

## Saying No to an Economy that Kills: Undermining Mission and Exploiting Vocation in Catholic Higher Education

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MORAL THEOLOGIANS AND SOCIAL ETHICISTS are well trained in what constitutes human flourishing and communion with God and others. Yet, there is still surprisingly little work on how Catholic colleges and universities create obstacles to human flourishing in regard to their employment practices, particularly the rise in contingent faculty.<sup>1</sup> Currently, nearly 75 percent of college faculty members are contingent workers.<sup>2</sup> Still, many students and their parents do not realize this because most universities do not actively report this data to their own staff and faculty, much less to students and parents. To ignore this shift and the institutional policies that support it is nothing short of willful ignorance.<sup>3</sup> Those who attempt to deny the scope and harm of the current landscape of higher education are analogous to those who deny climate change. In almost all cases, contingent faculty labor funds the salaries of tenured and tenure track faculty, and yet contingent faculty often receive extraordinarily low comparative pay for similar work, no or limited access to benefits, and apathy or disdain from their colleagues. Without addressing the changed landscape of the U.S. economy and the professoriate and without rethinking the very structure of the academy, the small percentage of tenure-track faculty will, like those denying climate change, enjoy the privileges of their positions while simultaneously eroding the future of a profession they love. Catholic colleges and universities participating in such practices ig-

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term contingent faculty to include those working part-time and those working full-time with renewable contracts. I use the term part-time faculty interchangeably with adjunct faculty to highlight those most likely to be receiving proportionately lower pay and no or low benefits when compared with full-time faculty of any category.

<sup>2</sup> The Coalition on the Academic Workforce, *A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members*, June 2012, [www.academicworkforce.org/CAW\\_portrait\\_2012.pdf](http://www.academicworkforce.org/CAW_portrait_2012.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> The Coalition on the Academic Workforce, *A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members*.

nore Catholic social teaching and fall short of manifesting the distinctively Catholic charism to model evangelization that serves not only church members but also the world at large. Creating a culture of good news requires creating an economy of life, which supports the material and spiritual needs of workers. The hiring of contingent faculty in particular, and short-term workers without benefits more generally, undermines the mission of Catholic universities and colleges and exploits the vocation and the dignity of work.

I begin by placing the increase in contingent faculty in a larger economic context and then demonstrate how current business practices, including those at Catholic colleges and universities, are in tension with Catholic social teaching, undermining the good of persons, the stability of families and communities and obscuring employer responsibilities. The second section focuses specifically on contingent faculty and how current employment practices undermine an educational mission and exploit the vocation of the theologian, lay Catholic and the professoriate more generally. The third section focuses on tactics to move toward just pay, inclusion, and advocacy for contingent faculty and the need for Catholic universities and colleges not just to teach about Catholic social teaching but to model it in their culture and employment practices.

### **INCREASED TEMPORARY, LOW-WAGE WORK, DECREASED EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITY**

The U.S. economy has undergone profound shifts in the last forty years that have resulted in a shrinking middle class and unprecedented income disparity. This changed landscape speaks to an urgent need for the church to reclaim its deep and prophetic stance on the dignity of work and employer responsibility.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Changed Economic and Institutional Landscape*

In May 2017, Intuit's Brad Smith reported that roughly 34 percent of all U.S. jobs are gigs—short-term work without benefits—and that number is expected to rise to 43 percent by 2020.<sup>5</sup> While there are surely some who both have financial stability through other means and prefer the flexibility, most have to take these jobs because they are economically vulnerable. The gig economy is the culminating effect

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<sup>4</sup> For a thorough explanation of Catholic higher education's labor challenges see Joseph McCartin's "Confronting the Labor Problem in Catholic Higher Education: Applying Catholic Social Teaching in an Age of Increasing Inequality" in the *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* 37, no. 1 (2018): 71-88.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Gillespie, "Intuit: Gig economy is 34 percent of US workforce," CNN-Money, May 24, 2017, [money.cnn.com/2017/05/24/news/economy/gig-economy-intuit/index.html](http://money.cnn.com/2017/05/24/news/economy/gig-economy-intuit/index.html).

