

Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education

Volume 42 *After 50 Years: The Living Spirit of Vatican II*

Article 31

9-1-2012

Letters: Didn't Face the Issues

Richard T. McClelland

Follow this and additional works at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations>

Recommended Citation

McClelland, Richard T. (2012) "Letters: Didn't Face the Issues," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*: Vol. 42, Article 31.
Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol42/iss1/31>

Letters

Didn't Face the Issues

To the Editor:

I have read with interest the article by Lynne Elkes on adjunct faculty in the recent *Conversations* (Spring, 2012; Number 41). I was dismayed to find that virtually none of the most serious problems faced by adjunctive faculty are treated in this article. Most adjunctive faculty work under inhumane and unjust conditions. They are poorly paid for each course or section they teach, despite having the same responsibilities there as any regular faculty member would have. They often have access to no benefits. They have little or no job security. To make ends meet, they often take on towering loads of teaching, frequently in multiple institutional settings.

I taught as an adjunct for six years at Seattle University. There were over a dozen of us doing so in the philosophy department at that time, several of us with PhD's, long years of experience and good records of publication. We were adjuncts because we had no alternative. SU was relatively enlightened in its treatment of adjuncts: rates of pay, for example, increased the longer one worked there; and benefits were available on a pro-rated basis. Wherever possible, the department tried to make full teaching loads available to its most successful adjuncts, and so on.

The Jesuit university in which I am currently employed (happily as a tenured full professor) does none of this. I can tell you from personal experience and from long interactions with other peo-

ple similarly placed, that the stress on adjuncts (and their families, where they have families) can be virtually crippling. Moreover, for universities and colleges that profess a fundamental commitment to social justice, as the Jesuit institutions all do, it is simply scandalous that an entire academic under-class is allowed to work under the usual conditions affecting adjuncts.

Of course, the institutions stand to save very large sums of money by employing large numbers of adjuncts (virtually none of whom answer to the traditional notion of an adjunct, namely someone who has special expertise, and a day job, who teaches the odd course—often in the evenings or weekends—because they want to do so). I estimated that SU, when I worked there (1993-1999) saved approximately 25-30 million dollars per annum

by employing large numbers of adjuncts. Savings on that order are awfully hard for trustees and administrators to resist, comprising as they might the margin within which the institution makes it or fails, financially. It remains the case that most adjuncts are being regularly and reliably treated very, very badly.

That you would run an article on the problems of faculty development with respect to adjuncts, while leaving these other issues unstated and unexplored, seems to me deplorable and irresponsible. I hope that you will undertake some remedy of this in a future issue of *Conversations*. ■

Sincerely yours,
Richard T. McClelland,

Richard T. McClelland, professor of philosophy, Gonzaga University.



Gonzaga University.