



Contingent Faculty Job Security Task Force Job Security Report

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Background

At its 2025 convention, AFT Washington membership renewed its commitment to the advancement of job security and pay equity for contingent faculty in the state's Community and Technical Colleges as one of its leading priorities.

At the mandate of those members, a task force of contingent and tenure-track faculty have met over the last nine months to study the failure of Washington State to protect adjunct faculty and look ahead to a more equitable and secure future.

The Job Security Task Force recommends adoption of a United Faculty Model which would reduce or eliminate the disparate working conditions that divide our members. We include in this report a set of collective bargaining recommendations, legislative agenda items and organizing goals.

Our platform for contingent faculty includes:

- **Equitable opportunities for economic advancement**, including placement on the same salary schedule, paid office hours, professional development opportunities and access to equipment;
- **Additional pathways to tenure** that would grant opportunities for permanent employment for all faculty;
- **A consistent and reliable workload** with transparency in scheduling;
- **Evaluations and monitoring of work** that are equal across the board, not based on employment status;
- **Seniority benefits**, including clear hiring practices that create pathways to promotions and protections from layoffs, and;
- **Just cause protections** that prevent employers from unilaterally terminating contingent faculty under the guise of coursework being unavailable.

This report is the culmination of years of work by AFT Washington and its locals, the state federation's Contingent Faculty Issues Committee, and this task force. These recommendations reflect input from leaders and members across the state. It also reflects work performed by the California Federation of Teachers, the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges and Vancouver Community College Faculty Association, which have preceded our state federation in research and implementation of these principles.

Current Limitations

The two-tier employment model as it currently stands

Short-term contracts explain most of the gulf between the employment conditions of full-time and contingent faculty. These contracts are the root cause of contingency. To elaborate:

- When contingent faculty are technically laid off and re-hired every quarter, just cause protections are meaningless.
- The part-time nature of contingent faculty is used by management to bargain a lesser tier of wages, benefits, and privileges for those workers. The degree of inequality between the two tiers is highly and capriciously variable across workplaces.
- Signing quarterly contracts for faculty takes more time for administrators than longer-term or indefinite contracts. This is used as justification for administrative bloat.
- Overreliance on a contingent workforce can affect course offerings and instructional capacity.
- Overreliance on contingent faculty means colleges often do not have the staff necessary to institutionally function.
 - There are not enough tenure-stream faculty to fill necessary committees.
 - Often, this work just doesn't happen, which endangers the model of shared governance and breeds institutional dysfunction.
- Contingent faculty often underutilize professional development opportunities to the extent they are offered.
- Contingent faculty may not be on contract every quarter, so students may not be able to contact their instructor.
 - This leaves less time for office hours, outreach, and individualized feedback.
 - Many of our students, including those who are immigrants, have limited access to the kind of social connections needed to secure letters of recommendations needed to further their education or to compete for jobs. Community college instructors provide an essential resource in helping disadvantaged students move forward with their goals. When the instructors who teach them are tenuously employed, that important role may not be fulfilled. If students are unable to contact instructors who are not employed that quarter, or who have left the profession, this source of social capital is diminished.
- Contingent faculty are incentivized to take as much work as they can fit into their schedule, often commuting to multiple colleges within a single workday. Contingent faculty feel that they must hedge their bets against classes being canceled in the future, so will often take whatever work they can get. Educational quality invariably suffers when instructors overextend themselves.
- Curriculum fragmentation or misalignment. Inconsistent course design and learning outcomes across sections. Difficulty maintaining scaffolding across levels/programs. This will have the effect (if it isn't already) of facilitating the transfer of course design from publicly-employed and publicly-accountable faculty to privately-held textbook companies.
- Limited innovation and program development. Less time/resources to redesign, update, or create classes/programs.
- Lower morale and sense of belonging. The contingent nature of faculty turns colleges from schools to businesses, from communities of learning to spaces where customers show up, pay, and leave.