of changed business practices that deliberately try to evade long-term employer-employee relationships and responsibilities to persons from whose work they benefit.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1980s, business practices turned to identifying and streamlining core competencies, and increasing financial flexibility by relying on short-term and long-term contractors.<sup>7</sup> For the past forty years, growing numbers of corporate and nonprofit employers have distanced themselves from their workers in an effort to save costs and, in turn, obscure responsibility for their welfare. Not surprisingly, wage theft and income inequality have risen and savings have shrunk. The Department of Labor reported that weekly minimum wage violations in California and New York alone amounted to an estimated \$1.6 to \$2.5 billion of lost wages for workers in 2011.<sup>8</sup> While these numbers may be particularly high due to the levels of undocumented workers in these states, these estimates do not account for lost income due to unpaid overtime. Further, gig workers have to pay for their own healthcare, often resulting in lower quality and almost always more expensive care, have no paid vacation, resulting in increased psychological and physical stress, and earn lower wages and no access to employer matching, decreasing day to day and retirement savings. Roughly 57 percent of Americans had \$1,000 or less in their savings account in 2017.<sup>9</sup> The Economic Policy Institute reported that in 2013 “high-income families [were] 10 times as likely to have retirement accounts as low-income families.”<sup>10</sup>

Regarding income inequality, the average CEO-to-worker income ratio in 1980 was 42:1, but by 2014 that ratio had ballooned to 373:1.<sup>11</sup> Since the recession ended in 2009, more than half of all job growth

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<sup>6</sup> See Nick Wertsch, “Just Employment on University Campuses” Presented at the United Association for Labor and Education 2016 Annual Conference, April 15, 2016, [uale.org/document-table/conferences/conference-2016/425-just-employment-on-university-campuses/file](http://uale.org/document-table/conferences/conference-2016/425-just-employment-on-university-campuses/file). Wertsch and I developed our approach to these issues in parallel while working at Georgetown University.

<sup>7</sup> See David Weill, *The Fissured Workplace: Why Work Became So Bad for So Many and What Can Be Done to Improve It* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Ross Eisenbrey, “Wage Theft by Employers is Costing U.S. Workers Billions of Dollars a Year,” *Economic Policy Institute*, [www.epi.org/blog/wage-theft-by-employers-is-costing-u-s-workers-billions-of-dollars-a-year](http://www.epi.org/blog/wage-theft-by-employers-is-costing-u-s-workers-billions-of-dollars-a-year).

<sup>9</sup> Kathleen Elkins, “Here’s How Much Money Americans Have in their Savings Accounts,” *CNBC*, September 13, 2017, [www.cnbc.com/2017/09/13/how-much-americans-at-have-in-their-savings-accounts.html](http://www.cnbc.com/2017/09/13/how-much-americans-at-have-in-their-savings-accounts.html).

<sup>10</sup> Monica Morrissey, “The State of American Retirement: How 401(k)s have failed most American workers,” *Economic Policy Institute*, [www.epi.org/publication/retirement-in-america](http://www.epi.org/publication/retirement-in-america).

<sup>11</sup> “Income Inequality,” *Inequality.org*, [inequality.org/facts/income-inequality/](http://inequality.org/facts/income-inequality/).

has been in low-wage work.<sup>12</sup> Workers have been subject to suppressed wages since the 1970s, earning only .2 percent more per hour now than then when adjusted for inflation.<sup>13</sup> There are, of course, many other factors for these changes. A decrease in unionization and worker protections, an increase in technological advances, the relaxation of regulations and lower corporate tax rates have all contributed to growing income inequality. Higher education is not exempt from any of these trends.

On-campus, many services such as bookstores, security, food service, and janitorial services have been increasingly outsourced.<sup>14</sup> Most of these jobs pay minimum or just over minimum wage. Even if jobs are not outsourced, on-campus jobs are often still low paying. In 2012, more than 700,000 university workers earned less than a living wage, and a significant percentage of food service, janitorial, groundskeeping and security workers did not earn enough to meet the federal poverty line of \$24,300.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, between 1976-2011, senior university administrator positions grew by 141 percent.<sup>16</sup> “Full-time, non-professional employee ranks at colleges and universities grew 369 percent, while full-time, tenure and tenure-track ranks grew by just 23 percent.”<sup>17</sup> Part-time positions increased by 286 percent and full-time non-tenure track faculty by 259 percent.<sup>18</sup> Over the same period, university CEOs’ pay grew by 175 percent. The average course compensation for an adjunct is just \$2,700 per course.<sup>19</sup> A congressional report, *The Just-in-Time Professor*, estimates there are over one million contingent faculty in the U.S.<sup>20</sup> Whether outsourced or low-paid staff,

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<sup>12</sup> Mark Gongloff, “Half of All Jobs Created in the Past 3 Years Were Low Paying: Study,” *Huffington Post*, May 13, 2013, [www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/13/low-paying-jobs\\_n\\_3266737.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/13/low-paying-jobs_n_3266737.html).

