

Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession Annual Report, 2012–13

Background and Charge

The Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession (CLIP) was established in February of 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.

Committee members for 2012–13 were:

Karen Lentz Madison (chair): Dept. of English, Univ. of Arkansas, Fayetteville
Don Bialostosky: Dept. of English, Univ. of Pittsburgh
Heidi Tiedemann Darroch: Dept. of English, Univ. of Victoria
Dorothea Heitsch (ex officio): Dept. of Romance Languages and Literatures, Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Elena Lanza: Dept. of Spanish and Portuguese, Northwestern Univ.
Glenn Levine: European Language and Studies, German Language Program Director, Univ. of California, Irvine
Maria Shine Stewart: Dept. of English, John Carroll Univ.
Nicole B. Wallack: Dept. of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia Univ.

Our staff liaisons are Rosemary Feal, executive director, and David Laurence, director of research and of the ADE.

Meetings and Activities

The committee met at the MLA office on 20–21 September 2012 and by conference call on 12 November 2012 and 1 April 2013.

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 on the survey report, titled “A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members.” Along with several past CLIP members, the current committee has been focused on 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.” The volume is projected to be completed by the time of the convention in January 2014. It contains an essay by Laurence (“A Profile of the Non-Tenure-Track Academic Workforce”); a CLIP position statement by Glenn Levine, Dorothea Heitsch, and Karen Madison; and a reprint of the committee’s June 2012 document, titled *Professional Employment Practices for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members: Recommendations and Evaluative Questions*.

A great deal of effort went into plans for the 2013 MLA convention, at which the committee hosted four events. The initial event was a breakfast meeting for non-tenure-track faculty members in the Boston area. Laurence 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 for the day. Over continental breakfast, committee members presented CLIP’s work and invited attendees to share their professional concerns and suggestions for ways 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. General suggestions were offered, as well as specific ideas regarding strategy, governance, transparency, job-site presence, funding for professional development, connecting with students, organizing, and making manifest the value of non-tenure-track faculty members. In all, the breakfast event appeared to have generated much good will for the MLA, and the committee will organize a similar event in Chicago at the 2014 convention. To comply with CLIP’s previous decision to take the opportunity to promote MLA membership among the participants, Karen Madison will send a follow-up note to attendees in October, and membership yields from attendees will be tracked.

Our second event in Boston was a session that CLIP cosponsored with the Women’s Caucus for the Modern Languages. “Gender and Contingent Labor” was chaired by Beth Landers and featured panelists Kirsten Christensen, Jane Harty, Alyson Bardsley, and Karen Madison. This event was well attended, with two-thirds of the seating utilized throughout the time allotted.

The third event we hosted was a roundtable discussion based on selections from the above-mentioned special issue of the ADE and ADFL bulletins. Glen Levine served as chair and speaker, and Dorothea Heitsch, Karen Madison, and Maria Shine Stewart gave short presentations. The session was very well attended, with few seats vacant. The reviews were attentively received and actively discussed. Three of the authors from the collection were able to add to the conversations concerning their articles. The question-and-answer period was lively and informative, with many attendees staying well after the end of the session to speak to various members of the committee. The past CLIP chair, Beth Landers, was in attendance and reminded attendees to look on the committee's Web page to find the *Professional Employment Practices* document. Several Twitter posters were in attendance, including Maria Maisto, president of the New Faculty Majority.

Our final offering was the panel "Professional Practices in Online Education," with past CLIP member Sandy Baringer (chair), Maria Shine Stewart (respondent), and Batya Weinbaum, Joshua Fenton, Cynthia Eaton, and Aaron Plasek (panel members) offering contrasting views on the promise and peril of online education in relation to employment security and contingent faculty members. The papers will prove useful references if the committee creates another professional employment practices document to address issues raised by online teaching. Although only eight people attended this session (held during the last time slot of the convention), we were able to maximize its potential. Several attendees stayed afterward to speak with Stewart, who has stayed in contact with two of the attendees since the convention. She also posted her response to the panel on her blog, then tweeted it @mariashine and was "favorited" by someone active in the digital humanities. She joined a massive open online course after the conference, which may direct up to 1,000 possible new readers to the entry. Rosemary Feal attended the session and tweeted summaries and calls for folks to attend the CLIP panel, and Nicholas Birns, a scholar who tweeted our other panels, was also in attendance.

