

METAMORPHOSIS

A Newsletter for Faculty of Bemidji State University
 published by the Center for Professional Development

2000-2001 CENTER for PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
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Other Professionals, Professional “Other”

By Carol Richards

You struggle to turn the knob to your office door, juggling your laptop and your briefcase. Once inside, you flick the light switches and glance toward the answering machine. You remove your coat and hang it, plug in the laptop and, while you wait for it to warm up, head down the hall to check your mail. You greet several colleagues and stop to confer about the conference two of you are attending later in the week. You grab your mail and open what you hope is a message granting you improvement monies this year for that project you have been wanting to complete, and you also notice a

pamphlet from the medical insurer. Back at the office, you point and click to retrieve your email and hit the playback on the answering machine. Another busy week has begun.

If you can identify with the scenario above, you are not one of "us," the "other" professionals: the adjunct and the part time fixed term faculty. We take none of such everyday



matters for granted. Not all of us have offices, few of us have computers, and insurance is a sometime thing. I am a veteran of many years' service to Bemidji State University as adjunct faculty, part time fixed term faculty, full time fixed term faculty, and the temporarily unemployed adjunct or fixed term (those terms when I would have been too expensive to employ as fixed term).

Fall term 2000, BSUFA President Chris Brown asked to submit my name to serve on a task force investigating the professional lives of adjunct and fixed term faculty system-wide. I was eager to participate, and I am happy to say I have met four times with the task force both by phone and in person. The task force has now made recommendations to the IFO, particularly regarding how to improve the status of temporary faculty. My task force experience has been revelatory. Though I have worked at

BSU since 1985, and I thought I knew a great deal about my rights and responsibilities, I have learned that I have been naïve, even negligent. But others on the task force discovered that they, too, had much to learn.

For example, none of us realized

“...None of us realized that adjunct salaries are not limited to \$1000.00 per credit; that figure is the minimum...”

that adjunct salaries are not limited to \$1,000.00 per credit; that figure is the minimum, not the maximum. The foremost point to be grasped, and it took repeated meetings to get the full import of this fact, is that no two campuses or even two departments can be sure that they interpret and act upon the IFO contract in the same way regarding adjunct and fixed term faculty. Therefore, despite some



similarity of experiences or observations and some shared sense of how it feels to work as adjunct or fixed term, no two of us on the task force had quite the same story to tell. Indeed, our individual stories raised many issues, each of which was addressed in the recommendations provided to the IFO board on February 2.

Look around your office and your life as probationary or tenured faculty (or even as a full time sabbatical replacement), and imagine how you would cope without computer, phone, answering machine, travel funds, professional improvement money and insurance.

Fixed term faculty are just now getting some attention and earning some perquisites such as travel funds. But there will be points of contention for some time. As long as departments struggle with unexpected demand and campuses struggle with the changing marketplace and strict budgets; as long

as some faculty want to stay on regardless of their status and other faculty are militant about earning fulltime tenured positions; as long as some faculty merely want fair recompense for years of service, yet most would like to be recognized for the jobs they are doing, there will be concerns and issues and controversy surrounding nontenured faculty.