- Colleges are increasingly hiring union breaking consulting firms to fight adjuncts' legal right to unemployment insurance. This represents yet another transfer of resources from instruction to administration.
- Some collective bargaining agreements require contingent faculty to be "available" to students outside of class time, even if office hours are not officially required, but don't put any upper limit on time spent.
- The combined impact of these conditions is such that adjunct faculty are often left experiencing burnout, particularly among those who must teach at multiple institutions or who are new to the career.

The issues with "Priority Hire"

Many locals have bargained for a version of "Priority Hire" for contingent faculty who have accrued some seniority and met certain milestones. While these job categories represent an important win, they do not address significant gaps between contingent and tenure-track faculty.

- The increase in pay fails to achieve parity with full-time faculty.
- At most workplaces, management has full discretion over the issuance of priority hire contracts.
- The number of classes per year "guaranteed" by priority hire is often too low to add up to a living wage.
- Classes offered to priority hire faculty can still be rescinded at the discretion of management for reasons including, but not limited to, low enrollment. Faculty who have their classes thusly canceled are usually entitled to nothing more than a token one-time payment.
- At colleges where priority hire is not at the discretion of management (notably Shoreline Community College), it can be undermined by "gapping" in which management declines to offer a contingent faculty classes during the quarter when they would hit their priority hire threshold.
- At many colleges, full-time faculty can take moonlights before priority hire adjuncts are assigned coursework. This undermines the very notion of guaranteed coursework.
- Seniority tiers for adjuncts often come with additional responsibilities or evaluation without concomitant meaningful protections or wage increases.
- When priority hire faculty retire, the position may be left empty at the full discretion of management.

Collective Bargaining Recommendations

To address the issues identified in the previous section, AFT locals representing faculty should use the following guidelines to craft their initial bargaining demands.

The United Faculty Model: This model is intended to serve as a new paradigm for academic work in Washington State. It does not eliminate two-tier, but it does significantly ameliorate many of the disparities between the two job categories.

In crafting this proposal, this Task Force has avoided language which would endanger the protections of tenure status. Tenure is a necessary and sacrosanct pillar of higher education which should be fortified, not eroded. The United Faculty Model will instead allow locals to bargain more robust tenure provisions as it will increase the number of members who will view tenure as an attainable goal.

The United Faculty Model is achievable within the current legal framework of Washington State. These recommendations take extensive inspiration from extant collective bargaining agreements and will reference these when applicable. Recommendations for changes to that legal framework will be made in the “Legislative Recommendations” section.

Locals should anticipate resistance from employers but should not do their jobs for them by preemptively compromising justice. Nonetheless, this report will anticipate some employer counterarguments and rejoinders, with the caveat that collective bargaining is a power struggle, not a debate club.

The core elements of the United Faculty Model are:

1. Equal, or equitable, pay.
2. Pathways to tenure and hiring.
3. Transparent and consistent workloads.
4. Evaluations and monitoring of work that is equal to those of tenure-track faculty.
5. Seniority benefits, including access to work opportunities and layoff protections.
6. Just cause protections.

The following recommendations will explore methods by which these goals can be achieved at the bargaining table.

Long-term contracts: Locals should seek to limit the number of faculty employed on quarter-to-quarter contracts without safeguards to ensure ongoing renewal. Locals should strive to expand and strengthen job categories such as Shoreline’s “Full-Time Faculty - Annual Contract.” Locals should aim to place the overwhelming majority of contingent faculty on contracts which:

- Are **long-term:** Upon hire, contingent faculty should be contracted for no fewer than nine months (3 consecutive quarters), and ideally, with indefinite options that guarantee continued work.

Clover Park Technical College currently has a “full time adjunct status” where faculty are contracted for 9-11 months (3-4 quarters). They are hired on the full-time salary schedule,

maintain the same responsibilities as full-time tenured faculty, and are eligible for the same step increases as full-time tenured faculty.

Cascadia College and the Seattle Colleges have job categories called “Full-time Faculty Temporary” and “Full-time Non-Tenure-Track” respectively which may also serve as good foundations. Currently, these positions are heavily caveated within their collective bargaining agreements to suggest that they will only be offered under exceptional circumstances. Locals should bargain to remove these caveats.

