Should I Take a Part-Time Position?

If you have been offered a part-time position teaching one or more courses at a local college or university, you probably would much prefer full-time status, and are worried that teaching part-time will keep you from ever getting onto the tenure track. Or, you may be geographically limited in your job search by family constraints and wondering about what settling for such a job will do to your long-term goals.

In both cases, secure in your degree and well aware of your own merits, (continued on p. 2)
you undoubtedly nurse the hope that this will lead to a full-time slot in the same institution.

Although a part-time position is sometimes a stepping stone to the tenure track, this does not happen often, since reliance on part-timers has to do with a cynical Walmartization of higher education, one of the cornerstones of which is that hiring more and more part-timers constitutes a “good business practice” of creating a “flexible” workforce which can be kept on substandard wages, without benefits, and subject to dismissal whenever enrollments dip. From your university’s point of view, hiring you has everything to do with improving its “bottom line,” which is to pile up money it would otherwise spend on full-time salaries, benefits and retirement plans to invest in large scale institutional goals.

Your part-time position will be short-term (semester-to-semester basis), and you will never know whether you have a job for the next semester. You will probably be hired by the departmental chair rather than by a search committee to teach a specific course or courses, for less than $3000 a course. Although you are supposed to carry a lighter teaching load than full-time faculty you may find yourself teaching just as many courses as they; and although you are not going to get paid for committee and other service expectations, you will find yourself wrestling with your conscience about doing these (you will be asked) and about how many (unpaid) hours you should devote to advising students.

The more squarely you face the fact that the ivory tower has hired you for self-serving and nefarious reasons, the more wholeheartedly you can act from your own self-interest. On the plus side, such a position enhances your teaching experience, can be added to your vita, and can give you a sense of confidence about teaching should you eventually go back on a nation-wide, full-time job search. It may be to your advantage to serve on committees directly related to your courses: it can alleviate the isolation so cruel for non-tenure track faculty, and your intelligent input might bring your value and worth to the department’s notice to your own future good.

There are those convinced that “Scholar Gypsies,” undeterred by institutional loyalty, enjoy an “outsiderliness” that makes their life their own in a unique way for academe. Jody Norton argues that part-timers experience far more academic freedom than many faculty members, who are at the beck and call of whatever fads their discipline and department are currently espousing. “In theory,” she notes, you “can think and speak more freely than any except the most idealistic (or perhaps suicidal) tenure track faculty,” enjoying “the freedom of not having to follow either the traditions of the discipline or the Law-of-the-Cutting-Edge.”

"The outsiders would bind themselves not only to earn their own livings, but to earn them so expertly that their refusal to earn them would be a matter of concern to the work master... They would bind themselves... to cease all competition and to practice their profession experimentally, in the interests of research and for love of the work itself, when they have earned enough to live upon.

Virginia Woolf, Three Guineas

But there’s the rub: where are you going to find time to do all that research and writing, and what are you going to eat while doing it? You are only going to make between $12,000 and $20,000 a year, at a level with fast-food and other service workers whom you may well join during periods of low enrollment. (Continued on p. 3).

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES FOR PART-TIME FACULTY

When there are no positions open, should I consider filing for unemployment?

Even though it seems a drastic and distinctly non-academic thing to do, there is nothing wrong with filing for unemployment benefits. Scott Smallwork argues that although you might get only $150 a week, it is important to apply, not only to keep you from "eating [your] shoelaces over the break" but also because the money comes from the institution and there is a chance that large numbers of unemployment applications will make it rethink its reliance on part-timers. The disadvantage is that you have to file through your university employers, which brings you to their attention, leading one part-timer to worry "whether they would put a little black star by your name if you continue to fight them for your unemployment." *

Should I join a Union?

Academic unions are forcing changes in unemployment laws while militating for better pay and even benefits. The pain of departmental shunning accorded to many part-timers can be psychologically debilitating, which makes joining a union of those who are in your same shoes especially heartening. Not only will you find companionship: you will get a tie in to a large organization with lawyers, research engines, and a national perspective on your dilemma.

