

## **Investing in Indiana: New Priorities for Quality Education**

(Proposal for a State-Wide Campaign to Improve the Professional Environment at Ivy Tech Community Colleges—Endorsed by AAUP’s *Committee for Contingent Faculty and the Profession*)

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The time is ripe to upgrade the conditions of faculty at Indiana’s 23 Ivy Tech community college campuses. In the last three years the Ivy Techs, along with Vincennes University, have been folded into a community college system intended to offer its 93,000 students (about 17 percent of whom are minorities) a one and two-year degree program and feed qualified applicants into Indiana’s four-year universities. It is now the state’s second largest and fastest growing college system. Indiana’s new community college system fills an important gap in the state’s system of higher education, and is vital to its competitiveness for future job growth. At present, Indiana ranks 44<sup>th</sup> among states in the percentage of adults with a bachelor’s degree, in a tie with Alabama and just ahead of Louisiana and Arkansas.

Yet, the conditions for Ivy Tech’s 2200 full-time and part-time faculty remain abysmal. All are hired on year-to-year contracts without tenure or guarantees of academic freedom and other due process rights. This is true for the 26 percent of Ivy Tech faculty who are full-time as well as part-timers; and for faculty with doctorates as well as master’s degrees. They are in every sense contingent faculty.

All faculty recognize that professional standards and guarantees of due process and participation in collaborative governance are necessary to teach at the highest level and do scholarly and creative work in their disciplines. Yet, our recently established

community college system is seriously lacking in these standards and protections thus jeopardizing its mission. Notably, Ivy Tech has no provision for tenure for its faculty. In a 2001 report for the Indiana Commission on Higher Education comparing Ivy Tech colleges and Vincennes University (which is also part of the community college system) virtually all of the 14 peer institutions, including those in Illinois had some provision equivalent to tenure.<sup>1</sup> At the Ivy Techs there is no requirement for a peer role in hiring and no provision for academic freedom. By contrast, 69 percent of all community colleges in the United States provide for tenure; and 59 percent of all fulltime community college faculty are eligible for tenure. Lacking tenure and protection for academic freedom, Ivy Tech faculty may be fired for making a false statement to or engaging in insubordination to a supervisor. Not surprisingly, Ivy Tech faculty do not participate in governance in a significant way unlike the peer group of community colleges. Though some campuses have a faculty or university senate, it lacks primary authority over academic matters.

Pay is also substandard at Indiana's community colleges. The same 2001 report found that Ivy Tech pay was 20 percent below the lowest peer institution. According to AAUP rankings, Ivy Tech pay ranked in the bottom quintile of its national ranking system. By contrast, Illinois community colleges ranked in the first quintile and Vincennes University ranked in the third quintile.

Lacking tenure, academic freedom, or genuine collaborative governance, fear is widespread among community college faculty to the extent that faculty are reluctant to even hold an AAUP meeting on campus, offer critical comments about the conduct of administrators, or individually determine the content of their courses. It is no

exaggeration to say that at present there is no meaningful commitment to academic professionalism on the part of the administration in a system that is educating tens of thousands sons and daughters of working-class Hoosiers.

It should be clear that the vast majority of our Ivy Tech faculty are qualified, dedicated, and talented professionals. The problem is not the professionalism of Ivy Tech faculty, many of whom have terminal degrees, but with the conditions they work under that undermine their professionalism and indicate a lack of respect for their qualifications and services. In light of these conditions, one should ask: how is it possible for Indiana to compete with surrounding states with robust community college systems and far greater commitments to the values of an academic community? If one does not want to look at surrounding states, Hoosiers need look no further than Vincennes University for a two-year institution that meets national standards.

Subpar conditions endured by non-tenure track faculty at the Ivy Techs and elsewhere are having an increasingly negative impact on tenure track and tenured faculty. According to the latest AAUP statistics compiled from Department of Education data, 63.7 percent of all faculty appointments are off the tenure track, a figure up from 57 percent in 1998 and less than 40 percent in the 1970s. Put quite simply, the steady rise in the percentage of contingent faculty threatens to destroy the professional standards enjoyed by regular faculty.

The threat to tenure that comes from replacing tenure track lines with non-tenure lines is self-evident. Academic freedom is also jeopardized. As Joe Berry, a longtime national organizer of contingent faculty puts it, “No contingent faculty member can afford to be fully open, honest, and transparent about his teaching and work life to

anybody who might potentially have power over him.” Meanwhile, the declining number of those with tenure reduces to a dangerous minimum those who have an everyday stake in defending academic freedom whether in curricular matters or in the realms of campus governance and state and national politics. Insofar as academic freedom becomes moot, so does tenure, which was designed to protect academic freedom.

