



Union of Part-Time Faculty at Wayne State University

UPTF / AFT, AFL-CIO

Volume I, Issue I
October 2007

A voice refusing to be stilled

UPTF member Dorothy Duensing on her own arbitrary treatment

By Rayfield Waller
UPTF member

Suddenly informed by the music department that she was dropped from the Fall roll of music adjuncts after eight years of outstanding service to her department, WSU adjunct professor, Dorothy Duensing, deprived of employment and separated from the continuing students who have depended on her mentorship, might be seen as the voice and face of Wayne's *Union of Part Time Faculty* (UPTF).

What has happened to her is exactly the kind of thing the union aims to protect its members from as the union prepares to go into bargaining with Wayne. UPTF is fighting for its first fair, beneficial and democratic contract to cover all part-time instructors and that will provide (among other necessities) job security and fair and open procedures for dealing with all adjunct employees. An adjunct is a college instructor not tenured or full time but who is distinguished by possessing professional experience in one's subject area.



Since part-time adjunct professors are not covered by the *American Association of University Professors* (AAUP), typical adjunct professors can be denied courses and contracts, can be dismissed, or can be dropped from department semester rolls at any time with no procedural justification or even explanation being required. Adjunct and part-time faculty are given contracts lasting only from semester to semester. Fair treatment depends solely on whim and practice within each department. For these reasons and more WSU part-time faculty, including Duensing, voted union almost unanimously last spring.

'We are the university'

Arbitrary and unfair dismissal is what Duensing feels the WSU Department of Music has subjected her to.

"It was a shock," said Duensing last week as she was trying to adjust to the reality that she'd been ordered to vacate her music department studio, and that she would be separated from the students she'd been continuously working with over several semesters. "As adjuncts we give everything to this university. We teach most of Wayne's courses. We are this university."

Continued on Page 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

UPTF Timeline 2

Bargaining Update & Survey comments 3

Solidarity! 4

Adjuncts nationwide fighting to be Union 5

UPTF member speaks out 6

Union power! 7

Who we are & The cost of war 7

**UPTF
Membership
Meeting Oct. 19
See page 8**



A Union of Professionals



Union of Part-Time Faculty timeline

△ 2005 August of 2005: Original, core members of the first Organizing Committee (The “OC”), working for the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), set out to assess Wayne State University’s English and Art departments to find out if there was interest in a union among part-time faculty. Their method was direct, face-to-face, person-to-person communication with part-time faculty.

September-November: A constituent membership info card was developed while it was determined that there was 90-95 percent interest in having a union among part-time faculty in the English department and the Music department.

December: AFT, encouraged by preliminary assessments, extended financing and logistical support to the OC.

△ 2006 January of 2006: The OC began ramping up its efforts to organize, organize, organize, as assessments continued.

February-August: An intensive membership drive was conducted using the same method that the OC had favored for its earlier assessment activities: direct, face-to-face communication. The OC signed up members throughout the summer and into the fall.

September-December: The OC decided to aim at getting out a formal up or down vote for a union in the spring.

△ 2007 January-February of 2007: The OC went to the Michigan Employment Relations Commission and requested that MERC handle a petition to call for a vote.

March: Effort continued to get a vote taken by April. The OC went out in teams to discuss the union with part-time faculty, canvassing in neighborhoods, door to door, two-on-one. Phone banks went on night and day to contact and encourage part-time faculty to vote.

April: A formal vote was taken, overseen by the AFT while MERC took responsibility for distributing, handling, and counting ballots. Approximately 470 faculty voted yes, approximately 8 voted no, out of approximately 900 of what were now members.

July: Members of what is now the Union of Part Time Faculty gathered for a victory party!

△ Currently: Formal committees have been constituted, including the Bargaining Committee, the Communications Committee, and the OC, in preparation for collective bargaining this fall, and for upcoming membership meetings to plan elections to vote in union officers, plan mobilizing activities and more.



Bargaining time!

As the UPTF prepares to begin negotiating our first contract, the membership has been polled about our concerns. The results of this survey will be shared at the general membership meeting on October 19. The issues our members have said are important to them will form the substance of our bargaining agenda. Details of that agenda will be discussed and approved at the meeting. Negotiations with the administration should start in early November.

