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Thank you for this opportunity to share my experiences in Illinois higher education and those of my colleagues across the country.

Higher education is one of the prime economic engines for the United States and has been for some time. It has been addressed by policymakers throughout American history from George Washington and other founding fathers, who advocated a national university for the new nation, to more recent developments like the growth and transformation of federal student aid programs.

On July 2, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed a law that forever changed higher education in the United States. Called the Morrill Act, for Justin Smith Morrill, the Vermont Congressman who sponsored the bill, the law is recognized for revolutionizing higher education—it provided each state with public lands to create universities specializing in agriculture, mechanics, and military tactics. Leaders such as Representative Morrill and President Lincoln had the vision to see America's future and how creating such universities could strengthen the American economy and offer opportunities to more citizens.

More recently, President Dwight Eisenhower signed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) into law on September 2, 1958, providing funding to U.S. education institutions at all levels. NDEA was one of many science initiatives implemented by President Eisenhower in 1958, which aimed to increase the technological sophistication and power of the United States alongside, for instance, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). It followed a growing national sense that U.S. scientists were falling behind, especially after the former Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first satellite, in 1957.

America and the states must reinvest in higher education. We must stop the trend in the states of shifting the costs of attending colleges, universities, and trade schools to students and their families. Instead, the states and the federal government must once again invest in those systems. Disinvestment in higher education has led to an explosion of student loan debt that has topped \$1.3 trillion, making it the largest type of indebtedness in our country today. In contrast, the greatest economic expansion in the history of the United States, and the most widely shared economic expansion, was due in large part to the GI Bill passed after World War II.

Every dollar spent on higher education pays dividends many times over. A 1988 staff study for the [Congressional Joint Economic Committee](#) estimated that every dollar spent by the GI Bill generated a direct return on investment of between \$5.00 and \$12.50. That return did not include the quality of life issues that made the legislation the most successful public policy of the last century. Higher education offers a pathway for all citizens to better their lives. We all know that to be true, and many of us have lived that reality in our personal lives. The knowledge and personal networks we gained in college have led us here.

The Eisenhower administration and Congress answered the Russians' Sputnik with the National Defense Education Act, which brought much needed funding to our public schools and universities. We put astronauts on the moon and launched a massive technological revolution. University research, in cooperation with the Defense Department, led to the development of computers, the Internet, and the digital revolution in our society. Cutting back or slowing investment in higher education hurts our economy and job creation.

Today, many low-income and middle class students simply cannot afford to go to a college or university that prepares them for their career. Even with existing student aid programs, higher education can be beyond the reach of many qualified students and their families. I had a student—very bright and hard-working, a single mother with a two-year-old daughter—who worked full-time in healthcare and attended community college classes. She had previously attended a university and was trying to pay off her student loans. A friend who worked at Oprah Winfrey's Harpo Studios in Chicago identified an unpaid internship opportunity that she could not afford to apply for even though she was an outstanding candidate. She could not afford the train ticket or taking time off from work.

Low-income students are often blocked from the critical experiences needed to get into a career. And there might be solutions staring us right in the face. Could the tax code be modified to encourage companies to cover the cost of travel and meals for interns? Could public-private grants be established to meet the need for tuition assistance? Could the U.S. Department of Education improve the coordination of resources and link students to those resources?

Seventy percent of those who default on their student loans do not finish their programs of study. To address this problem, we need to invest in academic and other support services—more faculty as well as student advisors. Where will the money come from? We could do what the countries that have overtaken the United States in post-secondary accomplishment routinely do: invest directly in higher education.

The United States ranks 5th in the percentage of 25-64 year olds with higher education degrees and 14th in the percentage of 25-34 year olds with higher education degrees. One-third of the money spent on higher education in countries that have surpassed us comes from private sources; two-thirds of that money comes from private sources in the United States. (Source: *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*)

Another issue hurting colleges and universities is the explosion in the use—and overuse—of contingent faculty. Current estimates are that almost three-quarters of college and university faculty are contingent or adjunct faculty who do not have tenure and have no possibility of getting it. Typically, they work from semester to semester and are paid by the course. Some work part-time at one or several institutions. Occasionally, part-time work at multiple institutions adds up to full-time work—or more than full-time. Some contingent faculty work full-time at one institution, but without the stability and benefits of tenure or tenure-track faculty. Not only does this mean that contingent faculty, both full and part-time, face serious economic challenges, but it impacts student success.

Too many adjunct faculty are on welfare in their communities. I earn \$1,950 for my course at Joliet and \$2,600 for my course at Kankakee. If I wasn't a retired teacher and a retired soldier, I could not afford the cost of traveling to teach at these colleges. Many of my contingent colleagues are trying to cobble together a career. Some are teaching at multiple campuses in a single day. They are highly qualified instructors, with advanced degrees and high ratings for teaching ability. In previous decades, they would have qualified for full-time tenure or tenure-track positions. But the trend in higher education is replacing full-time tenure or tenure-track faculty with part-time adjunct (also known as contingent) faculty.

As others have mentioned, it isn't the quality of the faculty that's an issue; the issue is the lack of support by institutions for their workforce. And that has been driven by the lack of support for higher education by the states and the federal government. Contingents now make up almost three-quarters of all faculty nationally, and half are part-time. They have become the majority of faculty in the country. And many of them are trying to survive on poverty wages with no benefits. What student would want to follow in the footsteps of faculty that is on welfare, with no benefits? I understand that this type of employment is spreading to other fields, with equally detrimental effects, but I want to focus on the impact in higher education.

