

Spring 2009 • An Open Forum for Faculty at Santa Rosa Junior College • March 3, 2009

THE AFA DIALOGUE HAS BEEN CREATED TO AIR CONCERNS OF ALL FACULTY. THE AFA UPDATE WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE FACTUAL VOICE OF THE AFA, WHILE THE AFA DIALOGUE WILL ENCOURAGE CONVERSATION AND PUBLISH OPINIONS ABOUT WORK PLACE ISSUES AND POLITICAL CONCERNS. WE INVITE ANY FACULTY MEMBER TO SUBMIT LETTERS, ARTICLES, OR OPINION PIECES. AFA RESERVES EDITORIAL PREROGATIVES.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

“ADJUNCT”? “PART-TIME”?
“NON-TENURE TRACK”? “HOURLY”?
“ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR”?

Lara Branen-Ahumada,

*Part-time Faculty Member in P.E., Dance & Athletics, & Theatre Arts,
AFA Executive Council Member, Publications Coordinator & Negotiator*

If Lenny Bruce was to be believed words are not dangerous or “bad” in themselves. He pointed out the absurdity of getting worked up over words and was imprisoned for his belief (oh and maybe possession of narcotics.) Words are meaningless – a group of letters that are given tremendous power by the meaning we assign to them. Lenny wasn’t alone in that contention. Shakespeare agreed: “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”

I believe that words have power and that what we say matters because we do agree to the meaning of words. Words trigger responses, attitudes and biases. Of the four references to part-time faculty above, only “adjunct” packs a negative punch. Even if only subliminally I believe the messages behind the word are damaging.

A quick glance at the word “adjunct” in the Microsoft Word Thesaurus (has it come to this? I can’t even pull out Roget’s anymore?) reveals that the list of synonyms for adjunct include: add-on, accessory, appendage, and optional extra. The word adjunct when applied to faculty implies

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ADJUNCTS – STILL CONFUSED AS TO YOUR CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS?

SEE THE HANDY GUIDE BELOW
THAT TAKES ON SOME COMMON MYTHS
ABOUT WORKING FOR FREE

Myth #1: If I work for free, I will have a better shot at getting a full-time job here at SRJC.

Reality: A record of having worked for free is not a factor in the selection process, and therefore the degree to which you allow yourself to be exploited has no bearing on whether or not you get a full-time job. Also, it’s a good idea to save your strength just in case you get that full-time position, since as Contract faculty you’ll have plenty of opportunity to work for free.

Myth #2: If I work for free, my department chair will be impressed with my strong work ethic and give me special consideration when it comes time to divvy out assignments to adjuncts.

Reality: Each department has a written departmental procedure regarding assignments that by contract must be followed. It is highly unlikely that any written procedure your department may have stipulates that special assignment rights shall be given to adjuncts who, in the past, have worked for free. If, however, you do discover that your department has such a policy, run—don’t walk—to the AFA office to speak with the Conciliation and Grievance Officer.

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PLEASE DON'T WORK FOR FREE!

*Janet McCulloch,
Regular Faculty Member in English,
& AFA Chief Negotiator*

Just a simple reminder—even though the State Budget is looking very grim, there is no reason for Adjunct faculty to donate their time to District-wide committee work or departmental activities. We all feel obligated to maintain the quality of our programs because we care about our students, but running the College is the responsibility of administrators and Regular faculty (and Adjunct faculty as well, if being compensated to do so!). AFA continues to fight to maintain Adjunct Faculty District Activity Fund compensation for participation in the shared governance process; but, when Adjunct faculty work for free, that undermines our argument that all work should be paid and, what’s more, it is unfair to those faculty members. **It is AFA’s position that department chairs, coordinators and cluster deans should not pressure Adjunct faculty to work on curriculum or SLO projects, attend meetings, and so forth without compensation. Whether paid or unpaid, Adjunct faculty are never required to attend department meetings or activities.** Limited Department Activity funds may be available; however, Adjunct faculty should not count on receiving those funds. AFA urges Adjunct faculty: don’t work for free!

AFA WELCOMES YOUR FEEDBACK!

Send comments to afa@santarosa.edu

STILL CONFUSED? *(cont. from page 1)*

Myth #3: If I work for free, people in my department will like me.

