

The Value of Mutual Respect: What We Learn from Student Complaints

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The student and I have to share a mutual trust and value.

—Kevin Davis

(Bishop and Davies 55)

When I served as assistant director and then acting director of my university's first-year writing program, I heard a wide variety of student complaints. Some complaints were amusing: for example, one student found it inappropriate that her teacher did not give her an A for the extra credit work she did. Unfortunately, other complaints addressed much more difficult issues. Perhaps the most troubling kind of complaint was registered by a delegation from a class rather than a single individual: two or three or four or more well-groomed, responsible-looking students who wanted to "talk to someone about our teacher."

That did not happen often, but it did happen, and two instances were sufficiently memorable that I still reflect on them and wonder what could have been done to prevent them. In the first instance, the students were distressed by problems in the classroom. They reported that assignments were not returned, grading policies were unclear, grades on Blackboard were not kept up to date, and the teacher did not respond to phone calls and e-mails. When she met with me, the teacher resisted the idea that anything was amiss; for example, she explained that she had not commented on some student papers because they were turned in late. She also told me that she had heard one student talking in a threatening manner outside her office at 9 p.m., when the building is mostly empty. Worried about her personal safety, she waited an hour before heading home. But she did not communicate her fears to campus security or the Writing Program.

The second instance was similar to the first in that it involved multiple complaints, confusion about grading and assignments, and disorganization in the schedule. Students were concerned—distressed, even—that the confusion might keep them from successfully completing the semester. Yet, invariably, these students' complaints concluded with some version of "He's a nice enough guy, but he just doesn't seem to care." Rather than feeling alarmed and defensive, as the first teacher had been, this teacher was disengaged and unresponsive. In fact, it proved difficult to arrange a meeting with him to discuss what was happening in class.

Now I am struck by the similarities in the two incidents: in both, breakdowns in communication between students and their instructor resulted in a situation where teaching and learning could not continue. After the first teacher had left my office, I called the university's student conduct officer, who commented that often classrooms with multiple problems develop an atmosphere of mutual disrespect between students and teacher which eventually poisons all

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their work. His insight helped me understand what was taking place in both classrooms.

This essay represents my effort to untangle—and learn from—these admittedly complex events and to critique my performance and the Writing Program’s in the hope of improving the situation for others. Here I’d like to outline some of what I’ve come up with: that teaching involves emotional labor as well as knowledge and creative work; that the emotional labor of teaching may have been either neglected or under-rated in these situations; and, most importantly, that asking adjunct and contingent faculty to engage in this emotional labor is both necessary and at the same time highly problematic, given the conditions of their employment. The emotional labor of teaching writing can be challenging for tenured professors; for those who are overworked and underpaid by our universities, it is almost too much to hope for. And yet it is a vital part of teaching. My university employs many adjuncts to teach composition and other English department courses; at the very least, the Writing Program might help them deal with the emotions and emotional labor that are an essential aspect of teaching. Dale Jacobs posits the argument that “by revising the discourse surrounding teaching so that emotion talk becomes acceptable, we perhaps use the expression of emotion as a starting point for critique and social change” (46), linking the ways we talk about the role of emotion in teaching to the possibility of better working conditions for our instructors. At the end of my essay, I consider ways this has become true in our case.

What is Emotional Labor?

Arlie Hochschild, author of *The Managed Heart*, created the term “emotional labor”:

This labor requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others. . . . This kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality. (7)

Emotional labor is always done for pay; emotional work is a synonym. In “Emotional Labor since *The Managed Heart*,” Ronnie Steinberg and Deborah Figart offer an updated description:

Emotional labor emphasizes the relational rather than the task-based aspect of work found primarily but not exclusively in the service economy. It is labor-intensive work; it is skilled, effort-intensive, and productive labor. It creates value, affects productivity, and generates profit. It is why frontline service workers and paraprofessionals have been referred to . . . as the “emotional proletariat.” (9)

In other words, contingent faculty—often highly skilled employees who teach service courses and make money for the university—belong to the emotional proletariat. Hochschild’s original study was of flight attendants, but her work is relevant to teaching, and in fact it is generally agreed, by Hochschild and those who have followed her, that postsecondary teaching involves “substantial amounts

of emotional labor” (Bellas 97). As teachers, we must produce the proper state of mind in others so that learning can take place; we have to coordinate our thinking and feeling to manage a classroom successfully; and this work involves our deepest sense of our own integrity. Marcia Bellas writes, “Postsecondary teaching involves far more than simply imparting knowledge. Professors help students mature intellectually and emotionally; they motivate and stimulate student interest. In short, professors nurture young minds” (98). Teaching, then, can be considered to be emotional labor.