Survey responses Survey responses

"I would very much like easy access to an office of some kind."

"I like the contact with the students."

"I had a toothache. Hard to teach when your teeth are falling out."

"It is also important that we have access to the means to do research."

"I don't know of any professional development resources provided by my department. They could do a better job of promoting any resources. Also, most university provided learning seminars are during the day, when I'm not able to attend."

"I enjoy the great campus and diverse student body."

"I like the professors in the area I teach and the relationships I have with them. I did graduate with my Ph.D. from this department so this likely impacts positively in this regard. I also like the graduate classes I have taught and the students in these classes."

"I just want to feel as if my contribution to the department is appreciated.."

"I teach at night, so a parking space near my classroom is important to me. The university expects me to walk across campus late at night when there is a structure across the street that is rarely filled. This is not a matter of convenience, but of personal safety."

"The main issue to me is job security. We need more than a semester to semester contract. I have wanted to buy a house for some years now, but I haven't because I never can be sure if I will be working four months from now, let alone next year. We need to rationalize the process of re-hiring, course assignments, and just professionalize the whole adjunct process so that it is not based on whims or someone liking you or not."



Duensing cont.

Duensing also teaches as a distinguished professional in the Clawson school system. She sings opera professionally, and works as a church musical director. She does frequent recitals and concerts throughout southeastern Michigan. "I did two faculty recitals for Wayne out of the goodness of my heart [both were done *gratis*] in 2004 and 2006," said Duensing.

After eight years at Wayne teaching voice and instrumental courses, working intensively with individual music students, and even working with graduate students, the music department suddenly told Duensing, at first with no explanation, to clear out her studio. "All my stuff ended up piled on top of my dining room table," she says.

Only after this eviction had happened and after her calls and enquiries had been ignored, did she finally receive a letter from the music department's recently appointed chair informing her that her 'preferences' had led to the department deciding not to renew her contract due to those preferences being incompatible with department needs (many departments require adjuncts to file forms each semester stating the hours, days and courses they prefer to teach).

"Where [at least one other] part-time faculty are concerned, the associate chair of music sat them down and told them they would no longer be allowed to teach at home, what they could or could not teach, etc., but I was never consulted about my preferences for the fall," said Duensing.

Added Duensing, "Clearly, there is arbitrary treatment going on. There is an informal seniority system being applied, and preferential treatment. Of course, what I most want to see happen is that I receive classes in January, but what needs to happen in general is more open communication, fair treatment, and inclusiveness for adjuncts in curricular planning and development. We have the facility and expertise at Wayne to create a highly developed music program. There could be a lot more for our students."

Valuing students

Publicly available university memos, department policies, and minutes of faculty senate meetings, as well as a recently completed UPTF survey of part-time faculty all show that part-time instructors make up the lion's share of teaching employees in most departments.

Yet, part-time teaching employees lack health care, adequate office space, official grievance procedures, retirement benefits, job security, and are paid sub-standard wages in comparison to union contract university employees. Their wages are inconsistent: data released by Wayne to the UPTF show that pay rates vary from department to department though all rates for adjuncts are sub-par.

Being an adjunct, says Duensing, is a plus in terms of service to the university, not a minus.

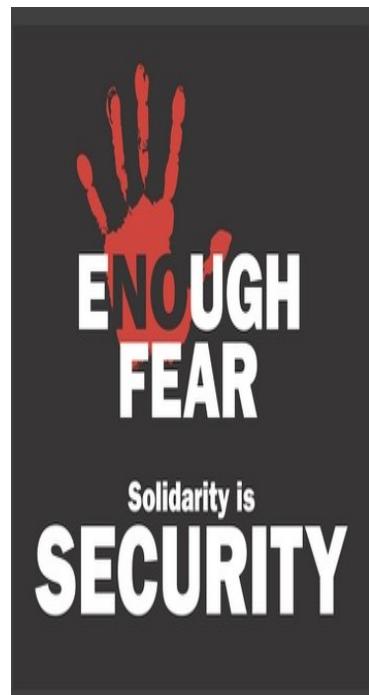
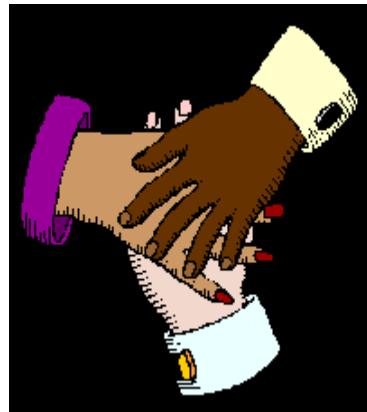
"Since we *are* adjuncts," she said, "That means we are professionals with experience and skills that we bring to our students. Wayne should value us. Valuing us for our expertise would be valuing our students since we are here to share that expertise with students." Δ

