

Protecting Common Interests of Full- and Part-Time Faculty

By Jane Kerlinger and Scott Sibary

Striving for employment rights and benefits can seem like an uphill battle to tenure-track faculty. But nontenure-track faculty have even more difficulty securing any form of job security or fair treatment.

If an administration can make these groups see each other as rivals and play them off against each other, the consequences can be serious for all faculty. Yet this kind of internecine conflict does take place. In light of the community of interests that exists between tenure-track and lecturer faculty, this conflict is senseless.

Drawing specific examples from the California State University system—where both lecturers and tenured and tenure-track faculty are represented in the same bargaining unit by the California Faculty Association—we hope to show that the relationships between these two groups of faculty should be harmonious, rather than contentious. Fifteen years ago, when

the California Public Employees Relations Board put both tenure-track and nontenure-track faculty in the same unit, the board determined that all teaching faculty at CSU shared a “community of interests.”¹

The Board found that the two faculty groups “perform functionally related services or work toward established common goals,” “have common skills, working conditions, job duties, or similar educational or training requirements,” and “have common supervision.”²

More than 15 years later, the CSU central administration is still trying to undermine these community of interests and divide the faculty.

A recent CSU press release, during the latest contract negotiations, falsely claimed that the CFA is proposing that thousands of temporary faculty be given tenure-like employment security. This release is only the latest such attempt to play off temporary appointment fac-

Jane Kerlinger is a lecturer in the Department of Geosciences and the Recreation and Parks Management Department at California State University Chico (CSUC). She is the associate vice president for lecturers and serves on the board of directors of the NEA-affiliated California Faculty Association. **Scott Sibary** is a professor in the Department of Management, teaching primarily law-related courses such as Labor and Employment Law. He has also served on the Representation Committee for the CFA at CSU Chico.

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ulty against the permanent faculty.³

In this article, we hope to explore the issues of conflict and commonality between lecturers and tenure-track faculty. We point out some fallacies that foster division and conclude with an assessment of what is to be lost or gained from conflict or cooperation between groups of faculty.

Our setting: The 23 campus system of the California State University, which enrolls nearly 350,000 students and has an annual budget of approximately \$2.5 billion.⁴ CSU employs 20,449 faculty, of whom 9,899 or 48 percent hold nontenure-track appointments.⁵

These lecturers may be part-time or full-time and are hired usually for one term or one year. A very small proportion have two- or three-year renewable contracts.⁶ The average length of employment for lecturers in the CSU is about five years, and they teach on average two courses a semester. Factoring in the difference in course load between tenure-track faculty and lecturers, we estimate lecturers teach about 34 percent of the classes offered in the CSU.⁷

Lecturers are not a uniform group of faculty, either in the CSU or nationwide. The employment terms and conditions at their institutions will vary. Their reasons for teaching, their preferences for part-time or full-time work, and the

issues and concerns they see as important to their jobs reflect a variety of perspectives.

These concerns, however, can be grouped into two general categories: one involving contractual rights under the collective bargaining agreement, the other involving the campus work environment.

The issues for lecturers at CSU—since they are covered by a collective bargaining agreement—are in some ways unique, but in other ways the same as those of their colleagues.

After a series of bargaining agreements, lecturers in the CSU currently have a number of contractual rights. These include periodic evaluations, some protections against arbitrariness in rehiring and longevity, and a salary schedule.

But there are ongoing, unresolved bargaining-related concerns, such as job security, salary, participation in governance, and fairness in evaluation procedures.

Lecturers want a contractual seniority system as a reward for becoming more experienced faculty and to reduce the possibility of their being replaced for a variety of unpredictable reasons.

Many lecturers who teach year after year don't get a notice of assignment, let alone an offer of employment, until shortly before

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the term begins. This uncertainty of employment means the lecturer must make a decision whether or not to invest the necessary preparation time to do a good job in advance of being hired. An effective seniority system would reduce the uncertainty.

In addition, lecturers are often bewildered and frustrated by the reappointment process. During periods when departments have fewer classes to offer to lecturers, there can be great anxiety if long-term lecturers are competing for the same courses and have no idea of how decisions are being made.

On another front, salary issues for lecturers take on a strange irony beyond the amount of the salaries themselves. As lecturers advance through salary steps to higher pay, they are sometimes told, quite bluntly, by department chairs or deans that they are becoming too expensive.

As absurd as this might seem, these lecturers are not reappointed because they have not been given a commitment to continuing employment and—unlike their tenure-track colleagues—by moving up the salary schedule, they “price themselves out” of the labor market. The reward for quality teaching: They put themselves out of work.