Emotional labor works through the management of feelings and is accomplished in one of two ways. The first is surface acting, which involves bodily movements, facial expressions, and well-rehearsed scripts; the flight attendant’s “Enjoy your flight,” accompanied by a smile that extends to the lips but not the eyes demonstrates surface acting (Hochschild 35). The second, deep acting, asks that the practitioner actually experience the feelings he or she projects, either through method acting or through a self-induced emotional experience (35, 38–39). Emotional labor involves following conventions related to feeling or what Hochschild called “feeling rules” (56); these conventions are an accepted part of everyday life—i.e., crying at a funeral—and also of work. They are certainly a part of teaching: we may chide a student who comes to class unprepared, even though we are not especially angry. Or we may choose not to immediately address a student who angered us during class, worrying we’ll be too harsh.

Bellas points out that not only should professors refrain from experiencing negative emotions, but they are also expected to keep their students from negative feelings as well (100). Steinberg and Figart agree: “Emotional labor also requires a worker to produce an emotional state in another person while at the same time managing one’s own emotions” (13), just as Delta flight attendants in Hochschild’s original study were responsible for helping passengers enjoy every flight. Certainly, at least from an institutional perspective, this is true for teachers: the university expects us to be enthusiastic about the subjects we teach and to share our excitement with our students. And we ourselves know we must often help our students feel sufficiently confident to undertake the work required in our classes.

The confidence that writing teachers help their students learn is not the same thing as simply feeling good about the experience of writing, as flight attendants want airline passengers to do while they are in the air. A positive outlook will encourage students to undertake difficult or challenging assignments, to know that they are ready to master increasingly complex material. In fact, a teacher skilled in emotion work may give assignments that make students distinctly uncomfortable or that jar their complacency. But students must also know that the teacher has given such an assignment because she respects their abilities. Any real challenge may feel unsettling or disturbing, but students are very clear on the difference between a challenge for which they are supported and prepared by the teacher and one that is impossible. This preparation and support are part of the atmosphere of mutual respect that our student conduct officer posits as the most essential component of classes that work.

Emotional Labor and Student Engagement

One of the most difficult things about emotional labor in teaching composition is that the teacher’s own emotional involvement is essential. Jacobs writes:

“to allow students' emotions to enter into the classroom, we as teachers have to also allow our own emotions to become part of the mix” (42). In order for students to be engaged, teachers must be vulnerable, invested. Teaching and learning, at heart, are a relationship within which “daily emotion work is crucial to accomplishing the goals of literacy widely espoused in higher education” (Holt, Anderson, and Rouzie 151). In their 2002 article, “What's Love Got to Do with It?” Wendy Bishop and Kevin Davis explore the opposite situation to a classroom meltdown: What happens when a class works? What characterizes a successful class, and how can we replicate that? Perhaps the first step in trouble-shooting classrooms that develop a poisonous atmosphere is to unpack classrooms where the atmosphere is salubrious and share some of that good air.

Bishop and Davis posit three markers for such classrooms and such teaching: process, collaboration, and authenticity. Bishop argues that rather than loving individual students, she loves an entire class: “There's something that happens when a class works. . . . When that happens, a class is a magical thing. . . . And I know that the difference happens only on an emotional level. If I don't connect, if I don't love 'em, if they don't love me back, it's just a class” (47). That sentiment is hardly unique; Susan Kirtley reports, “despite my attempts to remain a brain alone, my heart has betrayed me and I have fallen in love again, this time with a student—a whole class of them in fact” (57). In loving a whole class, Bishop is most interested in whether the entire class (teacher included) has learned during the course of the semester; she compares this attitude to the fact that she's more interested in a whole student portfolio than a single paper because the processes of learning and writing are more evident within the portfolio, implying a connection between learning and loving (48). “Is process love different from product love?” she asks (48).

