October 30, 2017

Campus Equity Week of Action
Today kicks off Campus Equity Week, when faculty, students, and communities on campuses across the country shine a light on the increasingly precarious nature of academic work and the effects of this precarity on our higher education system. Contingent appointments now account for over 70 percent of all instructional staff appointments in American higher education. The term “contingent faculty” encompasses part- and full-time non-tenure-track faculty, including graduate employees. The growth in faculty contingency comes alongside the corporatization of higher education and its negative implications for students and higher education.

- A large number of faculty in so-called “part-time” positions actually teach the equivalent of a full-time course load, often commuting between institutions and preparing courses on a grueling timetable, making enormous sacrifices to maintain interaction with their students.
- Since faculty classified as part-time are typically paid by the course, without benefits, access for many college teachers to affordable healthcare and retirement security is withheld.
- Academic freedom is in serious jeopardy when a majority of faculty lack basic due process protections.

All faculty should have access to the protections of academic freedom and tenure, a fair return on their work, due process protections, and inclusion in institutional governance. Throughout this Halloween week, faculty, students and local communities from Connecticut to California, will continue to call attention to the truly frightening implications of precarity and disinvestment in higher education and will inspire change through actions, brown bag discussions, art installations, and other methods.

Caprice Lawless, AAUP second vice president and instructor at Front Range Community College, said, “In these times, especially, we need to stay connected, to share facts and to validate our experiences. Academic labor activists make good use of social media, year-round. We can do that in between the mountains of grading, and it helps keep us sane. Campus Equity Week allows us to get dressed up, to be with colleagues face-to-face, and to make some noise. We are wired to feel the camaraderie and solidarity that comes from creating and attending these events.
“CEW has become our Olympics. This week, we will see examples of everywhere of all the energy we've collected in two years of connections, discussions, and frustrations. Here in Colorado, for example, we will be un-celebrating how, in its latest promotion, Colorado's Community College System administrators boast that our low-wage work is valued at more than $6 billion. Our 13-college system has spent nearly $400 million of building projects, has more than 48 vice presidents, scores of deans and directors, has raised tuition 149% since 1996, and transformed our once-friendly campuses into corporate-sponsored, cold and uninviting enterprise zones. There is a growing questioning of such designs here and elsewhere.

“Academic workers will continue to organize until we see significant change. It is reassuring to know we are not alone, that our movement is growing, and that this week we will get to meet friends old and new at Campus Equity Week events.”

Faculty and students can find #2017CEW resources here.

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The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) champions academic freedom; advances shared governance; and promotes economic security for all who teach and research in higher education. Since 1915, the AAUP has shaped American higher education by developing standards that uphold quality education and ensure higher education’s contribution to the common good

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