CONTINGENT EMPLOYMENT

The emergence of contingent employment as the most common situation for instructional staff members has been a recurring concern of this annual report in recent years. Under the heading of contingent instructional staff we include full- and part-time faculty members not on the tenure track and graduate student employees. (The category should include postdoctoral fellows as well, but national datasets provide us with very little information on individuals in these positions.) As has been detailed in numerous other AAUP reports, individuals employed in contingent academic positions have limited academic freedom, since their employment is subject to termination or nonrenewal without due-process procedures that are vital as protectors of academic freedom. Faculty members with contingent appointments risk dismissal if they challenge students by assigning significant reading loads or in-depth writing assignments. Graduate student instructors who raise controversial topics in their seminars can be deprived of their assistantships or even expelled from their programs. In most cases the individuals employed in contingent positions lack the institutional support necessary to do their jobs effectively, whether that be in the form of technology, private office space for consultation with students, or access to funds for travel to academic conferences. Too often, our colleagues in contingent positions are also excluded from meaningful participation in shared governance, as documented in the recent AAUP report The Inclusion in Governance of Faculty Members Holding Contingent Appointments.

This year’s report adds to the body of knowledge regarding the compensation and working conditions of academics employed in contingent positions. We first provide an updated overview of the extent of contingent employment on the basis of national aggregate employment statistics, followed by a supplement to recent reports on the compensation of part-time faculty members. Finally, we provide new analysis of data on the compensation and working conditions of full-time non-tenure-track faculty members.

Figure 1 provides an update on trends in instructional staff employment through fall 2011, the most recent year for which national data have been released by the US Department of Education. Unfortunately, complete tabulations for fall 2011 have not yet been published at the time of this writing, so figure 1 provides an estimate for the most recent year based on the partial tabulations available.