<sup>13</sup> Jay Shambaugh and Ryan Nunn, “Why Wages Aren’t Growing in America,” *Harvard Business Review*, October 24, 2017, [hbr.org/2017/10/why-wages-arent-grow-in-g-in-america](http://hbr.org/2017/10/why-wages-arent-grow-in-g-in-america).

<sup>14</sup> David Milstone, “Outsourcing Services in Higher Education: Consider the Campus Climate,” *The Bulletin* 79, no. 2 (2010): 30-39.

<sup>15</sup> Pablo Eisenberg, “Campus Workers’ Wages: A Disgrace to Academe,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 10, 2012, [chronicle.com/article/A-Living-Wage-for-Campus/134232](http://chronicle.com/article/A-Living-Wage-for-Campus/134232).

<sup>16</sup> Colleen Flaherty, “Professor Pay Up 2.2%,” *Inside Higher Ed*, April 7, 2014, [www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/04/07/faculty-salaries-are-22-report-sees-many-financial-issues-facing-professors#sthash.lrdfnG4.dpbs](http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/04/07/faculty-salaries-are-22-report-sees-many-financial-issues-facing-professors#sthash.lrdfnG4.dpbs).

<sup>17</sup> Flaherty, “Professor Pay Up 2.2%.”

<sup>18</sup> Flaherty, “Professor Pay Up 2.2%.”

<sup>19</sup> The Coalition of Academic Workforce, *A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members*.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce, Democratic Staff, *The Just-in-Time Professor* (Washington, DC: United States House of Representatives, January 2014), [democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/1.24.14-AdjunctEforumReport.pdf](http://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/1.24.14-AdjunctEforumReport.pdf).

whether adjunct faculty member or janitor, university workers are often paid so little they are unable to adequately care for their material needs. Such restrictions impact their spiritual well-being, leaving them unable to partake in the life of the campus or wider community. On one hand, given the larger economic changes, the move to outsourcing and the related rise in income inequality in higher education is not that surprising. On the other hand, there are pointed reasons why Catholic universities and campuses in particular should resist these trends and reclaim ethically defensible economic models in higher education.

The documental history of Catholic social teaching clearly demonstrates the moral necessity of protecting the worker. Beginning with *Rerum Novarum*, and in numerous papal encyclicals and U.S. Bishops' statements since, the teaching of the church makes clear that persons must be put before profit. This message becomes more urgent in the current U.S. context as gig work continues to increase and workers have fewer opportunities to find full-time jobs with benefits.

### *Catholic Social Teaching on the Dignity of Work*

Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si'*, "To stop investing in people, in order to gain greater short-term financial gain, is bad business for society" (no. 127). For support, he cites *Caritas in Veritate* (no. 32), where Pope Benedict reminds society of the need to "continue to prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone" no matter the limited interests of business and dubious "economic logic." Francis reiterates the consistent link between the good of the human person and work. He writes, helping the "poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work" (*Laudato Si'*, no. 128). When employees or faculty have to forgo medical treatment due to its expense, have little or no day-to-day savings or retirement savings, and are unable to participate deeply in campus-life or the wider community, they do not have a life fully fitting the human person.