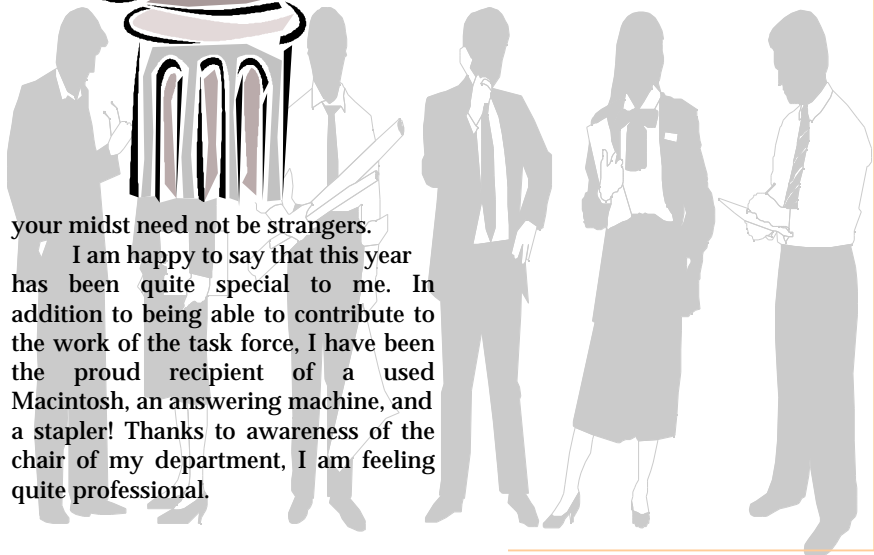
Our ad hoc task force may continue for a bit longer since we would like to research adjunct and fixed term matters at universities across the country. We are hoping to learn more about how to improve the professional lives of MNSCU part time and temporary faculty (16% system-wide) and Metro campus community faculty, and we know that our population is representative of populations in higher education generally.

The "other" professionals are becoming a topic at conferences and in journals. If you know who the part time and temporary faculty are in your department, then you can do quite a bit to assist them immediately. You can tell the BSUFA who these faculty are, how to reach them, and how to get them a copy of the IFO contract. You can begin a continuing conversation with these faculty and within your department about their professional rights. The "other" professionals in



your midst need not be strangers.

I am happy to say that this year has been quite special to me. In addition to being able to contribute to the work of the task force, I have been the proud recipient of a used Macintosh, an answering machine, and a stapler! Thanks to awareness of the chair of my department, I am feeling quite professional.



“...You can go to Yale and basically get the same instruction you’d get at...Community College...”

METAMORPHOSIS is published as a service for faculty at Bemidji State University by the Center for Professional Development. The purpose of METAMORPHOSIS is to serve as a medium for exchanging ideas about teaching and scholarship, and for sharing information about faculty development activities and programs. The editor invites your comments, suggestions, and contributions.



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Faculty Grants for Innovative Teaching Congratulations!

Dr. Dada Maglajlic, Professor of Social Relations and Services was awarded a grant for \$900.00. This funding will be used to provide expanded opportunities for students to explore participatory Social Work education, collaborative learning techniques, and learning through service activities.

Elaine Hoffman, Assistant Professor of Industrial Technology, was awarded a grant totaling \$4420.00. This grant support will fund Elaine for release, providing time and funds for developing and printing materials for a student sponsored, on campus symposium. Area teachers will be invited to attend presentations where students will present experiential, hands on modules demonstrating emerging technologies. Handbooks will be distributed to attending teachers, and students will receive direct feedback on their work.

on the discipline, and up to 42.5 percent of introductory courses.

- Part-time faculty members are rarely afforded benefits. Only 22.6 percent of history departments offer any benefits to part-time staff; in other disciplines, only about 40 percent offer benefits.
- Even teaching four courses a term, part-time faculty members are paid at rate – less than \$3,000 per course on average. That puts them on par with porters and fast-food workers.

If you have an interest in reading the Coalition's report in detail, you can find the complete version online at the American Historical Association's World Wide Web site:
www.theaha.org/caw/index.htm.



Center director Dr. Russ Lee introduces Dr. Janet L. Guggenheimer at a recent faculty forum sponsored by the Center for Professional Development. Dr. Guggenheimer's topic was "Students Who Implode." Discussion highlighted resources available through the counseling center on campus as well as increasing faculty awareness and ability respond to students in need. The Faculty Forum Series provides the opportunity to present information, read papers, or facilitate discussion about a wide range of academic topics. These scholarly meetings are sponsored by the Center for Professional Development. Contact Center Director Russ Lee, at 755-2881 for more information.