- Are **equal to full-time faculty** in salary scale, benefits, job responsibilities, and access to professional development funds, sabbaticals, technology, mentorship, and constructive evaluation.
 - a. **Salary, benefits, and responsibilities.** The Washington State Legislature has defined pay equity for contingent faculty equity for contingent faculty as 85% of the pay of full-time faculty. While this remains a worthy goal to work toward, it does not fully recognize the unpaid work contingent faculty perform. This includes:
 - Student support
 - Curriculum development
 - Program/discipline development
 - Outreach
 - Departmental participation
 - Support for student organizations
 - Shared governance
 - Service on standing and ad hoc committees

Research consistently shows that contingent faculty who feel connected to their institution are more effective teachers and more invested in student outcomes. Studies of community college students demonstrate that faculty engagement outside the classroom is directly tied to improved student retention, degree attainment, and transfer rates (Schudde, 2019). Contingent faculty who participate in professional development and campus activities are also more likely to use evidence-based teaching practices that produce better outcomes for students. In short, when contingent faculty are integrated into the life of their institution, students benefit.

When contingent faculty do this work without pay, or at unreasonably low rates, employers benefit from a hidden subsidy that disadvantages both faculty and students. As the Community College Research Center has noted, inviting contingent engagement and collaboration without compensation further exacerbates the pay inequity between contingent and full-time faculty (Bickerstaff, 2025). This happens for many reasons: a desire to remain included, opportunities for professional development, or simply a deep commitment to students and their success.

Contingent faculty should not be penalized for that commitment, nor should institutions rely on it for free.

Under the United Faculty Model, contingent faculty may lose their eligibility to apply for unemployment insurance when off-contract between academic quarters. As this can be a significant source of income, it is necessary that they receive a meaningful increase in salary to maintain equivalent take-home pay.

- b. **Fair compensation for additional duties performed.** Where equal pay cannot be achieved, locals should pursue additional stipends or hourly pay for work performed outside of a contingent faculty's written job description. The principle is simple: no new required work without new pay, and existing unpaid work should be brought into the contract and compensated wherever possible.

Locals should look to the hourly equivalent pay rate for overtime exempt employees as a starting point for appropriate pay rates for this work. At some colleges, contingent faculty are paid stipends for non-teaching work based on hourly rates as low as \$32, well below the rate for full-time hourly rates. Closing this gap would represent a meaningful and achievable step forward at colleges where hourly pay continues to lag behind.

- c. **Professional Development funds.** Few collective bargaining agreements include professional development funds for contingent faculty, and of those that do, they are far from equal to what tenure-stream faculty receive. We propose that all collective bargaining agreements eliminate this disparity and render professional development funds to all workers.
- d. **Sabbaticals.** Sabbaticals (described in some contracts as professional leave) provide critical professional development opportunities for tenure-track faculty, but similar offerings are not made available to contingent faculty. We propose that collective bargaining agreements provide such opportunities to contingent faculty members.
- e. **Technology.** Contingent faculty members must have access to the "tools of the trade" for their coursework, including, at a minimum, a college-provided laptop and relevant software for designing and executing their classes. When contingent faculty use a personal device for performance of their duties, they incur legal liability, expose their workplace networks to cybersecurity risks, and become subject to the Public Records Act and Ethics in Public Service Act on personal devices.
- f. **Mentorship.** Few collective bargaining agreements formalize mentorship for contingent faculty, which is an important pathway for professional development. collective bargaining agreements should require academic divisions to formally assign faculty mentors to contingent faculty. Contingent faculty may have opportunities to serve as mentors to more junior peers as a fulfillment of their service requirements.

- ▶ Automatically **convert to full-time** after a set period.

This language currently exists in the job description for “Full-Time Temporary Faculty” at Cascadia College, albeit with caveats. This language should be expanded and strengthened.