***"There could be a lot more
for our students."***

— Dorothy Duensing

'....Solidarity forever; For the union makes us strong!....'

— 'Solidarity Forever' by Ralph Chaplin





UPTF part of burgeoning movement

Unionizing on campuses growing nationwide

By Amanda Hiber
UPTF member

When it comes to a growing reliance on part-time instructors, Wayne State is far from alone among institutions of higher education in the United States. In 2003, part-time instructors were estimated to range between 30 percent and 46 percent of all college and university faculty in the U.S. According to the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW), the proportion of part-time faculty has doubled since 1973.

Using fewer full-time, and more part-time, faculty is part of a nationwide trend. Corporations-and institutions of higher learning-cut costs by replacing full-time workers, for whom they are legally obligated to provide benefits, with part-time workers, to whom they have no such obligation.

"In a fundamental restructuring of work, businesses now farm out not just special projects but everyday functions like office cleaning, payroll processing, human resources departments and entire clerical and assembly-line units," writes Christopher Cook in *The Nation*. MIT economist David Autor echoes Cook, estimating that the number of temporary workers in the U.S. more than tripled

between 1991 and 2000.

Using part-time faculty has, indeed, helped college and university budgets. A 2000 study by the CAW found that more than 70 percent of part-time faculty members make less than \$3000 per course. About two-thirds of these adjuncts receive no benefits: no health insurance, no retirement plan.

A 2004 study conducted by University of Richmond economist James Monks, posted on the Cornell Higher Education Research Institute website, revealed that while the median full-time tenure-track faculty member is paid \$8424 per section, the median part-time non-tenure-track faculty member is paid \$2174. Thus, the median part-time instructor is paid one-quarter of what the median full-time professor is paid, per section.

Just as in corporations, where this trend takes the shape of outsourcing work that is less desirable, at colleges and universities, part-time and graduate instructors teach a disproportionate number of 100-level, or introductory, classes. Many full-time faculty members consider these courses less appealing than higher-level courses that may be more in alignment with their academic specializations. Some disciplines and departments rely more on part

-time instructors than others. They are usually those departments with numerous sections of required 100-level courses, such as English or History. As of Fall 2007, WSU's Education and English departments used the highest number of part-time instructors.

Particular types of institutions, too, rely more on part-time faculty than others. For instance, community college faculties are typically less than 50 percent full-time. Large research universities like WSU rely on both part-time faculty and graduate teaching assistants to teach a substantial portion of its courses. According to WSU's 2005 Annual Institutional Data Update, there are 1,759 full-time faculty and 1,997 faculty classified as "part-time," including graduate employees who teach. These numbers put WSU's full-time faculty at only 47 percent of its total faculty.

Like part-time faculty at WSU, graduate teaching assistants are, in comparison to full-time faculty, "cheap labor." But since the union representing graduate employees at WSU, GEOC, won its first contract in 1999, graduate employees have generally been better compensated than part-time faculty. In their most recent contract, which went into effect March 1, 2006, WSU's graduate employees received annual salary increases and the addition of vision insurance (GEOC members gained

dental insurance in a previous contract).

Graduate employee unions like GEOC have been forming at a steady rate since the 1990s, and there are now more than 30 recognized graduate employee unions across the U.S. Generally, organizing part-time instructors is a greater challenge because of the nature of their work; they tend to be more transient and more isolated than graduate students. In spite of these obstacles, part-time instructors have begun organizing their own unions in recent years. In Michigan, the most shining example is LEO, the Lecturers' Employee Organization-American Federation of Teachers, which represents non-tenure-track faculty at the University of Michigan. LEO formed in 2002-2003 and ratified their first contract in 2004.

