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## Equal Pay Means Equal Raises, Too

By [KEITH HOELLER](#)

### THE ADJUNCT TRACK

Career advice for part-time instructors

It has been well documented that adjunct faculty members do not receive equal pay for equal work, with most earning only half of what tenure-track professors make to teach the same number of courses. Little attention has been paid, however, to the fact that adjuncts rarely, if ever, receive raises to reward them for their experience and professional development.

That means most experienced adjuncts are paid at the same rate as beginners, and are denied annual raises that are routinely awarded to full-timers.

Little data is available on adjunct salaries nationally, and virtually none on adjunct raises. But the issue of raises for adjuncts may be as important as the wage issue itself, for the lack of raises explains in large part how adjunct salaries got so low in the first place, and why they stay so low despite recent gains in many states.

As long as raises go only to full-timers, the disparity between part-time and full-time faculty salaries will continue, and the goal of equality will remain elusive -- even in a state like Washington, where I have taught as an adjunct and which has been hailed as a leader in the effort to improve pay and benefits for part-time faculty members.

Perhaps the issue of pay equity for women may help put in perspective the challenge that we adjuncts face. The federal Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibited salary discrimination on the basis of gender and laid the foundation for the "comparable worth" movement, whereby many state legislatures allocated money to improve salaries for female state employees.

Despite such efforts, however, in 2003 women still earned, on average, only 76 percent of what men earned, according to the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

In a study of pay disparities in state governments between men and women from 1987 to 1997, Brinck Kerr and Steven Neuse, two political scientists at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, posed the question: "Have pay equity measures succeeded in reducing the sex-based wage gaps among administrative state employees?" Their answer was no. Why not? "It would be accurate to characterize sex-based pay equity measures as short-term, single-shot policies devoid of any long-term commitment," they wrote in 2000 in [a working paper](#) published by the university's Center for the Study of Representation. "In the absence of such a commitment by the states, the prospects for closing the wage gap between women and men in the near future do not look promising."

The adjunct faculty movement, too, has had some successes, but it could face the same fate as the comparable-worth campaign if we do not learn from the mistakes of the past.

Even the gains adjuncts have won in Washington State may well be a statistical illusion.

As a result of \$15-million appropriated by the Legislature to increase part-time faculty salaries since 1999, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges says that part-timers have gone from earning 49 percent of a full-time salary in 1999 to 57 percent in 2004.

The board says that part-timers now earn \$27,406 for teaching a full-time load of nine courses a year, compared to \$48,303 paid to a full-time faculty member who teaches the same number of courses. (However, since union contracts limit adjunct workloads, the actual adjunct is usually allowed to teach only half of a full-time load, and thus earns only \$13,703 a year.)

In 2004, the disparity between part-time and full-time salaries in the community colleges totaled \$115-million. That figure, which is the amount of money it would take to close the gap and pay all adjuncts at the same rate as the full-timers, has not gone down since 1999, because full-time salaries have not been a standing target. Although the part-timers, who outnumber full-time faculty members by three to one, received total raises of \$27.5-million, the full-time faculty received total raises of \$34.8-million during that same period.

With all the emphasis in my state on reducing the salary disparity between part-timers and full-timers, how could that have happened?

While unions at all 34 community and technical colleges have negotiated annual raises for full-time faculty members, 21 of the local unions have failed to bargain for any increments at all for their part-timers. The other 13 unions have won only a few small steps that I have nicknamed "dinkrements." As a result, since 1999, full-time faculty members have received nine times as much in incremental raises as the part-timers.

Since the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association are the exclusive bargaining agents for the part-timers in the Washington community colleges, and are quickly moving to force part-timers to either join the union or pay them a representation fee, you would think the unions would lead the charge in proposing state legislation to grant all part-time faculty members annual increments.

Yet for years union leaders have argued that such legislation would interfere with local collective bargaining. Although the two unions claimed this year that they would for the first time support pay increments for all part-timers, the unions nonetheless failed to offer their public support to a specific bill that would have done just that -- the "equal increments" legislation proposed by state Sen. Ken Jacobsen.

There is no justification, by either the colleges or the unions, for awarding raises to full-timers but not to part-timers. Just as adjuncts deserve equal pay for equal work, they also deserve equal raises for equal years of teaching experience.

Denying raises to part-timers is just one more way for colleges to "save" money by stiffing the adjuncts. On the part of the two faculty unions, it is one more way of denying the part-timers the fair representation that federal law requires in return for the right to be the exclusive bargaining agent.

Equal pay for equal work means equal salaries, equal raises, equal benefits, and equal treatment.

Anything less than equal is rightly called discrimination.

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