There are other areas where lecturers want redress. Lecturers are typically not afforded the same

opportunity to take a leave of absence even for professional purposes. If a major rationale for granting professional development opportunities is to promote quality education, then lecturers feel cheated when they are denied these opportunities.

In addition to salary, job security and benefits—administrative-generated concerns—lecturers have no doubt that they are generally viewed by the tenured faculty as “second-class citizens.” They recognize the irony of being needed to teach large lower division classes, while the tenured faculty teach the more high-status, upper division classes, and then being treated with disrespect by their tenure-track colleagues.

Lecturers often feel isolated from the academic community, unless they have the opportunity to participate in such matters as curricular decisions. When opportunities to participate do arise, lecturers receive mixed signals about whether they are wanted. For those lecturers who are expected to be employees without a voice or input, frustrations mount. But many lecturers never venture to speak about their concerns, fearing that involvement will lead to a decision not to reappoint them.

Much of the blame for these conditions may be found in the per-

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spectives of administrators and tenured faculty.

For administrators always on the lookout for ways to cut costs, lecturers are valuable for a variety of reasons. For one thing, lecturers are an important complement to a university's capacity to build new or experimental programs. Lecturers can be used cheaply and without the fear of having to lay off tenure-track faculty.

Lecturers are also a good bargain for the administration in ways that go beyond lower salaries. They teach an average of 10 courses per year as a full-time load while tenure-track faculty teach on average fewer than eight. That translates into 25 percent more classes taught by lecturers, even if the salaries were identical to full-time.

The process is even more cost effective if the courses lecturers teach are splintered so that each individual lecturer teaches less than half-time. In the CSU, the administration doesn't pay for health benefits for people teaching less than half time.

Quality issues don't appear to be a major concern in the employment of lecturers, except for the reputation of the institution and for accreditation purposes. Consequently, little support is given for these activities. Yet, for the equiva-

lent of promotion, lecturers are expected to publish.

Tenure-track faculty also feel the impact of the use of lecturers in a number of ways, perhaps most immediately on tenure-track faculty workloads and work conditions.

Lecturer faculty provide flexibility by filling in when tenure-track faculty go on leave or sabbatical. Lecturers typically teach less desirable courses, enabling tenure-track faculty to focus more on upper division or advanced courses.

Similarly, lecturers tend to teach courses or sections of courses with larger class sizes than do tenure-track faculty. And, again consistent with the lecturer role of filling in as needed, lecturers typically get the leftover and less desirable schedules, while tenure-track faculty get schedules more conducive to professional, scholarly, and service activities.

These tendencies may vary. But it's safe to state that these propositions are typical and generally beneficial to tenure-track faculty.

The use of lecturers also provides less apparent benefits to tenure-track faculty. For instance, the number of class sections taught by lecturers replacing a tenure-track faculty member on leave will typically be greater than the number of sections taught by that same faculty member when not on leave.

These savings benefit tenure-

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track faculty indirectly via resources gained by the department, including staff and student-assistant time, or even travel funds.

The impact of lecturers on job security for tenure-track faculty is more complex. For one thing, lecturers add another layer of faculty to the lay-off list during time of retrenchment, and, in that respect, constitute added job security for tenure-track faculty.

On the other hand, some tenure-track faculty feel their job security is threatened by the use of temporary appointments. For instance, if lecturer status were to become the norm, current tenure-track faculty may never get tenure. In such a case, it is easy to imagine an assistant professor feeling uncomfortable about the use of temporary appointments.⁸

Another drawback for the tenure-track faculty: the use of lecturers increases aspects of full-time workload. This is especially true where lecturers don't participate in committee work. The higher the percentage of faculty in temporary appointments, the greater the share of committee work for tenure-track faculty.

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go to them. For example, if lecturers are eligible for awards, they may be resented as competition.

One additional area of concern for tenure-track faculty is the reputation of the university in the areas of research and scholarship, which declines when there is a large portion of faculty in lecturer status.

When there is over reliance on lecturers, tenure-track faculty might also have concerns about the quality of teaching. This is a problem because high turnover among lecturers presents the possibility of courses being noticeably less well-taught. Less well-taught courses could diminish interest among prospective majors, and this would naturally be of concern to tenure-track faculty.

Another sentiment we often hear is the desire for a feeling of community among academics, which can often be inclusive even of lecturers. Those who believe in this vision of the academic community find in their lecturer colleagues attributes that are valued by this community.

But those with a more exclusive view see lecturers as not genuinely belonging to the academic community. "A Statement of Concern to the Community of CSU Hayward" illustrated this attitude succinctly: "Lecturers are in the university for a time, but they are not of the university."⁹

Lecturers should have the same rights as tenure-track faculty to be treated fairly.