Kirtley makes a connection between love and the process of writing that is similar to Bishop's: “I teach my students that the joy of writing is not only in the product, but in the process as well, in the act of crafting language” (65). So the processes of learning through writing and learning to respect each other as students and teachers are thoroughly intertwined. Bishop further explains how such emotional work can be done: “Teachers have to accept themselves flexibly—in the moment—but be ready to learn from each moment. . . . You don't love yourself arriving, you love yourself on the way, continuing. Because of that flexibility, you're able to help students dream because your images of them aren't set either” (51). She points out that this flexibility requires that teachers continually reinvent themselves (52) and pay attention to what they learn from students.

Collaboration, Bishop and Davis's second suggestion, involves working closely with students. Referring to a John Berger essay and the concept of “copying distance,” she argues that classes may fail because a teacher doesn't get close enough: “She stays at a copying distance (doing only or mainly what was done to her and/or thinking of the students as something quite ‘other’)” (51). Rather than engage in creative collaboration with students and with the material, the teacher relies on set standard patterns of behavior in teaching. But the temptation to stay within copying rather than collaborating distance would be especially strong if an individual taught more than sixty writing students in any given semester—the maximum number advised by the CCC “Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing”—and most of our

adjuncts, including those about whom complaints were registered, have many more students than that.

Bishop and Davis's final suggestion is to "value authenticity over authority" (54). Taking a Freirean position, Davis states, "An authoritarian gets from students only what he demands; authenticity, on the other hand, begets authenticity, and students will give what they have to give to a teacher who both gives and receives with grace" (54). Inauthenticity is one of the "emotional dissonances" Hochschild noted as a damaging consequence of doing emotional labor when the disjuncture between the role and the self is too great (ctd. in Wharton 163). Here the need for deep rather than surface acting becomes apparent: teachers must become—or rather, are always in the act of becoming—teacher selves that work in authentic rather than inauthentic ways.

And that act of becoming always includes the possibility of failure, for none of us is an automaton, reliably positive and energetic, competent and compassionate, prepared and engaged. Even tenure, helpful as it is, does not protect us from exhaustion, self-doubt, anger, or depression. To be always positive whether we feel that way or not would be inauthentic: humans aren't like that—nor are human emotions or emotional labor, which can and perhaps should take advantage of our imperfections. In order to be authentic and to collaborate with students, we ought perhaps to acknowledge that we may be able to learn from times when we were exhausted and doubtful, disengaged and afraid.

We may also be able to do more emotional work with and in such times. In an essay exploring what he learned in disavowing the quest for perfection in student writing—and in teaching—Keith Duffy argues for "the essential role of imperfection in the writing classroom—not as a brokenness to be fixed or a problem to be solved, but as the source of humanity and community, indeed something to be honored" (2). At times when we are less than perfect as emotional laborers and experience the teaching flaws and failures that represent our most authentic selves, we gain opportunities to share and learn. We can talk about them with others, including most importantly our students. Such times also make it possible for us to teach in more honest ways and, if such experiences are shared with other teachers, to create stronger professional communities.

Nevertheless, it is worth asking whether the emotional labor rules ought to be the same for tenure-line and contingent faculty, who perform the same sorts of labor as tenure-line faculty but within vastly different contexts. Steinberg and Figart ask, "Which types of jobs should receive compensation for the emotional labor they perform?" (23). And in "The Psychosocial Consequences of Emotional Labor," Amy Wharton notes, "The consequences of emotional labor may be highly contingent upon other characteristics of the job, the organization, and the worker" (161). An adjunct and a tenured professor may engage in the same sorts of emotional labor to the same extent but nevertheless receive different rewards or penalties for doing so; the role of the adjunct within the institution determines the outcome.

As teachers, however, we perform emotional work based upon our skills as emotional laborers and our understandings of what the culture of our institutions and our discipline will accept—regardless of our professional status. If we do not, as Bellas comments, we may "be subject to poor evaluations, informal or formal sanctions, and in extreme cases, termination from employment" (97). Certainly these consequences must have been in the minds of the teachers involved in the complaints we heard: is it any wonder that neither was eager to talk with us?