Reality: Although you may get an occasional pat on the back or “thumbs up” (usually quite demonstrably in the presence of other adjuncts) from your department chair/program coordinator for your amazing dedication to teaching, meanwhile your less ambitious adjunct colleagues will be secretly conspiring to lure you to a secluded spot on campus where they will proceed to beat the crap out of you.

Myth #4: Although I don’t consider myself a person who suffers from low self-esteem or lack of self-respect, I still tend to try to avoid icky situations

whenever possible. If I work for free, I will avoid the unpleasantness involved in having to tell my department chair/program coordinator “no.”

Reality: No one, not even the people who stand to benefit from your behavior, will really respect what you’re doing. Grow a spine and just say no.

Myth #5: What about the students? Teachers, like others in the “helping” professions (social work, mental health, mortgage brokering, etc.) are expected to go above and beyond their paid hours to help struggling students. If you do not donate some of your time, you are not giving your all.

Reality: Don’t fall for this guilt trip; it’s the oldest trick in the book.

There’s more to life than work. Go home and enjoy yourself, at least until you leave for your other job (if you still have it).

Myth #6: If I refuse to work for free, and/or discourage others from doing so, I risk retaliation on the part of my superiors.

Reality: The idea that members of academia would stoop to the level of petty retribution against anyone “crossing” them is one of the most pernicious, yet prevalent of the myths out there. We can only be grateful that we—full-timers and part-timers alike—coexist in a climate of intellectual and academic freedom where we need not fear speaking our minds nor recoil from taking full ownership of our words and actions.

~Justin Adjunct

WHAT’S IN A NAME? *(cont. from page 1)*

that part-time faculty are not necessary, expendable, an after-thought, and that we are not whole. With approximately 50% of the credit courses at SRJC (and nearly 100% of non-credit) taught by part-timers and a total of 1400 part-time faculty compared to 300 full-time faculty,* clearly we are not expendable – we are essential to the teaching

mission of the college. Sadly, we will not be “whole” until we have pay parity and job security. Perhaps a more empowering title could get us there with more ease than continuing to refer to ourselves as “less than.”

For many this may seem a non-issue – perhaps most part-time faculty members couldn’t care less what they are called as long as they are treated fairly and are equitably compensated. However, if words

have the power to alter perceptions then what we are called matters. A different name could ultimately alter perceptions enough that different treatment would come about.

Tell us what you think! We will include comments in a future *Dialogue!* Send your comments to AFA@santarosa.edu.

* Figures rounded from SRJC Factbook 2008

COUNT OF ADJUNCT & CONTRACT FACULTY (UNIT A)
2003-04 TO 2007-08 – PAY PERIOD ENDING APRIL 30TH

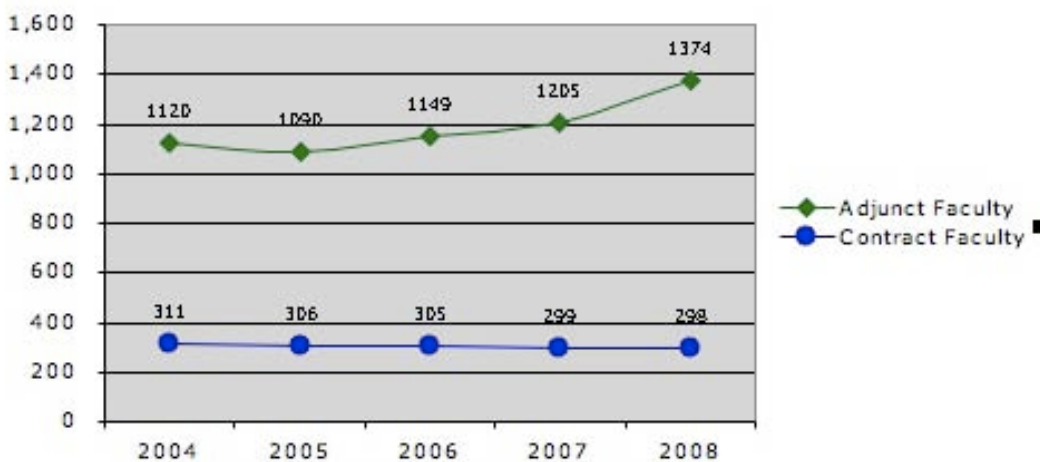


Chart adapted from SRJC Factbook 2008