Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession
Annual Report, 2013–14

Background and Charge
The committee was established in February 2009 and charged as follows:

The Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession is charged with considering a range of issues that affect teachers of modern languages and literatures in institutions of higher education who hold non-tenure-track appointments (e.g., salary and benefits, workplace issues and conditions of employment, demographics, participation in departmental and institutional governance, academic freedom, professional development). The committee should collect information useful to individuals and departments and identify effective policies and practices. The committee should organize convention sessions and should consider proposing association publications and other projects that will address the concerns of non-tenure-track faculty members and the departments that employ them. The committee will report annually to the Executive Council.

The following were members of the committee for 2013–14:

Karen Lentz Madison (chair), Department of English, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville
Don Bialostosky, Department of English, University of Pittsburgh
Dorothea Heitsch (ex-officio), Department of Romance Languages, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Paula Krebs (ex-officio), Dean of Arts and Sciences, Bridgewater State College
Elena Lanza, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Northwestern University
Glenn Levine, German Language Program Director, University of California, Irvine
Maria Shine Stewart, Department of English, John Carroll University
Heidi Tiedemann Darroch, Department of English, University of Victoria
Nicole B. Wallack, writing program director, Columbia University

Meetings and Activities
The committee met at the MLA office on 19–20 September 2013 and by conference call on 26 November 2013, 3 February 2014, and 29 April 2014.

Throughout the year the committee remained interested in various documents and initiatives organized by other branches of the MLA and by other organizations. David Laurence kept the committee informed about the updating of the fall 2010 survey of contingent faculty members conducted by the Coalition on the Academic Workforce and its report, A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members. Present members continued to expand on the work of previous committee members by working toward the drafting of an addendum to Professional Employment Practices for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members: Recommendations and Evaluative Questions that would address online teaching.

Rosemary Feal reported that the Executive Council renewed the committee’s charge for a second five-year term and had noted the committee’s enthusiasm and dignity during this year’s challenging public relations situation regarding MLA and its activities. She met and worked with several scholar-activists this year, including Adrianna Kezar and Maria Maisto, to strategize means to improve the working situations of contingent faculty members. Feal also reported that Professional Employment Practices for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members (PEP) is being used in many areas to create a dialogue for positive change.
Current committee members Dorothea Heitsch, Maria Shine Stewart, Glenn Levine, and Karen Lentz Madison, along with past committee members curated a special issue of the ADE and ADFL bulletins, *Issues and Directions: Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members in English and the Other Modern Languages*. The committee’s work on the project was largely completed in 2012–13, and the issue was published in January 2014.

A great deal of effort went into plans for the 2014 MLA convention, at which the committee hosted three events. The initial event was a breakfast meeting for non-tenure-track faculty members in the Chicago area. We invited non-tenure-track advocates to speak on strategies and techniques to help contingent faculty members improve their working lives. David Laurence contacted department chairs at local colleges and universities; they recommended 100 nominees to invite, and 30 invitations were accepted. Speakers Maria Maisto, Beverly Stewart, and John Casey focused on ways that attendees could advocate for themselves and others. Many of the participants took several copies of the PEP brochure.

Karen Madison and David Laurence encouraged MLA membership, as did other committee members.

Our second event was a roundtable organized and chaired by Nicole Wallack, “Write on Your Own Time: Scholarship and Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members.” Even though the panel was scheduled during the same time as our breakfast, twenty-seven attendees came to this session, including several chairs of departments who expressed tenure-track anxiety due to the erosion of governance structures. The panel opened up the opportunity for the committee to pursue the idea of working conditions as aspects of contingent faculty identity.

The third session we hosted was “Off the Tenure Track, on Our Radar,” which was organized by Don Bialostosky and chaired by Elena Lanza. Two panelists spoke on the need for inclusive faculty governance, which provoked a lively discussion and a debate about the use of the term *adjunct* by two members of the nine-person audience.

Karen Madison and Heidi Tiedemann Darroch attended sessions at the first MLA Subconference, held on the campus of Columbia College near the MLA’s conference location. Madison presented a paper on using “Junct Lit” to teach equity awareness in composition classes.

In spring 2014, committee members also made plans for the 2015 convention in Vancouver. The committee will sponsor two panels and host the committee breakfast. The following panels were organized by their chairs.

**The First Year of College and Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members: Paradoxes, Problems, Possibilities**
Chair: Elena Lanza

“You Are Only Temporary: Precarity and the First-Year Experience,” Lee Skallerup Bessette, Univ. of Kentucky

“First-Year Writing, Contingent Faculty Members, and the Problem of Student Retention,” John A. Casey, Univ. of Illinois, Chicago

“A Delicate Balance: Teaching, Research, NTT Faculty Members, and First-Year Students,” Heather L. Colburn, Northwestern Univ.

