

Indispensable But Invisible

A Report on the Working Climate of Non-Tenure Track Faculty at George Mason University

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According to institutional data, during the 2012-2013 academic year, adjunct and other contingent faculty made up 71 percent of the total faculty at George Mason University. Like contingent faculty at other colleges and universities, much of Mason's non-tenure track faculty, especially part-time faculty members, earn less than a living wage, have little to no benefits, lack job security, lack representation, and have few opportunities for advancement. This report documents the results of a working conditions (climate) survey conducted on contingent faculty at George Mason University during the Spring Semester of 2013, along with suggested recommendations.

*A report by members of the Public Sociology Association
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Table of Contents

Summary of Findings	3
Introduction	8
Methods	10
1. Who Are GMU Contingent Faculty?	14
2. Levels of University Support	33
3. Contingent Faculty and Their Contributions	46
Conclusion	62
Recommendations	63

Summary of Findings

Our report on GMU contingent faculty (non-tenure line faculty) working conditions is similar to reports coming from colleges and universities across the country. The findings are not all negative, though we find strong evidence that GMU contingent faculty are overworked, underpaid, and undersupported. These negative consequences ripple across the university amongst the faculty, within departments, and in the student body.

These are among the key findings of a survey of 241 contingent faculty and their working conditions at George Mason University, the most detailed study to date of a single college or university's contingent faculty population. Each of these findings and others are discussed in depth within the body of this report.

GMU contingent faculty are dedicated educators.

Eighty-five percent of our respondents noted that they are motivated to be educators by their passions for teaching and their subject area. They devote extra time and effort because they care about students and want to do the best possible job. Despite this, only 26 percent believe that these extra efforts will prompt the university to recognize their value.

GMU contingent faculty are suffering financial hardship.

Although some contingent faculty are well off, we found that 23 percent have an annual household income under \$30,000, while an additional 23 percent are dependent upon teaching to prevent their income from falling to poverty or near-poverty levels. At only one or two courses per semester, these highly educated workers are making less than minimum wage (and significantly less than a living wage) in a metropolitan area with one of the highest costs of living in the country.

GMU contingent faculty are career-oriented.

Nearly 40 percent of our respondents cited their ambition to work in a tenure-track position or to gain teaching experience. However, contingent faculty express concern that they are rarely considered for tenure-track positions in their departments once they have accepted a contingent position.

GMU contingent faculty are supporting their own graduate studies.

Thirty-three percent of our respondents were also graduate students. Although some receive funding for their education, and valuable experience in the classroom, 51 percent assert that their teaching responsibilities force them to take longer to complete their degree. This may be because of some departments heavily rely upon their graduate student faculty. Additionally, this means that their salaries are essentially paid back to the university to fund additional semesters that otherwise would not have been necessary.

GMU contingent faculty report lax hiring requirements, being hired with little preparation time, and a lack of orientations.

GMU contingent faculty report that they encountered lax hiring requirements, with only 59 percent asked to submit references, and 50 percent participating in an interview. A significant minority of these hires occurred shortly before the semester started, leaving contingent faculty with little time to prepare for their courses. (Thirty-three percent had less than 2 weeks to prepare, and 25 percent had one week or less to prepare.) In addition, less than half report that they received trainings and orientations to important resources and departments—such as copying and printing services, library resources, human resources, and University Life—when they started working at GMU.

GMU contingent faculty report having limited access to resources for their courses.

Significant minorities of GMU contingent faculty did not receive important course resources such as curriculum guidelines (29 percent), textbooks (18 percent), and sample syllabi (19 percent). Others report that they did not have access to a phone (67 percent), computer (40 percent), printer (36 percent), copying services (21 percent), library resources (21 percent), or classroom technologies (10 percent). These percentages are even higher for part-time faculty.

A majority of GMU contingent faculty do not have access to private spaces to meet with students, and provide their own out-of-class resources such as computers, phones, and printers to conduct their office work.

Most GMU contingent faculty report that they are using their own out-of-class resources, such as their own computer (77 percent), phone (73 percent), printer (64 percent), and office space (56 percent). Additionally, they must absorb the provisional and repair costs for these resources themselves. Three-fourths (75 percent) of respondents indicated that they had taken on the burden in time or out-of-pocket expenses so that their students would not be negatively affected by the lack of resources from the university. Of the lack of resources reported, our respondents stated that the most detrimental deficiencies were the lack of office space and the lack of private space with which to meet students.

Most GMU contingent faculty reported not receiving training to know how to accommodate students with special needs.

A majority (79 percent) of GMU contingent faculty have not received training to accommodate students with unique or special needs, even though large majorities reported that they had previously taught non-traditionally aged students, students with disabilities, first generation immigrant students, ESL students, first-generation college students, and veterans. To make sure that the unique needs of these students were met, 34 percent of respondents reported that they had sought out training at their own time and expense.

A substantial majority of GMU contingent faculty do not feel prepared to know how to respond to an emergency situation.

GMU contingent faculty feel largely unprepared to confront an emergency situation that could arise on campus, and even fewer report that they have been trained by GMU to know how to respond. For example, only 42 percent felt prepared, and 28 percent had been trained by GMU, to know what to do if they felt that a student was a threat to themselves or others. Similarly, only 42 percent felt prepared, and 27 percent had been trained by GMU, to know what to do if a student came to them who had been a target of prejudice or discrimination.

Part-time faculty wages are inadequate and rarely increase.

GMU only requires departments to pay a part-time faculty member between \$2,511 and \$3,948 for a three-credit hour lecture-based course, depending on their experience and the level of the course. For part-time faculty, these rates do not increase for larger class sizes or the amount of work in preparation, grading, etc. that different courses require. This wage is substantially less than the per course earnings of their tenure-track colleagues, and is less than contingent faculty earn at GMU's competitors in the same metropolitan area. Pay increases are rare. The pay matrix for part-time faculty, released by the provost, is the same for the Fall 2014 semester as it was in Spring 2013. Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of our respondents were dissatisfied with their wages.

Opportunities for advancement, representation, recognition, and other benefits are limited for GMU contingent faculty.

Part-time respondents stated that they are largely excluded from many of basic opportunities, including priority consideration for tenure track openings in their department (95 percent), priority consideration for full-time term positions in their department (86 percent), representation on their department or college website (53 percent), and participation in departmental meetings (54 percent).

GMU contingent faculty invest a large amount of uncompensated time into their classes, both before and during the semester.

The average amount of uncompensated preparation time for GMU contingent faculty, before the beginning of a semester, is between 16 and 25 hours—although 54 percent spent over 20 hours preparing. Most shockingly, 32 percent stated that they spend 50 or more hours preparing a class they had not taught before. At the university's rate of 9 hours per week for each 3 credit hour course, this equates to 6 weeks' worth of work for which they are not paid.

Once the semester starts, 84 percent of faculty exceed the nine hours of compensated work time each week, by an average of five hours. For one semester, this equates to about 80 hours of uncompensated work—nearly nine weeks' worth of wages—per class.

GMU contingent faculty invest a significant amount of uncompensated time in outside of class activities.

Over half of our respondents (55 percent) stated that they advised students outside of their compensated time on a monthly basis. Twenty-nine percent do this weekly. Additionally, 47 percent of respondents say that they participated in uncompensated course development, and 31 percent participated in uncompensated curriculum design for their departments at least monthly.

Students heavily rely on GMU contingent faculty for non-academic advice, counseling, and support.

A majority of our respondents (62 percent) stated that they had been approached by students for non-academic advice, counseling, or support. Nearly half (45 percent) had been approached by a student manifesting mental health difficulties. A large majority of this care work falls upon the shoulders of female contingent faculty and is uncompensated.

Introduction

The working conditions of faculty on U.S. college and university campuses have shifted dramatically in the last 40 years. Tenured and tenure track faculty, who made up almost 60 percent of total faculty in 1975, are now only 25 percent of the professoriate¹.

Non-tenure track faculty (both full- and part-time) are the new faculty majority, as they now comprise around 75 percent of the total faculty on college and university campuses in the United States¹. Often described as “contingent faculty” because of the precarious nature of their employment, these faculty include adjuncts, lecturers, term faculty, part-timers, post-docs, and teaching assistants, among other titles. Most of these are part-time faculty; in 2009, part-time non-tenure track faculty comprised nearly 50 percent of all faculty.

Research has shown that hiring temporary faculty was initially a short-term solution to a set of larger problems in higher education, including a booming student population and cutbacks in federal and state funding, but it has now become the primary hiring method at colleges and universities^{2,3}.

This trend toward contingency is one aspect of several well-documented problems, including a decline in educational quality^{4,5}, lower graduation rates and less contact time between the teacher and students⁶, band-aid solutions to larger educational staffing problems such as reduced hiring standards⁷, and the rise of what has been described as “caste-based faculty system” in

¹ Coalition on the Academic Workforce, *A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members*, retrieved from http://academicworkforce.org/Research_reports.html, June 2012.

² Kezar, A., *Embracing Non-Tenure Track Faculty*, Taylor & Francis, 2012.

³ Schuster, J.H. & Finkelstein, M.J., *The American Faculty: The Restructuring of Academic Work and Careers*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.

⁴ Jaeger, A.J. & Eagan, M.K. “Effects of Exposure to Part-Time Faculty on Associate’s Degree Completion”, *Community College Review*, 36(3), 2009, 167-194.

⁵ Jacoby, D. “Effects of Part-Time Faculty Employment on Community College Graduation Rates”, *The Journal of Higher Education*, 77(6), 2006, 1081-1102.

⁶ Ehrenberg, R.G. & Zhang, L. “Do Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty Matter?” *The Journal of Human Resources*, 40(3), 647-659.

⁷ Baldwin, R.G. & Chronister, J.L. *Teaching Without Tenure*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

which contingent faculty—especially part-timers—lack equitable compensation, benefits, job security, professional development, and advancement opportunities.

The New Faculty Majority Foundation (NFMF), a research and advocacy organization for contingent faculty, conducted a nationwide back-to-school survey during the fall of 2011 that assessed the working conditions of contingent faculty in the United States⁸. Many of their results shocked the higher education community, such as the finding that two-thirds of contingent faculty were hired less than three weeks before courses began, or dismal rates of access to basic pedagogical resources and technologies for contingent faculty, including essential items like office space, campus libraries, or even curriculum guidelines⁹.

This trend of increasing reliance upon contingent faculty is present at George Mason University, where, according to institutional data, non-tenure track (contingent) faculty made up 71 percent of the total faculty during the 2012-2013 academic year, with part-time faculty making up 49 percent of the total faculty that same year¹⁰. NFMF's 2011 survey became the initial skeleton for the research we conducted at George Mason University during the spring semester of 2013. In the following pages, we share the findings of that research, bringing light to the working conditions of the majority of faculty on our campuses, and the effect this trend has on student learning conditions. We conclude with a series of recommendations that, if addressed, would position GMU as a leader in addressing the growing concerns in higher education.

⁸ Retrieved from <http://www.nfmfoundation.org/NFMF-Back-to-School-Survey.html> .

⁹ Street, S., Maisto, M., Merves, E., and Rhoades, G. "Who is Professor 'Staff' and How Can this Person Teach so Many Classes?", retrieved from <http://www.newfacultymajority.info/research-and-reports/>, 2012.

¹⁰ Retrieved from <http://irr.gmu.edu/> .

Methods

Since the release of our survey instrument, it is now being used at multiple institutions across the U.S. to assess the working conditions of their contingent faculty members. The Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success, a co-partnership between the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education and the Association of American Colleges and Universities, as well as the New Faculty Majority Foundation both prominently feature the survey on their websites as a resource for researchers and advocates. It has been touted by Dr. Gary Rhoades, Director of the Center for the Future of Higher Education, as "the most comprehensive survey on contingent faculty working conditions at a college or university to date."

One reason why this survey has received considerable attention is because it was created by and in concert with contingent faculty. The three authors of this study have all worked as contingent faculty (both at GMU and at other colleges and universities across the nation and in the DC metro area), and we regularly consulted with a diverse group of colleagues at GMU as we constructed and implemented this survey. Most other instruments have been created by tenure line faculty, Human Resource departments, or by external assessment companies. We believe that many of these groups lack a comprehensive understanding of the diverse and complex issues faced by contingent faculty, and as a result, their survey instruments may not fully capture the experiences faced by these faculty members.

As Ph.D. students in the Department of Sociology and as members of the Public Sociology Association, a GMU student organization, we conducted a web-based survey to reach out to contingent faculty members within our own community. Recognizing the difficulty of finding accurate contact information for contingent faculty, we implemented a two-part strategy. First, we compiled e-mail information from each departmental website across all four of Mason's campuses. Second, we used the Spring 2013 course schedule¹¹ to search for names and e-mail addresses that were not listed on departmental websites. Anyone who was not directly identified

¹¹Accessed on GMU's [Patriot Web](#).

as tenured or tenure track on departmental websites was included in our sample. We also encouraged respondents to forward the invitation to their contingent colleagues. As a result, although contact information for contingent faculty is notoriously incomplete and difficult to find, we are confident that our survey has minimal coverage error.

Utilizing DatStat, a survey authoring software program, to host and disseminate the survey, we sent a survey link to 1,665 e-mail addresses. We stressed in our invitation that we were acting independently of the university's administration, and that all responses would remain anonymous. Our final response rate was a little under 15 percent, with 241 completed responses. Taking into account inactive email addresses and unqualified respondents, our true response rate is likely between 20 to 25 percent. Although this may seem low, a response rate of less than 25 percent is typical for robust, web-based, academic-quality surveys¹².

Filters were created in the survey to exclude tenured, tenure-track, and non-GMU faculty, ensuring that only contingent faculty at GMU were represented in the data. Similarly, recognizing that the experiences of full-time term faculty members are different from part-time faculty, post-docs, and graduate teaching assistants, filters were created directing respondents to position specific questions only applicable to them.