In addition to the urgency created by the above circumstances, however, there are good reasons to think that the conditions of contingent faculty across the state of Indiana can be improved. The AAUP’s *Committee on Contingent Faculty and the Profession* has issued a statement that identifies the long-term costs to quality education from hiring increasing number of faculty off the tenure track. It recommends the reconversion of contingent positions to tenure track positions and protections akin to tenure for those who remain.

In Indiana, both IUPUI and Indiana State University have recently established comprehensive policies guaranteeing due process rights and raising per course salaries. At ISU, the new policy sets a cap of 15% of total instructional hours to be delivered by non-tenure track faculty at the university level and 25% at the department level. It also sets up an Advocate for the rights of contingent faculty. Though it doesn't establish tenure, it does allow for three-year contracts for full-timers and creates priority hiring for part-timers with some seniority. Finally, it returns hiring authority from chairs to the department faculty. IUPUI has also established due process procedures, including search and screening procedures for hiring contingent faculty. They have also set a goal for each school and department of 60% tenured and tenure track faculty.

Especially since 1998, contingent faculty have been organizing within unions, including those sponsored by the AAUP, but just as significantly in citywide and statewide coalitional campaigns to voice grievances, establish representation, and in general improve pay, job security, and working conditions. For example, the California Part-Time Faculty Association (CPFA) formed in 1998, along with its affiliates, and other unions, conducted a three-year legislative campaign for pay equity in the community colleges, and framed its goals to appeal to the public's concern with the quality of education. With the support of the Community College Board of Governors the CPFA won a commitment in 2001 from the Democratic-controlled state government to close the pay gap between contingent and tenure-track and tenured faculty. More recently, the community college part-time faculty in CPFA has joined with unionized lecturers from the four-year schools to form COCAL-California to work for improved funding for higher education in California. The CPFA has also supported the "Save the CSU" campaign, a non-partisan statewide coalition of business, government, labor, academic, and student leaders to protect funding for the CSU system.

A closer look at the California and other statewide campaigns suggests there are four major interests that can be brought together in a campaign to improve the conditions of contingent faculty in community colleges.<sup>2</sup> First, there are contingent faculty themselves, who need tenure, higher pay, and guarantees of due process and other professional standards—in short equity and parity with their regular faculty brethren. But there are also three other elements that can be brought into a broad-based coalition for change, including administrators, the public, including legislators, parents, and students, and tenured and tenure-track faculty. All have an interest in reform.

Many administrators desire reform despite a continued concern for budget flexibility, because they recognize that treating large numbers of faculty as casual labor prevents colleges and universities from taking full advantage of their educational assets. Relying on the corporate human resource approach these administrators are often willing to offer contingent faculty a measure of job security, professional development opportunities, and integration into campus culture.

The public interest rests on the recognition that any attempt to improve undergraduate education must reckon with the need to upgrade the conditions and standards of contingent faculty members. Among other things, excellence in teaching requires continuity, repetition, and security; adequate resources, such as office space, telephones, and computers; support for professional development; the highest possible level of educational attainment; and the time and opportunity to experiment with new approaches, all conditions denied to contingent faculty. Students and parents in turn often feel betrayed by the advertisements that lured them to the institution of their choice when they learn that classrooms are run by teachers without a long-term tie to the academic community, and the time or office space to meet with students outside of class. If Indiana in particular is going to attract higher paying, information technology era jobs, the state needs to be able to offer a college education to a higher percentage of its population. The state's community colleges are essential to that mission, and so is a thriving and robust academic community, which the Ivy Techs now lack.

The fourth interest, regular faculty, increasingly recognizes that over-reliance on contingent faculty drains power away from the faculty in relation to the administration. Not only are contingent faculty not represented in the departments and on the faculty

senate, but their increasing use makes the model of shared governance less relevant to colleges and universities. With fewer regular faculty members left to stand up for the older standards, the hierarchical, corporate model of governance, already dominant in community colleges, looks more appropriate to other institutions of higher education.

In the case of the Ivy Techs, an improved professional environment is important to tenured and tenure track faculty at other Indiana institutions for another reason. They are essential to maintaining broad faculty support for transfer and articulation agreements that allow coursework at the Ivy Techs to count for credit at four-year institutions. The Indiana Commission on Higher Education is also vitally concerned about this issue.