“Who Am I This Time?” A Meditation on Adjunct Life, Veronica Popp, Coll. of DuPage, IL

**Contingent Academic Labor and Unionization**
Chair: Heidi Tiedemann Darroch

“Faculty Mentoring and Collegiality,” Christine M. Probes, Univ. of South Florida


“Making Solidarity Real,” Erin Wunker, Dalhousie Univ.
Committee Members’ Related Activities

Maria Shine Stewart continued her successful “A Kinder Campus” column, and she completed her second master’s in community counseling this past year while teaching at three schools, Cuyahoga Community College, John Carroll University, and Notre Dame College. Stewart was appointed as an adjunct faculty representative to the English department at John Carroll University for fall 2014. She rotated her attendance with another adjunct faculty member who served in spring 2014, attending monthly full-time faculty meetings. She hopes to continue to serve as a conduit for information between adjuncts and other faculty members and to promote communication between them.

Heidi Tiedemann Darroch is a member of the recently constituted Task Force on Academic Employment of the Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English. Last spring, the group developed a best-practices checklist for the employment of contract academic faculty members: http://accute.ca/2014/03/03/contract-academic-faculty-in-canadian-departments-of-english-a-best-practices-checklist/. It has been circulated to all English departments in Canada.

Elena Lanza is serving as the cochair of the Lecturer Development Committee (LDC), a subcommittee under the umbrella of the Council on Language Instruction, at Northwestern. The LDC drafted a comprehensive and holistic document called Best Practices: Evaluating Teaching Performance of Foreign Language Continuing Lecturer Faculty in WCAS. The recommendations on this document were modeled after our PEP document, and its main purpose is to avoid using student evaluations as the only point of reference for NTT faculty evaluation when it comes to contract renewal, promotion, salary raises, and so forth.

Dorothea Heitsch announced that the University of North Carolina ushered in a completely new administration last year and that she hoped to make the new administrators aware of contingency issues. Dorothea met with the Fixed-Term Faculty Association last spring and stressed the need for health insurance for all instructors as well as for a system-wide listserv for fixed-term faculty members. She also completed her service on the Executive Council and as an ex officio member of the committee.

Paula Krebs began her appointment as the Executive Council’s ex officio representative on the committee. She serves as Dean of Arts and Sciences at Bridgewater State College and works with a diversity and social-justice committee there that is examining contingency as a social-justice issue. Krebs is also a former member of the ADE Executive Committee.

Nicole Wallack has been nominated to stand for election to the MLA Executive Council. She sat on the executive committee of the New York Metro affiliate of the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) this year. She also developed and led a workshop for the group’s annual conference last February that mirrored our breakfast session at the MLA convention in Boston. From the 70–80 conference attendees, 15–20 people attended the workshops. Wallack hopes to target facets of the WPA in the future in regard to contingency concerns. On the Columbia campus, she sees a potential for improvement of part-time faculty members’ situations if the Non-Tenured Caucus will consider the roles of part-time faculty members. She plans to get this issue on the agenda the next time the caucus meets. She has also been appointed to a campus-wide renewal procedures committee as a non-tenure-track faculty member in the humanities. Every category of the non-tenure-track faculty was included in the list to be evaluated, with part-time adjuncts’ procedures to be in place by September 2014.
Don Bialostosky is responsible for the full-scale evaluation of all full-time faculty members (90) in his department at the University of Pittsburgh. He has appointed a departmental committee to recommend processes whereby full- and part-time non-tenure-track faculty members are evaluated on a regular basis. He is also serving as a member of an ad hoc Faculty Senate committee on contingent faculty issues and has observed that the various discipline-specific definitions of and employment configurations for contingent faculty members adds to the confusion of what it means to be an adjunct or contingent faculty member.

Glenn Levine is the acting director of Academic English/ESL at the University of California, Irvine, where cuts to the language program have occurred four years in a row, resulting in a devastating loss of many long-term lecturers and damage to the program. Last fall, new deans concerned with contingency issues in the teaching of languages and composition supported Levine’s hiring of fourteen new lecturers (thirty-eight total) to support the increase in students from the previous spring.

Karen Lentz Madison served as a mentor for the non-tenure-track faculty members in her department at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. She developed a standing contingent faculty forum for the College English Association (CEA); the inaugural session at the spring conference was successful. She received the CEA’s 2014 Joe D. Thomas Distinguished Service Award for her long-standing contingent faculty advocacy. She was elected last spring to the Board of Directors of the New Faculty Majority (NFM) Foundation and is serving as NFM communications chair and executive secretary.

**Continuing and New Initiatives**

Continuing and new initiatives for the coming year will be discussed at the committee’s next meeting, which is scheduled for 15–16 September 2014. A number of possibilities have been advanced, including:

- collecting samples of good-practices documents (on hiring, developing, evaluating, promoting NTT faculty members)
- creating awards for NTT faculty members or the departments and institutions that employ them or both
- working with Maria Maisto, who serves on the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities, to encourage the committees to collaborate on PTF issues
- finding ways to advocate more aggressively for NTT faculty members, perhaps through alignments with groups like the MLA Subconference
- helping MLA representatives to be more involved in influencing administrators
- recording our presentations on the PEP document to create a digital archive
- examining what can be done for term or sessional faculty members who lose access to library privileges during summer sessions
- engaging in collaborative projects to encourage regular communication among NTTs (regionally or nationally)
- creating an annual research panel based on a project that the committee will steer, with adjuncts applying to work on the project

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Lentz Madison, 2013–14 Chair