



## Vice President for Student Affairs Dies at 56

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# ADJUNCT CONFESSIONS

By Tim McCormack

**A**s a CUNY adjunct instructor of writing, literature and journalism for seven years, I feel the need to confess...

I stole chalk from other classrooms, and I did not return what was left. I absconded with a ream of paper from the English Department office because I had forgotten to bring my own. I tucked it inside my bag, which I had emptied out in my office ahead of time, and so this crime was premeditated.

I used the administrative assistant's phone while she was on lunch, so that I could call a student in a 516 area code. I used the same phone to call the hospital to see how a sick relative was doing in a Long Island hospital.

I slipped into the photo copy room at 7 a.m. with a key that I obtained surreptitiously in order to make more than my allotted number of copies (25) for my 74 students. In fact, on campuses all over CUNY, I used departmental copy machines for purposes only tangentially related to my courses, such as photo copying articles from educational journals and making copies for a presentation I was giving at a conference. And, I should also say, I copied my tax forms before mailing them to the IRS.

One semester, I often ended a class five minutes early, so I could get back to the adjunct office before my office mate could claim the desk. He taught at the same time as I did, and when I had the desk, he had to go to the student lounge to meet with his students.

I used the faculty-outgoing mailbox to return a paper to a student, even though I had been told in memo and in person that adjuncts were not allowed

to use up the departmental postage allotment, *especially not to return papers to students.*

When I went to the security office to obtain a color-coded validation sticker for my I.D., the officer behind the desk asked if I was full time. I said yes and walked away with the pink sticker and full access to the campus. I used the same lie to get a "vendacard" for the gate on the parking lot nearest my building.

On more than one occasion, I kept the key to the adjunct computer office (one computer for 50 or 60 adjuncts) overnight, so I would have access before my morning class the next day, since the English office was still closed at that hour.

I accepted a course in a pilot program that enrolled remedial students into Freshman Composition, even though I was clueless about teaching basic writing. Half the class failed.

I canceled classes to hold office hours so I could be paid for my time conferencing with students. It didn't work, as the conferences took five hours (30 students at 10 minutes each), while the class was for only two hours. After four semesters in a row teaching Freshman Composition at 8 a.m., I told my chair I had a schedule conflict, when in fact I didn't. I just couldn't face another winter arriving on campus in the ghostly dark.

~~One semester I kept track of the hours I put into my teaching: 452. When I divided the number of hours by the salary I made I was appalled: \$12 per hour. The next semester, I dropped my office hours; I started skimming instead of reading all of my students' papers; I gave fewer assignments; and I lec-~~

tured more, so I wouldn't have to spend time developing classroom activities where students did more than listen to me. I made \$8 more per hour. Though I compromised my beliefs, I was still poor.

I was not completely honest with three students who were attempting to over-tally into my writing class. I told them that the class was limited to 27 and that the over-tally limit was 32 (the number of students in class that day). In fact, the limit was 32 and the over-tally limit was 37. I hope they found another class to take.

I accepted a last-minute course and found myself teaching 20th century American Literature though I had not prepared a syllabus or a reading list. The students told me they had not noticed a difference; it seemed just like a regular class.

With this public statement, I hereby apologize to staff members for my thievery and white lies; to my full time colleagues for pretending to be one of you; to my fellow adjuncts for competing for the scraps that the adjunct system forces us to fight over like dogs; and to my students for my complicity in a system that gives them less than what they deserve.

*Tim McCormack is currently an adjunct at CCNY, where he teaches writing courses for the English Department and the Office of Freshman Year Programs. He will not tell the Advocate whether he will need to confess again at the end of the year.*

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# ADJUNCT ACTION SET TO HEAT UP IN THE FALL

By Kristin Lawler

This fall promises to be the most explosive time yet for adjunct and graduate student power here at CUNY and beyond. First of all, as many of you know, the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), CUNY's faculty and staff union, will be collecting a fee equivalent to union dues from the paychecks of all Graduate Teaching Fellows (GTFs) and adjuncts who haven't yet joined the union. The point of this new policy, of course, is to encourage part-timers to join the union that negotiates on our behalf.

The union is, in fact, currently in contract negotiations and is demanding pay and benefit parity between part-timers and full-timers. The more voting adjunct members there are in the union, the more pressure the Administration feels to accede to this demand. The PSC's "Strength in Numbers" membership drive, begun last March, has already more than doubled the previous part-timer membership of the union by bringing in 1,000 new members in just a few months. And organizers are confident that once the fee collection begins, thousands of new CUNY part-timers will sign up for a voice, and a vote, in the union.