It is important to note here that there is a three-tiered faculty system at GMU consisting of part-time faculty, non-tenure track (term) faculty, and tenure-line faculty. This differentiation is significant because, though contingent faculty include all faculty off the tenure track, the experiences of full-time non-tenure track faculty are often markedly better than those who work part time because of salaried wages, access to benefits such as health insurance, retirement, sick leave, representation on the faculty senate, and the ability to work toward student loan forgiveness, amongst other benefits. On the other hand, though, full-time non-tenure track faculty still operate from limited contracts and can be let go with little reason, make less than their tenure-line counterparts often doing the same or more work, and do not have the security

¹² Dillman, D.A., Smyth, J.D., Christian, L.M., *Internet, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*, Wiley, 2008.

that comes with the academic freedom of having tenure. To that extent, it is important for us to include these full-time non-tenure track faculty in our survey.

The most significant limitation of our sample may be its rate of nonresponse. Hypothetically speaking, if those who took our survey differ significantly from those who did not, this can produce misleading results. With our limited information about the population, it is impossible for us to identify whether and to what extent nonresponse bias has occurred. We note, however, that we did receive demographic and college affiliation results roughly consistent with what we expect to see from the GMU contingent faculty population. Moreover, we note that while an argument can be made that our results may overstate the extent to which GMU contingent faculty have had negative experiences on the job (since these would presumably be more motivated to take our survey), it is also possible that our results may *understate* these negative experiences (since those who are most overworked and aggrieved may not have had time to take a survey, or may have been hesitant to share their experiences with us in spite of our assurances of confidentiality). The best possible course of action would be to utilize this survey instrument to conduct annual studies assessing the working conditions of GMU's contingent faculty.

The three authors of this study sought to design a comprehensive and robust instrument that truly captures the experiences of contingent faculty and we hope that it will be of use to administrators and advocates alike. The full survey can be accessed at our website:
contingentfacultystudy.wordpress.com.

A partial list of the topics covered includes:

- Demographics
- Work history and experience
- Motivations for becoming contingent faculty
- Career aspirations
- Application history and interest in becoming a tenure-track faculty member
- Subjects and types of classes taught at GMU
- Hiring experiences at GMU
- Availability of orientations and trainings at GMU

- Availability and access to resources and support at GMU
- Accessibility and safety experiences at GMU
- Compensation, benefits, and job security at GMU
- Time management and work demands at GMU
- Treatment by GMU administrators, faculty members, and students
- Subjective attitudes towards the above aspects of their job at GMU

Who Are GMU Contingent Faculty?

GMU contingent faculty are predominantly white, over half are female, and a majority hold graduate degrees.

Although some respondents opted not to provide demographic information about themselves, we found clear majorities of women (55 percent) and those who identify as exclusively white and non-Hispanic (84 percent). Not surprisingly, our sample was extraordinarily well-educated, with 44 percent having last obtained a Master's degree, and 36 percent having last obtained a doctoral or professional degree. Full demographic statistics are presented in Table 1.

GMU contingent faculty ages cover a wide range, with 18 percent under the age of 30 and 20 percent over the age of 60.

Respondents were most reticent about reporting their age, with one-fourth of our sample choosing not to provide this information. Among those who did, however, we found a wide range of ages represented. There were large numbers of young scholars, with nearly one-fifth of respondents (18 percent) under the age of thirty, and a near-majority (44 percent) under the age of forty. But there were also large numbers of older scholars as well, with more than 40 percent over the age of fifty, and 20 percent aged sixty or older.

In addition to this demographic information, we asked respondents to tell us in which school(s) or college(s) at GMU they have worked as contingent faculty. As the College of Humanities and Social Sciences is the largest college at the university, it is not surprising that a plurality are affiliated with this college—although at nearly 37 percent, this college is overrepresented.

Significant minorities, though representative of the university more broadly¹³, were affiliated with the College of Science (14 percent), College of Education and Human Development (11 percent), and the College of Health and Human Services (9 percent). Additionally, 19 percent of

¹³ Data retrieved from GMU Office of Institutional Research and Reporting, <http://irr.gmu.edu/FullTimeFacComp.pdf>.

Table 1: Demographics of GMU Contingent Faculty

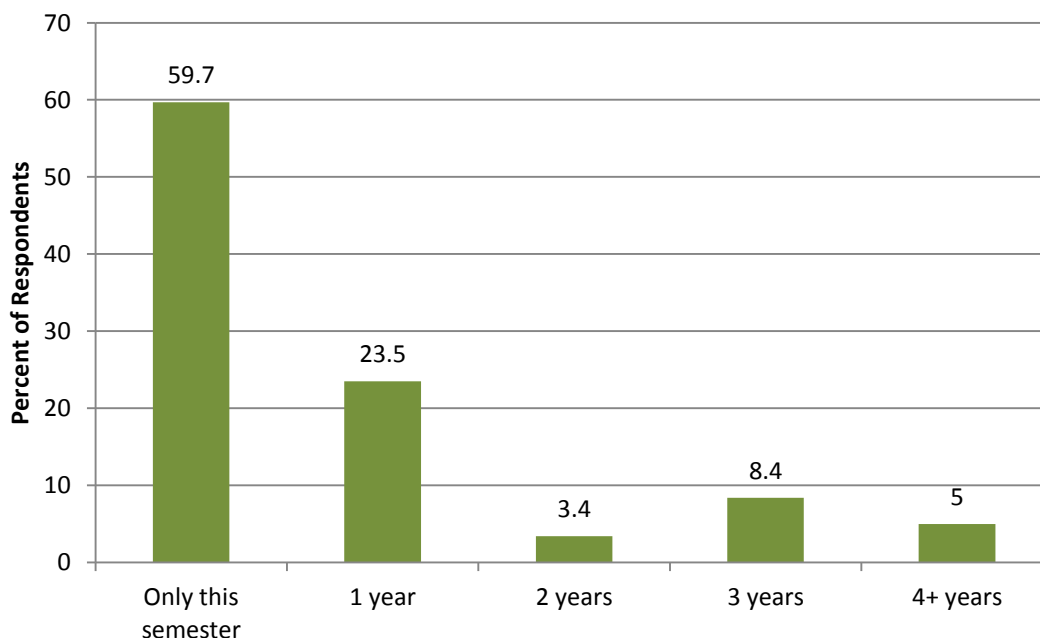
	% of respondents (n = 241)
Gender	
Men	32.8
Women	55.2
Other/Prefer not to answer/No answer	12.0
Race/Ethnicity	
White, non-Hispanic	84.9
Black, non-Hispanic	2.4
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	7.3
Asian, non-Hispanic	2.9
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.5
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	0.5
Two or More	1.5
Education	
Bachelor's degree	7.9
Master's degree	44.0
Doctoral degree	32.4
Professional degree	3.7
Other/Prefer not to answer/No answer	12.0
Age	
Under 30	17.5
30-39	26.2
40-49	14.8
50-59	21.8
60+	19.7
Affiliation(s)	
College of Education and Human Development	11.3
College of Health and Human Services	8.8
College of Humanities and Social Sciences	36.5
College of Science	14.3
Other	19.2
Two or More	9.9

our respondents reported that they are affiliated with one of the other schools or colleges: the College of Visual and Performing Arts, Honors College, Krasnow Institute for Advanced Study, New Century College, School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, School of Law, School of Management, School of Public Policy, and Volgenau School of Engineering.

About 50 percent of contingent faculty respondents have been working at GMU for four semesters or fewer, but 25 percent have been working there for 14 semesters or more.

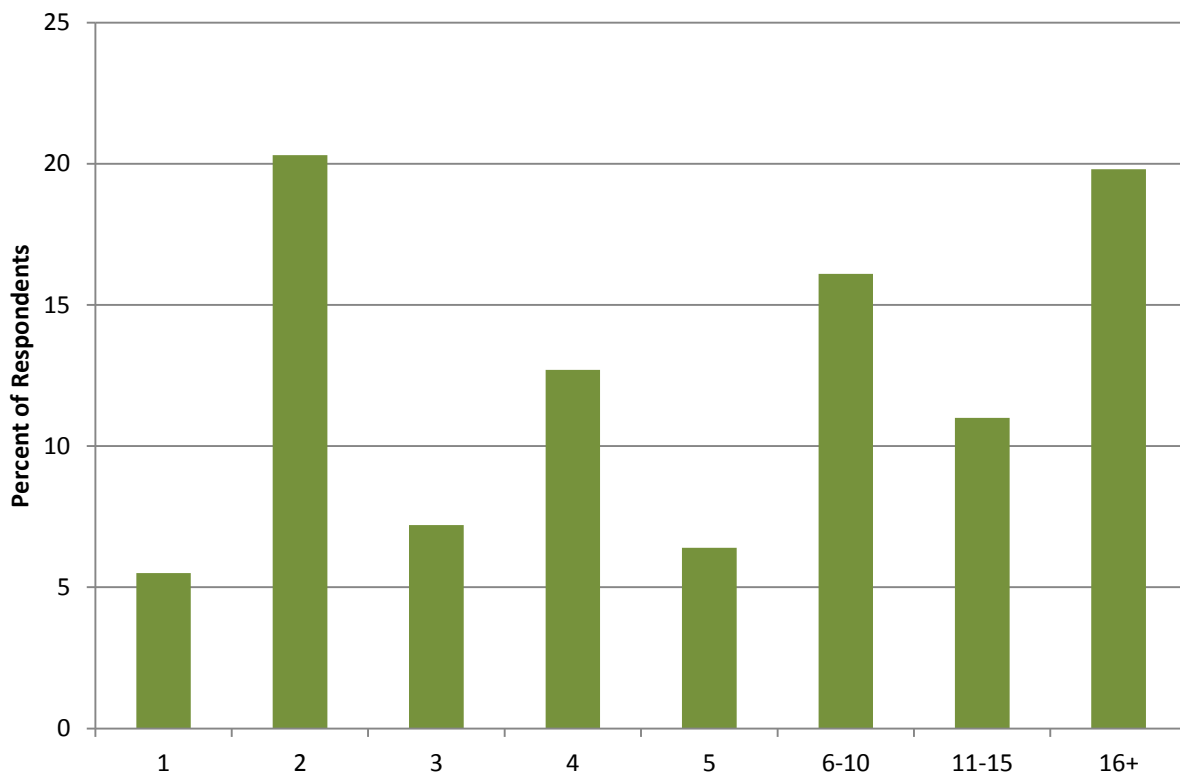
One of the main differences between contingent faculty and their tenure-track colleagues is their short-term contracts, which are often only one semester in duration. Figure 1 shows that this is the case at GMU: 83 percent of respondents were working under a contract of no more than two semesters, and 60 percent only had a contract for a single semester. When looking at part-time faculty specifically, 83 percent report only having a contract for the semester.

Figure 1: Current Length of GMU Contract



In addition to a lack of job security, shortened contracts lead to a high turnover rate, which is one of the most salient findings of Figure 2. Many contingent faculty simply have not been at GMU for very long: 46 percent have only been working at the university for four semesters or fewer. Given that two-thirds of GMU’s faculty are contingent, this finding suggests that many four-year undergraduates will find the department offering their major to be significantly transformed over the course of their time at GMU. This may hinder the students’ ability to form long-term relationships with professors, and have negative consequences as they enter the job market. (For example, students may find it to be difficult or impossible to locate past instructors for career advice, or for references when they apply for jobs.)

Figure 2: Total Semesters Taught at GMU



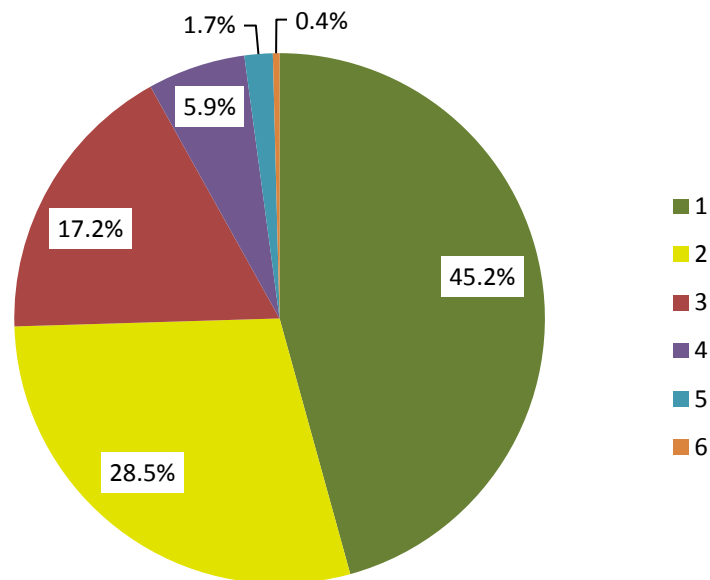
The other conspicuous finding of Figure 2 is the presence of a sizable minority of contingent faculty who have been at the university for a long time. Among survey respondents, 25 percent have been at GMU for 14 semesters or more, with 16 percent having worked at the university for twenty semesters or greater. Amongst part-time contingent faculty, 17.2 percent report working

at GMU for more than 20 semesters, or over 5 years, suggesting that they are being employed on more than just a temporary basis.

Three-fourths of GMU contingent faculty are only teaching one or two classes per semester at the university, and a significant minority (37 percent) are teaching at least one other college or university in addition to GMU.