NB: Further Reading on Part-Time Issues

- The Chronicle of Higher Education is a good source for articles on part-time issues. (You will need to use your library to get at the back issues of The Chronicle, but a wide variety of "part-time faculty" articles can be found by using a general search engine.)
- You can find a report on part-time employment from the AFT's site at www.theaft.org/caew/caewreport.htm.
- The American Association of University Professors maintains a committee on contingent faculty. (www.aaup.org)

**Tenure and Promotion: How Are Women Faculty Doing?**

By Ines Shaw and Sharon Leder

There is not a better time than now to examine

1) how women are doing in academia,
2) what we have learned after more than a quarter century of Women's Studies in the Academy and an increase of women and minority faculty across the disciplines, and
3) how we can sustain the gains and simultaneously change in order to achieve greater gender equity in academia.

The fact is that although "women have made many gains in higher education, gender equity is a prevailing problem at the tenure and tenure-track levels. Women are severely underrepresented among highest ranks— they hold lower-ranking positions, earn less, and are less likely to have tenure. Overall, less than one-third of tenured faculty at four-year institutions—27%—are women." + (continued on p. 4)


This is the model of gender equity for the female and male students who are in our colleges and universities -- is it desirable?

And why this state of affairs? After all, are women just plain inferior to men, incapable of the intellectual heights that men achieve, despite the training and opportunities offered to them? Some may feel that such a question does not merit the space it takes on the page, but it forces one to acknowledge that this belief still guides behaviors or is used by some to gain some advantage. In other words, this state of affairs partly exists precisely because gender biased beliefs and attitudes affect perceptions, evaluations, and decisions in academia. Of course, they should not, and most of the time, almost everyone acts as if the integrity of academic institutions is to be trusted without question. But the institution is made up of people, and people hold biases and discriminate, notwithstanding the prohibition against discrimination on the basis of sex in the workplace that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 first promised and then ratified as an amendment to the Constitution through the Act of 1972. However, women faculty often find that protection from discrimination means engaging in a legal fight that only very few can take up because of the ever-escalating cost of litigation.

Some women who choose the legal path seek assistance from funds, such as the NWSA Academic Discrimination Legal Fund or the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund, and other organizations, such as WAGE (We Advocate Gender Equity). The AAUW report 

Tenure Denied: Cases of Sex Discrimination in Academia

looks at nineteen cases that involved sex discrimination in denials of tenure. The cases examined for the report are similar to the cases that those of us on the NWSA Academic Discrimination Advisory Board (ADAB), have experienced ourselves or the cases of the women faculty who apply for the ADAB legal fund.

Among the discriminatory behaviors found in these cases are procedural violations; application of different standards of evaluation; arbitrary, biased, and whimsical decisions; faulty comparisons of academic records; discrimination against pregnancy and marital status; improperly or illegally placed comments in faculty's files; and a host of biased and prejudicial behaviors meant to retaliate, isolate, and create a hostile environment for the woman faculty under attack.

If this list, which is not exhaustive, gives you pause, consider what happens to the women who cannot seek remedy for discrimination through the legal channel. The losses are great: access to earnings that match one's training and qualifications, job security, guarantees of academic freedom, recourse against discrimination or violations of due process. In addition, physical or emotional illness is virtually unavoidable once a woman faculty finds herself struggling to retain her position or to gain tenure or promotion while also fighting against discriminatory behaviors and biased decisions. Institutionally, the loss of jobs and the greater proportion of women in the lowest paid positions, often non-permanent, contribute to the erosion of equity, affirmative action, interdisciplinarity, and activism. Parallel trends have had critical consequences for women faculty and students—the trend to do away with tenure, the opposition to unionization, less faculty governance and more top-down decision-making, the privatization of education, increases in administrative positions, less public funding, downsizing of departments in the humanities and social sciences, and increases in student tuitions. Are these trends in evidence at your college or university?

Despite what is known, there is much that needs to be reflected upon, examined, and figured out. In addition, what can and should change so that the model of gender equity for current and future generations of students is not as lopsided as it currently is?
CALL FOR PAPERS

A special issue of the NWSA Journal will be devoted to what we have learned about women, tenure, and promotion, what can be done to sustain gains, and what needs to change to ensure real gender equity.