- a. **Priority hire for contingent faculty into new tenure-track positions.** Where new tenure-track positions are created, current contingent faculty must be provided with priority hire rights. This is a basic right afforded to part-time and temporary workers in union shops across industries, yet is consistently denied to contingent faculty. Contingent faculty should have a right of first refusal to newly created tenure-track positions within their discipline and should receive credit toward tenure for time served at the college.
- ▶ Are considered the **default** terms of employment at their locals. Employers will likely fight hard to maintain contingency, as it is a crucial mechanism for management to discipline labor. For these gains to mean anything, they must be understood as the new standard for hiring contingent faculty. Collective bargaining agreements should only leave room for contingent (one-quarter contracts) under exceptional circumstances and should require management to demonstrate in writing that these circumstances exist.

Seniority benefits: Even with longer-term contracts, contingent faculty will still be contingent employees. However, contingent faculty should be eligible for the same opportunities for annual incremental raises as full-time tenured and tenure track faculty. Thus, it is crucial to bargain formalized seniority and just cause protections.

- ▶ **Just cause protections covering non-renewal:** The critical gap in existing contracts is that just cause, where it exists at all, applies only during an active teaching quarter. Non-renewal at the end of a quarter is explicitly carved out. This loophole allows employers to use non-renewal as discipline, bypassing any accountability. Contracts must include language explicitly requiring just cause standards for withholding class assignments, not just for mid-quarter termination.
- ▶ **Written reasons for non-renewal.** Locals should demand that contingent faculty receive a written explanation when they are not offered classes they have previously taught. This creates a record, supports accountability, and builds the foundation for stronger protections over time.
- ▶ **Seniority-based course assignment.** Just cause protections are only meaningful when paired with fair and transparent scheduling. Locals should bargain for seniority-based first right of refusal for course assignments, so that long-serving contingent faculty are not bypassed arbitrarily in favor of new hires.
 - a. When the “Priority-Hire” job category is relevant, those employees should take precedence over full-time faculty moonlights (see Cascadia College’s most recent collective bargaining agreement).

- b. Full-time faculty moonlights should be divided as equally as possible with more senior faculty having right of first refusal.
- c. Seniority should be viewed as an important tool for retaining faculty and building institutional depth.

Transparent scheduling: Transparent class scheduling practices involving both full-time and contingent faculty are critical for ensuring fairness and promoting solidarity at our locals. Unfortunately, scheduling practices can vary widely even among departments at a single college. When class scheduling is opaque, it can create a feeling of mistrust and division among contingent faculty. For this reason, and to ensure that seniority systems are honored, locals should bargain for class scheduling to be open to all faculty in a department.

Legislative Advocacy

While collective bargaining offers a powerful pathway toward adoption of the United Faculty Model outlined in this report, AFT Washington and its locals must also lobby for changes in state and federal law to improve working conditions for contingent faculty.

It must be noted that few of these priorities can be achieved without sufficient funding of the state's community and technical colleges. Washington's austerity measures have led to chronic underfunding of higher education, leading in recent years to reductions in force, the proposed elimination of beloved programs, and management at the bargaining table who fail to commit to paying contingent faculty what they are worth.

This is an unacceptable model that will require aggressive lobbying and electoral work to address. The following recommendations range from more immediate, low-cost goals that can be achieved in the coming biennium, to longer term fights that will require significant advocacy from members across the state.

The key items of this legislative agenda include:

1. Improved tracking mechanisms of contingent faculty workloads.
2. Reforms to protect job security and wages for current faculty.
3. Long-term investment in wages and tenure laws to promote equity.

Retention tracking and goals: The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges does not formally track faculty retention, continuity and internal promotions. The Legislature should ask for a study to quantify:

1. The rate of turnover of contingent faculty.
2. Each faculty member's average years of experience at specific institutions.
3. Percent of contingent faculty conversions into tenure-track faculty at their respective institutions.

There is also no current data on the number of contingent faculty who teach at multiple institutions. These "freeway flyers," so nicknamed for the need to travel to multiple campuses to piece together a living wage, are in a precarious but largely invisible position.

Such a study and ongoing collection of data would have limited to no cost and represented relatively accessible legislation that would improve contingent faculty's leverage during bargaining.