The number of classes taught per semester at the university is an important statistic because GMU employees who work more than 30 hours per week receive health insurance. At GMU, with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, one class is considered to be the equivalent of nine hours per week; therefore, contingent faculty teaching four or more classes are likely to be receiving health insurance. As Figure 3 demonstrates, only about eight percent of contingent faculty qualify for insurance through their teaching responsibilities alone. Although it is probable

Figure 3: Number of Classes Taught at GMU During Spring 2013 Semester



that some of the remaining 92 percent receive health insurance from the university because of other, non-teaching responsibilities, only 12 percent of our respondents reported that their current position included ten or more hours of additional non-teaching obligations. As a result, we can infer that many GMU contingent faculty do not receive health insurance from the university.¹⁴

With so many contingent faculty only able to earn a part-time salary without benefits at the university, it is not surprising that a sizable number look for employment at other universities as well. Over one-third of our respondents reported that they had been employed at more than one institution during a semester—with 26 percent employed at two, 8 percent employed at three, and 2 percent employed at four or more. This finding is consistent with other studies that have identified a significant minority of contingent faculty who are attempting to cobble together a living wage by rushing back and forth between as many institutions as possible. In addition, it is likely that many other GMU contingent faculty who cannot find work at other colleges or universities must supplement their income by finding other non-academic work.

Contingent faculty report six major motivations or reasons for becoming contingent faculty.

One goal of our survey was to identify what motivations contingent faculty have for taking their position. Through consultation with contingent faculty, we identified over a dozen possible motivations, and asked respondents to indicate whether these motivations were applicable to them. Not surprisingly, many cited multiple reasons for taking a contingent faculty position.

To make sense of these complex and overlapping motivations, we performed a factor analysis—a statistical technique that identifies patterns and then groups together common responses—to arrive at six clusters of motivations that best describe GMU contingent faculty. This procedure identified six distinct factors and the motivations associated with each of them (as well as two motivations that weren't selected into any of the six factors) are displayed in Table 2.

¹⁴ Virginia Commonwealth University, by comparison, offers significantly more benefits to part-time faculty (and limited benefits to adjuncts) including retirement plans, life insurance, and tuition waivers for those who qualify. Retrieved from <http://www.hr.vcu.edu/benefits/faculty/part-time/>

Table 2: GMU Contingent Faculty Motivations for Taking the Job

	% of respondents (n = 241)
Factor 1: Dedicated	
<i>I have passion for my subject area.</i>	73%
<i>I enjoy it.</i>	67%
<i>I want to stay current in my field.</i>	37%
Factor 2: Desperate	
<i>I need the money.</i>	43%
<i>I don't wish to be unemployed, and this is the only position available to me.</i>	15%
Factor 3: Careerist	
<i>I'm hoping to improve my chance of being hired for a tenure-track position.</i>	32%
<i>I need the teaching experience.</i>	24%
Factor 4: Student	
<i>I receive financial aid that supports my education.</i>	21%
Factor 5: Multioriented	
<i>I want to teach, but I don't consider it a career.</i>	16%
<i>Teaching is not the primary focus of my position.</i>	4%
Factor 6: Overstretched	
<i>I can't work full-time right now due to other commitments.</i>	19%
<i>I prefer the lesser responsibilities that come with a contingent position.</i>	6%
Other (unassigned):	
<i>I don't need the money, but it allows me to live more comfortably.</i>	13%
<i>I'm retired, and I'm interested in continuing to engage in my field.</i>	7%

We believe this data is important for two reasons. First, debates about the current status of contingent faculty working conditions often rely on assumptions about the proportion of contingent faculty who are struggling to make ends meet. Many parents, students, and members of the broader public are unaware that a significant proportion of university teachers are currently living in poverty, while many university administrators who are aware of the problem may underestimate its severity.

Second, while some working conditions are prevalent among all contingent faculty, it is likely that contingent faculty with different motivations for taking the job will have different needs and confront different impediments to job satisfaction. By identifying these motivations, we hope that our data will help university administrators to more effectively address these varying needs. In the remainder of this section, we briefly describe each of these six clusters of motivations in turn.

1. GMU contingent faculty are dedicated to their jobs.

Above all, GMU contingent faculty are passionate (73 percent) and enjoy their work (67 percent). Eighty-five percent of respondents selected at least one of the three motivations associated with this factor, 66 percent selected at least two of the three, and 28 percent selected all three.

Respondents wrote at length about the gratification they derive from “helping and seeing students gain confidence in writing and articulating” and “seeing students make connections to the subject matter and enjoying the process when previously they thought the subject was ‘boring.’” They also wrote that they enjoy the challenges of “preparing a class well, [and interacting] with students,” and “explaining and passing on knowledge and skills of my field to others, and helping them apply these skills.”

“Teaching is my passion. It's what drives and motivates me. Helping students make sense of the world and achieve their goals is one of the greatest opportunities and responsibilities a person can have.”

Most GMU contingent faculty who devote uncompensated time do so because they're passionate about their students and their jobs, but they are pessimistic that they will be rewarded for their extra efforts.

A major finding of our study is the excessive amount of uncompensated time GMU contingent faculty must devote to their jobs. (See Section 3, “What Are Contingent Faculty’s Experiences on the Job?”) This finding is consistent with other studies and anecdotal reports. Anticipating this result, we were curious to know *why* contingent faculty devote this time, despite knowing they will not be compensated.

Table 3 shows that, by far, the most common reasons for devoting uncompensated time are respondents’ enthusiasm in working with students (77 percent), their passion for doing the best possible job (68 percent), and their fervor for their program or department (57 percent).

While 67 percent of respondents enjoy the work (see Table 2), only 37 percent enjoy the work regardless of their compensation. Moreover, a minority of respondents feel that it is necessary to devote this extra time to keep their job (13 percent) or that the job requires it (38 percent), suggesting that most devote this extra time because they are motivated to excel and not to do a merely tolerable job. They also do so in spite of believing that their extra efforts will not result in a promotion (93 percent) or that the university will recognize their value (74 percent).

“The money and tuition support is nice—but seriously insufficient. Even with both, I am currently losing money every month, in order to have the opportunity to teach. This truly is an act of teaching as a passion.”

Table 3: GMU Contingent Faculty Reasons for Devoting Uncompensated Time to the Job

	% of respondents
I care about the students.	77%
I want to do the best possible job.	68%
I care about the program.	57%
The job requires more time.	38%
I like doing the work.	37%
I hope the university will recognize my value.	26%
I have to devote uncompensated time to keep my job.	13%
I don't know why, I just do it.	11%
My colleagues devote uncompensated time.	8%
I hope to get a promotion.	7%
Other	5%

While the university may financially benefit from this uncompensated labor in the short term, our data indicates that it will likely be detrimental in the long term. These passionate instructors want to produce high-quality work, but don't like that they are uncompensated for it, and are pessimistic that the university will appreciate their value.

2. GMU contingent faculty are suffering financial hardship.

The low compensation of contingent faculty has received considerable attention from observers within the academy, although knowledge of these low wages is still relatively unknown outside the academy. The problem of low wages is compounded when contingent faculty do not have other means to supplement their low salary and earn a living wage.

Nearly half of our respondents (43 percent) indicated that a motivation for working at GMU was their need for money. This is more than three times the percentage of respondents who indicated that they don't need the money, but the additional income allows them to live more comfortably (13 percent). In addition, 15 percent of our sample indicated that they felt compelled to take their position at GMU, because they didn't wish to be unemployed and it was the only opportunity

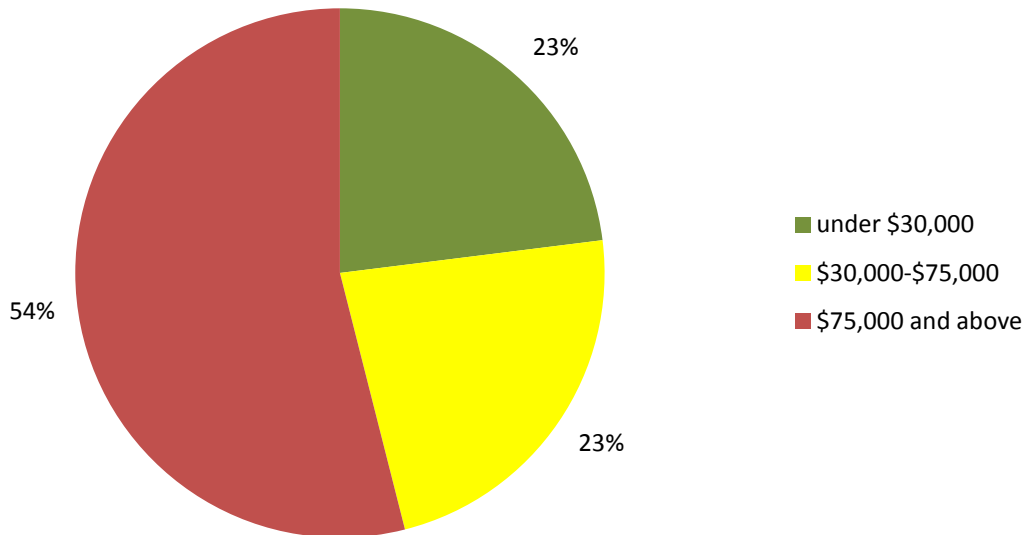
available to them. The vast majority of this group are working at GMU due to necessity, not choice: 12 percent of our sample indicated that they needed the money *and* had no other opportunities available.

Nearly one quarter of GMU contingent faculty report a household income under \$30,000.

“It is a miserable slog. I am fortunate because my spouse has a stable job and is able to provide health insurance to our family. Absent this, we would be in a state of absolute squalor, given the atrocious cost of living and the logistical nightmare that is transportation and traffic in this region. Instead of absolute squalor, we are merely squeaking by, living paycheck to paycheck in a one-bedroom apartment built inside someone's garage. Our aspirations to build a family have been long postponed, we have not taken a vacation in years, and our health is suffering due to the stress and difficulty of working for this ‘well-being university.’”

Figure 4 displays the reported annual household income of respondents. Although over half (54 percent) reported an annual household income over \$75,000, nearly one-fourth (23 percent) reported an annual household income under \$30,000, while another fourth (23 percent) reported an annual household income between \$30,000 and \$75,000. In other words, our findings suggest that one-fourth of GMU contingent faculty are living in poverty or near-poverty even with their contingent faculty salary, while an additional one-fourth are at risk of falling into poverty or near-poverty if their contingent faculty contracts are not renewed. These findings corroborate the assertion of 43 percent of respondents that financial need is a primary motivation for becoming a contingent faculty member.

Figure 4: Annual Household Income of GMU Contingent Faculty



We can obtain a somewhat more accurate estimate of the percentage of GMU contingent faculty who are suffering financial hardship by comparing salaries and household incomes to the living wage in northern Virginia. GMU is located in Fairfax, Virginia, a suburb of Washington D.C. Between 2008 and 2012, only 5.6 percent of residents of Fairfax lived below the poverty line. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Fairfax County is the fourth wealthiest county in the United States, with an annual median household income of \$105,409. As a result, the cost of living is well above poverty levels.

Table 4 combines annual household poverty levels (from the official 2010 thresholds used by the U.S. Census Bureau)¹⁵, estimates of the actual annual household living wage in Fairfax County (from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Project), and the national average salary per class earned by contingent faculty (\$2,700) to calculate the number of classes a

¹⁵ The poverty guidelines for 2014 have increased and can be found at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/14poverty.cfm>.

contingent faculty member would have to teach in a year to reach the poverty level and the living wage in Fairfax County.¹⁶

The results show that teaching 3 classes per semester (the maximum that can be taught without mandated health insurance) is inadequate to reach poverty level in households with children.

Even a single parent cannot earn enough to support one child on the salary of a full contingent faculty workload—an especially troubling finding given the overrepresentation of women among contingent faculty. To earn enough to meet the actual living wage would require contingent faculty to teach 6-10 courses per semester (11-19 courses per year), an impossibility even by the university’s conservative estimate of 9 hours per 3 credit hour class per week.

“Students, whose only income is teaching on the side, end up deeply in debt as the salaries simply can't sustain a person in the DC metro [area].”

Table 4: Number of Classes Taught Per Year Necessary to Reach Poverty Level and Living Wage in Fairfax County

Household size	Annual household poverty level	No. of classes to reach poverty level	Annual household living wage in Fairfax County	No. of classes to reach living wage
One adult	\$10,836.80	4.01	\$27,497.60	10.18
Two adults	\$14,560.00	5.39	\$40,040.00	14.83
One adult, one child	\$14,560.00	5.39	\$50,710.40	18.78
Two adults, two children	\$22,048.00	8.17	\$50,939.20	18.87

Source: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Project and U.S. Census Bureau

¹⁶ There are part-time faculty at GMU who earn less than the national average of \$2,700 per course, so interpret these findings cautiously.

The prevailing stereotype of the contingent faculty member is the expert who has a primary job outside the university and is not dependent upon their university wages. Our data suggests that half of GMU contingent faculty do in fact live in households that are well off, whether or not they are the primary breadwinner. But our data also suggests that the other half either must endure financial hardship or must keep their contingent faculty position in order to avoid enduring financial hardship. The majority of these highly educated workers are making less than minimum wage¹⁷ without benefits.

“I would strongly prefer to be in a tenure-track position, but, as GMU's own reliance on contingent faculty suggests, a lot of the new positions created nationwide in response to a growing student population have been contingent (part- or full-time). I originally took the position believing it would be temporary; I'm now at a point where I'm at least as concerned with seeing contingent positions better integrated into the university and transformed into a true career track as I am about finding a tenure track job.”