It has been almost forty years since *Laborem Exercens* was released, but its focus on the theology of work grounded in Scripture and the causes and remedies of worker exploitation remains as relevant now as it was then. John Paul II offered a sustained critique of the reification of the person in the labor market. According to him, work is a defining characteristic of humanity, and through it, humans participate in the creative activity of God to meet the needs of the community (no. 4, 24-27).<sup>21</sup> The value of work comes from the person

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<sup>21</sup> See David Hollenbach, "Human Work and the Story of Creation: Theology and Ethics in *Laborem exercens*," in *Co-creation and Capitalism: John Paul II's Laborem*

doing the work, the proper “subject of work” even when the “work” is mechanized (nos. 5-6) or, perhaps, even when the syllabus is already written or books selected. Worker solidarity is advocated, including an increase in worker participation, to protect humans in the face of the change, such as types, conditions and opportunities of work (nos. 7-8). Worker issues are fundamentally a Christian concern and must be addressed anew as circumstances change. The types, conditions and opportunities for work in higher education have changed, and Catholic universities and colleges have an obligation to protect the dignity of work and encourage and practice worker solidarity.

The human value that work generates is both participation in God’s creative work and an opportunity to become closer to and more formed by God. Work is overall positive and fulfilling, and its dignity is related to imaging God; as Genesis shows us, humans too require work and rest (no. 25). Francis highlights the necessity of work as part of a full life: “Work should be the setting for this rich personal growth, where many aspects of life enter into play: creativity, planning for the future, developing our talents, living out our values, relating to others, giving glory to God” (*Laudato Si’*, no. 127). Low-paid workers, workers marginalized from community life through contract work, and workers juggling multiple jobs to make ends meet are distanced from life-enriching rest and community (USCCB, *Economic Justice for All*, no. 14). Planning for the future is harder when one is worried about paying today’s bills. Developing one’s talents is stunted when one’s position has no growth potential. In short, employers must meet the material needs of their workers so that their spiritual needs have a greater chance of being met too.

In *Laborem Exercens*, John Paul II traces the development of worker solidarity since the promulgation of *Rerum Novarum* to demonstrate how the emerging liberal-political system favored capital over labor. *Laborem Exercens* insists on the priority of labor over capital, critiquing this system that seeks maximum profit while attempting to pay the lowest possible wage and disregard the safety, health and living conditions of workers and their families (nos. 11-12). To right this imbalance, worker solidarity emerged as a response to the degradation and exploitation first experienced by industrial workers (no. 8). Workers should have an opportunity to share in the means of production, management, or benefits from profit sharing (nos. 14-15). Labor rights include “suitable employment for all who are capable of it” (no. 18), just remuneration for the work done, including a family wage, and a labor process conducive to human needs (nos. 18-19), the right to

form unions (no. 20), and the right to emigrate in search of work (no. 23).

Paying a family wage and supporting workers' rights have been consistently taught in Catholic social thought and show up in papal encyclicals and U.S. Bishops' statements.<sup>22</sup> Such teaching makes clear that, when employers depress wages, they limit worker agency and harm the common good. "If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or contractor will afford no better, he is made the victim of force and injustice" (*Centesimus Annus*, no. 8). Later social teaching addresses needs for retirement, health insurance, and even accident or disability insurance (*Quadragesimo Anno*, no. 14; *Centesimus Annus*, no. 24). Thus, Catholic social thought is clear that reliance on short-term and contract workers to avoid paying living wages and providing social protections for workers is ethically indefensible.

*Laborem Exercens* contributes to a deeper understanding of the reality of workers by discussing the responsibilities of the direct and indirect employer and role of intermediary organizations. Direct employers are always accountable for respecting the rights of the worker (no. 17). The state is considered an "indirect" employer by substantially determining "one or other facet of the labor relationship" and helping the direct employer establish an ethically correct labor policy (no. 17). Universities and colleges function as direct employers. Gerald Beyer demonstrated how Catholic universities and colleges' attempts to block adjunct unions selectively ignores the contexts in which unions become necessary and contributes to the undermining of universities and colleges' mission through neglect of Catholic social teaching.<sup>23</sup> Regarding Beyer's first point, unions are a long-standing mechanism for raising wages generally and for contingent faculty specifically. Unionized adjuncts earned roughly 25 percent more in pay across most university types, with the exception of baccalaureate colleges, according to a 2012 survey by the Coalition on the Academic Workforce.<sup>24</sup> The same survey indicates that unionized faculty are significantly more likely to have access to healthcare and retirement benefits, including retirement matching. Unions are acting as a corrective force to unjust employers who are depressing contingent faculty wages. Beyer's second point—that Catholic universities and

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<sup>22</sup> See *Laborem Exercens*, no. 19; *Quadragesimo Anno*, no. 14; *Centesimus Annus*, no. 24; USCCB's *Statement on Church and Social Order and Economic Justice for All*.