And on our home turf, WSU's part-time faculty voted in May 2007 to be represented by the Union of Part-Time Faculty (UPTF)-AFT. The UPTF is the first-and, so far, only-union to solely represent part-time faculty in the state of Michigan. We won't be alone for long, as part-time faculty organizing campaigns are currently underway at both Henry Ford Community College and Michigan State University. Δ

Organize!

**Opinion**

An open letter to the WSU Board of Governors

By A. Joseph Kos
UPTF Member

It's never too late to speak for a just cause, even when the victims are gone and redress seems hopeless. I speak to such a cause here.

I wish to thank you, the Board of Governors of this university, for reminding us of the brutality ever near to our lives, even in the otherwise humane confines of this university. I thank you personally, because it is under your guiding hands that WSU experienced its own 'September event,' its own sudden and destructive blow that some have called 'The Maccabees Massacre.' I am fully aware that it is an unholy juxtaposition with the tragedies suffered in our nation on 9/11 and vastly incomparable with those awful events. Yet, it happened.

It was the day-September 7, 2007-that this university's Humanities Department and the Interdisciplinary Studies Programs were bludgeoned to academic death by your appointees and the teaching staffs of both curriculums summarily terminated and dispersed. I and my colleagues of the Humanities program, distinguished by many years of service to this university, were thrown out of the eleventh floor of Macabees, our offices closed to us, our belongings, personal libraries, slide collections-the accumulation of years-rushed out onto Woodward Avenue. Our classes-already fully

enrolled-were cancelled and our teaching contracts abrogated.

The reasons behind your actions?

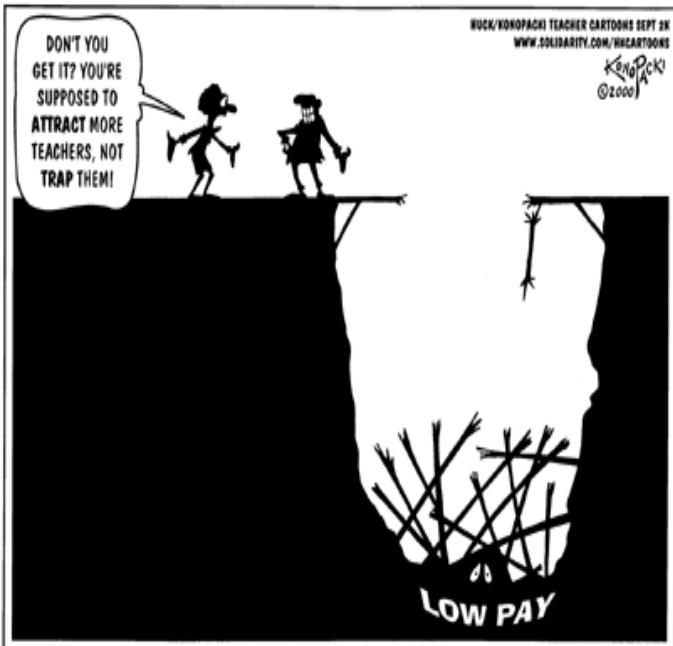
Was it the teaching staff? I and my distinguished colleagues have taught at WSU for decades, twenty to thirty years, a staff with abundant experience and expertise.

Was it academic viability? The humanities courses we taught were unsurpassed in curricular flexibility and in popularity.

Was it budgetary constraint? Economics could not have been the reason for your excision of our programs from the university's offerings. The courses had already been fully enrolled; the Humanities department was starting the semester worth \$440,000 to the university. The extraordinarily qualified staff was to receive a paltry fraction of that sum paid in 1996 adjunct wages.

Was it facilities? The office space could easily have been contracted and shared and the classrooms in Old Main were operating on a shoestring. Those three dim classrooms, always full of pathos, until brought to life by arts, music, ideas, and happily engaged students.