This type of elitism also includes resistance to any narrowing of the gap in terms and conditions of employment between lecturers and tenure-track faculty. An increase in lecturer salary, for example, is seen as a threat to the class lines that separate the two groups of faculty.

Desire for special status is a natural enough human characteristic to not require deeper analysis here. Rather, our point in this article is to highlight the benefits of the more inclusive approach to academic community.

We should note here that some use off temporary appointments can enhance a university's reputation. Specialists in particular fields working on particular projects or teaching special classes can certainly augment the breadth and quality of the programs offered.

Fortunately, some tenure-track faculty oppose on principle the use of job insecurity as a way to manipulate or intimidate lecturers. Or, as discussed below, tenure-track faculty may see that what happens to lecturers may later happen to all faculty.

We are not arguing for increasing or decreasing the percentage of lecturer faculty as a portion of the total faculty. Rather, our goal is to make the terms and conditions of employment for lecturers parallel to those for tenure-track faculty.

Some conditions of employment must remain different for lecturers. Job security, for instance, should not be the same for lecturers as for tenure-track faculty, for lecturers must necessarily remain below tenure-track faculty in seniority, regardless of date of hire or tenure status.

Pay scales will almost certainly be different. If lecturers are not hired to do scholarship or service, the resources allocated to lecturers for these activities also will reflect this. But other terms of employment *not related* to the difference in the roles they play in the university should *not* be different.

Lecturers should have the same rights as tenure-track faculty to be treated fairly and have redress in the case of mistreatment.

Lecturers should have the same procedural rights to be evaluated under legitimate criteria for re-employment as tenure-track faculty have to be evaluated for continued employment and eventual tenure.

In neither case should administrative whim, even if hidden behind such terms as "flexibility," be considered sufficient justification for an employment decision.

Lecturers should have rights to medical benefits, sick leave, and the like on a par with the level of

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their appointments. Breaks in service should be treated the same way for seniority purposes within the lecturers "pool" as leaves are treated for seniority purposes among tenure-track faculty.

Moreover, providing lecturers with terms and conditions employment that are parallel to those for tenure-track faculty is in the interests of all faculty.

This point is premised on the administration keeping constant downward pressure on the terms and conditions of employment for all employees.

Generally, in such situations, the larger the gap between the terms of employment for lecturer faculty and for tenure-track faculty, the greater the downward pressure on the tenure-track faculty.

For example, if lecturers pay scales are at 50 percent those of tenure-track faculty, the ability of tenure-track faculty to gain pay increases or resist decreases will be less than if lecturers pay scales were at 70 percent of those of tenure-track faculty. As lecturer pay increases, it becomes easier to argue that tenure-track faculty merit higher pay.

A general upward movement in terms and conditions for lecturers is, of course, an answer to most lecturer concerns.

For tenure-track faculty, the roadblocks to supporting such

improvements in the worklife of their lecturer colleagues are concerns about a supposedly limited supply of salary funds and a perceived threat to the special status of tenure-track faculty as compared to lecturers.

The first of these concerns is exactly the same issue that a union faces in negotiating pay scales from assistant professor through full professor and should be addressed in the same manner.

The second concern is illusory, even putting aside the issue of the legitimacy of a definition of academic community that excludes lecturers.

Even if lecturers were to win optimal terms and conditions of employment, these conditions would be qualitatively different from those enjoyed by their tenure-track colleagues. Moreover, the threat of replacement of tenure-track positions with temporary positions is lessened if the gap between the two is reduced.

It should also generally be true that as conditions improve for lecturers, so will the quality of their work. In the absence of tenure, greater job security would inspire those lecturers who see teaching as an important job to invest more time into becoming an increasingly effective instructor.

Another argument is quite sim-

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ply that fair treatment of people should always be of particular concern to academia. Universities are centers for building and maintaining the foundations of society and play a role in defining socially responsible behavior.

Fair treatment should be the standard for all university employees, whether permanent or temporary. But, beyond that, many of us believe fair treatment is essential to achieving a moral community. Such a community, we would argue, tends to be more efficient and productive than an exploitative group fraught with antagonistic divisions. And such a community gives its members a sense of dignity that the alternative cannot.

Why, then, might tenure-track faculty resist improvement of conditions for lecturers? Perhaps much of the reason lies in a number of fallacies about lecturers.

One fallacy, for example, labels lecturers as “temporary” employees. The appointments lecturers receive are temporary, but many, if not most, of the faculty in those positions teach at their institution for many years.

Like some tenure-track faculty, some lecturers do not stay long. But it is a distortion to loosely label lecturers as “temporaries.” They do not just show up and disappear

with too little permanency to be bothered with.