<sup>23</sup> Gerald J. Beyer, "Labor Unions, Adjuncts, and the Mission and Identity of Catholic Universities" *Horizons* 42, no. 1 (2015): 1-37.

<sup>24</sup> The national median adjunct pay for a three-credit course is \$2,700, \$2,475 for nonunionized part-time faculty and \$3,100 for unionized part-time faculty. See The Coalition of Academic Workforce, *A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members*.

colleges are undermining mission—is clear by these institutions’ selective engagement, application, and promotion of Catholic social thought.

*Rerum Novarum* acknowledges that the state itself cannot solve every aspect of various social problems and thus, intermediary organizations, such as family and various cultural and economic and political groups, help to realize human fulfillment. Religion, more narrowly the Catholic Church, is highlighted for its important role in promoting justice. There is “no intermediary more powerful than religion (whereof the Church is the interpreter and guardian) in drawing the rich and the working class together, by reminding each of its duties to the other, and especially of the obligations of justice” (no. 19). Catholic universities and colleges are employers whose mission stems from the church; they function as both direct employers and as intermediary organizations. They have a particular responsibility to fulfill both obligations by modeling just pay and social protections for their own workers. Instead, they are undermining their mission and exploiting vocations, particularly regarding contingent faculty.

### UNDERMINING MISSION, EXPLOITING VOCATION

As James Keenan points out in his 2015 *University Ethics*, the ethical and moral power of universities—real or aspirational—is currently questionable at best. By and large universities have failed to create “a culture of ethical consciousness and accountability.”<sup>25</sup> Keenan points to the “silo” effect of departments, which leads to all kinds of horizontal bubbles, where faculty may know few other faculty or employees. In the *Journal of College and Character*, Laura Harrison notes that, when people do leave their silos, they tend to do so “in a competitive context” often pitted against each other in a “discourse that separates us.”<sup>26</sup> Classism against blue-collar workers and racism often create additional barriers to getting to know one another.<sup>27</sup> A matrix of pressures—widespread economic trends, the nature of academic work, the organization of higher education, and classism and racism—have become obstacles to fulfilling universities and colleges’ missions.

#### *Undermining Mission*

Addressing the current matrix of pressures is necessary for higher education to reclaim its moral power and to impact positively the lives

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<sup>25</sup> James Keenan, S.J. *University Ethics: How Colleges Can Build and Benefit from a Culture of Ethics* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 4.

<sup>26</sup> Laura M. Harrison, “Faculty and Student Affairs Collaboration in the Corporate University,” *Journal of College and Character* 14, no. 4 (2013): 365-372, 367.

<sup>27</sup> Eisenberg, “Campus Workers’ Wages: A Disgrace to Academe.”



of the campus community and fulfill institutional mission. Most higher education institutions are anchors for their communities, “whose physical presence is integral to the social, cultural, and economic wellbeing of the community.”<sup>28</sup> The 4,000-plus colleges and universities in the United States “*spend* more than \$400 billion annually, *own* more than \$300 billion in endowment investments, and *employ* roughly three million faculty and staff.”<sup>29</sup> The economic and social reach of higher education is formidable. Further, community engagement is often an explicit component of university mission statements, strategic plans and curriculums, so important that community partnerships are frequently tracked and evaluated.<sup>30</sup>

We are faced with a climate wherein current business practices are undermining institutions’ educational mission but also their contributions to the common good and as anchor institutions in their local communities. By and large, anchor institutions, such as hospitals and universities, offer extensive tangible and intangible benefits to employees, including quality health care, retirement matching, and tuition. But as Laura Harrison points out, “When these anchor institutions outsource jobs or increase part-time employees to circumvent such investments in human capital they harm the very communities they otherwise profess to support.”<sup>31</sup>

All universities, by nature of their nonprofit status and mission, aim to strengthen knowledge, values, and positively impact the world. Catholic institutions, in addition to their nonprofit and anchor status, often have mission statements that expressly commit themselves to social justice and the common good. To the extent such institutions have outsourced staff or created tenuous employment of faculty, they have lost moral credibility. This is particularly true for Catholic institutions that ignore Catholic social teaching on labor and the dignity of work.