3. GMU contingent faculty seek to advance their career in teaching.

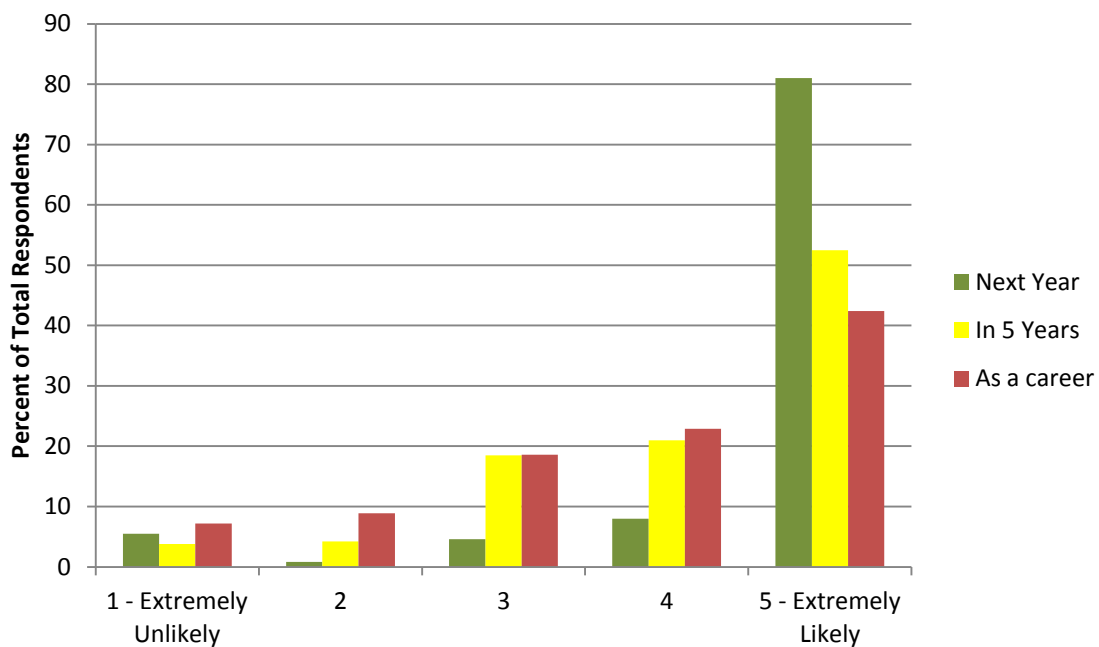
The remaining factors identify significant minorities of contingent faculty members with shared motivations. The most prominent of these is a desire to cultivate a career in teaching. Nearly 40 percent of respondents asserted that they were working as contingent faculty in hopes of improving their chances of being hired for a tenure-track position (32 percent) and/or to gain teaching experience (24 percent).

¹⁷ At \$7.25 per hour, the equivalent of a year's salary at minimum wage would be teaching 5.58 classes in a year at 3 credit hours per class.

Nearly three quarters of GMU contingent faculty expect to be teaching in higher education in five years, and about half of GMU contingent faculty under 40 aspire to be hired to a tenure track position.

Figure 5 illustrates that respondents are very likely to foresee themselves continuing to teach in higher education, with over 60 percent reporting that they are committed or extremely committed to making a career out of teaching in higher education.

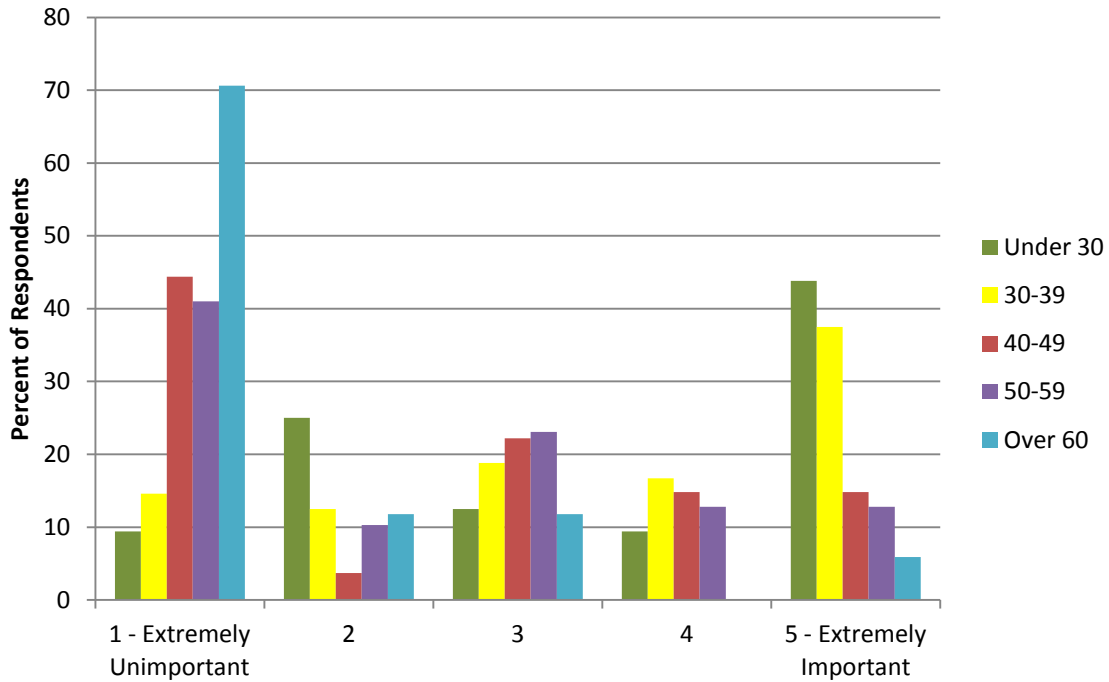
Figure 5: Current Likelihood of Continuing to Teach in Higher Education



Not surprisingly, the ambitions of contingent faculty to eventually be hired to a tenure track position are lower among older respondents, with 70 percent of those over the age of sixty rating this ambition as extremely unimportant (Figure 6). But this ambition is quite significant to younger contingent faculty, with over half (53 percent) of respondents under the age of forty rating this ambition as important or extremely important. Over the age of forty, however, this ambition plummets to 29 percent (for respondents in their forties), 26 percent (for respondents in their fifties), and 6 percent (for respondents over sixty). Undoubtedly this drop is partly due to a higher proportion of “traditional” contingent faculty members with other careers, but it also

suggests that many who have not been hired for a tenure track position by the age of forty are pessimistic that they will ever reach this goal.

Figure 6: Current Ambition to Work in a tenure-Track Position (by Age)



4. GMU contingent faculty need funding for their own graduate studies.

One-third (33 percent) of our respondents are also students. Graduate students can fill multiple roles as contingent faculty, from graduate teaching assistants to primary instructors. About one-fifth (21 percent) of our total respondents indicated that receiving financial aid to support their education was a motivation for them.

Over half of graduate student contingent faculty agree that their time to complete their degree has been affected by the amount of work they've put into their courses—and one-third strongly agree.

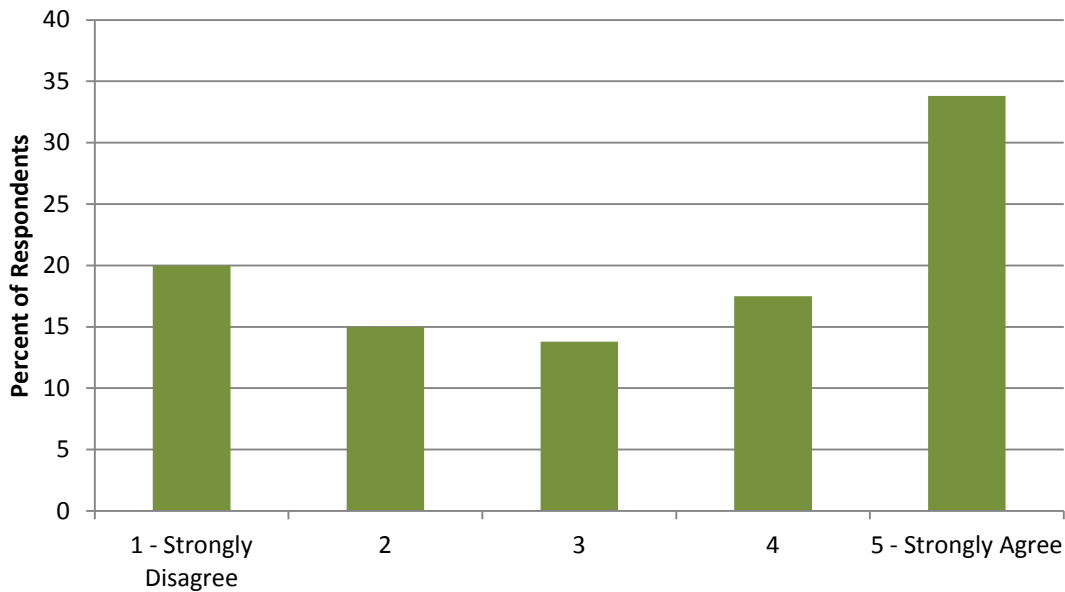
Contingent faculty positions can be beneficial by providing graduate students with teaching experience and helping them to finance their education. Traditionally, funding in graduate programs for GTAs has included tuition remission, in-state tuition waivers (if needed), a stipend, and health insurance in exchange for 20 hours of work per week.¹⁸ This is not always the case though, as many graduate students are offered multiple courses to teach at the part-time (adjunct) level without tuition remission, a stipend, or health insurance. As our financial data shows, the compensation is not adequate to finance living expenses in Fairfax County, much less the cost of a graduate education on top of that.

Furthermore, participating in the contingent faculty workforce (particularly outside of an assistantship) can negatively impact the time to the completion of a graduate degree. As Figure 7 shows, over half of our graduate student respondents (51 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that this has been the case for them, with over one-third (34 percent) strongly agreeing. These figures are perhaps even higher when we consider that some graduate student respondents were in their first semester as contingent faculty, and therefore couldn't yet answer this question.

“The lack of funding at GMU and the cost of living in the area requires most grad[uate] students to work as much as possible in order just to survive. This, obviously, is a detriment to our/my own commitments as a PhD candidate.”

¹⁸ Some GTAs are primary instructors of a course and some assist faculty members. Very often, within the same department, there is no difference in compensation of a graduate student who is the primary instructor for a course and a graduate student who is assisting a professor in a course, though their workload is significantly different.

Figure 7: "The Time to Complete My Degree Has Been Affected by the Amount of Courses I've Taught/Assisted Teaching."



Increasing the time for graduate students to complete their degree decreases the chances that these students will ever complete their degree, which negatively impacts them as well as the university. It also ensures that much of the compensation they do get from working as contingent faculty is used to finance extra semesters that they would not have had to finance had they not had to teach in the first place, whether out of financial necessity or to gain the experience necessary to be competitive in the academic job market. In many cases, outside of an assistantship, the wages that graduate students earn as part-time faculty cannot even cover the costs of their courses at GMU, particularly if they are out-of-state students.

5. GMU contingent faculty don't necessarily aspire to a career in teaching, and they have non-teaching positions that include some teaching responsibilities.

The final two factors identify smaller groups of contingent faculty that, nevertheless, are likely to have unique needs and challenges. We describe the fifth factor as "multioriented" because the analysis grouped together those who want to teach but don't consider it a career (16 percent), and

those with positions in the university that include some secondary teaching responsibilities (4 percent).

It is worth noting that one consequence of the increasing reliance of the university upon contingent faculty positions is the disillusionment of many graduate students who began with ambitions to teach in the university, but who reconsider upon discovering the working conditions of contingent faculty. “I used to feel much more excited about teaching at the college level, and being in a tenure-track position,” one respondent wrote. “But now that I’m close to graduating, I’m increasingly concerned about the availability of tenure-track positions in my field. As a result, I find myself gravitating toward research positions outside of academia.”

6. GMU contingent faculty face constraints that prevent them from taking on more responsibilities.

Finally, some contingent faculty are unable to work full-time due to other commitments (19 percent) or prefer the lesser responsibilities that come with a contingent faculty position (6 percent). Those who have other commitments can include those who have full-time jobs outside of the university, but it may also include family obligations such as child care. Much has been written about the “second shift” of working women who must come home and take care of responsibilities in the home. Women (23 percent) were slightly more likely to cite the inability to work full-time due to other commitments than men (17 percent), but it is quite likely that the nature of these “other commitments” vary widely with respect to gender. As a result, it is reasonable to infer that the rise of contingent faculty is a contributing factor to persistent gender inequalities with respect to pay in the workplace.

Levels of University Support

GMU contingent faculty report that they encountered minimal hiring requirements, were given minimal time to decide whether or not to accept their position, and had minimal time to prepare their course.

Unlike tenure track faculty, who often encounter stringent hiring requirements, contingent faculty at GMU report significantly fewer requirements. While a large percentage of respondents (85 percent) were asked to submit a curriculum vitae, only 59 percent were asked to submit references, only half (50 percent) reported participating in an interview as part of the hiring process, and only 22 percent were asked to submit a teaching philosophy statement.

Our contingent faculty respondents wrote that these lax standards were having a negative impact upon their programs and departments. “The long time adjuncts in my school [and] area are amazing,” one respondent wrote. “They should have input on new hires. Many of the newer adjuncts [from the] past 2 years were hired with no actual process at all by the director. [The process is] very random with no track record, and it is destroying the internal climate of the program, and this is beginning to take a toll on the reputation of the [program], on student morale, and on the devoted faculty who have stayed the course and persevered and built the program.”

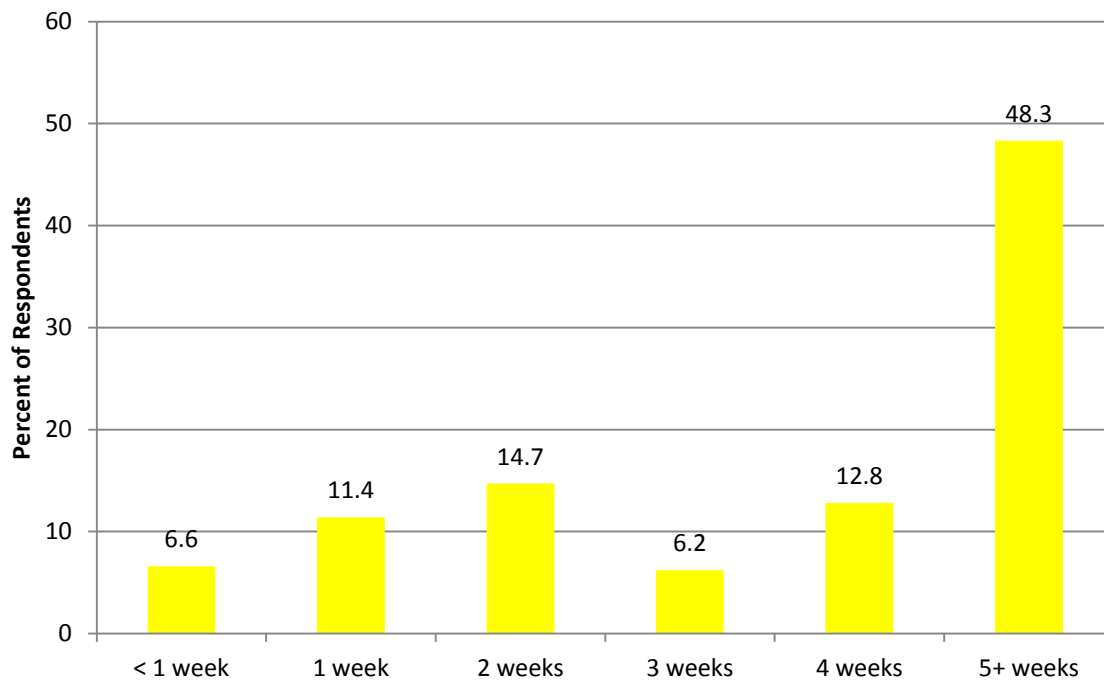
One of the most striking findings of our survey was the amount of time hires were given to prepare their class. Respondents were asked the least amount of lead time that they were provided to prepare for a Spring 2013 course. As Figure 8 shows, although nearly half of our respondents (48 percent) had more than a month to prepare, one-third (33 percent) had

“It’s very close to being tossed in the pool and told to start swimming.”

two weeks or fewer to prepare for one or more of their classes, and one-fourth (25 percent) had one week or less. When we consider that many of those who have a long time to prepare are those who have longstanding arrangements within departments, it is clear that many new hires

are given very little time to prepare for the classes they teach at GMU. Most striking is the lack of time that graduate students and postdocs are given to prepare courses for which they are the primary instructor. Almost half (49.1 percent) report having 2 weeks or less to prepare for their Spring 2013 courses, 14 percent report having less than a week to prepare. This is particularly concerning given that these respondents are likely to be in their first years of being the instructor of a university level course.

Figure 8: Time to Prepare for a Spring 2013 Course at GMU (All Contingent Faculty)



Less than half of GMU contingent faculty report receiving orientations to important resources and departments when they started working there.

Respondents were asked if they were provided with orientations to various resources or departments when they were first hired at Mason. These include Human Resources, University Life, Online Teaching Resources, Library Resources, Copying and Printing Services, and the

campus bookstore. They are also asked if they were provided with an orientation to their department, a teaching orientation, and a campus tour.¹⁹

Table 5 shows that only in one case did over half of the respondents report that they were provided with an orientation, and it was a departmental orientation (53 percent). The lack of orientations stand out most strikingly amongst part-time contingent faculty (where only 38 percent report being provided a teaching orientation) and amongst graduate student instructors and postdocs (where only 25 percent report being given an orientation to copying and printing services). It was clear from our respondents that there are in fact university-wide orientations, and these largely received positive reviews. One respondent claimed that “the orientation session that was developed for part-time faculty...was the most comprehensive orientation I have received as a part-time instructor at any university.”

However, most of our respondents had been unaware of these opportunities and struggled as a result. “Little to no direction with teaching for the first time,” one respondent wrote. “No advisor watching, helping, or guiding. [I] simply walked in [on] Day 1 and did what I thought was best and how I was taught.” Another asserted: “Nothing. Zip. When I was later hired as a term prof[essor], I was given the same orientation as all full-time hires, including tenure-tracks, but nothing as an adjunct.” Another reported that (s)he “had to find out about most resources on my own time, [and] some resources were only available in theory.” The lack of guidance upon first starting to teach at GMU was among the most commented upon topics addressed by our respondents.

“Most departments need to let adjuncts know about the adjunct orientations in August and January. They are wonderful, informative, and helpful.”

¹⁹ As noted previously, many of these orientations may not be available to tenure-line faculty either, but are important to smoothly transitioning all faculty into their classrooms and fully ensure student needs are being met.

Table 5: Orientations to Various Resources and Departments

	% of respondents
Department	52.8
Teaching orientation	45.5
Copying and printing services	34.5
Library resources	33.8
Online teaching resources	31.2
Human resources	31.2
Campus bookstore	22.4
University Life	13.7
Campus tour	7.9

A plurality of GMU contingent faculty don't receive important course resources such as textbooks, sample syllabi, and curriculum guidelines, or access to a phone, computer, printer, copying services, library services, and classroom technologies.

Access to resources undoubtedly affects faculty members' ability to perform their job duties, and supports positive student learning environments. We asked faculty to tell us, if applicable, how soon after being hired by GMU were they given access to a series of resources—or if they were ever provided access at all. (See Table 6)

In most instances, more than a quarter of all contingent faculty were NOT provided with necessary course resources while they were employed at GMU, though the provision of some resources was more rare in some instances. The lack of office space—and especially the lack of private space in which to meet students—was one of the most common complaints. Although the shortage of office space affects all faculty, it is contingent faculty (particularly part-time faculty) who are most affected. Almost 40 percent of our total respondents (and 49 percent of part-time faculty respondents) reported that they did not have office space. Of the 60 percent who reported that they did have office space, 69 percent said that they shared it with others—and of those who shared, 28 percent had to share their space with 10 or more people. Privacy when meeting with

students to discuss grades or any other information associated with their educational records is one of the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Yet over 53 percent of contingent faculty (58 percent of part-time faculty) at GMU report that they do not have access to a private space to meet with students.

Table 6: Percent of Contingent Faculty without Access to Resources

	% of respondents <u>without</u> access
Access to a phone	67.2
Parking	55.2
Private space to meet students	53.5
Access to a computer	40.1
Office space	38.5
Access to a printer	36.1
Remote access to resources for virtual classrooms	34.5
Curriculum guidelines	29.4
Access to copying services	20.9
Textbooks	18.2
Sample syllabi	19.1
Access to library resources	21
Access to appropriate classroom technology	9.5

The other resource which received the most complaints was parking. “The parking situation is very difficult,” one representative comment read. “The only time I need to be on campus is for teaching and office hours. The semester permit is more expensive than the daily rate if I park at Field House. If I park on the parking deck, I have to dash in at the last minute and dash out at the end of class in order not to incur the second hour fee.” Permits for the 2014-2015 school year range between \$350-\$625, (\$105-\$195 for qualified adjuncts) a significant expense for faculty making as little as \$837 per credit hour taught.

Most GMU contingent faculty must provide their own out-of-class resources (e.g., office space, phone, computer, printer), and half must provide their own in-class resources.

Out-of-class resources are essential to in-class success. However, like contingent faculty at other colleges and universities²⁰, many of GMU’s contingent faculty must provide their own resources during their employment. As seen in Table 7, majorities of respondents reported that it was necessary for them to provide or use their own computer (77 percent), phone (73 percent), printer (64percent), and office space (56 percent) during their most recent teaching position at GMU. In addition, about half (49 percent) indicated that they usually or always had to supply their own in-class materials, such as computers, projectors, chalk, markers, and erasers. The most striking findings come from those who are employed as part-time faculty who supply their own resources at significant rates including: using their own computer (82 percent), their own phone (79 percent), and their own printer (75.9 percent).

“Adjunct faculty pay everything out of their own pocket. Space, parking, office supplies, transportation, benefits—everything.”

Table 7: Percent of Contingent Faculty Providing Their Own Resources

	% Total Respondents	% Part-Time Respondents
Using their own computer	77.1	82.3
Using their own phone	73.0	79.4
Using their own printer	63.9	75.9
Using their own office space	56.4	64.5
Using their own funds for copying	36.1	40.4
Buying their own textbooks	21.6	23.1

²⁰ Kezar, A. & Sam, C. *Understanding the New Majority of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty in Higher Education: Demographics, Experiences, and Plans of Action*, ASHE Higher Education Report, Wiley Periodicals, 2010.

A majority of GMU contingent faculty report that access to resources (or lack thereof) affected students' experience in their class.

We asked respondents directly to tell us whether they believed that access to resources had positively affected their students' experience, and whether lack of access had negatively affected their students' experience. Not surprisingly, 71 percent agreed or strongly agreed that access to resources had benefitted their students, while 51 percent agreed or strongly agreed that lack of access had negatively affected their students.

However, the negative effects would likely have been worse if dedicated contingent faculty had not frequently taken matters into their own hands. We asked our respondents to tell us if, in situations when resources were not available and students would have been negatively affected, they felt they had "made an extra effort to ensure that students would not be negatively affected." Three-fourths (75 percent) of our respondents indicated that they had gone above and beyond so students would not be negatively affected, with nearly half (47 percent) strongly agreeing. These findings indicate that many of the failures of the broader university infrastructure to provide adequate resources are harming students' experiences. When they do not harm students' experiences, it is due to dedicated but overworked contingent faculty taking on an even greater burden in time and out-of-pocket expenses to compensate for these failings.

Most GMU contingent faculty are not trained to accommodate the unique needs of particular groups of students—such as those with disabilities, veterans, ESL students, first generation immigrants, first generation college students, and non-traditional students.

Contingent faculty are often tasked with teaching introductory courses that are undesirable to tenured or tenure-track faculty, and as a result, many of the first experiences students will have at the university is with the contingent faculty members teaching these classes. Because such introductory courses often have hundreds of students, meeting the special needs of particular groups of students is a common challenge of contingent faculty.

Table 8 demonstrates that large majorities of GMU contingent faculty teach students who face unique challenges to succeed at the university level. However, when we asked respondents if

they had been given training to address the unique needs of these students, only 21 percent replied that they had. Thirty-four percent of respondents further reported that they had sought out training at their own time and expense to meet the needs of these students, due to insufficient or lack of support provided by the university. As GMU strives to be a university known for its accessibility, diversity, and inclusiveness, this research uncovers a serious need to support these uniquely challenged student populations.

Table 8: Percent Who Have Taught Students with Special Needs

	% of respondents
Non-traditionally aged students	93.3
Students with disabilities	75.6
First generation immigrants	75.2
English as a Second Language (ESL) students	74.4
First generation college students	72.6
Military veterans	69.0

In addition, our contingent faculty respondents were strongly and overwhelmingly critical of existing university support for students with special needs. Common complaints were that support is severely deficient, forcing many contingent faculty to take on extra burdens, and that attempts to advocate on behalf of these students for the support they require are frequently rebuffed. The following comments are representative of those we received from our respondents:

“I have taught blind students at Mason before and had to work a significant amount of time to make sure that the course was accessible for them. I did not feel that the Office of Disability Services was working in their best interest, though the Assistive Technology Services was extremely helpful and committed.”

“Disability services for blind students are just about useless. And the lead time for notifying a professor that a disabled student is entering the class is far too short. I had one student with multiple disabilities who arrived in class on the first day with interpreters—I had received no notice of her arrival, and had no time to

meet her needs. Her paperwork indicated that she had signed up for the class two months before.”

“Little assistance from the ODS on how to accommodate both hard-of-hearing and developmentally challenged students in my classes. They could not understand why I couldn't do ALL the work [myself] to get the accommodations for these students when I had over 200 students this semester.”

Few GMU contingent faculty report that they need accommodations to make their classroom more accessible for themselves—but few of those who need such accommodations receive them.

Students are not the only group with unmet special needs—a small percent of our contingent faculty respondents (12 percent) reported that they required special accommodations to make the campus or their classroom more accessible for themselves. Unfortunately, only 19 percent of these respondents reported that GMU had provided them with these accommodations.²¹ For example, one respondent wrote that (s)he had leg injuries that make climbing stairs very difficult, yet on several occasions, the elevators in the building in which (s)he taught were out of service.

Another wrote that (s)he could not park in the less expensive, more distant parking lots due to health reasons, and was therefore compelled to pay several hundred dollars more for parking as a result. Overall, our data strongly suggests that GMU is failing to support those students and contingent faculty who require special accommodations.

Most contingent faculty do not feel they have been prepared to know what to do in the event of emergencies, such as natural disasters or crimes. Half of those who do feel prepared did not receive training from the university.

On campuses across the nation, rapid and adequate responses to issues of campus safety is a top priority. Respondents to our survey were asked a series of questions regarding their preparedness to address events that might arise on campus or in their classrooms. With one exception, a minority of our contingent faculty respondents reported that they felt prepared to know what to

²¹ Given that most part-time faculty are not oriented with the Human Resources department, it is likely that their accommodation needs are never even heard.

do in extraordinary circumstances. (See Table 9.) We also asked if they had been prepared by a GMU official, either with training or through documents, on what to do in the event involving safety and security. In every case, a majority of contingent faculty reported that they had not been prepared by GMU officials²².

Table 9: Percent Who Feel Prepared, Have Been Trained to Handle, or Have Encountered Emergencies

	% who feel prepared	% who have been trained
A student came to you with signs of depression or other mental health issues	54.9	36.6
A student came to you who had been the victim of a crime on a GMU campus	45.8	23.5
A student or colleague sexually harassed you	45.6	26.9
A student came to you who has been a target of prejudice or discrimination	42.4	27.3
You felt that a student was a threat to themselves or others	42.1	28.2
An emergency situation happened on campus	33.0	18.0
A natural disaster occurred during class	30.0	15.3

We encourage readers to interpret these findings cautiously. Some of the events about which we have asked are difficult to feel “prepared” to confront, no matter how much training anyone might receive. It is also clear from our respondents’ comments that GMU does have procedures in place, and has, for example, posted instructions regarding some of these emergency situations in classrooms.²³ However, a recurring theme of our report is the extent to which contingent faculty at GMU are so often neglected or undersupported, and this is certainly the case with respect to preparation for emergency situations.

