

Monica F. Jacobe, English, Princeton University

Candidate Biography

Education: Emory & Henry College, B.A., English and Mass Communications, 2001; American University, M.F.A., Creative Writing, 2004; Catholic University of America, Ph.D., English Language & Literature, 2010.

Recent Appointments: Lecturer, University of Maryland, College Park, 2007-2010; Assistant Director, Rhetoric & Writing Program, Catholic University of America, 2009-2010; Postdoctoral Lecturer, Princeton University, 2010-present.

I taught my first composition class in the fall of 2002 while still a graduate student at American University and have spent the last decade not only teaching at four research universities as graduate student labor, adjunct, and even administrator but working to raise awareness of the changing nature of the academic workforce—at my home institutions, within my discipline, and nationally.

In 2006 I joined the AAUP as a Sloan-funded research fellow working on contingent faculty issues. That year I coauthored, with John W. Curtis, “Consequences: An Increasingly Contingent Faculty,” published in the AAUP’s *2006 Contingent Faculty Index*, published an article in *Academe* noting the lack of useful data on contingent faculty, and joined a panel on academic freedom and contingency at the MLA, with Marc Bousquet and Joe Berry.

Since then, I have focused my academic labor work on English and Humanities, speaking at the MLA and CCCC about

contingent labor and advocating for changes in graduate student mentoring and education. I also coauthored an article on contingent faculty identities forthcoming in *College English*, am the chair of MLA’s Discussion Group on Part-time Faculty, and co-chair of the Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Profession. In January 2011, I took part in a special forum at the MLA to address “The Academy in Hard Times,” speaking alongside Gary Rhoades, among others, to interrogate this trope of economic hardship and its impact on the academy.

Candidate Statement

It was the 1980s when the majority of faculty were first working off the tenure track, and the intervening years have only seen the situation worsen, with now more than half of all faculty working part time and over two-thirds in non-tenure track appointments. That means that during the lifetimes of the majority of college students, contingent faculty have staffed the academy—under-supported and undervalued. Over the same set of years, more and more graduate degrees have been earned in fields and disciplines with shrinking undergraduate enrollments, leaving generations of newly minted Ph.D.s confused, frustrated, and embittered as they get left behind in the tide of a profession that promised them a myth it could not deliver.

The more I look at the state of the academic workforce, the more I am concerned about the connection between graduate education and hiring practices. The specific issue seems to be serving all students well—undergraduates AND graduates. We know—and I have written before—that the conditions of contingency are, by default, the conditions of undergraduate learning and that having more than half of the

professorate excluded and voiceless in contingency harms faculty governance and the running of the university. But graduate students are impacted as well—as programs take in more students to staff lower division courses, as one university’s grads become adjuncts next door, as time to degree completion is extended, and as the marketplace presents increasingly fewer jobs with living wage, basic benefits, or security. All this, despite the singular focus on professional training for graduate students, preparing them for a workplace that hasn’t existed for decades.

I believe firmly that the AAUP can change the national conversation, not just about undergraduate education and the academic workforce, but about the state of graduate education across the disciplines. This means placing “the graduate student” question more centrally in the conversation about contingent faculty, drawing attention to the cost of increased contingency in all parts of the university, and questioning the viability of a decade-long (or more) apprenticeship in the name of training for a career that is increasingly an impossibility.