Student Complaints: Where Emotional Labor and Working Conditions Meet

I cannot help returning to the fact that neither teacher in the incidents with which this essay began was able to discuss the emotional aspects of their situations—their alarm, their disengagement—much less participate in a dialogue about the necessary emotional labor involved in teaching. And I can understand their position. I may be a tenured associate professor and an administrator now, but for the first half of my working life, I was a part-time flexible clerk in the U.S. Postal Service: a job with irregular hours, no guarantees, and extensive emotional labor related to customer service—and a paycheck my family depended upon. From a postal clerk's perspective, the only imaginable format within which to discuss emotion and work with a supervisor would be one in which I was “in trouble,” which would probably mean fewer hours or possibly even termination. The only relevant question would be, “Will I lose my job?” As a working mother, I did not want to even formulate that question.

And it is not natural to expect contingent faculty to trust administrators in such matters (any more than I would have trusted a postmaster), particularly when emotion is excluded from the normal discourse of and about teaching. As Tom Kerr explains, “we do not . . . promise to engage deeply and/or critique (or evaluate) the emotions of our students or colleagues, but the constant interpretation, production, and exchange of text amounts to no less” (25). In a similar vein, Jacobs notes that our disciplinary dialogue about teaching takes place within a framework “in which it is not possible to express one’s emotional responses to the demands of teaching” (44). Finally, Kerr asks a very relevant question, considering that both of these complaints involved student concerns with grades: “But what formal means . . . have we developed to talk about the abundance of feeling that always already accompanies the ‘text,’ (or the grade) and the complex social relations . . . in which the text is embedded?” (26). Each of the complaints outlined at the beginning of the essay included an “abundance of feelings” and also a failure to communicate; while our Writing Program had a formal procedure for addressing complaints, it could not ensure that we could talk about their emotional contents.

It is also essential to note our discipline’s perspectives on the working conditions of contingent faculty. The CCC “Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing” states:

These teachers work without job security, often without benefits, and for wages far below what their full-time colleagues are paid per course. Increasingly, many are forced to accept an itinerant existence, racing from class to car to drive to another institution to teach. . . . [I]t is evident that their working conditions undermine the capacities of teachers to teach and of students to learn. These conditions constitute a crisis in higher education.

Similar arguments, demonstrating the awareness within English studies that contingent faculty need but do not have humane working conditions, have appeared in many places. The MLA “Report of the Commission on Writing and Literature” points out that contingent faculty “are untenured and untenurable, what one administrator calls the ‘floating bottom.’ They teach term by term, with

no benefits or job security . . .” (70). Both of these statements were drafted in the 1980s.

Twenty years have passed, but the humane working conditions which contingent faculty need have not appeared, while their numbers have increased. The 2003 AAUP statement on “Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession” asserts, “The dramatic increase in the number and proportion of contingent faculty in the last ten years has created systemic problems for higher education,” and goes on to outline the costs of such reliance on contingent faculty: problems with student learning, faculty governance, academic decision making, and academic freedom. And in the introduction to *Moving a Mountain: Transforming the Role of Contingent Faculty in Composition Studies*, Eileen Schell and Patricia Lambert Stock summarize:

those who are calling for academic reform share a number of understandings: the academy has come to rely too heavily on contingent faculty, particularly to teach the core curriculum to undergraduates; the working conditions of contingent faculty are, almost without exception, substandard; and contingent faculty often resemble tenure-accruing faculty in their talents, preparedness, and in the contributions they make to the larger educational enterprise. (28)

Interestingly, Schell and Stock’s description echoes that of Steinberg and Figart in describing the emotional proletariat: contingent faculty teach service courses, are often highly skilled, and create value for the university, all the while working under difficult conditions.

Thus, more support from the Writing Program would be well-deserved. While it would not counterbalance the effects of working conditions, it is important for us as a Writing Program to perform our own emotional labor: to appreciate, value, and love the adjuncts who teach in our program. Mutual respect is a three-way rather than a two-way, student and teacher relationship: the third leg of the triangle is the Writing Program and the institution of which it is a part. Eileen Schell advocates a “rhetoric of responsibility” which includes the responsibility of the institution to faculty and students (330); we are responsible for what happens in our composition classes. If the Writing Program doesn’t respect and value its instructors, if there is little trust between the Program and its participants, then the ability of each teacher to create a respectful relationship with his or her class is already seriously compromised. If contingent faculty are responsible for performing emotional labor, it’s obvious that the Writing Program and the English department are responsible for supporting contingent faculty in that performance.

