

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WOMEN IN TODAY'S 2 WORLD

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## Faculty, Adjunct and Contingent

Contingent workers are those individuals without any expectation of long-term or continuous employment within an organization. Within the field of higher education, contingent workers include part-time adjuncts and full-time nontenure-track faculty members. The use of contingent faculty has increased over the years, particularly within the field of higher education. According to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics analyst Steven Hipple, 25 percent of the contingent workers holding advanced degrees in 1999 were college or university instructors. The *2009 Almanac of the Chronicle of Higher Education* reports that in 2007, 51 percent of faculty members were full-time compared with 49 percent categorized as part-time.

The use of part-time adjuncts has been a common and long-standing practice among universities; however, in recent years many universities have increased the number of adjuncts and full-time faculty not on the tenure track. Jack Schuster indicates that adjunct appointments represented 22 percent of all faculty in 1970 compared with 46 percent in 1998, and the use of full-time nontenure-track faculty has increased at a greater rate. The American Association of University Professors reports that nontenure-track appointments accounted for only 3.3 percent of full-time faculty positions in 1969 compared with 28.1 percent in 1998.

The use of contingent faculty provides cost savings and greater flexibility to university administrations, which frequently attribute constrained budgets and the ability to meet fluctuating demands as the main reasons for the increased use of adjuncts and full-time nontenure track faculty. The National Study of Postsecondary Faculty Institution Survey found that 40 percent of all institutions implemented policies to reduce the number of full-time faculty, including the replacement of tenured positions among retiring faculty with full-time nontenure-track faculty.

Among the advantages cited by faculty members occupying contingent positions are flexibility in meeting competing demands and less pressure as a result of lighter research expectations. In addition, contingent positions provide the opportunity for graduate students to develop their teaching skills and for professionals without terminal degrees to enhance their resumes while serving their communities by bringing their work experience to the classroom.

In contrast, individuals and institutions may also be disadvantaged by contingent faculty positions. At the individual level, contingent faculty members are more likely to teach the courses that full-time faculty members wish to, avoid particularly introductory courses, large sections, or evening schedules. Although contingent faculty members typically receive much lower pay than traditional faculty, adjuncts are particularly disadvantaged because they rarely qualify for health or retirement benefits. In

addition, professional development, and travel support are nearly nonexistent for contingent faculty.

At the institutional level, the use of contingent faculty members may exacerbate gender inequity, negatively affect the quality of instruction and academic freedom, and inhibit faculty governance. Regarding gender inequity, there tends to be an overrepresentation of women in contingent positions in higher education. Women represented 48 percent of part-time faculty positions and 39 percent of full-time positions in 2003. The *Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession* reveals that in 2004, women were 10 to 15 percent less likely than men to occupy tenure-track positions. A recent report on women's progress in higher education indicates that women occupy 52 percent of the nontenure-track contingent positions at doctoral institutions, 54 percent at master's institutions, 53 percent at associate institutions, and 49 percent at baccalaureate institutions.

Regarding quality of instruction, the argument is often put forth that discourse within the classroom is limited among contingent faculty for fear of reprisal. In addition, student access to adjunct faculty members is frequently limited because instructors work full-time elsewhere and often do not have a designated office on campus. Regarding faculty governance, many contingent faculty members are prohibited from participating in department meetings, faculty senate meetings, or serving on university-wide committees.

**See Also:** American Association of University Women; Attainment, Graduate Degree; College and University Faculty.

### Further Readings

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## Fair Trade

Fair Trade is a trading arrangement intended to provide more equitable international trade by creating better conditions for disadvantaged and/or marginalized producers of goods. These practices include, for example, paying fair wages, supporting participatory workplaces, supporting environmentally sustainable production, and developing long-term and sympathetic buyer–producer relationships (typically between a buyer in a developed nation who is purchasing products from a producer in a developing country).

Fair Trade results in a smaller margin of profit for (and sometimes the complete elimination of) the middleperson, whereas the producer or grower of the product receives a larger portion of the product's ultimate price. The increased income producers and growers earn is intended to enable them to move from economic vulnerability to greater self-sufficiency and from powerlessness in relation to their products to greater involvement and financial empowerment. For example, by purchasing directly from farmers, the Fair Trade premium price is significantly higher than the world market price and is also a stable price. This allows farmers to afford basic costs of living such as food, health, and education. At this time, the world market price for coffee is \$0.50 to \$0.80 per pound (growers often receive less than this), whereas the stable Fair Trade price for coffee is \$1.21 per pound for nonorganic and \$1.41 per pound for organically grown coffee.