Whatever your reasons, your preemptory and arbitrary actions have no clear justification. Our department staff were given no



hint, no prior notice, no meetings, no discussion, no advance warning—just a phone call from the department secretary to the effect that: "The Humanities department is no more; all humanities classes are cancelled; students have been informed; you should clear out your office, and return all keys. You're history."

Universities are institutions founded on rational and humanistic principles, on decency and discussion. And you had a duty, and still have a duty, to provide a clear rationale for your actions to the now belated staff of the now terminated Humanities and Interdisciplinary studies departments, as well as to the WSU community at large.

You've trashed two great programs of study that have been a fundamental part of the liberal arts curriculum at this university for 50 years and which remain so in universities and colleges across this country.

You have trashed a superb teaching staff. A staff this university will never see again, not because you've cast us away, but because you cannot replace teachers with decades of experience and expertise.

Yes, I know these are antiquated sentiments, given the Machiavellian ethos out of Washington and today's corporate jungle, but could one have calculated that such brutality lurked behind the doors of academe? At WSU?

It is in such light that your actions on September 7, 2007 affect us.

One more work of violence, one more reason that the WSU community can remember its own Septembers with chagrin and regret.Δ

Unity!



A union equals power

The principle of a union is simple: we can accomplish more if we work as a group than we can as isolated individuals.

As an officially recognized union, we have the legal right to negotiate salary, job security, health insurance, and other working conditions with the university administration. This means that we discuss these things with the administration until both sides agree on changes. The agreements we reach become part of a binding contract that cannot be changed unilaterally.

We are now beginning to bargain our first contract with the WSU administration. There are many opportunities to get involved in various committees.

Call (313-832-7902),

Email (uptf@aftmichigan.org), or stop by the UPTF office for more information.

The union is you.

Δ

WHO ARE WE?

We are the part-time or “adjunct” faculty who work at Wayne State University. There are about 900 of us, teaching in all of the departments and colleges, on the main campus and at the extensions. Some of us have taught every term for 35 years, some of us are in our first semester of teaching. Some of us have full-time jobs elsewhere and teach only one course; others are trying to patch together a living teaching at WSU and at two or three other colleges. Some of us are working on our advanced degrees while we teach.

We are from the English, Communications, Philosophy, Anthropology, Art, Romance Language and Mathematics departments as well as the Schools of Education, Law, and Social Work.

Last spring we voted in our union and are now fighting for our first contract. Many members are working on the Communications, Bargaining and Organizing Committees. The union is only as strong as its active membership. If you're a UPTF member and would like to get involved call or email the UPTF office or stop by M-F. Δ

The cost of War – Michigan

Since the beginning of the U.S. war in Iraq in March 2003, Michigan taxpayers have “contributed” \$12 billion to the war. This money could instead be used to:

- ✓ Build 107, 988 housing units
- ✓ Place 1, 588, 520 children in Head Start
- ✓ Fund 581, 410 four-year college scholarships
- ✓ Pay the health care costs of 7,181, 636 children for one year
- ✓ Pay the salaries of 207, 845 public school teachers

Sources:

National Priorities Project: <http://www.nationalpriorities.org/>

Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice:

<http://www.mecawi.org/>

Union of Part-Time Faculty / AFT, AFL-CIO

51 West Hancock Street, 4th Floor
Detroit, MI 48201

Staff Organizer: Bryan G. Pfeifer

Phone: 313-832-7902
Email: uptf@aftmichigan.org

UPTF Newsletter
Volume One, Number 1
October 2007

Produced by UPTF Communications Committee



UPTF / AFT, AFL-CIO

WSU Union of Part-Time Faculty
AFT, AFL-CIO
51 West Hancock Street, 4th Floor
Detroit, MI 48201
Phone: 313-832-7902

E-mail: uptf@aftmichigan.org

An injury to one is an injury to all!



Addressee

Mailing Label

Membership Meeting

Friday, Oct. 19, 2007, 3 p.m.

Hannan House, 1st Floor
4750 Woodward Ave (and Hancock St.), Detroit
(Free parking accessible off Woodward Ave.)
(Street parking available)

- ✓ A Worker's Testimonial
- ✓ Ratify Bylaws and Constitution
- ✓ Bargaining Committee presentation
- ✓ Organizing Committee update