Reform and regulations on existing systems: Washington lacks basic protections for contingent faculty in a multitude of areas, as this report has outlined. Simple reforms to a number of systems would create a more supportive landscape for these workers, including:

1. **Unemployment insurance:** While improving pay and equity for contingent faculty should be the leading priority of AFT Washington, unemployment insurance reform is an important interim

measure. Unfortunately, despite clear legal direction that Employment Security Department adjudicators approve unemployment benefits for contingent faculty, colleges are increasingly successful in appealing and overturning those benefits. AFT Washington is pursuing legal action in this matter but should also work to eliminate the concept of “reasonable assurance” in a manner that guarantees unemployment for contingent faculty. The Illinois Education Association recently [made progress in this area](#) for education support professionals.

2. **Anti-evasion regulations:** Where institutions have rules for awarding “mid-tier” status (such as priority hire, senior associate, or affiliate status), they must be prohibited from evading that responsibility by withholding the work necessary to reach such status. If a faculty member’s progress toward that goal is disrupted, the college must be required to demonstrate a clear need for reducing or changing that workload if it results in the faculty member not receiving the desired status.
3. **Right to recall laws for academic workers:** California’s COVID-era hospitality recall law (often referred to as the “right to recall” framework, e.g. California Senate Bill 93), required employers to hire laid off workers first, used seniority-based rehiring practices, and formalized enforcement provisions to ensure that laid off workers were prioritized after workplaces returned to normal. This model could be applied to contingent faculty who are routinely laid off at the end of each term or contract period. This prevented employers from hiring outside workers before hiring back previously employed workers and required “just cause” from employers if previously employed workers were not rehired when the work was available. The rehire eligibility period lasted for three years.
4. **Protection from wrongful discharge:** Montana’s Wrongful Discharge from Employment Act (WDEA) extends just cause protections to all workers after a probationary period. While the Montana law does not include non-renewal of temporary contracts, a similar Washington state law could extend to include non-renewal of ongoing work. A broad-based law like this would also provide opportunities for coalition building with other labor partners.

Coverage of faculty under wage and hour laws: Statutory wage and hour protections do not extend for faculty due to exemptions from what is considered an “employee” under the Fair Labor Standards Act and Washington Minimum Wage Act.

RCW 49.46.010(4)(c) exempts any individual employed in a “professional capacity” from such protections. WAC 296-128-530(2) further defines “professional capacity” as any worker “with a primary duty of teaching, tutoring, instructing, or lecturing in the activity of imparting knowledge and who is employed and engaged in this activity as a teacher in an educational establishment by which the employee is employed and (b) Who [are] compensated on a salary or fee basis.”

Striking through this exemption would create a floor for faculty wages in Washington State, or render faculty eligible for overtime. As of Jan. 1, 2026, large employers must pay overtime exempt workers a minimum of \$80,168.40, with annual increases required.

This is a significant lift that would require coalition building with labor partners and interest groups. This would have sweeping implications for educators across the country and would require lobbying at both the federal and state level. Therefore, AFT should also consider alternative approaches to promote pay equity at the state or local level.

Proportional tenure track system: Academic employees' most precious right – tenure – must be extended to all faculty, regardless of part-time status. The sections in RCW 28B.50 that address tenure should be rewritten to provide faculty progress toward tenure based on their load percentage.

Under current statute, faculty must work for nine consecutive college quarters to achieve tenure. This could, for example, be prorated as follows:

1. Full-time load: 66-100% load: 3-year probationary period
2. Part-time load: 33%-66% load: 6-year probationary period
3. Part-time load: 1-33% load: 9-year probationary period

This proposal does not fully address faculty members who are predominantly employed in another industry, but who teach classes more sporadically. It is not the intention of this task force to eliminate that population of faculty, but it must be closely regulated in order to prevent colleges from treating their career educators as temporary hires.

Organizing Goals

The goals of this proposed United Faculty Model are extremely ambitious and require long-term investments by AFT Washington and its locals in member education, local collective bargaining and pressure on the state legislature.

These efforts are made more difficult by the challenges outlined in this report regarding worker solidarity. Contingent faculty remain one of the most challenging constituencies to organize and mobilize, due both to the nature of their work and the fear that advocacy may result in loss of future work.