²² This trend may not be unique to contingent faculty alone.

²³ Additionally, it has been noted that new emergency preparedness materials have been placed around campus during Fall 2014 to help the Mason community know what to do in the case of an emergency. This is certainly a step in the right direction.

Fortunately, with one exception, the emergency situations described above have been relatively rare at GMU:

- 45.2 percent have had a student come to them with signs of depression or other mental illnesses.
- 18.2 percent have taught a student whom they felt was a threat to themselves or to others.
- 9.5 percent have had a student come to them because they were a victim of prejudice or discrimination, or had witnessed an act of bias or intolerance on a GMU campus.
- 6.3 percent have had a student come to them because they were the victim of a crime on a GMU campus.

When asked if they had reported the incident(s) they had experienced, a near majority (45 percent) of our respondents indicated that they had. Among those contingent faculty who reported the incident(s), 44 percent said they were satisfied with GMU's response, 40 percent said they were dissatisfied, and 16 percent said they were unsure.

The lack of training and preparation—and contingent faculty's willingness to participate in additional measures—was a common theme of those who chose to comment:

“Documents are in rooms on what to do in case of emergencies, but I feel there is so much more to do to make our rooms safe. I have taught at VA Tech (Falls Church campus) and NOVA, and they are much more prepared. Rooms can lock from the inside. Clear instructions, with telephone numbers to call, panic buttons to police, ER kits with instructions if in lockdown to signal police from classrooms, including food/water. Faculty should be required to take part in ER drills each term, on what to do in a lockdown or [dangerous] storms.”

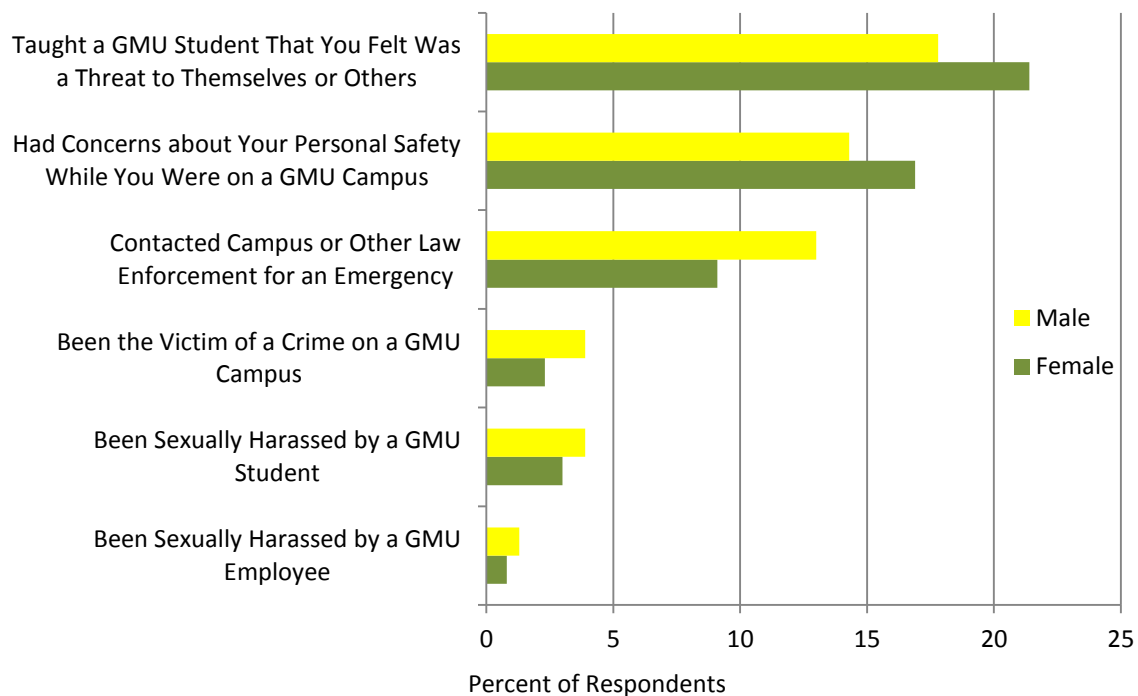
“It was pure chance that I caught a presentation at CTE's annual conference from the disabilities department. I pulled them aside afterwards to ask how to grade a student with obvious developmental delays. Wish there was more obvious ways to get this info in advance of teaching, and to address other issues like students being bullied, suicidal, or dealing with PTSD.”

“As an adjunct faculty member I feel extremely unprepared for anything related to the university as a whole. I would be very willing to participate in any training as it relates to extreme circumstance preparedness.”

It's not unusual for GMU contingent faculty to feel concerned or threatened while on campus, but serious incidents appear to be fortunately rare.

Figure 9 reveals that concerns about safety while on a GMU campus are not uncommon for either gender, with 18 percent of men and 21 percent of women teaching a student who they felt to be a threat, and 14 percent of men and 17 percent of women having had concerns about their personal safety while on a GMU campus.

Figure 9: Concerns, Threats, and Incidents Regarding GMU Contingent Faculty Safety



Ultimately, 13 percent of male and 9 percent of female respondents reported that they had to contact GMU campus security or other law enforcement to deal with an emergency while on campus. Between 2-4 percent of respondents reported that they had been the victim of a crime while on campus.

The incidence of sexual harassment was also quite low, ranging between 1-4 percent. However, especially regarding sexual harassment, we encourage university officials to interpret these findings with extreme caution. Sexual harassment is notoriously underreported, even in confidential surveys, and remains a serious problem on university campuses. While we certainly hope the sexual harassment of contingent faculty is as rare as our data indicates, we suspect the actual rate is somewhat higher.

Contingent Faculty and Their Contributions

Part-time GMU contingent faculty are paid as little as \$2,511 to teach a three credit-hour course.

Each semester, GMU’s provost distributes a publicly available “Adjunct Faculty Salary Matrix” to departments across the university. (A link to this document can be found [here](#).)

This matrix provides department chairs, and any others who have faculty hiring privileges, a baseline for what they must pay part-time faculty to teach a course. The matrix is based only upon two criteria: the experience level of the faculty member, and the level of the course (lower level, upper level, or graduate) they are being hired to teach. This means that many other factors that influence the amount of work done—such as class size—are not considered.

The current (Fall 2014) matrix reveals:

- Part-time faculty with experience equivalent to an “Instructor” make between \$2,511 and \$2,874 for a three-credit hour course.
- Part-time faculty with experience equivalent to an “Assistant Professor” make between \$2,985 and \$3,381 for a three-credit hour course, dependant on the course level.
- Part-time faculty with experience equivalent to an “Associate or Full Professor” make between \$3,570 and \$3,948 for a three-credit hour course, dependant on the course level.

“I have nearly 20 years of teaching experience, publications, service awards, and GMU is getting a real deal with me. I am unable to live in this area much longer if I don't get paid what I should be paid). For that reason, I have and will continue to find other employment that will pay me a living wage.”

There does not appear to be any formal university standards for distinguishing between the experience levels of an “instructor,” “assistant professor,” or “associate or full professor.” This suggests that this determination is made on a case-by-case basis by department chairs and deans.

Similarly, the [GMU faculty handbook](#) allows that “faculty in highly competitive areas of instruction may be paid above matrix rates.” This suggests that part-time faculty pay is a rather arbitrary system in which the majority receive low wages.

Respondents to our survey were understandably reticent to report their wages, and as a result, we encourage readers to interpret these results with extreme caution. However, we found that the median wage earnings per three credit-hour class for part-time faculty was \$3,500 (meaning that half of all respondents made an amount equal to or less than this amount). Inadequate pay was by far the most common concern of our respondents—including both part-time and full-time contingent faculty members. The following comment is from a full-time term faculty member:

“I was hired at the last minute because all of the previously arranged adjuncts never showed up to sign their contracts. I was told that other institutions who pay a little bit more grab them up, and this seems to happen every semester! How does the Commonwealth expect to have highly qualified professors if they don't pay them in a competitive manner?”

“I have not been adequately compensated for my job... I would absolutely not be able to teach or work at GMU in my current position if I was a single person. I do not make enough alone to have a mortgage. If I had to pay for medical and other benefits every month, I would be in serious financial trouble if I was single. I am expected to work 50-60 hours a week on salary, with a salary that is not comparable to others in my same position within my college.”

Not only are these wages low to begin with, but comments from contingent faculty strongly suggest that they are lower than other comparable colleges and universities in the metropolitan area. With little support and benefits to go with these low wages, we believe GMU administrators have to address how to remain competitive if a majority of the faculty are paid at rates below competitors.

Most GMU contingent faculty do not receive any annual increases in pay, priority consideration for other openings, representation in their department and the faculty senate, or the opportunity to apply for research grants with institutional support.

Low pay is not the only condition this research uncovered—our data also reveals that pay increases are rare. Table 10 also shows that contingent faculty are often ignored, underrepresented, and denied opportunities to participate in the academic community. One respondent wrote:

“I think it's completely unethical that tenure-line faculty in our department determine whether term faculty receive annual raises. I have never met most of the tenure-line faculty in my department, and despite my achieving high marks on my evaluation last year, I did not get a raise. I have been expected to sit on committees but not rewarded at all for doing so. My colleagues don't 'look at me as 'term',” but I do not receive adequate pay for all that I do, conference travel funding, etc.”

“I have extremely high evaluations every semester. My pay has not increased in the 7 years I have been teaching.”

One problem noted regarding contingent faculty is that advancement in the faculty line is blocked once a faculty member accepts a contingent faculty position. When a college or university is already receiving the labor of an adjunct for such a low salary, there is little incentive to consider them for tenure-track openings.

Table 10: Percent of Contingent Faculty Without Opportunities or Benefits

	% of all respondents <u>without</u>	% part-time respondents <u>without</u>
Priority consideration for tenure track openings	94.1	95.2
Priority consideration for full-time, non-tenure track openings	83.1	86.2
Annual increases in pay	78.6	80
Representation in faculty senate	68.1	*
Ability to submit research grants with institutional support	56.3	61.4
Representation on department or college website	49.8	52.8
Opportunities to attend teaching development workshops	45	51
Access to participate in departmental meetings	49.4	54.2

*Part-Time faculty do not have representation on the faculty senate.

A whopping 94 percent of our respondents (and 95 percent of part-time respondents) said they are not given priority consideration for tenure track openings in the departments for whom they teach, while 83 percent (86 percent of part-time respondents) said they weren't given priority consideration even for full time non-tenure track openings. One commenter described their struggles to be taken seriously at length:

“My department did not announce (or at least I was not informed) that a position was opening up. I found it on the HR website. When I asked to talk to someone in my department about my intention to apply, I felt more blocked than encouraged. When I applied anyway for a tenure track Assistant Professor position, I was not invited to an interview, but a colleague telephoned to say that I was not considered because my publication record was not what was expected. All that was a moot issue for the person hired, because that person was in the process of finishing a Ph.D.—with no publication record yet, but half my age.”

Respondents also reported that most (56 percent) could not submit applications for research grants with institutional support, while nearly half (45 percent) were not given opportunities to participate in teaching development workshops—both of which are basic opportunities that benefit the university and its students, as well as contingent faculty members. In addition, a majority (68 percent), did not have representation on the faculty senate, half (50 percent) were not represented on their department or college website, and 49 percent were not invited to be a part of departmental meetings.

“It is frustrating to work for the same university for a number of years, to have put heart and soul into your work, but to know there is no hope of reward (whether monetary and/or a secure job).”

Despite denying contingent faculty these opportunities, the university and its departments sometimes attempt to benefit from them in troubling ways.

We asked our respondents to tell us if, to their knowledge, their department(s) or college(s) had included publications, grants, or other funding these contingent faculty members have received in their official reports that are submitted to upper administrators. These reports are often used to justify additional university resources and to attract students to participate in their undergraduate and graduate programs. Thirteen percent of our respondents said that their department had in fact claimed their own work in these reports, while 43 percent were unsure.

“Have you ever been contacted by GMU to contribute to its fundraising campaigns?”

Yes..... 60 percent
No..... 34 percent
Unsure..... 6 percent

With such a large percent of uncertain responses, it is unclear how prevalent this practice really is. However, with so many contingent faculty denied institutional support for their academic

work or any voice in the proceedings of their department or the faculty senate, it is disturbing to consider that some departments are exploiting the activities of this significantly marginalized group of workers for their own gain.

Another troubling finding was that well over half (60 percent) of our respondents reported that they had been contacted by GMU and asked to donate money for its fundraising campaigns. While some GMU contingent faculty are no doubt GMU alumni as well, it is troubling to consider that the university is asking these workers to support to their own fundraising initiatives when they are already contributing to the university in many undercompensated and uncompensated ways.