How is it possible to build on the gains made by IUPUI and ISU and learn from the experiences of contingent faculty and their allies from around the country? The executive committee of the state conference proposes that Indiana AAUP pursue a multi-interest statewide campaign to substantially upgrade the professional environment (including pay) within which Ivy Tech faculty teach. This movement would have four goals:

- 1) Increase to at least 50 percent the fulltime faculty at our community colleges, so as to approximate the percentage at Vincennes University.

- 2) Establish a peer-reviewed process to offer the possibility of tenure to all fulltime faculty along with multiyear contracts to part-time faculty with seniority. In conjunction with tenure, it would also be necessary to write into faculty handbooks guarantees for academic freedom as defined by AAUP's 1940 statement.

3) Establishment of campus-based faculty senates with power and authority over curriculum and academic matters approximating that of the senate at Vincennes and other Indiana universities.

4) Increase substantially the pay for full-time and part-time faculty

To create the conditions for success, we propose a two level statewide strategy: 1) organize a statewide Ivy Tech chapter drawn from its various campuses and 2) create a statewide committee with AAUP leadership consisting of representatives from the Commission on Higher Education, administrators, state legislators, union and public interest groups, and Ivy Tech and other faculty.

Work at each level would reinforce and complement work at the other level. Organizing Ivy Tech faculty and publicizing their grievances would help ensure that the coalition campaign would meet the pay and professional interests of community college faculty; it would also facilitate bringing the issues and concerns of these faculty to public attention. On the other hand, creating a viable statewide committee would help focus the public interest in improving community college educational conditions, perhaps beginning with an investigation, and could mobilize an array of diverse interests in behalf of reform. Just as important, developing a statewide constituency for reform would dissipate the pervasive fear that keeps Ivy Tech faculty from organizing and create the space for the creative thinking and compromises necessary to change existing reality. In the meantime, successful organizing at the Ivy Tech level would establish the impetus for that change and provide the basis for publicity as to the conditions faced at our community colleges.

No doubt, some will harbor suspicions that a multi-interest, public-oriented state campaign could serve to divert energies and resources from grass roots organizing and undermine a labor-oriented. One obvious answer to this concern is that such an approach is a necessary first step in states lacking collective bargaining laws for faculty in public institutions of higher education. But, even in states with such laws, public-oriented campaigns are critical. The capacity to influence the formation of public opinion in the “public sphere,” win recognition by officeholders and other social actors as an interest group with legitimate claims on public policy, and engage in a variety of public-interest coalitions is actually a crucial factor in organizing and challenging authority without being vulnerable to debilitating counter-attacks.<sup>3</sup>

This point can be illustrated by returning to the late nineteenth-century when the labor movement was in its infancy. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries our common law held that combinations of workers that influenced other workers to strike or in any other way set the price of labor on the market were illegal conspiracies punishable by the courts. Similarly, our republican heritage was suspicious of unions, as it was of large combinations of capital, because both seemed to resemble a monopoly or a special privilege, which threatened to destroy the control over the state by the many. Finally, political economy taught that wages could not be raised except at the expense of the wages of less-organized workers or the ability of the economy as a whole to grow through capital accumulation. In addition to these disabilities in the court of public opinion, the labor movement was concentrated among industrial workers in the nation’s cities, which comprised only about 28 percent of the population in America. In short, organized labor was a tiny minority in a nation and almost all states, which were still

largely rural and agrarian. Under these circumstances it was important for the labor movement to participate vigorously in the public sphere and more generally in politics to redefine public opinion and to gain allies to protect it from its enemies.

A critical political opportunity for labor came in the 1870s and early 1880s when the country's economy hit a major depression marked by cutthroat business competition, falling commodity prices and wages, and falling profit rates, together with mass bankruptcies. The tendency for depression or what economists began to call "crises of overproduction," continued to plague the economy through the 1880s and 1890s. The US Senate launched a series of hearings on these recurrent crises in 1883. It was just before this critical juncture that existing unions formed the first viable national federation of unions, the Federation of Trades and Labor Organizations, the immediate forerunner of the AFL (1886). Almost with one voice labor leaders testified that unions should be allowed to legally combine, that wages could and were being raised in the market despite competition and in violation of the widely accepted laws of political economy, and that strong unions and high wages, far from being inimical to economic growth, were necessary to hold up consumer purchasing power and absorb surplus capital. To facilitate these ends, labor spokesmen demanded the eight-hour working day as a way of reducing unemployment and raising the standard of living and the wages for all workers.