To that end, AFT Washington's locals must prioritize:

- 1. Equal representation of faculty:** Local executive committees must provide spaces in which contingent faculty can contribute to union leadership. This should include:
 - a. Encouraging contingent faculty to run for executive committee positions and creating seats specifically for contingent faculty issues.
 - b. Targeted recruitment of contingent faculty on bargaining committees and joint labor-management groups.
 - c. Creating local caucuses and work groups for contingent faculty.
 - d. Representation on the AFT Washington Contingent Faculty Issues Committee.
 - e. Mobilizing around issues that specifically affect contingent faculty.
- 2. Frequent and consistent member drives:** Each AFT Washington local should conduct at least one member drive quarterly, with specific focus on reaching contingent faculty. Our locals must be aggressive in asserting their right to a timely quarterly list of faculty who are currently teaching, which can be matched against each college's course catalogue to find and meet with faculty when they are on campus.

Executive committees that do not currently have a membership coordinator should amend their bylaws to create such positions. The Edmonds College Federation of Teachers, Local #4254, has two such positions, a model that should be considered by other locals.

AFT Washington staff will continue to assist in those efforts.
- 3. Participation in legislative action:** AFT Washington's annual Lobby Day provides members with a valuable opportunity to meet with and discuss issues with state legislators in Olympia. There are also opportunities throughout the legislative session to testify in committee hearings, and to meet with individual legislators in their home districts. Locals should prioritize outreach to contingent faculty for these opportunities to ensure their voices are represented.

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Appendix A

Analysis of Adjunct Job Security and Promotional Opportunities in the CTCs

January 2025

Summary

Despite almost three decades of advocacy and activism, the state of adjunct¹ job security in Washington State is poor; the vast majority of adjuncts still lack meaningful job security, and no adjuncts enjoy “just cause”² provisions. Shoreline Community College and Cascadia College stand out in their attempts at establishing a path to job security through promotional opportunities, and their contract language is recommended for use by bargaining teams (see enclosed chart). However, it will take a multipronged approach of local bargaining and changes to state law to fix these issues across the state.

Background

The state legislature first directed the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to create and adopt “Best Practices” for employing part time faculty in 1996. Reports from taskforces which included union representatives have revised these practices periodically throughout those nearly three decades. One of them, updated in 2022, currently reads:

Best Practice 5: Job Security. Upon successfully completing a review period, regularly employed part-time faculty should achieve a form of job security.

[....]

Consideration: The majority of community and technical colleges (CTC) faculty are long-term temporary employees. In the name of providing the colleges the flexibility to address fluctuations in enrollment, there has evolved a state of contingency among CTC faculty, who serve for five, ten, twenty, and more years with no job security. State Board research shows that contingency is deleterious to student success.

Although some colleges have implemented the use of annual or multi-annual contracts whereby designated part-time faculty members are awarded multi-quarter contracts, these contracts have significant shortfalls.

The following is a survey of all AFT Washington and select Washington Education Association-represented colleges of their most current job security and promotional provisions as of July 2024. The concrete goals of this survey are to 1) update the analysis above and provide more detail about the status of job security for adjuncts by college; 2) provide thorough recommendations to bargaining teams, in part to augment Appendix E of the SBCTC report; and 3) show lawmakers that legislative action is necessary to achieve the unmet goals they set forth 28 years ago. The overall aim of this

¹ Adjunct faculty are called many things at different colleges, including “Part Time” and “Contingent” faculty. For expediency the term “adjunct” is used here.

² Just Cause is a legal norm afforded to most unionized workers across the country. It requires investigation and progressive discipline for workers once they pass a probationary period, and is meant to ensure disciplinary measures are fair.

analysis is to ensure that most adjuncts have meaningful job security as soon as possible, as per the recommendations of the SBCTC report.³

Methodology

AFT Washington surveyed all 19 Community and Technical Colleges represented by AFT Washington (as well as one private college) and two CTCs represented by WEA.⁴ The survey included a comparison of CBAs and interviews with union leaders about how CBA provisions are working in practice. It is common knowledge that no adjuncts inherently have job security beyond their current teaching quarter, unless achieved through promotional opportunities. Therefore, we examined these promotional opportunities for their job security provisions. We reviewed Collective Bargaining Agreements and interviewed union leaders about how their CBA language is working in practice.