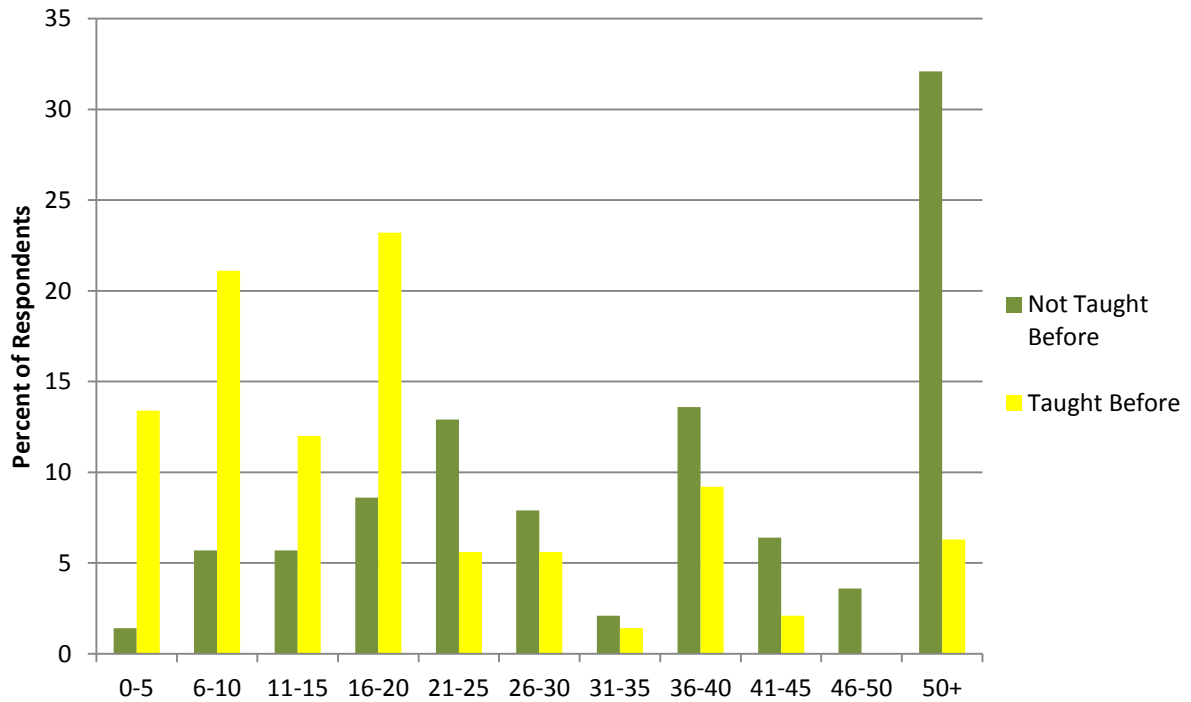
GMU part-time faculty invest a large amount of uncompensated preparation time into their classes before the semester begins—especially if it’s a class they’ve never taught before.

Like other colleges and universities, GMU considers the amount of time to teach a typical three credit-hour class to be approximately 9 hours per week. This valuation is the basis for part-time faculty salaries, and is also low enough that a contingent faculty member can teach 3 classes per semester, still be rated as “part-time,” and will not qualify for health insurance or other benefits mandated by the federal and state government for those who work 30 hours or more per week.

Our findings demonstrate that this valuation of time put into a course is woefully inaccurate, as most part-time contingent faculty must commit significant amounts of time beyond this estimate. First, preparation time before the semester starts is not included in this valuation, and our results show that for many part-time faculty, this amount of time is considerable (Figure 10).

“The financial compensation is not in line with the amount of work that is expected in teaching a course, particularly when asked to develop a new course. Having to pay for parking adds insult to injury.”

Figure 10: Average Preparation Time (in Hours) Devoted to Each 3 Credit Hour Course Before a Semester Begins



Since we anticipated that this investment would vary depending upon whether or not they had taught the class before, we asked respondents to provide estimates for new courses that required first-time preparation as well as courses they had taught before.

The average amount of uncompensated preparation time before the beginning of a semester is between 16 and 25 hours, although over half (54 percent) spend over 20 hours preparing. For those classes faculty have not taught before, however, the average time they spend preparing for the class before the semester begins is between 31 and 40 hours. Nearly one-third (32 percent) state that they spend 50 or more hours preparing a class they haven't taught before. At the university's rate of 9 hours per week, this is the equivalent of 6 weeks of work for which they are not paid.

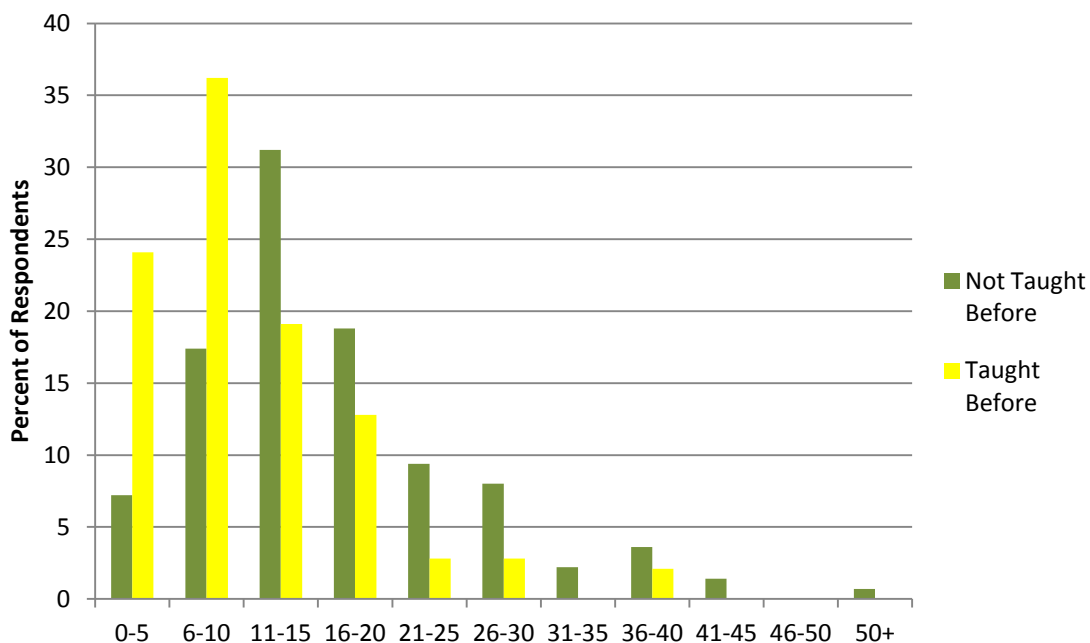
“The more students in the course, the more time I spend, yet adjunct pay is the same.”

As much as 76 percent of GMU part-time faculty exceed the 9 hours of work per week for which they're compensated, for a class they've taught before. When they're teaching a class they haven't taught before, this figure soars to 93 percent.

The amount of uncompensated work grows further during the semester. We asked respondents to estimate the amount of time they spend per week working outside of class on each three credit hour course they teach. This work includes preparing for lectures, communicating or meeting with students, and grading.

The results of Figure 11 are staggering. If the 9 hour per week valuation were accurate, we would expect part-time faculty to be spending 5-7 hours per week outside of class, once class time was taken into consideration. Instead, we find that on average of 84 percent of part-time faculty regularly exceed this amount, even when it is a class they have had the benefit of teaching before. The figures are even more stark when it is a class they have not taught before: 93 percent of part-time faculty exceed the 9 hours for which they are compensated on a weekly basis.

Figure 11: Average Hours Per Week Devoted to Working on Each 3 Credit Hour Course Outside of Class Time



Although not all weeks require the same workload, this average estimate suggests that a clear majority of part-time contingent faculty are devoting uncompensated work to their classes during most weeks. Even a small weekly overrun leads to a significant amount of unpaid work over the course of a 16 week semester. At a conservative rate of 3 hours per week in class and 11 hours per week out of class—which 40 percent of respondents exceed with classes they’ve taught before, and 75 percent exceed with classes they haven’t taught before— part-time faculty are devoting about 5 hours of unpaid work per week, which adds up to 80 unpaid hours over the course of a semester—nearly 9 weeks worth of wages *per class*.

“I think adjuncts should get paid better than they currently do, because there is A LOT of outside preparation and grading that takes place that is not compensated for enough.”

In other words, even without taking into account the uncompensated preparation work done before the class begins (see previous section) and other uncompensated duties they perform for their departments (see next section), we can conservatively infer that part-time faculty are only paid for about 64 percent of the time they invest per course during the semester. In some cases—especially with large classes—this figure is likely much lower.

Many respondents commented upon this disparity between time invested and pay, often noting how certain classes are far more demanding and time-consuming than others, and how much work is required to be responsive to the needs of students:

“Whether or not I have previously taught a course, I am constantly revising lectures to update the material, drop material that didn't "work" the last time I taught the course, & add material that is currently relevant. I also integrate visual material which again takes time to find, record, & fit into each session. Finally, I spend a great deal of time on preparing & grading exams, as well as term papers.”

“I find that I spend much more time with freshmen than with 300 level or grad classes. Usually freshmen classes are large and students need much more guidance, more quizzes and HW to "digest" the class materials. Hence, more time is spent grading and giving feedback. In addition, one has to prepare and post mid-term grades. Also, to keep up with the continuously changing technology, time needs to be set aside each semester.”

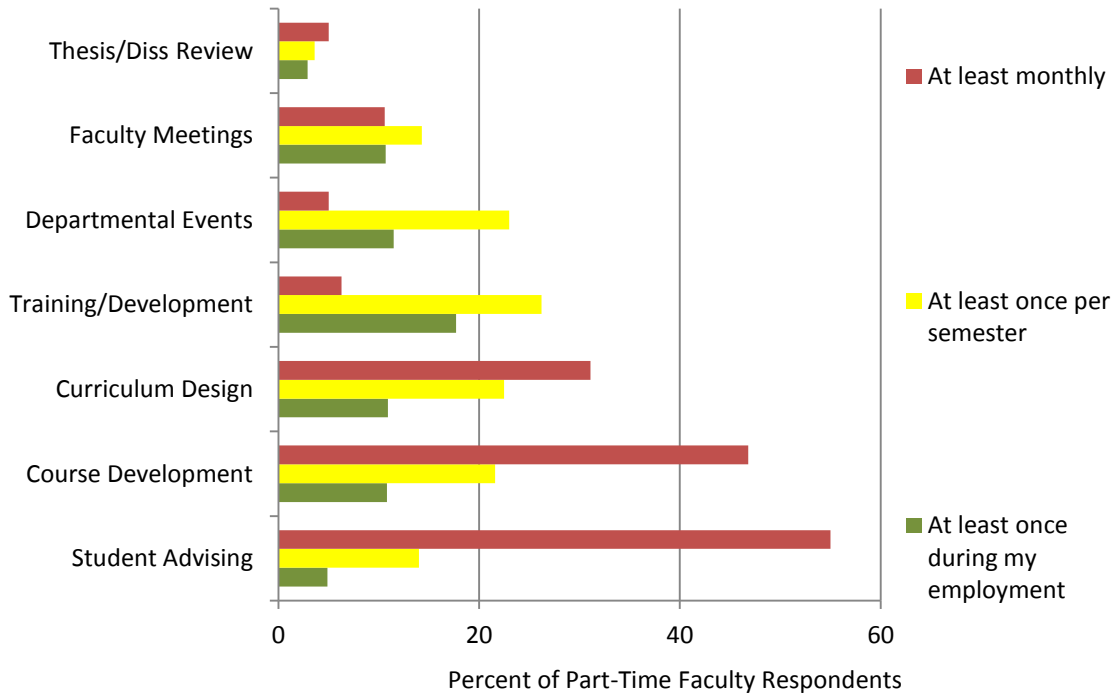
“The only comment I have is that this is extremely common. Most of my colleagues devote tons of ‘after hours’ time to teaching, preparing for their classes, and developing new activities or assignments to help the students learn the material more effectively. This makes the current trend of universities downgrading their faculty's status to ‘part time’ that much more egregious.”

In addition to class-related activities, part-time faculty at GMU are often asked to devote uncompensated time to other activities, such as student advising, course development, and curriculum design.

Finally, uncompensated time is not limited only to activities associated with part-time contingent faculty classes and preparation. We asked respondents to report how frequently they spend uncompensated time doing other activities during the semester. These include thesis or dissertation review, faculty meetings, departmental events, training and development, curriculum design, course development, and student advising.

Figure 12 displays the frequency with which our respondents reported they were asked or required to devote uncompensated time to these activities. Although part-time faculty are occasionally asked to participate in thesis/dissertation review, faculty meetings, departmental events, or training/development, these are rarely monthly commitments, and occasional attendance at departmental meetings, events, and trainings is mutually beneficial when everyone attending is being compensated for their time.

Figure 12: Frequency of Uncompensated Activities Outside of Class



However, part-time faculty are frequently asked to donate their time and expertise to curriculum design, course development, and student advising, while their department profits from their uncompensated contributions. Over half of respondents (55 percent) stated that they advise students outside of their compensated time on at least a monthly basis. Nearly one-third (29 percent) noted that this typically happens on a weekly basis. Similarly, significant minorities of respondents stated that they participated in course development (47 percent) and curriculum design (31 percent) on at least a monthly basis.

In addition, many respondents noted other activities they had been asked or required to perform, even though it falls outside of their job duties: advising student organizations, making arrangements for guest speakers or colloquiums, proctoring exams, staying up

to disciplinary standards, staying current with resources to be shared with students, participating

“I have sat on hiring committees and participate in GA interviews as well. Right now, I sit on 7 committees.”

on committees or task forces, attending student graduation activities, helping with the evaluation of prospective students for graduate programs, and assisting or advising new contingent faculty in their department.

It is worth repeating that contingent faculty do not believe that this extra time will prompt the university to recognize their value (26 percent) or that it will lead to a promotion (7 percent). Only 37 percent enjoy this extra work. But they do it anyway, because they care about their students (77 percent), they want to do the best possible job (68 percent), and they care about their programs (57 percent).

Students rely heavily on GMU contingent faculty for non-academic advice, counseling, and support.