The committee judged all four events successful; attendance was better at all four events than at our events in Seattle in 2012. Following the convention, Glen Levine, Dorothea Heitsch, and Karen Madison created a CLIP position statement, "What You Can Do: Position Paper by the MLA Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession (CLIP)," which will serve as one of the introductory documents in the special issue of the ADE and ADFL bulletins.

In spring 2013 committee members made plans for the 2014 convention. The committee will sponsor two panels and host the CLIP breakfast. The panels are “Write on Your Own Time: Scholarship and Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members” (session 196), organized by Nicole Wallack, and “Off the Tenure Track, on Our Radar” (session 571), organized by Don Bialostosky.

CLIP Members’ Related Activities

Maria Shine Stewart continued posting her career-advice column, *A Kinder Campus*, on *Inside Higher Ed*.

In February, Nicole Wallack organized a successful session for the meeting of the Metropolitan WPA, the New York–area affiliate of the Council of Writing Program Administrators. The session, “Considering Contingent Labor Issues for Writing Programs,” was modeled on our breakfast meeting at the convention. About 100 people attended her workshop.

In March, the MLA held a session at the CCCC meeting in Las Vegas titled “The Contingent Academic Workforce: Myths, Facts, Prospects.” David Laurence reported on the development of the MLA’s Academic Workforce Data Center and on the misconceptions concerning non-tenure-track faculty members that data collected by the United States Department of Education reveal. He spoke about the academic workforce instrument and its statistics concerning non-tenure-track faculty members. Karen Madison presented a paper titled “The Public Work of the Professional Employment Practices Document,” and Seth Cohn, a member of the CCCC Contingent Labor Committee, spoke about tenured faculty members’ support of nontenured faculty members. This panel was well attended, and there was much discussion after the presentations with many in the audience, who also collected copies of CLIP’s *Professional Employment Practices* document to share with colleagues.

Karen Madison presented a paper on the *Professional Employment Practices* document in a panel (“The Nature of the Beast: Sustainable?”) she organized for the College English Association conference in Savannah in late March. (The conference theme was Nature.) Sandy Baringer (a former CLIP member) and Anne Wiengard (New Faculty Majority) were also on the panel. The CEA’s Executive Board unanimously granted Madison’s request that it create a standing session (Coffee on the Commons) with a featured guest speaker on nontenured faculty issues. The initial event will be in Baltimore in spring 2014.

Don Bialostosky attended “Countering Contingency: Teaching, Scholarship, and Creativity in the Age of the Adjunct,” a conference held in Pittsburgh in April.

Elena Lanza organized a language symposium, “World Languages and the Roles They Play in Academia,” that was held in mid-April and had 200 attendees. Rosemary Feal was the keynote speaker. Lanza also successfully delivered an overview of CLIP’s projects, the Adjunct Project, and the Delphi Project to colleagues, including 20 language lecturers, on 29 May.

Heidi Tiedemann Darroch served as CLIP’s liaison to ACCUTE (Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English) last June at the University of Victoria. She attended panels on professional concerns, including a panel on sessionals’ issues.

New Initiatives

New initiatives for the coming year will be discussed at the committee’s next meeting, which will be held 19–20 September 2013 in New York. A number of possibilities have been advanced, including:

- collecting samples of good practices documents (hiring, developing, evaluating, promoting NTT faculty)
- creating awards for NTT faculty members or for the departments and institutions that employ them
- finding ways to advocate more aggressively for NTT faculty members, perhaps through alignments with similar groups
- assisting MLA representatives to be more involved in influencing administrators
- recording our presentations on the *Professional Employment Practices* document to create a digital archive
- examine what can be done for term or sessional faculty members who lose access to library privileges during summer sessions
- collaborative projects to encourage regular communication among NTTs (regionally or nationally)

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Lentz Madison, 2012–13 Chair