In early September, each and every adjunct and GTF throughout CUNY will receive a packet in their departmental mailbox explaining the fee change and laying out the importance of union membership. Mass meetings will be held during the fall on every campus so that part-timers have a chance to hear from union reps, ask questions, voice their concerns and their hopes, and most importantly, start talking to one another. And Campus Equity Week, a nationwide grassroots campaign to raise the profile of part-timers and our ever-growing movement, will be held from October 28 to November 3. Here in New York, we'll put together a huge citywide event as well as smaller events on each campus.

The Adjunct Project of the Doctoral Students Council has a special position in all of this action. There's no question that the interests of graduate students are often unique within the universe of part-timers, and we have a seminal role to play in the development of our new union. That's why the involvement of graduate students is so crucial now, when the PSC is turning a corner and taking the unprecedented step of opening up to the transformation of its entire membership base. And that's why it's never been more important to get involved with the Adjunct Project.

Last May, working with the Woody Guthrie Archive, we put on a wildly successful rally and concert in support of the organizing efforts of graduate students and adjuncts throughout the city. Over three hundred people packed the Proshansky Auditorium to hear seven singer-songwriters and roots rock bands perform songs they'd written to previously unseen Woody

Guthrie union lyrics. Speakers like Stanley Aronowitz, Barbara Bowen, and graduate student organizers from around the city talked about the new energy around this movement and the importance of music and culture to the labor movement. There was a strong feeling in the air that something big is afoot. It is.

And the Adjunct Project has lots more planned for the fall. We'll work with the Strength in Numbers campaign to set up a mass meeting for grad students to meet with PSC reps and voice their own hopes for what we can all achieve through the union. We'll also work with other NYC organizers to put on another big event during Campus Equity Week. And we'll continue to be a clearinghouse for information for all graduate students. In addition, we're planning a lecture series in which we'll bring in thinkers and writers about the crisis in academia and the movement that's working to turn it around.

The context of our work can never be separated from the work itself—if you have to adjunct during grad school, piecing together a living with other random assignments, you probably won't be able to publish as much as you'd like to before you finish. If you finish your Ph.D. and take it on a flooded job market and have trouble finding a full-time, tenure-track job because universities nationwide rely on adjuncts to teach over half of undergraduate courses, you may have to adjunct to make a living.

Once you've done that, you've put yourself in a second tier of academia, the stigma of which people often find it difficult to escape. And if

and when you finally do land that coveted tenure-track job, you may find yourself in the middle of a trend that has professors teaching heavier loads for salaries that have been stagnating for years. To think that these conditions are in any way separable from the quality of your intellectual work is absurd.

Only under conditions of decent pay and reasonable teaching loads, in departments where the faculty constitute a vibrant professional community and not a fragmented, burned out bunch of teachers, can we hope to do the kind of meaningful work that we all envisioned doing when we filled out that graduate school application.

The good news is that the glum scenario painted above represents the present for a growing majority of the academic workforce, but not the future. The future is being crafted by those in academia who've woken up to the real conditions that are turning the university into a sweatshop and who are organizing to make it something much more. A place where we can live a life without overwork, where we can explore the ideas that turn us on, where we can create and inspire and do the work, not the labor, that we came to graduate school for. So get on the bus. It's all happening, folks, the time is right, but we have to organize to make it real.

*The Adjunct Project is located in room 5398 of the Graduate Center. Give us a call at 817-7890 and keep your eye out for announcements of upcoming events.*

## DEMAND JUSTICE

**The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank will be holding their Joint Annual General Meetings in Washington, DC from September 29-30, 2001.**

**We call on activists from CUNY to come to Washington during that week to protest and expose the illegitimacy of the institutions and officials who continue to claim the right to determine the course of the world economy.**

**FREE CUNY! Will be organizing buses to DC and housing. For more information, contact: [freecuny@yahoo.com](mailto:freecuny@yahoo.com)**

*FREE CUNY! is non-hierarchical, cooperative organization of CUNY students, faculty and staff committed to overcoming corporate globalization (especially the corporatization of the university) and all forms of oppression. We are part of a growing movement united in common concern for justice, freedom, peace, and sustainability of all life, and in a commitment to take direct action to realize radical visionary change.*