Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession
Annual Report Submitted by William Christopher Brown, Chair 2018-2019
02 August 2019

Charge

The Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession will consider 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, identify effective policies and practices, and develop advocacy strategies to address higher education’s growing reliance on contingent academic labor. The committee should organize convention sessions, should maintain a public-facing site on MLA Commons that will serve as a resource on the relevant issues, 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. To broaden the impact of its work, the committee should collaborate with other association committees on issues of mutual concern and should identify possible collaborations with other organizations for the Executive Council’s consideration. The committee will report annually to the Executive Council.

[revised Feb. 2019]

Introduction

The 2018-2019 member of Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession (CLIP) were the following:

- Ali Bedad, 2016-2019
- William Christopher Brown, 2016-2019 (Chair, 2018-2019)
- Mary M. Gallucci, 2017–20
- Alan J. Gravano, 2018–21
- Viailla Hartfield-Méndez, 2017–20
- Pamela A. Lim-McAlister, 2017–20; 2019–20 (Ch.)
- Christiane Rey, 2018–21

The committee met virtually on 10 September 2018 and in person at the MLA Convention in Chicago on 05 January 2019. The committee met in smaller groups electronically in February to discuss and propose a revision to its charge, which was approved by the executive council. They also communicated electronically in March/April/July to plan and coordinate the 2020 convention sessions.
This annual report covers activities by the CLIP from 01 July 2018 to 30 June 2019. Our activities can be divided into the following categories:

- Advocacy
- Convention Sessions
- Contingent Website
- Correspondence with Other Organizations
- CLIP Renewal

This report will address each of these categories in the following pages.

Advocacy

In Fall 2018, the MLA's Profession published an article written by CLIP entitled "Worst Practices: How to Avoid Exploiting Contingent Faculty." We received evidence of a response in an Inside Higher Ed article by Mark Bresnan that responded explicitly to the issues raised by CLIP's article; this article appeared in John Warner's popular Just Visiting column.

CLIP also began two writing projects that, as yet, remain incomplete. The Chair, Brown, asked the committee to break into two subcommittees. One subcommittee was devoted to contingency in Foreign Languages Departments (Hartfield-Méndez, Lim-McAlister, and Rey, with some guest commentary by CAFPRR Chair, Heather Colburn), while the other subcommittee focused on contingency in Comparative Literature Departments (Bedad and Gallucci). The goal was to produce two documents, comparable to the "Worst Practices: How to Avoid Exploiting Contingent Faculty." Work was to be submitted to Brown, who would have turned the content into a draft for review by Gravano, followed by further review by the subcommittees. Work towards the completion of these two documents has begun but remains incomplete. Outgoing Chair Brown has emailed the drafts of the documents to both the incoming Chair Lim-MacAlister and MLA Liaison Dennis Looney. If CLIP wants to continue this project, Brown is willing to assist in any way.

Convention Sessions
Here are the panels from the 2019 MLA Convention in Chicago:

- CLIP Panel presided over by Hartfield-Méndez: "'Making Do': Tactical Possibilities toward Institutional Reform of Contingent Labor Practices"
- CLIP Panel presided over by Gallucci: "What’s 'Rights' Got to Do with It? Adjuncts Are Professionals Too!"
- CLIP Panel collaboration with the Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession presided over by Lim-McAlister: "Vulnerable Positions? Feminism and Contingent Labor"

Panels were received positively by the audiences. Q&A sessions were robust.

For MLA 2020 in Seattle, CLIP has created or co-created the following three panels:

- CLIP panel to be presided over by Rey: "Ins and Outs of Immigration in the Academy: Employment and Visas for Faculty"
- CLIP panel to be presided over by Gravano: "Taxonomies of Power: Roles and Regulations in the Academy"
- CLIP collaboration with CAFPRR, to be presided over by Brown: "The Valuation of the 73%: Contingent Faculty Work and Access to Academic Freedom"

Contingent Website

Brown posted two summaries of scholarship/reports on contingency on the CLIP website:

- Contingent: "Recent Scholarship on Contingency: Academic Labor: Research and Artistry—Volume I (2017)"
- Contingent: "Recommendations and Reports on Contingency from the MLA."

Correspondence with Other Organizations

Two different organizations contacted Looney about CLIP's work: the American Political Science Association and the Society for Classical Studies. Looney put them in touch with Brown, who shared a bibliography of scholarship and reports on contingency. Both individuals were invited to stay in touch with CLIP in the hopes that we may imagine ways to collaborate in the future.
Revised CLIP Charge and Renewal

Brown, as Chair, drafted the revised CLIP charge and renewal document, with advice from Looney. Clip has been renewed for another five years.

Works Cited