For the purpose of this analysis, job security was examined using the following questions:

- Does the college offer opportunities for promotion within the adjunct job category?⁵
- Do adjunct faculty have a pay scale connected to promotions and/or commensurate with their experience and credentials?
- At colleges that provide promotional opportunities, how extensive are the requirements for achieving this status?
- Are there other material benefits to promotions, such as higher priority in course assignments, or eligibility for multi-quarter contracts?
- How many adjuncts attain promotional statuses? Or how well is the CBA language working in practice?
- Are there any just cause or similar provisions for promoted adjuncts beyond the current quarter in which they're teaching?

Results

No colleges fully met the above criteria, especially regarding the important aspect of "just cause." In this respect, adjunct faculty are unusually disadvantaged relative to other unionized workers.

However, two non-technical colleges stood out in this analysis: Shoreline Community College and Cascadia College. They answer all the questions above favorably.

Shoreline's Priority Associate faculty (Article 22) obtain their status after 3-4 years and it does involve pay increases. It is not evaluative (e.g., relatively automatic, requiring few or no extra steps) beyond the evaluation standards for all adjuncts, who regularly undergo observations and student evaluations. 50% FTE for this status is "guaranteed," meaning they can expect enough classes to maintain benefits. They

³ Additionally, we've seen too many older adjuncts experience a cruel forced retirement, where after working decades at a college they are deemed disposable and simply not given any classes. No chance at professional development to update their teaching practices, no retirement party. It is frequently ageist.

⁴ Adjunct representatives from Highline College and Bellevue College regularly attend AFT WA's Contingent Faculty Issues Committee as guests, and agreed to participate.

⁵ No college provides an official path for adjunct faculty to transition to full-time, tenure track positions, though it is easier to do this at some colleges (especially technical colleges), while very unlikely at others.

may also sign a multi-quarter contract. However, like all other adjuncts who have a “guaranteed” load in the CTCs, Priority Associate faculty can still be laid off. Also, there is a process at Shoreline for removal that resembles some of the principles of just cause. Importantly, about half of all working adjuncts attain this status.

Cascadia college’s CBA is similar in many respects, except their Priority Hire Associate Faculty status does require some evaluative elements beyond those required of all adjuncts. However, these evaluations are not onerous.

Technical colleges are somewhat of an outlier in this analysis. Clover Park Technical College, while it has very few part-time adjuncts, has excellent job security provisions and meets (and in some cases exceeds) minimum suggestions for adjunct pay equity.⁶ Their language is exemplary for this type of college. The other technical colleges I surveyed have few part-time adjunct faculty compared to community colleges. Therefore, if these colleges lack job security provisions for adjuncts, it is far less impactful to the workforce as a whole.

For colleges seeking additional sample bargaining language to improve adjunct job security, Seattle Colleges’ Priority Hire language is strong, and in practice is being applied to a large number of faculty, however it does not afford a pay increase. The contracts at Highline College and Whatcom Community College may also be useful as they meet some aspects of the designated criteria.

Key Issues & Solutions

To date, no adjuncts enjoy the job security concept of “Just Cause.” Very few adjuncts, likely less than 20% in colleges represented by AFT Washington, have any form of job security in 2024. By bargaining for just cause provisions (requiring investigations and progressive discipline for adjunct workers as a condition for withholding class assignments), unions could more effectively hold employers accountable to non-discrimination policies,⁷ support for academic freedom, and fair workplace practices.

Adjunct faculty deserve to have good-paying jobs with job security; this is an urgent matter that has been largely disregarded despite nearly three decades of the legislature-directed, non-binding “best practices.” It is time for our unions to prioritize not only that adjuncts achieve pay equity with full-time, tenure-track faculty, but also that they have meaningful job security with just cause provisions.

