

**Testimony to the House Higher Education Committee**  
**Special Topic: Nontenure-track Faculty**  
**February 15, 2006**  
**Remarks Prepared by Sandy Flood**  
**Chapter President of NIU Instructors**

Thank you for convening this hearing on nontenure-track faculty.

I am currently teaching at Northern Illinois University as a full-time faculty member-----as a nontenure track faculty. I have been called a temporary, an adjunct, a contingent worker, a part-timer, an extra, not regular, a strawberry picker for higher education. In fact, I have served the students at NIU for over 25 years, but I do not have a PhD, only a Masters. Because of the labels, one assumes a very tenuous connection with the university. In Illinois, full-time nontenure-track do get medical benefits and invest in the pension system.

When preparing students to teach children, the situation never felt tenuous, but when I was told that we may or may not have money for you in the fall, I felt like my job WAS definitely in jeopardy year after year. Unionization in 1992 brought about better job security.

At NIU, the number of full-time nontenure-track faculty has risen since 1992 due to the decreased number of tenure-track faculty and the increasing number of college students. Two hundred Instructors teach over 10,000 students each semester, courses from math, English, speech, Spanish especially at the lower levels to 300 and 400 level courses in business, education, physics, history, health, nursing.

**We are no small work force!** It seems like nontenure-track faculty have become a MORE permanent part of the higher education staff than ever before. The average length of service for Instructors at NIU is 6 years, which reflects the national average.

As with other 4-year universities, NIU hires many part-time faculty too, some of whom have full-time jobs elsewhere. Most of our contracts are for a year, but some nontenure-track, longer-term faculty now have multi-year appointments. Others are hired for only a semester. Hirings might be done 4 months ahead due to excellent planning or they can be done two weeks before classes begin. Late and hurried hirings are a

disadvantage to employee AND to the students who expect the course to be planned thoroughly and organized from the first day of class.

Historically, 25-30 years ago, the community colleges started using nontenure-track faculty first to teach specialty courses. This is still one reason to hire outside the tenure-track faculty. But, more often, the institution sees a cost advantage to hiring teachers for half or a third of the salaries of tenure-track faculty. They also want the flexibility to hire and fire at will as enrollments fluctuate. Presently over HALF of the faculty in higher education in the U.S. is nontenure-track.

According to the findings from the National Commission on the Cost of Higher Education (1998), institutions set new priorities as a result of the rise of students in the 1980's and 90's. Institutions chose to allocate proportionally less to their instructional budgets. Instead, they increased funding for physical plants, new technologies, and administrative costs. They tried to attract students by updating dorms and recreational facilities. This commission confirmed that investments in faculty had decreased as tuitions rose. To maximize costs, they hired more nontenure track faculty for less money. Now students find better facilities but also find faculty with less time, less professional support, and fewer resources.

So many critical issues have risen because of the dependence on nontenure-track faculty. The brochures from AFT explain these issues in depth. Very briefly:

- They are usually denied total voting rights.
- They are excluded from university and departmental functions.
- Sometimes it is a struggle to make sure every faculty member has an office with desk, computer, printer, file cabinet, phone—just the basics. We are still working on this at NIU.
- Many of the faculty lack a voice in choosing their own curricular content and have no input about selecting a department chairman. In fact, some department Chairmen have not even MET their nontenure-track faculty.

- The situation creates high turnover of too many faculty.
- The institutions lose a sense of intellectual and social community with such a stark, two-tiered system of faculty. Often this demeaning, two-tiered system is not obvious to anyone outside the university walls.
- Professional development such as attendance at conferences is paid by the faculty member with little or no reimbursement.

The universities need to invest in the professional development and involvement of ALL faculty. The nontenure-track faculty should not be left to simply stagnate professionally.

**Of the list of issues, by far the most problematic issue is the unprofessional wages.** Administrators hire professional teachers in our fields, but we are treated as second-class citizens. However, we are expected to deliver FIRST-RATE classes to students. Many nontenure track teachers do not even get cost of living increases; the unionized campuses have done better on these. Indeed, cuts to higher education at the federal and state levels have also impeded progress regarding salary gains.

I will report on NIU's "salary scale" since I am familiar with that. Other public universities in Illinois have close wages for nontenure-track faculty. Per course for nontenure-track faculty, the universities pay far better than the community colleges.

The beginning wage of full-time, non-tenure track faculty at NIU with a Masters degree is \$30,500/year in the first, fifth or twentieth year of service. Our average Instructor salary is about \$33,700, but the median is closer to \$31,000. When compared to our IBHE peer group for NIU, the average salary of Professors is \$85,998; Associate Professor-\$64,398; Assistant Professor-\$54,945; Instructors-\$38,843. The Instructors often teach the same classes as the tenure-track faculty; the Instructors teach 4 classes per semester while the tenure track faculty teach fewer and add research and service to their workload.

In comparing NIU's Instructors to the salaries of public school teachers,

the teacher at Step 1 or year 1 with a Masters in Rochelle and DeKalb will earn \$33,440 and \$36,555; St. Charles-\$37,215. These are all 9-month salaries.

In further comparing the IBHE data on community colleges, the average salary at Elgin Community College is \$72,500; Kishwaukee is \$46,100; Waubensee is \$60,100. Many of these tenure-track faculty members have Masters degrees and teach 9 months as we do.

I handed the article to you about the Illinois Family Income Levels from the U.S. Census Bureau. Workers with Masters degrees now earn median salaries of \$61,692, whereas those with a HIGH SCHOOL diploma should be earning a median salary of \$31,456. We stand with those high school graduates in wages.

I found a relevant article on my desk entitled, “Why Employees Should Be in First Place” by a HR expert. “Most boards put either shareholders or executives first. . . . Neither should be at the top of the list. A more rational thought process would place employees first. . . . Treat them like the skilled professionals they are.” (*Chicago Tribune*, December 18, 2003).

I discussed this higher education issue several times with your former colleague, Dave Wirsing. As the owner of a successful farming operation in Sycamore, he spoke from experience. He said he always valued his employees and always paid them ABOVE the going rate for their jobs. That way they knew they were appreciated for their contribution to the operation, and as a result, Dave had a constant and stable work force.

This is Good Advice for Higher Education in Illinois. Stymied budgets are not the only problem here. ALL Teaching Faculty need to be more appreciated for THEIR contributions and dedication to their institutions. They work hard to advise, assist, and prepare students for their future careers. A solid higher educational system enhances the positive economic climate for citizens of Illinois.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Sandy Flood, NIU Faculty, Local #4100 UPI/IFT/AFT, [flood@niu.edu](mailto:flood@niu.edu), 815-753-1302