In addition to the absolute rise in numbers of contingent faculty, and probably as a direct consequence, contingent faculty are finding themselves in the vanguard of public policy discussions in higher education. The working conditions of faculty relate directly to the learning conditions of students—for example, in an academic bait-and-switch for students as well as faculty, contingent professors can be reassigned or have their classes canceled at the last minute. Moreover, they have limited or no access to important instructional resources and facilities that can enhance the ability to engage and serve students¹.

Over the past two decades, NEA has responded to the emergence of these issues through passage of resolutions at our annual Representative Assembly. These resolutions determine the association's policy positions. *The Resolution on Contingent Faculty and Professional Staff Protection* (adopted in 2008 and amended in 2009) calls for “creating new full-time faculty positions

within colleges, universities, and community colleges, and, in doing so, giving priority to contingent faculty seeking full-time positions.” In addition, “contingent faculty and professional staff ... should be treated no differently than full-time, tenure-track, or permanent faculty or professional staff for purposes of employment conditions, including eligibility to bargain collectively.” The resolution goes on to highlight the issues created by “the excessive use of academic appointments on contingent, temporary, non-tenure track, and/or multiple-year contracts.” For faculty, the lack of tenure protections “may undermine academic and intellectual freedom, [the future] opportunity for tenure, and participation in the governance structure.” More fundamentally, “Institutions fail to fulfill their responsibility to provide adequate working conditions and educational support when contingent faculty have no office space or allowance for office hours and are forced to teach at multiple campuses, thereby undermining educational quality.”

At all levels of education, the teacher-student relationship has been critical to academic success. It is no less valuable in higher education. For example, in 2001, George D. Kuh and Shouping Hu published a study of faculty-undergraduate student interaction in the 1990s and found that although the specific effects may have been trivial, “such interactions had substantial positive effects on students’ efforts in other educationally purposeful activities, which had non-trivial effects on their estimated gains and satisfaction.”ⁱⁱ More recently, Audrey J. Jaeger and M. Kevin Eagan studied a number of impacts of the institutional use of contingent faculty on student outcomes. For example, in 2011, Jaeger and Eagan found that “high levels of exposure to part-time faculty in the first year of college are consistently found to negatively affect student retention to the second year.”ⁱⁱⁱ Since contingent faculty are used most heavily in introductory courses, these findings present serious challenges to public policy choices to improve student retention and completion outcomes. None of these studies focused on the individual characteristics of those teaching on a contingent basis.

As I said before, but it bears repeating, NEA believes that it is not lack of ability on the part of individual contingents that jeopardizes educational quality; the issue is the lack of institutional commitment to the working conditions that these very qualified individuals face every day in the classroom. The association believes that equitable policies and practices must be in place so that contingent faculty are treated as institutionally supported professionals so they can better serve students as an integral and valued part of institutions of higher education. All faculty are professionals, and must be supported to carry out the traditional three parts of professional work: teaching, research, and service. Efforts are underway to “unbundle” the faculty role into smaller component parts, which would further demean the professional nature of the work and diminish the quality of the educational process.

On the basis of these policies, NEA has been working to improve working conditions for contingent faculty for many years now. The national position is stated in the association’s Contingent Action Plan and subsequent documents. The plan calls for an emphasis on research, organizing, collective bargaining, and political advocacy. The association continues its efforts in all these arenas. We work to organize unorganized faculty at institutions around the country. We maintain extensive databases of contracts for all faculty in order to help local units improve situations at their particular institution. And finally, we work at the national level and encourage our affiliates at the state and local level to advocate for better policies to improve faculty working conditions and student learning conditions.

For example, the NEA strongly supports the Adjunct Faculty Loan Forgiveness Act, which would allow part-time faculty to participate in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Act. Under current law, part-time faculty eligibility for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) is severely restricted to those working for one employer for 30 hours a week—and their employers must declare them full-time workers, something not likely to happen. Part-time faculty with employers must document 30 hours of work for eligible employers to qualify. With recent changes in how faculty work is counted, this is more difficult than it seems. The Adjunct Faculty Loan Forgiveness Act would allow faculty members who teach one course and do not have an outside job to qualify for PSLF. I urge all of you to support this bill, sponsored by Senator Richard Durbin of my state.

We have also been working with the Department of Labor on the problem of contingent faculty eligibility for unemployment compensation (UC) between academic terms. The association strongly believes job offers that are “contingent” on enrollment, funding, or whether a more senior faculty member wants to teach the course do not constitute “reasonable assurance” of a job at a specific point in the future. Although current DOL guidance is over 30 years old (prior to the explosion of contingent faculty in higher education), colleges and universities have successfully used it to argue that contingent faculty should not be granted unemployment compensation. Two states—California because of a court case (*CERVISI v. Unemployment Ins. Appeals Bd.*) and Washington because of legislation—have recognized the reality that such offers do not constitute “reasonable assurance” of a job. NEA argues that this reality should be recognized nationwide.

The ultimate solution to the contingent situation is to move most part-time faculty into full-time positions. But until that goal is achieved, we need to ensure that those working in higher education are treated fairly. They must be eligible for the full range of benefits and resources that all faculty deserve in order to provide the education that students deserve.

ⁱ Street, Steve; Maisto, Maria; Merves, Esther; and Rhoades, Gary. *Who is professor “staff” and how can this person teach so many classes?* Center for the Future of Higher Education, Policy Report #2. August 2012.

ⁱⁱ Kuh, George D. and Hu, Shouping. *The Effects of Student-Faculty Interaction in the 1990s*. The Review of Higher Education, Volume 24, Number 3, pp. 309-332 | 10.1353/rhe.2001.0005. Spring 2001.

ⁱⁱⁱ Jaeger, Audrey J. and Eagan, M. Kevin. *Examining Retention and Contingent Faculty Use in a State System of Public Higher Education*. Educational Policy, Volume 25, Number 3, pp. 507-537. 2001.