Another complaint one can sometimes hear is that lecturers “use up resources that could go to tenure-track faculty and create quality issues and other problems.”

Lecturers do use resources, like office space and supplies, computers, and the like. But resources are typically acquired with budgets based on enrollments, and lecturers produce revenue. So without the lecturers to teach the extra classes there wouldn't be any extra resources.

For some tenure-track faculty, quality issues are a concern—and should be, for these issues arise because of the way some administrations choose to hire and treat lecturers. Little or no job security and little or no advance notice of teaching assignment make high turnover likely and morale low.

It is also a fallacy to equate the kind of job security a lecturer might have with the security that tenured faculty have. Whatever the nomenclature, tenure boils down to a matter of job security in the face of work or budget shortages.

We propose a seniority system for lecturers that is in the interests of both lecturers and tenure-track faculty. This would be a separate seniority list for lecturers who would, as a group, be lower on the seniority list than tenure-track fac-

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ulty in the same department.

So why would tenure-track faculty feel threatened by job security for lecturers? This leads to the next fallacy: "Lecturers are taking over."

Getting rid of of tenure and replacing permanent appointments with temporary appointments is perhaps the dream of most university administrations—and this is the agenda that should worry tenure-track faculty.

Lecturers, regardless of job seniority or the like, will never be in a position to determine policies for tenure-track faculty. As the proportion of lecturers increases, it is the relative power of administration vis-a-vis faculty that is increased.

In the end, two divisive factors emerge as most influential. The first is the desire of administrators to reduce costs and increase control. We have seen the proportion of budgets going to administration steadily increase, even in times of faculty layoffs and dropping enrollments. Increasing the proportion of faculty hired on a cheaper, temporary basis has made this easier for administrations to effect.¹⁰

At the same time, the over-use of lecturers makes it possible for administrations to use the threat of a large pool of "reserve" instructional employees to gain leverage on tenure-track faculty. The lower

the cost, the lesser the rights and job security of lecturers, the greater the leverage of administration.

Clearly, it is in the interest of cost- and control-conscious administrations to keep tenure-track faculty and lecturers separate.

The one legitimate reason for hiring instructional faculty with lower job security is to be able to meet variations in demand. This is the one *inherent* way in which the role of lecturers is and will remain distinct from the role of tenure-track faculty. And it is this difference in job security that administrators use to play the groups off against each other.

A sense of academic community that encompasses both faculty groups—and makes lecturer contract rights parallel to tenure-track rights—would take this weapon out of the hands of the administration and increase faculty power. We need to recognize that despite the different roles we play, our interests are the same.

Some sort of seniority system for lecturers would be inherent in this proposition. But at the same time, lecturers must accept sporadic variations in work as an inevitable feature of their jobs. This is a limitation that tenure-track faculty—thanks to the existence of lecturers—rarely face.

A recognition of the importance that each group has for the other,

and their basic commonalities as instructors in academia, should lead to recognizing a fuller academic community as one providing

opportunity for achievement, expression, and growth for all its members. ■

Endnotes

¹ California Gov. Code section 3579 (a) (1)

² PERB later determined that under HEERA, graduate students teaching in the same fields in which they are pursuing degrees would generally not fall under the definition of "employee," and therefore would not be "faculty" for representation purposes. This determination was upheld by the California Court of Appeal in *AGS v. PERB*, 6 Cal. App. 4th 1133 (1992).

³ Letters almost identical to the press release were mailed to all tenure-track faculty in July, 1998. Letters were also mailed to lecturers, but without reference to any CFA attempts to achieve greater job security for lecturers. The press release is available on the CSU Web site at www.co.calstate.

In reality, the CFA proposal for temporary faculty job security falls far short

of even the modest proposal we make here. For more on the CFA contract negotiations, visit www.cfa.org

⁴ See the CSU web site, www.co.calstate.edu/bo/FeeEnrrll_Infor/Enrollment/1997_98Enrllmt/Enrllmttrend.pdf

⁵ April 1998 State Controller's Tape

⁶ Personal information from Manuel Esteban, President of CSU, Chico.

⁷ 9899 lecturer faculty @ 0.4 timebase; 20,449 tenure-track faculty @ 1.0 timebase @ 11/15 teaching load.

⁸ "Report on the Status of Non-Tenure Track Faculty," *Academe*, 78:6 (Nov.-Dec. 1992)

⁹ *The Pioneer*, January 16, 1997, p. 7

¹⁰ "Report on the Status of Non-Tenure Track Faculty," *Academe*, 78:6 (Nov.-Dec. 1992)