Moves to improve adjunct job security will require careful planning and commitment. We need to continue working for pay equity while simultaneously recognizing that when adjuncts don’t receive classes, pay equity becomes a moot point. Fortunately, the work of envisioning a way forward has already started. In addition to the examples outlined in this report, activists from the California Federation of Teachers have authored a report outlining a possible One-Tier solution to provide something akin to tenure for all qualified faculty. As was demonstrated in the UAW’s successful one-tier

⁶ Pay equity for adjunct faculty is defined by AFT Washington as 85% per credit hour compared to FT/TT faculty with comparable experience and credentials.

⁷ Colleges are usually not required to provide an explanation for not renewing an adjunct contract, so there’s no enforcement mechanism for preventing discrimination of adjunct faculty based on protected statuses.

movement, one attractive benefit of a one-tier effort is the potential for strengthening our union and increasing our unified power. As we set goals for local bargaining and statewide priorities, the One-Tier proposal provides a helpful starting point.

Further Reading

[AFT State Legislative Agenda for Higher Ed Contingent Staff](#). Of note is AFT New Mexico's efforts to extend job security provisions to adjuncts.

[SBCTC's Best Employment Practices for Part-Time Faculty](#). Also includes a recommended section of additional faculty perspectives.

[SBCTC Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreements](#)

[CFT Pushes Forward on a Vision of a One-Tier/United Faculty Model](#). Another potential solution to fixing job security and pay equity issues, the one-tier model puts everyone on the same salary scale, pro-rated for part-time, and affords everyone over 20% load tenure rights.

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Appendix B

Indicators for a Powerful Local Union: Contingent Faculty Issues

This addendum to the Powerful Locals assessment is intended to address issues specific to contingent faculty membership and should be used in conjunction with that toolkit. You can find the toolkit on our website, under Resources.

If you have questions, please work with your AFT Washington Union Organizing Representative.

Data

Size of bargaining unit: _____ employees Total membership: _____ members

Member density (Membership/bargaining unit): _____%

Full-time employees in bargaining unit: _____ Full-time members: _____

Contingent faculty in bargaining unit: _____ Contingent members: _____

Full-time membership as a percentage of total membership: _____%

Contingent faculty membership as a percentage of total membership: _____%

Full-time membership as a percentage of total member density: _____%

Contingent faculty membership as a percentage of total member density: _____%

Local Leadership

Our local:

Yes No

		a. Has at least one executive board member specifically dedicated to contingent faculty issues.
		b. Creates opportunities for contingent faculty to engage in broader union issues, such as work groups, social events, escalating action, etc.
		c. Sends a representative to the AFT Washington Contingent Faculty Issues Committee.

		d. Is proportionately represented by contingent faculty on our bargaining committee, joint labor-management committees and other forms of shared governance.
		e. Sends contingent faculty to AFT Washington events, including trainings, Lobby Day, Powerful Locals and convention.

Contract Review

Our contract:

Yes No

		a. Has a salary schedule for contingent faculty that is proportionate to full-time faculty; i.e., contingent faculty are paid 75% of the wages of full-time faculty. If applicable, write that percentage here: _____%
		b. Ensures contingent faculty are paid for additional work, such as office hours, department meetings and orientations. Note the duties for which contingent faculty are paid, and the rates of pay they receive. Notes:
		c. Provides access to professional development. Note how professional development opportunities are funded: Notes:
		d. Provides opportunities for contracts lasting one year or longer. Describe below. Notes:
		e. Provides pathways to tenure for part-time faculty, such as priority hire status into new tenure-track positions. Notes:
		f. Provides opportunities to participate in setting schedules in a manner similar to full-time faculty. Notes:
		g. Requires evaluations and classroom observations in a manner similar to full-time faculty. Notes:

		h. Prioritizes class assignments based on seniority. Notes:
		i. Requires just cause disciplinary standards for withholding class assignments, not just for mid-quarter termination. Requires written reasons for non-renewal. Notes:

For Further Reflection

Where does our local have opportunities for improvement in serving contingent faculty membership? Consider representation and participation of contingent faculty, the collective bargaining agreement, and other areas important to your membership: