

Notes from Interest Group Discussions

COCAL XI

New York, 2014

Legal Issues Report

Following a vigorous, informed and difficult debate, the group chose to focus on the general topic of JOB SECURITY.

Within that broad topic, we focused more narrowly on the goal of STABILIZATION AND PROFESSIONALIZATION OF CONTINGENT WORK THROUGH EQUAL ACCESS TO RIGHTS AND BENEFITS. A few of the examples mentioned by the group were: just cause protections (especially as concerns termination/non-reappointment; load reduction; retaliation); unemployment insurance; and pro-rata fractionalization appointments. We concluded that to make this goal meaningful to our colleagues across the continent, we would leave it up to individual organizations to determine which specific topics within this broader framework to pursue. We also agreed upon the following criteria to be met by any topic to be pursued by an organization:

1. It must have political appeal across a variety of political landscapes
2. It must address a need felt by many
3. It must be winnable via legislative action and/or litigation
4. It must lend itself to actions on the regional, state, provincial, and/or federal levels
5. It will unite unionized and non-unionized people
6. It will interest the broader public(s)
7. It will promote the organizing of unorganized workers
8. It demonstrably benefits students

The group identified a number of strategies and tactics which we propose incorporating into an Action

Plan to achieve the goal.

Strategies

- Employ a broad, multi-faceted media campaign
- Follow the lead of states, provinces, or countries which have been successful in similar campaigns
- Engage in an active defense of those rights already "on the books" (laws, cbas, etc.)
- Emphasize stabilization and professionalization in rhetoric and propaganda
- Stress returning education to the "public trust" where it belongs
- Overcome the passivity and fear of our own members and leaders, as well as of those in the public and political arena who are otherwise inclined to support us
- Build coalitions, and find common ground, with groups of non-education workers (including those on our own campuses)

Tactics

- Lobby through academic unions and professional organizations and associations
- Anticipate and respond to opposition to this campaign (including oppositional legislation, bills, and campaigns)
- Seek and create supportive legislation
- Bring test cases into the courts throughout North America
- Bring test cases into the applicable regulatory agencies throughout North America, and compel them to do their enforcement jobs
- Create an information clearinghouse (including the various laws, rules and regulations applicable to contingent labor in higher education, along with a lay-person-accessible interpretation of those laws, rules and regulations)
- Create a national/international faculty defense organization to support those denied basic rights of due process and just cause (etc.)
- Communicate with and educate workers in higher education (including especially our own members), students and the public as to the terms and conditions of our work as well as to the need for-and possibility of obtaining-improvements

The Legal Issues working group recommends this package of proposals for the endorsement of the assembly of CDCA

Bargaining for Equity Report

Bargaining for equity will be strengthened by these strategies: (1) Democratization of the bargaining process (2) Proportional representation in the university governance and union structure (3) Work stoppage, strikes, and creative strategies (4) Membership mobilization efforts that employ multiple & direct contact (5) Vigilance against contract language that leads to undesirable consequences such as a threshold for obtaining regularization rights or late course cancellation fees in the absence of seniority rights.

Bargaining for equity will embrace the following topics: Parity in pay and benefits, job security, and seniority rights. Pay parity is better attainable through fixed dollar increase in addition to across the board raises as is advocated in the current U.S. campaign for a MINIMUM of \$5,000 per 3-credit course (or its equivalent).

Building National Agendas Report

Building on the ideals embodied in the political statements of past COCALs, we commit to a trans-national agenda whose goal is to shape an equitable and democratic future for higher education by continuing to build networks, coalitions and alliances across discipline, campus, international border, and industry sector, in order to [animate] democratization of [how about just "democratize"] the workplace, the classroom, and the broader community. To achieve this objective, COCAL will develop a "democracy index" using the following criteria which include but are not limited to:

- shared governance and efforts to achieve political democracy;
- pay equity and progress toward affordable or free higher education;

- commitment to the common good, understood as cultural and social democracy that values the critical role of intellectual inquiry and the essential value of work.

By September 15, 2014, COCAL will have formed a tracking committee to oversee this project, and will encourage local entities to collect data by which institutions (including unions) can be evaluated. This index can be used for actions such as publicizing the indexed data, taking action against undemocratic practices, and documenting violence against, and defending, academic workers.

Media Group Report

Retire the image of "poor adjunct" and rebrand as Pillars of the University in order to confront the corporate narrative of Wall St. and refute the myth that "all we do is teach."

Key issues: Identity, Professionalism, Knowing our Audience, Working together so as to find commonality

Short Term/Medium/Long Term Goals: presenting information to press and social media in a new way, with creativity, adapting according to audience (within the profession or from outside).

Get and keep the interest of those outside academia by distributing info to media with short two sentence pitches that capture interest (NOT press releases) and by taking advantage of visual arts and social media.

Shift focus so that our perspective is heard, recognized and understood by the media. Use social media: commenting and sharing quality adjunct media. Define and clarify misrepresentation about adjuncts/contingent faculty. Do not surrender our professional and civic accomplishments. Publicize ourselves as professionals, recognize accomplishments of contingent faculty.

Examples: Ask COCAL members to post photos on FB page wearing COCAL swag (shirts/hats/bags), Face Time NOT Facebook, Teaching Is.... (fill in the blank with personal narratives)

Focus on value we provide. We don't work for the college. We are the college. Focus on student needs and collaboration with students because the student/teacher relationship defines education.

Examples: titles that present our issues to attract greater interest from media: "Call Centers" ... the Future of Higher Education?" "Day of the Working Dead" "Where Our Student Tuition Dollars Go" "Follow the Money" "Hiding the Money" "You Might be an Adjunct if..." "Are Students Getting the Education They Deserve?" "Who are the Necessariets" "Instability and Frugality Do Not Inspire Innovation!" "Faculty Musical Chairs: Will Student Tuition Leave Them Sitting on the Floor?" "Higher Ed Labor Practices Weaken our Future Workforce"

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