**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

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**October 6, 2016**

Honorable Chair, Jasey, Honorable Vice-Chair Giblin, and Honorable Committee Members Barclay, Clifton, Gove, Holley, Mosquera, Rible, and Schaer:

Good morning. My name is Susanna Tardi and I am testifying before you as the AFT New Jersey Executive Vice President for Higher Education representing 30,000 members including faculty, librarians, staff, health professionals and allied employees. I want to express sincere thanks for inviting us to share with you our comments regarding adjunct faculty in higher education today, and to provide some recommendations for your consideration.

Adjuncts are part-time faculty who are usually hired on a temporary semester-by-semester basis. They play a significant role in higher education, representing up to 74% of faculty at New Jersey 4 year public colleges and universities and up to 90% of faculty at New Jersey community colleges. Since they teach the majority of entry level general education courses, their influence on incoming freshman students is even greater. This wasn’t always the case. In 1970, over 75% of faculty at New Jersey 4 year colleges and universities were full-time. Part-time teaching generally was limited to graduate student assistants, or professionals (e.g. senior CPA’s teaching accounting, senior Business Executives teaching business courses) teaching evening or summer courses.

What caused the full-time/part-time faculty percentages to flip? First, in 1970, there was a conscious decision by New Jersey 4 year public colleges to reduce the number of tenured full time faculty and give college administrators greater flexibility in managing a faculty workforce to respond to changing enrollment and course interests. To achieve this, the colleges tightened tenure standards, requiring a terminal degree and publications, and lobbied the New Jersey State Legislature to increase the tenure period from 3 to 5 years in 1970, and from 5 to 6 years in 2014. Second, there was a conscious decision to outsource teaching to part-time, adjunct faculty, to partially offset reductions in State aid (adjuncts are more “cost effective” than full-time faculty), and further improve workforce flexibility by increasingly relying on a part-time temporary teaching workforce, whose members could be hired and fired quickly without any long term obligation. Increasingly, hiring adjunct faculty in four-year colleges/universities has become more a matter of economics (salary cost savings) than academic enhancement. Adjunct faculty are seasoned professionals who can and do enhance higher education, but they should not become replacements for full-time, tenure track faculty lines. Today, almost 17,000 part-time faculty are employed across the State in public higher education. Because of their numbers, they have been referred to by some as “The New Faculty Majority.”

Given the important role of adjunct faculty in our higher education system, it is crucial to identify who they are and what’s important to them to guide policy development. Most of the major studies done on adjuncts and adjunct issues are nationwide in scope and are over 10 years old. I thought it was high time to give New Jersey adjuncts the attention they deserve and undertook a comprehensive survey of New Jersey adjunct faculty.

From January 13, 2014 to February 1, 2015, on behalf of AFTNJ, I conducted an survey of adjunct faculty teaching in public colleges and universities, and community colleges in NJ. Over eleven hundred and eight (1108) adjunct faculty participated in the study; 26% (292) teaching at community colleges, 61% (679) teaching at four-year colleges/universities, and 12% (137) teaching in both community colleges and four-year colleges and universities. Approximately one-third of the respondents relied on adjunct teaching as their only employment source; approximately one-third were adjunct faculty but had a full-time job as well; and about 20% were retired.

The study showed that the majority of the respondents hold a Master’s Degree and 15-20% hold a doctorate degree. This means that 15-20% have an opportunity to be eligible for full-time positions in four year colleges and universities. Many are successful, seasoned teaching professionals who are rehired again and again. More than 50% have taught 10 or more years; 90% have taught 4 or more years.

Higher pay was the highest priority issue for adjuncts at all colleges/universities – it was the number one priority for about 55% of the respondents. In terms of salary, adjunct faculty contracts fail to consider class preparation time, time spent grading exams and correcting papers, and assisting students outside of the classroom (i.e. mentoring, office hours and email responses). The second highest priority issue, coming in at about 20%, was teaching credit hours which amounts to a desire to teach as well as to earn more. The third highest priority issue, following closely behind at about 15%, was the desire for reappointment seniority. Since adjunct faculty are only hired semester by semester and considered “at will” (generally at the will of the department chairperson), or “contingency faculty”, the desire for some reappointment seniority has existed for many years. Adjunct employment is, unfortunately, an unreliable, undependable, risky proposition.

While respect by colleagues did not seem to be a priority issue for New Jersey adjunct faculty, this has been a wide spread problem reported in the Chronicle of Higher Education as well as in the media. Adjunct faculty are generally excluded from curriculum development, or learning outcomes; are all too often not represented on faculty or university Senates; not permitted or even invited to attend department meetings, and sometimes don’t have office space, clerical support, or working printers or copiers. When teaching evening courses, adjunct faculty are literally on their own; full time technical or office support is unavailable.

While adjunct faculty don’t have the same responsibilities as full time faculty-- they are not required to do research and publish or engage in service work such as committee work, there are situations when they do exactly the same work as full-time faculty (e.g. teaching winter or summer classes). In these situations, we firmly support the principle of equal pay for equal work and have repeatedly advocated during contract negotiations with the State of New Jersey for fair and equitable adjunct faculty pay. Unfortunately, the State of New Jersey doesn’t see it that way, and our advocacy and arguments have been met with stares and silence across the negotiating table. Today, adjunct faculty in the Council of New Jersey State College Locals are paid $100 less per credit than full-time faculty for winter or summer courses.

I’d like to close my testimony with a few comments on what is a frequent debate about adjunct versus full-time faculty. There have been many studies on the impact of adjunct faculty on student success and the results are all over the map. After more than 30 years of teaching experience, I have concluded that good teachers produce good student outcomes. Full-time faculty ensure course and curriculum consistency, continuity, and quality. When tenure reform was studied in 1970, New Jersey colleges committed to the State of New Jersey and the Division of Higher Education to maintain a goal of 60% full-time faculty, because in their words, the integrity and quality of academic programs deteriorate below this level. Applying a “one size fits all” model to almost any issue in higher education is likely to prove to be an unsuccessful approach. The mission and the student population of each individual college or university needs to be taken into consideration. We need to be smarter about how we can best utilize the abilities and expertise of adjunct faculty, and appropriately reward them for their contributions. Going forward, higher education policy needs to address and balance the roles and expertise of both full-time and adjunct faculty groups to achieve our common goal – student success.

I respectfully submit the following specific recommendations to the Committee for follow up and consideration:

* Every College and University should negotiate a Professional Adjunct Faculty Recognition Policy
  + Equal Pay for equal work
  + Recognition of continuous service
    - Promotion to Senior Adjunct status with a pay increment
    - Multi-semester/year contract options
    - Priority options on adjunct faculty course assignments
* If office hours are required for adjuncts, provide appropriate monetary compensation for the additional workload and time to serve students.
* Professionalize the terms of adjunct employment
  + Provide professional development opportunities
  + Increase the employment cancellation window
  + Elevate adjunct faculty hiring to a Department Committee with objective criteria
  + Adopt a strict Adjunct Non-Coercion Policy applicable to students, faculty, and staff (Adjunct faculty should not be intimidated because of their contingency status.)

Note: There are federal implications to adjunct faculty unemployment, but it is unacceptable that adjunct faculty pay into unemployment while most are ineligible to collect. We should work to eliminate this inequity.

Assemblywoman Jasey, I thank you and the other Assembly Higher Education Committee members for the opportunity to share my thoughts on the status of adjunct faculty, and I look forward to working with you in the future.

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