Learning in All Directions

Elaine Hoffman

I came to my position at BSU three years ago as a fixed-term professor. Not having a doctorate, I knew that in order to have a chance to apply for a tenure-track position when one became available I would have to get busy and pursue the awesome "terminal" degree. There's more to it,

"Each course in my program has shown me that I never really finish a subject, I just get started on it."

though; I've always held that as a goal and keeping the teaching job was one more motivating factor. It has been the unstable nature of a fixed-term position that has really helped to launch me into a deeply meaningful learning experience and for that I am enormously grateful. Long hours of research and writing to complete the coursework have certainly taken their toll in lack of sleep and vacations, but I have to say it's been worth the sacrifice. I plan on finishing my Ph.D. in education during the summer of 2001.

People ask me if I've learned anything or has this just been another hoop to jump through. I hear comments about the ridiculous notion of going on for "just another degree" when I already know how to teach. First of all, this has been a

humbling experience; I realize more and more just how much I *don't* know. Each course in my program has shown me that I never really finish a subject, I just get started on it. Where years ago a ten-page paper would've exhausted

"People ask me if I've learned anything or has this just been another hoop to jump through."

my knowledge of a subject, now a 90-page paper barely scratches the surface. In my opinion, I've learned a lot.

I am a product of the traditional education machine when it was acceptable to have a high number of students fall through the educational cracks. Now we know better. Research in neuroscience has shown there are proven ways that help people learn and to apply their knowledge. We don't have to rely only on theories any more; effective learning is now being documented through scientific proof. There is no longer an excuse for students to be slipping through those cracks but teachers don't know that unless they aggressively research new developments in teaching and learning. Students don't come to us as empty plates to be filled only with the information and experiences we impart upon them in the classroom. They come to us with a full plate of relevant experiences and it is up to teachers to make the important connections between the student's own effective learning. One is establishing relevance; by explaining *why* we need to know what we're studying is important to our goals in life, we'll remember it learning and school learning. By doing this they become



empowered to design personal learning strategies and reach for higher levels of understanding by exploring perspectives other than the teacher's. I find it interesting in the study of brain-based learning that certain "discoveries" have been made about better, maybe we'll want to know more. Another is by eliminating threat from the classroom. Think back on teachers that have attempted to teach by intimidation and threats; what is your attitude towards the very subject they were teaching? And now for my favorite: it's OK to have fun in the classroom. In fact it greatly enhances memory. The students in my welding



course are surrounded by potentially hazardous equipment. There is the possibility of mechanical with every forming process that malfunction as well as operator error students experience. As an example, we use acetylene, a highly explosive gas. The students are made aware of the risks of working with material that could blow Bridgeman Hall sky-high, yet nearly every course evaluation indicates the experiences in this course have been "fun." Putting everyone at ease in the class, eliminating threat while making the point of being serious about safety, and incorporating an attitude of "fun" while learning how to work with metal has been a huge challenge in teaching this subject and the success in this course is a result of project work I've done in the

Ph.D. program. The bottom line for me is greater job satisfaction and you'd better believe, I'm having a great time in my classes.

What really makes teaching so much fun for me is the opportunity to be with students. They may think I'm teaching them something, but my secret is that at the same time I'm learning an enormous amount from them. I appreciate every moment of my time with students; each of them is a precious gift. I also have a goal to help education majors appreciate the value of teaching. In the middle school and high school classrooms they'll be in, they're in a powerful position to positively influence a lot of young people. They're also in a position to negatively affect them as well and the negative effects may last a lifetime. As educators we're responsible for opening doors to a better life through teaching and learning. We evolve individual ways of accomplishing this through learning about ourselves and then relating our awareness to our work. Brain-based learning, problem-based learning, learning communities and many other new terms and methods are worth checking into; and let's not forget the value of Vygotskian theory and the good parts of the traditional system. The complex mix of "what works" is meant to continuously change.



Reflections on Adjunct Status

Tracy Sadek

I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to transform my teaching experiences from an undergraduate TA, a graduate student GA, and beginning staff member and Adjunct Professor for the Department of Chemistry at Bemidji State University. I was the first Graduate Assistant the Chemistry Department had housed for several years. As an undergraduate student I took the position of Teaching Assistant, fall semester 1998, in preparation for the Graduate Assistant

"I have received support but...always feel that 'It could be any time now' in the back of my mind."

position I obtained spring semester 1999.