At my university, the Writing Program employs seventy adjuncts and twenty-nine teaching assistants, who teach almost all of the sections offered of the first-year composition sequence, English 101 and 102. The teaching assistants tend to teach more 101, while more sections of 102 are taught by adjuncts. Class caps have recently been lowered to twenty-five. Both complaints with which the essay began involved English 102 classes taught by adjunct faculty. Our adjuncts are paid either \$820 or \$843/credit hour, depending on experience; this is the lowest hourly pay rate for adjunct teaching within the state. Apart from seven instructors, who teach four sections each semester and enjoy salaries, benefits, and expectation of continued employment, we offer adjunct faculty no benefits other

than library privileges. Helen O'Grady writes, "When writing teachers have neither time nor space (many do not have access to telephones, mailboxes, or offices), their ability to teach effectively is diminished" (133); most of our contingent faculty have access to shared desks, telephones, and computers, and the department has worked hard to secure these. The English department and the Writing Program are not happy about the extent of our reliance on contingent faculty for such important courses. By and large, we have an excellent, committed, and intellectually involved adjunct faculty, and we get much better teaching than we pay for.

How do these understandings inform the students' complaints? The first teacher was defensive, arriving in my office with a valise full of textual evidence: gradebooks, assignments, calendar, etc. She was only willing to meet with me once, although she did e-mail more evidence, when more questions arose. Perhaps her unwillingness was related to her highway flyer status: like many contingent faculty, she taught at two different institutions, for a total teaching load of seven classes that semester. When would she have time to meet with an administrator whom she had no reason to trust when she did not even have time to post student grades online? O'Grady points out what should be obvious: "Effective writing instruction depends on teachers having sufficient time and energy to prepare classes, to respond usefully to students' writing, and to conduct writing conferences with students outside class during office hours" (133). All of these practices are critical to writing instruction, and all involve emotional labor; yet with no time and few resources, it seems impossible that this teacher could provide the kind of teaching O'Grady describes for her students.

The second teacher's situation was like that of the first in one way: he had no time either as he had another full-time job. He taught three or four classes for us back-to-back, and then he went to his other place of employment. Because he wanted to compensate for his absence and in order to keep up with response and conferencing, he relied heavily on technology; nevertheless, his lack of availability weighed on his relationships with students. Because I knew this instructor better than the first one, I suspected that the problems his students encountered might be related to the fact that he had been involved in a life-threatening accident early in the semester; as a result, he had been ill numerous times. The accident had caused some emotional trauma as well. But the instructor had not come to the Writing Program offices to discuss his accident or the ensuing difficulties he was experiencing. The combination of his several professional lives and the aftermath of his accident caused him to disengage from his classes and resulted in the complaints we heard.

Was I able to use my experiences as a former part-timer at the post office to begin a dialogue about emotional work and teaching with either instructor? No, I was not. Anticipating fallout from superiors should students take their complaints forward, I spent more time on their concerns than the very real issues their teachers had to deal with. Certainly I failed to understand how close the emotional connections and mutual respect must be between administration, teachers, and students for teaching and learning to succeed. I did not know then what I know now. Neither teacher was responsive to my inquiries: the first from alarm, the second from a lack of emotional energy. Both were also seriously overworked. But certainly I failed to initiate a conversation about emotion with either of them, a conversation which might have opened up to critique and then to change. We

no longer employ either of these teachers, but we are responsible for what occurred in their classes—and for them.

What Have We Learned?

Writing program administrators usually find themselves working after the fact, attempting to reconstruct whatever caused a set of problems in the attempt to solve them. The Writing Program itself, however, helps to construct the programmatic framework in which classes take place and hires and supports teachers. Thus, while administrators are almost never in class at a crucial time when they might intervene and address problems directly (a solution that would be disrespectful to teachers), they are involved and implicated and—theoretically, at least—can use their positions to address problems. Some possible, optional solutions include the following:

- Make opportunities for new teachers to learn a program's rules for emotional labor before they teach their first classes. Both of the teachers involved in the cases outlined above were new to the institution although both were experienced instructors; they had not been our teaching assistants. Bellas notes, "Most colleges and universities do not offer on-the-job training for professors" (98). Our new adjuncts receive invitations to a working luncheon, a mentoring program run by other adjuncts, and once-a-semester in-service meetings. A workshop of several days before adjuncts begin teaching would be helpful, but some of our adjuncts are hired at the last possible moment.
- Work to create a strong adjunct teaching community. Our adjuncts teach on several campuses, and most of them have other jobs, too. We have several community events throughout the academic year, yet many of our teachers do not know each other. Because their offices are spread across campus and because they are scheduled to teach at times that vary widely, adjuncts cannot meet and form a core community. The situation does not allow new teachers to learn emotional labor rules that may be transmitted in an informal manner.
- Encourage faculty and administrators to develop interpersonal strategies in general in addition to strategies for teaching writing, to practice emotional work as part of the work of teaching. Wharton explains that "as the amount of time spent interacting with people at work increases, workers' feelings of inauthenticity [one consequence of emotional labor] decrease" (166). Practitioners experience inauthenticity when the gap between an emotional role and one's felt emotions is too great. Perhaps an honest and up-front assessment of the emotional labor required for teaching would better prepare teachers to undertake the deep acting that effective emotional labor involves.
- Maintain as much autonomy and self-direction for adjuncts as possible. The literature on emotional labor points out that "the fusion of self and work role increases the risk of burnout" (Wharton 162), and teachers suffering from burnout are less likely to undertake the emotional labor necessary to keep a class positive and productive.
- Work to improve compensation and working conditions for adjunct instructors; doing so will encourage adjunct instructors to see themselves as pro-

professionals and to abide by the feeling rules of the institution and profession. Bishop notes, "When I am (self)valued, I am able to do unto others. Difficult, no doubt, for teachers who often find their institutional conditions are poor mirrors for self-belief" (53). Autonomy and self-direction are good first steps; improving compensation will help even more.

- Create opportunities for the Writing Program, the primary link between adjuncts and the institution, to assert its differences from the Delta Airlines model of mandated emotional roles and perform its own emotional labor as an administrative body. Mutual respect between parties involved in a classroom transaction does not have to be solely dialogic. Since education takes place within an institutional framework, the Writing Program can perform the same kinds of emotional labor it asks from its teachers and students. Rather than a patriarchal airline, then, the Writing Program can be a Good Witch: powerful, but using its power to improve the lives of those it affects. In the main, our writing program does a good job of positive bewitching—or at least, I think it does. But there's always room for improvement; problem cases and cases where emotional labor isn't undertaken point out systemic weaknesses.

Finally, at my university there have been some substantive improvements in the working conditions of adjunct faculty with the creation of full-time, non-tenure-track appointments. Citing a desire to improve student retention after the first year—currently at sixty percent—the president and provost have opened up full-time, benefit-bearing special lectureships. These positions are renewable annually and pay \$30,000. For that sum, special lecturers are expected to teach four classes a semester and also to perform service to the Writing Program and the English department. Thirty special lecturer positions were filled at the university in late spring/early summer 2006; many of the adjunct instructors applied for the positions, and a faculty committee that included skilled adjunct instructors who did not plan to seek special lectureships quickly came to a decision about who should receive the additional four slots the English department was allotted (we already had three such positions, created in the early 1980s). The department was told that over a period of time, all of the adjunct instructors who had been teaching a four-three load eventually would be converted to special lectureships—a statement that the adjunct faculty regarded with a combination of appreciation and wary skepticism.

It is too early to say what effect the existence of the special lectureships has had on adjunct morale and the emotional labor that is a fact of part-time teaching life. Most of those who were not selected in the first round are waiting to see if there will be a second round and a third and so on until they themselves become special lecturers. While they are happy that four instructors have been promoted, they are uneasy about the possibility that a budget crunch or change in administration will intervene before they themselves achieve their goals. Based upon anecdotal evidence—my conversations with them—few of those who are eligible for special lectureships take for granted that they will actually receive them.

Things have changed for the better in terms of the emotional labor environment for adjunct instructors within the Writing Program and the English Department. Several instructors have become more politically active and continue to participate in university committees that address adjunct issues; these commit-

tees have the ear of the university provost and promise the opportunity for substantive change. Overall, the adjunct mood with regard to work environment is cautiously hopeful.

Evaluations, including classroom visits, are currently underway, but we are optimistic there, too. In visiting classrooms and conducting evaluations, adjunct instructors thank us for observing—and respecting—their teaching. As we staff our composition sections with those who are honored as professionals within the program and support them to perform the emotional work of teaching, everyone involved—the university, the Writing Program, teachers, and students—should benefit. ☺

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