This was only the beginning. On the initiative of organized labor, almost every industrial state established bureaus of labor statistics in the 1870s and 1880s. These bureaus conducted investigations into the living conditions of workers, demonstrating to the public that workers were not receiving a living wage that was supposed to result from America's protective tariff. The various bureaus, including a national bureau, also

conducted pioneering investigations into the distribution of wealth, and gave currency to labor's arguments that the nation lacked adequate purchasing power. The public investigations and testimony of labor leaders put the "labor problem" on the public agenda and created what sociologists call a new social movement "frame" for collective action.<sup>4</sup> Strikes, boycotts, and campaigns for union recognition could now be justified as being in the public interest.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, the trade unions on the city and state level gave up on third party forays and entered into what one historian has called "political collective bargaining" with the two major parties.<sup>6</sup> Hoping to act as the balance of power between the two closely divided parties, the local city labor federations began submitting labor programs to each major party and then endorsing candidates on the basis of the response. The indispensable premise of this strategy was that labor organizations could claim to speak for and to some extent, control the votes of their members. To make this claim a reality, labor leaders also established regular labor newspapers and cultivated labor reporters among the major newspapers. When labor-endorsed candidates outpolled candidates who lacked labor's endorsement, politicians noticed and began to cultivate the so-called "labor vote." Labor leaders also cultivated alliances with popular movements with likeminded movements and interests, such as the Irish nationalist land reform movement and the women's social reform movement, which was trying to win a ban on female and child sweatshop labor.

Labor's new public legitimacy and political clout paid handsome dividends when it came to organizing. For example, in 1880s the city of Chicago passed a tenement and workshop inspection ordinance and established the eight-hour day for city and county

employees. But the most important aid given labor by city government came in the form of police non-interference during strikes. During every major strike the local labor federation sent delegations to city hall to procure police neutrality. Local unions won so many important strikes that by 1885 local business leaders tried to pressure the mayor to protect their property from mass picketing. Despite employer opposition, by the beginning of the 1890s, the labor movement in Chicago boasted approximately 100,000 members, and the city's major union, the carpenters, had won collective bargaining after the intervention of leading citizens and businessmen.

The mutually reinforcing complementarity of labor acting, on the one hand as a social movement in the public sphere, and on the other as a class-conscious insurgency in the workplace has important lessons for contingent faculty. As a potential social movement and interest group, contingent faculty and their allies need to be alert to the mix of political opportunities and constraints, to framing our grievances in ways that speak directly to issues of public concern, and to cultivating supportive allies among likeminded groups and officeholders. This is precisely what the AAUP is trying to do in Indiana with its campaign that links improvements in the professional environment of community college faculty to the widely perceived public need to produce highly qualified graduates who are genuinely prepared to lead the state economically and culturally. In doing so we cannot and should not divert attention from organizing, but we *can* help establish a political context conducive to building active organizations at the grassroots by convincing the public that we are not simply a self-seeking interest, as well as establishing the necessary legislative clout to produce quality education for the sons and daughters of working Hoosiers.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Ernst Benjamin, Comparison of Ivy Tech State College and Vincennes University Faculty Personnel Policies with the Politics of Selected Peer Community Colleges (Indianapolis: Indiana Commission on Higher Education, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of contingent faculty members' recent actions as being part of a multi-interest social movement see Richard Schneirov, "Contingent Faculty: A New Social Movement Take Shape," WorkingUSA Vol. 6, No. 4 (Spring 2003): 38-48.

<sup>3</sup> The "public sphere" is the set of activities constituting a democratic society's deliberation on public issues. Though scholars often treat the public sphere as existing outside the state, a closer look at the history of liberal democratic societies demonstrates that it includes representative institutions; see Michael Schudson, "The 'Public Sphere' and its Problems: Bringing the State (Back) In," Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy 8 (1994):529-46.

<sup>4</sup> Sidney Tarrow, Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), chap. 7.

<sup>5</sup> On the importance of public investigations in reshaping the public agenda in the late nineteenth-century see Mary O. Furner, "Knowing Capitalism: Public Investigation of the Labor Question in the Long Progressive Era," in Mary O. Furner and Barry Supple, eds., The State and Economic Knowledge: The American and British Experiences (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 241-86.

<sup>6</sup> The arguments and supporting evidence in this and subsequent paragraphs are from Richard Schneirov, Labor and Urban Politics: Class Conflict and the Origins of Modern Liberalism in Chicago, 1864-97 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), esp. chaps. 6 and 12.