During both semesters my responsibilities increased from assisting students in the lab to grading



Phil Wyken is a Masters' student in kfldjasnioe iouemw;c o;l, e oek oi vm zm'zoin /lgkv 'phobmf;fli n'v'dfkd;l;sif4 v eofi df dofi 'f,a ;fk'posdif veo9if a"pfi 'oifa f-4025193750943-b 4'31 eui [92045b /as;gj a[09re78t 34qpo opfig r'09t 43oijt 'p8g erp9ti 948t 'poti =r08t9 [pkto wi90re85 'wit oprig rtoiw [port 89r=09t wkjt 0er978t w35 09438t rektj b iorej our ro oiutw rpotp8tor7 rjriout;skrgmn.xdifu r voierut o v vut or toi urourt oweirut oirut roeivtv poroitu out rotui porut ortu toiu proiru otiout pre8t7 proeu

various assignments, to learning what was expected of me as a professor. My Graduate Assistantship continued from spring semester 1999 to spring semester 2000. During this time I constructed the syllabi for all the General/Principles of Chemistry Labs, prepared exams and quizzes, graded all of my laboratory assignments, held



office hours, tutored, ordered lab modules, and turned in grades.

Fall semester 2000 my title was changed from Graduate Assistant to Adjunct Professor due to being hired as a part time staff member on campus. My duties remain the same. The experience has surpassed all of my

“...Communication within the department and the inclusion of adjunct professors is an essential component for quality education.”

expectations with both good and challenging components. I enjoy the freedom and trust the Chemistry Department has given, which allows me to make slight changes in what we offer to the students. I try to change the lab and how I present each topic on a semester basis to assist in increasing the quality of education we offer. I am allowed to search for new labs, change my syllabi, and prepare each lab in a manner that benefits the instructor, stockroom, and students.

I have found that the more I teach within the department the more involved I have become. The challenging components that not only I, but also other adjunct professors I

have talked with face are a sense of alienation from important discussions within the department and the increased reminder that our positions are only temporary. I have been at Bemidji State University since 1994 and hope to continue working on campus in the future. I have discovered that topics discussed when they are no longer considered an issue, are topics that I do know something about and would appreciate the opportunity to become more involved with. There are also topics that I may not be involved with, but find interesting and educational to see how they are dealt with.

The fact that my position is temporary is not something I need be reminded of, but appreciate being allowed to discover and express my capabilities. I have received exceptional and constant support from the faculty, but always feel that “it could be any time now” in the back of my mind. I feel I can benefit the department in many ways. The opportunity to dive head long into the heart and soul is what is needed for both sides.

One day the Chemistry Department will have another Graduate Assistant. A lot of duties I performed are not the normal duties of Graduate Assistants from other departments. I was allowed to do a little more because I asked for the opportunity. When another Graduate Assistant arrives I hope the department considers this and has some form listing duties to present to the new student upon arrival. I have not found another teaching assistant who performs the amount of duties that I do per semester. This may be unexpected by the department and student.

I also feel that communication within the department and the inclusion of adjunct professors is an essential component for quality education. Often the adjunct is eager to participate and give ideas. Department

faculty is not required to act upon it, but should encourage it. As a member of the Board of Directors for the National Association of Graduate and Professional Students, my advice to anyone considering an adjunct position is to go for it. The experience will be only as good as what you put into it.



Upcoming Events

- **Tuesday, March 20, 2001**

"Same Sex Unions"

Crying Wolf Room 7:00 Dr.
Colleen Greer, presenter

- **Thursday, March 29, 2001**

UTAP, "**Humor in the Classroom**" Viking Room,
1:00

- **Wednesday, April 4, 2001**

Newer Faculty Discussion at
4:00

- **Wednesday, April 25, 2001**

UTAP, "**Working in Teams**"
Scandinavian Room, 12:00

- **Thursday, May 10, 2001**

Park House Dialogue
"**Faculty Expectations,
Faculty Experience**" David
Park House, 2:00

