 May 2012.

Throughout the year the committee remained keenly interested in various documents and initiatives organized both by other branches of the MLA and by other organizations. David Laurence kept the committee updated on the fall 2010 survey of contingent faculty members conducted by the Coalition on the Academic Workforce and its initial report titled “A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members.” He also reported on the development of the MLA Workforce Data

Center and consulted with the committee on its development. Both Laurence and committee member Karen Madison attended the New Faculty Majority Summit in Washington, DC, in January, and they reported back on this event as well.

The committee's major project this year has been the production of a special joint issue of the ADE and the ADFL bulletins titled "Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members in the Modern Languages: Issues and Directions." Calls for submissions initially went out in December 2011, with a 1 April 2012 deadline to send manuscripts. The committee identified twenty-five individuals to receive personal invitations to submit an essay to the volume. Eight essays were submitted by early May. The deadline was extended to 1 August 2012, by which date two additional essays were submitted. Of the first eight submissions, five were accepted on condition that revisions be made and three authors were invited to revise and resubmit their essays. The last two essays are under consideration by the editorial committee until 30 September 2012. The volume will be complete by the convention in January 2013 and will contain an additional essay by Laurence and a reprint of the committee's June 2011 document titled "Professional Employment Practices for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members: Recommendations and Evaluative Questions."

A great deal of work went into plans for the 2012 MLA convention, at which the committee hosted three events. The first was a roundtable discussion that presented "Professional Employment Practices for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members," the committee's publication mentioned above. For this occasion, David Laurence helped produce a version of the document in an easily usable pamphlet form. The roundtable had the following composition:

**Professional Employment Practices for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members**

*Speakers:* Sandra K. Baringer, Univ. of California, Riverside; Janet Galligani Casey, Skidmore Coll.; Douglas Hesse, Univ. of Denver; Elizabeth Landers, Univ. of Missouri, St. Louis

*Session Description:* Members of the committee will present the 2011 document "Professional Employment Practices for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members: Recommendations and Evaluative Questions." Discussion will focus on how faculty members and department chairs can use the evaluative questions to assess employment practices in their own departments and how they can best implement the recommendations described in the document.

The second event was a panel discussion:

**Good Practices in Hiring, Developing, and Reviewing Contingent Faculty Members**

**Presiding:** Douglas Hesse, Univ. of Denver

1. "The Importance of Established Curricula and Syllabi for Making Good Hiring Decisions," Elizabeth Bernhardt, Stanford Univ.
2. "Laboring More to Labor Otherwise: Professional Development as Leverage for Change," Debra Frank Dew, Univ. of Colorado, Colorado Springs; Justin Jory, Univ. of Colorado, Colorado Springs
3. "Supporting and Developing Online Adjunct Faculty Members at a Comprehensive University," Christopher Ervin, Western Kentucky Univ.
4. "Prior to Enactment of University Rule 6-310 (IDTP): Claiming Space for Contingent Faculty Members," Maureen Mathison, Univ. of Utah

**Responding:** Katia McClain, Univ. of California, Santa Barbara

The committee judged both events successful, and attendance was much better than at the two events hosted by the committee at the 2011 convention. As a result of discussions that followed both sessions, the committee believes that the "Professional Employment Practices" document should be updated to include a section on employment practices related to online education.

The third session hosted at the 2012 convention was a breakfast event for non-tenure-track faculty members in the Seattle area. Committee members contacted department chairs at local colleges and universities, who recommended forty faculty members for invitations. Nearly all invitees accepted the invitation and received free admission to the convention. Over continental breakfast, committee members presented the committee's work and invited attendees to share their professional concerns and suggestions for how the MLA could address these concerns. In general, it was clear that attendees wanted the MLA to recognize non-tenure-track faculty members in visible ways and to advocate on their behalf. Another huge concern was health insurance, and this caused the committee to investigate a link to MLA-sponsored group insurance plans in the list of membership benefits on the MLA Web site. The committee is seeking to be better informed about the group medical insurance plans and how the link from the membership benefits page works. Terrence Callaghan, the MLA's director of operations, is currently reviewing the link in order to see how the program can be better described and made more transparent to members. In all, the breakfast event appeared to have generated much good will for the MLA, and the committee will organize a similar event at the 2013 convention in

Boston. This second time it will be more tightly organized as a recruitment event for the organization; membership yields from attendees will be tracked.

In spring 2012 committee members also made plans for the 2013 convention. Once again the committee will sponsor one roundtable and a panel discussion, and it is cosponsoring a third panel with the Women's Caucus for the Modern Languages. These sessions are as follows:

- (a) Roundtable: "Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members in the Modern Languages: Issues and Directions" (presider = Glen Levine; panel members = Karen Madison, Dorothea Heitsch, Maria Shine Stewart)
- (b) Panel: "Professional Practices in Online Education" (presider = Sandra Baringer; panel members = Batya Weinbaum, Joshua Fenton, Aaron Plasek)
- (c) Panel (in conjunction with the Women's Caucus for the Modern Languages): "Gender and Contingent Labor" (presider = Beth Landers; panel members = Kirsten Christensen, Jane Harty, Karen Madison)

Oversight of the committee's wiki, created in 2009, has been ongoing. After reflection, the committee decided that it is best used as an internal tool for committee members rather than as a resource for MLA members or the public at large. Committee members will continue to consult the wiki and add to it as necessary to conduct its business.

New initiatives for the coming year will be discussed at the September 2012 meeting. However, a number of possibilities have been advanced, including:

- (a) collecting samples of good practices documents (hiring, developing, evaluating, promoting NTT faculty members)
- (b) creating awards for NTT faculty members and the departments and institutions that employ them
- (c) finding ways to advocate more aggressively for NTT faculty members

The committee will next meet 20–21 September 2012 in New York.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Landers, Chair, 2011–12