“Women, Tenure, and Promotion” Special Issue of the National Women’s Studies Association Journal [2007]
Co-editors: Dr. Ines Shaw and Dr. Sharon Leder, Nassau Community College, and Dr. Betty Harris, University of Oklahoma.
Deadline for Submissions: 1 May 2005

After more than three decades of women’s studies in the academy and a steady increase of women faculty in higher education across the disciplines, it is appropriate to take stock of what we have learned and what still needs to be accomplished. Contributors may consider the following.

Status of Women and Changing the Structures:
How can academic structures change so that a) women rise through and occupy all ranks in equal proportion to men, and are not stuck in the lowest ranks with the lowest salaries? b) joint appointments and shared courses become regular systemic options? c) committees and administrations are monitored for accountability in promotion and tenure (p&t) decisions?

campus Affirmative Action offices actively encourage, defend, and insure gender equity?

Mentoring: What type of mentoring a) really advances the attainment of p&t for all women? b) helps service and activist contributions count for p&t?

Student Evaluations/Faculty Ratings: What can counteract negative consequences of gender, race, and ethnic bias in student evaluations of women faculty in p&t decisions?

Court Trends: How can knowledge of current trends in gender discrimination lawsuits prepare women for litigation?

Tenure and Promotion Struggles and Denials:
a) What factors halt women faculty’s paths to p&t? b) How may criteria for p&t change so that teaching and service scholarship count as “real” scholarship? c) How may criteria change so that interdisciplinary, feminist and activist work count toward p&t? d) What roles do personal and family life play in women’s struggles to gain p&t? e) How are women’s physical and mental health, financial status and professional life affected by denials of p&t, and by strategies they employ in response? f) What are the financial, educational, and human costs of not tenuring or promoting women faculty?

A 150-word abstract should be submitted with a completed essay of 20–30 pages, including abstract, notes, and references—two copies to Dr. Ines Shaw, English Department, Nassau Community College, One Education Drive, Garden City, NY 11530, and one copy to Dr. Betty Harris, Women’s Studies Program, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK 73019.

NWSA Journal Style guidelines are available at www.nwsaj.eng.iastate.edu. Inquiries can be directed to Dr. Ines Shaw at shawi@sunynassau.edu.

SOME SUCCESSFUL SUITS

From the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund:

On Dec. 2, following a four-day trial, a federal court jury awarded AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund supported plaintiff Kimberley Howard a total of $285,000 in damages and found that Bishop State Community College violated Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 by failing to adequately address Howard's complaints of sexual harassment by one of her former instructors after receiving actual notice of her
complaints.

For more information on this case, visit the AAUW website at http://www.aauw.org/lafl/cases/howard.cfm.

SUCCESS AT ADELPHI

Althea T. Davis, a former associate professor of nursing and director of the Nurse Practitioner Program at Adelphi University, New York, filed a racial discrimination lawsuit against the university. She alleged that the university retaliated against her after she filed an internal complaint. The fact that three months after she "was poised to be reappointed," she became unacceptable led to an associate provost to worry about (both) the University's legal and ethical vulnerability and "the possibility that Althea really has been subject to, at least, racial insensitivity." This memo, according to an article in Newsday, a leading Long Island newspaper, proved to be "the smoking gun." Davis and the university settled in "a voluntary judgment" for $600,000.00. Yet, the university stated that they believed her claims were without merit and claimed to have settled to avoid "a costly and lengthy trial that would have disrupted the fall semester classes." (Newsday Sunday, September 2004, A14).

INVEST IN YOURSELF

"Your contribution to the Academic Discrimination Advisory Board's Legal Fund is not a charitable donation but a savvy investment. For, on every campus where we can sustain discrimination suits— and whether or not those suits finally win or lose in the courts - we force an improvement in the status of women."

Annette Kolodny

Send Checks to Ines Shaw, Treasurer
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Long Beach, NY 11561-4207

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"If I am not for myself, who will be?
If I am only for myself, who am I?
If not now, when?"

Rabbi Hillel

become active on your own behalf

Join The Younger Women's Task Force (YWTF) is a brand spanking new coalition working to promote issues that matter to women in their 20's and 30's. YWTF was founded by younger women, is comprised of younger women, and is for younger women.

Read more, get excited, and sign up at www.womensorganizations.org/pages.cfm?ID=171. The Younger Women's Task Force is a project of the National Council of Women's Organizations.