

# RU CONNECTING?

## *Faculty Unions Support Quality Undergraduate Education*

### **Making the Undergraduate Connection.**

Nancy Holmstrom, Chair of the Philosophy Department, Newark Campus

Undergraduates deserve to have the best of the arts and sciences available to them including access to tenured faculty. In hiring faculty a top priority must be finding people doing exciting research in their field.

They must also demonstrate a strong commitment to teaching students and show themselves to be effective teachers. This entails that our liberal arts and sciences departments offer a respectable variety of majors, and that undergraduates have access to tenured faculty at the introductory level. I am including introductory courses because it is important for students to be exposed to people who can convey the excitement of research in their field.

The Undergraduate Report supports this, but again the question is how? Far too many of our undergraduate courses, particularly introductory ones, are taught by non-tenure-track Faculty, many who are excellent teachers and even manage to do some research despite their onerous working life.

Contingent members of the faculty cannot be expected to be as available to students as full time faculty nor to the college community. Without job security, they lack academic freedom. A top priority must be to preserve and increase the ratio of tenure-track to contingent faculty. If we are to encourage our faculty to commit themselves to the teaching, as well as to research, then we have to be sure they are rewarded rather than penalized for it - and that means giving much more weight to teaching in the promotion and tenure process.

### **How to Connect?**

Lisa Klein, President of Rutgers Council AAUP-AFT and Professor in Ceramic & Material Engineering

As the academic year begins, it is important for everyone to consider the Undergraduate Report and its impact in our community. Always eager to reconnect with students I read the Undergraduate Report looking for how to connect. I saw the word connect everywhere, but what I didn't see was how.

As I read each section, the question that comes to my mind is how? How will a single admissions program, or single honors program, or a single ethics code help me to connect to students? I'm all for having uniform policies and opportunities for all students to participate in all programs, but what does this have to do with connecting?

As the years go by, I have less time to connect to students due to mounting administrative responsibilities. I assemble all my own course materials. I enter my own purchase orders. I print my own rosters. I've become an expert at multitasking. As a result my face time with students has suffered. So, how does this new undergraduate plan help me to reconnect? With professors taking on the responsibilities that assistant deans did in the colleges, the multitasking accelerates.

Approximately 50% of the introductory classes are taught by non-tenure-track faculty. This includes part-time lecturers, adjunct faculty, and teaching assistants. These are the faculty members that students are face to face with every day. How does the report plan to connect the students with these members of our campus community?

### **What is the Connection?**

*"The University's design should reflect the values of the university community."* -Transforming Undergraduate Education

We as the faculty union support the mission of the report and the desire for more vital and dynamic learning communities. However the goals of the report cannot be achieved without enhancing the student-teacher connection, and almost half of our teachers suffer from a second class status. Can we improve undergraduate education while degrading the teaching profession? Quality education could be substantially improved by addressing the following issues of contingent faculty.

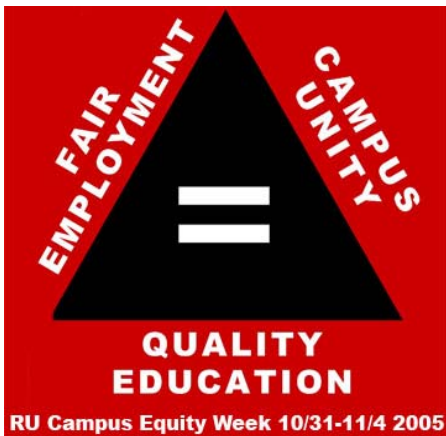
- Job Security (currently non-tenure track instructors face dismissal after four years, regardless of their service)
- Adequate notice of re-appointment
- Employer provided Health Benefits (Part-time Lecturers receive no health benefits)
- Access to internal grants for research and curriculum development
- Additional merit pay considerations

To value undergraduate education is to value the faculty. If we are to transform the undergraduate experience it is absolutely essential to recognize the work of the contingent faculty; recognition worthy of professional working conditions and compensation.

## **Rutgers Council of AAUP Chapters**

# Campus Equity Week: Oct 31 – Nov 4

## ATTEND – LISTEN – SPEAK OUT



### UNION TO HOST CONTINGENT FACULTY RIGHTS HEARING

Join us on November 1 as Part Time and Non Tenure Track Faculty testify before a board of notables to the sub-standard working conditions at Rutgers University.

**Tuesday, November 1, 4-7pm**

**Graduate Student Lounge on College Ave Campus**

Campus Equity Week (CEW) is sponsored by the Rutgers Council of AAUP-AFT Chapters, the Part-time Chapter, the TA/GA steering committee, the Non-Tenure-Track Caucus, and the Graduate Student Association. CEW is a week of coordinated activities on campuses in the United States, Canada and Mexico designed to educate campus communities, the public and policymakers on issues of fairness and quality in higher education raised by the overuse and abuse of contingent faculty appointments

## Don't miss the connection



**Don Seigel**

**Instructor in the Chemistry Department**

The first class I taught on my own at Rutgers was Chem. 128, Chemistry of Life. I was told I'd be teaching a few nursing students. The enrollment was about 200. The department said, "Go teach." Now, I coordinate the first year lab (about 900 students) and teach and coordinate the first year lecture course (about 1200 students).

I share an office on Busch with 6 other instructors. I have satellite offices on Livingston and Douglass in which I can see only 5 students at a time.

There are a number of roadblocks to being an effective educator as a non-tenure track faculty member. I never know from one semester to the next for sure what I'll be teaching. There isn't even a guarantee from one year to the next that I'll be teaching.

Technically I am part time. I'm hired at between 85-93% of full time. Initially, we were told that this was because if they pay us as full time, then after four years they have to fire us. It turns out if I'm full time, Rutgers has to pay benefit luxuries like health care.

**Sandy Becker**

**Instructor in Marketing at the Rutgers Business School**

The classroom experience includes both teaching effectiveness as well as the quality of instruction. Our institution has a strong reputation in many areas, including the quality and value of faculty research.

Non-tenure-track faculty provide timely, practical, applications-oriented training that creates an environment for students to both learn and apply classroom training to modern-day situations. In many ways, NTT faculty are providing the time for our Tenure-track faculty to focus on what they do well and have a passion for – that is developing and implementing research studies in their areas of interest.

It is in our best interest to deliver value to students, while leveraging the core strength of our full-time faculty. Our full-time Tenure-track faculty are a tremendous resource for the Rutgers community. NTT faculty deserve the recognition, rewards and opportunities associated with consistently providing teaching excellence at a very high level.

**Amy Bahruth**

**President of the Part-time Chapter of Rutgers AAUP-AFT and Part-time Lecturer in Labor Studies**

The part time faculty at Rutgers are the backbone of this University. We teach approximately 30 percent of the courses. Many of which are the introductory courses with hundreds of students in them. With Ph.D's, masters degrees, and professional certifications we bring real life experiences into the classroom.

Yet, as usual, we are invisible to the administration of this University. Despite the credentials and experience that the part time faculty brings to this institution, we are still seen as an insignificant nuisance and, therefore, not valued when discussing the quality of education for undergraduates.

Thankfully, I know the students of this University think otherwise. They value their educational experiences greatly and understand that we play a vital role in their education. However, our conditions: insecure, underpaid, and invisible, demonstrate to students how little respect the Rutgers administration may have for the undergraduate process.

## Teachers' Working Conditions = Students' Learning Conditions