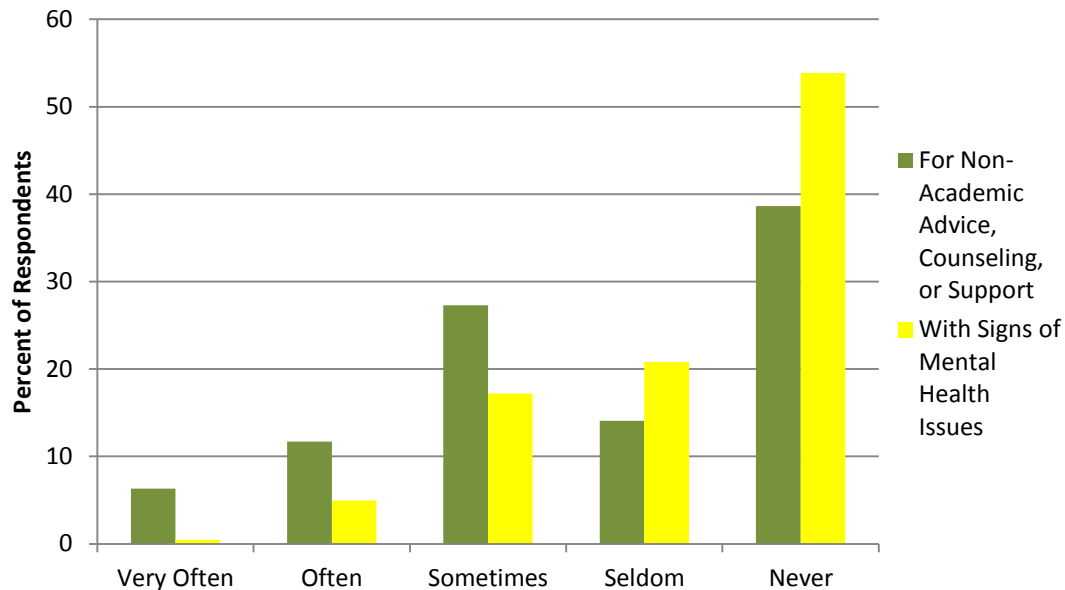
It is also worth noting that students benefit considerably from the time and effort contingent faculty members devote to their endeavors outside of class. Nowhere is this more apparent than the non-academic advice, counseling, and support that contingent faculty provide. Figure 13 displays the frequency with which our respondents are approached by students for this kind of non-academic feedback, as well as the frequency with which students have come to them with signs of depression or other mental health issues.

Overall, 62 percent of our respondents (64 percent of women, 58 percent of men,) had been approached for non-academic advice, counseling, or support, and 45 percent (53 percent of women, 31 percent of men) had been approached by a student manifesting symptoms of mental health difficulties.

The frequency with which female faculty were approached was also significantly higher than male faculty. Female contingent faculty (24 percent) were twice as likely as male contingent faculty (12 percent) to report that they were “often” approached for non-academic guidance.

“Students often come to seek counseling on life circumstances. As a woman, I have often been approached by female students asking about things ranging from balancing school and home obligations to dealing with harassment.”

Figure 13: "How Often Has a GMU Student Come to You..."



Similarly, women were much more likely to report that they were “sometimes” approached by students manifesting mental health difficulties (44 percent to 17 percent). Men were more frequently “seldom” approached by students dealing with these issues (65 percent to 43 percent). These findings suggests that female contingent faculty are disproportionately tasked with helping students to manage their personal struggles, something that has also been well documented in research on their tenure-line counterparts.

GMU contingent faculty are overwhelmingly dissatisfied with their wages, and significant minorities have negative opinions of other aspects of their job.

In light of their working conditions, how do GMU contingent faculty actually feel about their jobs? To further explore this question, we asked respondents to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of subjective statements about their work experiences. Table 11 displays these results.

Table 11: Percent Spread of Subjective Attitudes Regarding GMU Contingent Faculty Work Experience

	<u>Disagree or Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</u>	<u>Agree or Strongly Agree</u>
The language in my GMU contract accurately reflects what the university expects of me in my position at GMU.	14.6	30.7	54.7
The language in my GMU contract accurately describes what I'm actually doing in my position at GMU.	18.4	25.0	56.6
Unfair expectations have been put on me in my current position at GMU.	54.8	25.7	19.5
I am satisfied with the wages I am paid for teaching at GMU.	63.0	16.6	19.4
I feel that I am valued and respected by other faculty in my department at GMU.	21.4	20.0	58.6
I feel that I am valued and respected by administrators in my department at GMU.	18.6	20.9	60.5
I feel valued and respected by university administrators at GMU.	32.5	31.1	36.4
I feel valued and respected by the students I teach at GMU.	6.7	14.8	78.6
I feel secure in my job at GMU.	35.4	26.9	37.7
I feel that I have academic freedom at GMU.	13.3	20.4	66.4

It is clear from this table that GMU contingent faculty have mixed attitudes about their working conditions. On one hand, large majorities feel valued and respected by their students (79 percent) and that they have academic freedom at GMU (66 percent). Slight majorities feel valued and respected by department administrators (61 percent) and other faculty in their department (59 percent), believe that their contract accurately reflects what they are actually doing (57 percent), what the university expects of them (55 percent), and do not believe that unfair expectations have been put upon them (55 percent).

On the other hand, a clear majority (63 percent) are dissatisfied with their wages. The percent of those who feel valued and respected by administrators (36 percent) is nearly identical to the percent who do not (33 percent) or who neither agree nor disagree (31 percent). Job security is another category with a similar spread, with nearly as many feeling insecure (35 percent) as secure (38 percent).

Table 12 breaks down the average satisfaction scores by the work status of the respondent: full-time, part-time, or graduate student/postdoctoral fellow. The results show that graduate students and postdoctoral fellows are easily the most discontented group. Full-time contingent faculty feel the most secure in their job, but are the most likely to feel undervalued and disrespected by university administrators. Part-time contingent faculty feel most valued and respected by their students and are most likely to feel that they have academic freedom (in comparison to their full time and graduate student/postdoc counterparts), though they are also largely unsatisfied with their wages and the expectations put on them.

Table 12: Mean Values for Subjective Attitudes Regarding GMU Contingent Faculty Work Experience (by Status)

	<u>Grads/ Postdocs (N = 57)</u>	<u>Part-time (N = 133)</u>	<u>Full-time (N = 22)</u>
The language in my GMU contract accurately reflects what the university expects of me in my position at GMU.	3.23**	3.80**	3.68
The language in my GMU contract accurately describes what I'm actually doing in my position at GMU.	3.32	3.68	3.68
Unfair expectations have been put on me in my current position at GMU.	2.84**	2.21**	2.67
I am satisfied with the wages I am paid for teaching at GMU.	1.75**	2.46**	2.18
I feel that I am valued and respected by other faculty in my department at GMU.	3.50	3.51	3.55
I feel that I am valued and respected by administrators in my department at GMU.	3.51	3.69	3.64
I feel valued and respected by university administrators at GMU.	2.75*	3.22*	2.41
I feel valued and respected by the students I teach at GMU.	3.80	4.21	4.23
I feel secure in my job at GMU.	2.74*	3.05	3.55*
I feel that I have academic freedom at GMU.	3.53	3.92	3.91

1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree, *p < .05, **p < .01

From this research, it is clear that insufficient pay, staggering amounts of uncompensated work, and insufficient support and access to resources are widespread among GMU contingent faculty. What our data shows is that those contingent faculty who are most in need of adequate pay, support, and resources are the ones who are most negatively affected by these deficiencies.

Conclusion

In March of 2013, President Ángel Cabrera shared his vision for the future of George Mason University, a vision with the goal of making GMU “a university *for* the world.”

Recognizing that the ways we work with each other in the GMU community to reach our goals are as important (if not more important) as reaching them, our new president presented seven values to guide the ways the university, as an organization, and those in the Mason community must work together. Those values include putting our students first, being inclusive and embracing diversity, valuing innovation, honoring freedom of thought and expression, being careful stewards of economic and natural resources, acting with integrity and having the highest ethical standards, and thriving together by contributing to the well-being and success of every member of our community.

The working conditions of adjuncts and other contingent faculty members at George Mason University is no different than those faced by precarious faculty at other universities. What GMU has that other colleges and universities do not is (1) a solid, ethical, progressive vision for what George Mason University could be, (2) comprehensive research to show what is honestly happening in the work lives of its precarious faculty, and (3) fresh leadership who can guide the university to become a leader in creating an equitable and ethical work environment for contingent faculty. We hope that this report is only the beginning of the work that will be done to improve the working conditions of George Mason University’s contingent faculty.

Recommendations

The conditions faced by adjunct and other contingent faculty at George Mason University are similar to those faced by their colleagues at the vast majority of other colleges and universities in the United States. We did not choose GMU as the site of our study because their treatment of contingent faculty is especially egregious. We chose GMU because it does not aspire to simply be an average university. As we, GMU students, are making an important contribution to the study of this serious issue, we hope that GMU administrators will make use of our findings and commit to being leaders in addressing this problem.

GMU, like other colleges and universities across the country, must address the deficiencies of the contingent faculty model in order to remain competitive, to maintain a rich student experience, and to better support those who contribute so much to the life of the university while receiving so little in return. Across the nation, contingent faculty and their allies have begun to organize against the conditions of their work. In the DC metropolitan area alone, part-time faculty members have successfully unionized at George Washington University, Georgetown University, American University, Howard University, and Montgomery College in Maryland.

This poses a unique problem to GMU, as talented adjuncts and other contingent faculty in the area are likely to choose (and are already are choosing) to teach at these other colleges and universities because of their improving working conditions. To compete with these colleges and universities, GMU will have to make changes in order to become the leading university and employer it aspires to be.

As doctoral students at GMU, we set out upon this project to bring attention to an important issue affecting higher education, to inform the GMU community of the working climate of these often invisible faculty members, to use the knowledge we have attained as students at GMU to conduct a thorough research project on this community, and to use these findings to advocate for more just working conditions. This research is the most comprehensive picture of the working conditions faced by contingent faculty of any college or university in the nation. It creates an opportunity for a conversation that we hope will lead to action here at GMU and also more

broadly. We very much hope that GMU administrators will take these findings seriously and commit to enacting new policies and practices that will significantly improve the working conditions of its contingent faculty.

To start this conversation, we offer up recommendations for GMU and other colleges and universities to consider. Each of these recommendations emerged as solutions to problems identified in our research. They are divided into five categories: compensation, benefits, job security, equity, and learning conditions.

We do not see these categories as mutually exclusive. Many of these recommendations will impact contingent faculty and students in multiple ways. For example, any improvement in compensation, benefits, job security, and equity for faculty will better student learning conditions by having a faculty more able to focus on their classrooms because their basic needs will be better met.

We recognize that some of these recommendations, particularly those related to compensation and benefits, are costly. However, there are many basic, less expensive actions that can be taken that will have a significant impact upon the contingent faculty work experience and the students whom they teach.

Moreover, we contend that even though some options are expensive, they are no less important. If GMU wishes to be a leading university, it must hold itself to a higher standard than the industry norm. There is no doubt that colleges and universities must address other costly priorities in order to remain competitive. They will have to find a way to better support the faculty on whom their operations depend. This may entail partial measures, such as working to identify those contingent faculty who are living in poverty, and providing them with better support. But ultimately a more comprehensive and sustainable solution must be found. We very much hope that George Mason University will rise to meet this challenge.

Suggested Actions for George Mason University

Compensation

- Pay Equity between contingent and tenure track faculty of similar rank
- Compensation for work outside of compensated time
- Compensation for trainings
- Incentivize professional development
- Travel Money for Conferences
- Compensation for additional time spent to make courses accessible

Benefits

- Parking Fees on Sliding Scale
- Expand Healthcare: Use the ACA as an opportunity to provide health care more broadly
- Advocate for the inclusion of Part-Time Faculty in Student Loan Forgiveness
- Offer childcare to these faculty members
- Offer retirement options

Job Security

- Push for longer contracts
- If a class is dropped b/c of enrollment, find other work for the faculty member
- Move away from “temporary” employment and toward more term and tenure line positions
- At the college and department level, genuinely consider contingent faculty for tenure track and term positions

Equity

- Representation on faculty senate and department meetings
- Consider all faculty in Mason’s well-being initiatives
- Office Space
- Support Research of Contingent Faculty
- Access to basic office equipment (e.g. computer, printer, phone)

Improving Learning Conditions

- Give faculty a minimum of one month to prepare a course
- Departments should facilitate course development, if less than a month until course begins.
- All faculty should have access to office or private area to meet with students to comply with FERPA laws.
- Departments should integrate more with CTFE for orientations and trainings of all faculty.
- Departments should communicate copy codes and copier locations to all instructors.
- Copy Centers should be open until 10pm to support instructors during all class times.
- Better communication between student service offices and contingent faculty to better address student needs.
- Inform Faculty of special needs of students before the semester begins so faculty can prepare.
- Assess how time-to-degree of grad students is impacted by teaching obligations.
- More accountability on departments’ overuse of graduate student faculty.

About the Authors

Marisa Allison is a doctoral student of Public and Applied Sociology in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at George Mason University. Her dissertation research examines the gendered nature of economic shifts on higher education. As a contingent faculty member at various colleges and universities for the past 12 years, including George Mason University, she is also an advocate for improving labor conditions for all who work in higher education. She currently holds the position of Assistant Director of Research at the New Faculty Majority Foundation and has been featured in *Inside Higher Ed*, *Feministing*, and the *Fourth Estate*. She recently sat on the U.S. Congressional Briefing Panel on Working Conditions for Contingent Faculty in Higher Education.

Randy Lynn is a Ph.D. candidate, graduate lecturer, and graduate research fellow at GMU, with several semesters of contingent faculty experience at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and GMU. His research interests include digital technologies, critical youth studies, education, social networks, and inequalities. His work has been published in academic books and journals, and has been featured in *The Huffington Post*.

Victoria Hoverman is currently a doctoral student of sociology as well as a graduate research assistant at the Cochrane Collaboration College for Policy at George Mason University, conducting health-related research. Previously, she served as a graduate research assistant and computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) survey lab manager at the Center for Social Science Research (CSSR) at George Mason University. In addition to her research experience, Vicki has served in adjunct faculty and graduate teaching positions over the past 6.5 years at George Mason University, as well as several other universities in the DC metro area and at other institutions across the U.S. Vicki is passionate about teaching, and joined this project to help promote dialogue, awareness, and social change around contingent faculty struggles and concerns.