Low and unstable work offered to so many contingent faculty members undermines the value of education and the production of knowledge. First, the underpaying of faculty devalues the very worth of a college degree. Contingent faculty members receive the very smallest fraction of tuition dollars of all faculty members. One has to

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<sup>28</sup> Debra Friedman, David Perry, and Carrie Menendez, “The Foundational Role of Universities as Anchor Institutions in Urban Development: A Report of National and Data Survey Findings,” *Association of Public and Land Grant Universities*, [usucoalition.org/images/APLU\\_USU\\_Foundational\\_FNLlo.pdf](http://usucoalition.org/images/APLU_USU_Foundational_FNLlo.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Rita Axelroth Hodges and Steve Dubb, *The Road Half Traveled: University Engagement at a Crossroads* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2012), 7. Emphasis mine.

<sup>30</sup> Friedman, Perry, and Menendez, “The Foundational Role of Universities as Anchor Institutions in Urban Development.”

<sup>31</sup> Harrison, “Faculty and Student Affairs Collaboration,” 367.

question, if the education provided is not worth professional compensation, is the degree itself?

Moreover, the growing move to a distinction between teaching and research faculty is deeply problematic. If, on average, only 25 percent of faculty are paid to do research, how will this affect the production of knowledge? Without financial support, few contingent faculty have the time and resources to commit to research and publication. Will only those with independent resources be able to publish in the humanities? Catholic universities and colleges are to ensure that “*university teachers* should seek to improve their competence and endeavour to set the content, objectives, methods, and results of research in an individual discipline within the framework of a coherent world vision” (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, no. 21). If faculty do not receive support to conduct research or even to keep up on current research, how can they fulfill this aspect of mission?

There are about 260 Catholic colleges and universities in the U.S., serving roughly 891,000 students.<sup>32</sup> While slightly over half of these students self-identify as Catholic, 79 percent have attended Catholic primary or secondary school.<sup>33</sup> Seventy-seven percent of students leave Catholic institutions believing “helping the poor or disadvantaged should be a life goal.”<sup>34</sup> The reality is that many contingent faculty members at Catholic universities are the poor today, and students and parents have little awareness of how these institutions undermine their mission through hypocrisy.

*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, no. 13, identified four essential characteristics of Catholic colleges. These essential characteristics are:

1. a Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university community as such;
2. a continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research;
3. fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church;
4. an institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life.

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<sup>32</sup> Catholic Higher Education FAQs, *Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities*, [www.accunet.org/Catholic-Higher-Ed-FAQs](http://www.accunet.org/Catholic-Higher-Ed-FAQs).

<sup>33</sup> Catholic Higher Education FAQs, *Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities*.

<sup>34</sup> Catholic Higher Education Embracing Social Justice, *Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities*, [www.accunet.org/Portals/70/Images/Publications-Graphics-Other-Images/CHE-socialjustice.jpg?ver=2017-05-08-142606-590](http://www.accunet.org/Portals/70/Images/Publications-Graphics-Other-Images/CHE-socialjustice.jpg?ver=2017-05-08-142606-590).

When these characteristics are considered in light of the material and spiritual situation of contingent faculty, Catholic universities and colleges' fidelity to the Christian message is lacking. Without the ability to participate fully in the life of the community and pursuit of truth and knowledge through stable paid study and research, people and mission suffer.

### *The Material and Spiritual Needs of Contingent Faculty*

Contingent faculty members encounter multiple personal and institutional obstacles to meeting their material and spiritual needs. Before considering these factors however, three persistent myths must be addressed. The first is that contingent faculty members fill temporary departmental needs. This is simply not true the great majority of the time. The 2012 study by the Coalition on Academic Workforce found "over 80 percent of part-time faculty respondents reported having taught as a contingent faculty member for at least three years; over 55 percent taught in that role for six or more years, and over 30 percent for ten or more years."<sup>35</sup> This is critical to understanding the changed landscape of higher education: 80 percent of adjuncts have been at their institutions three years or longer.<sup>36</sup> The second myth is that most adjuncts have other jobs and do not rely on teaching as their sole income. While this is certainly sometimes the case, and there will be variation among universities and colleges, 73.3 percent of adjuncts polled in 2012 indicated that they considered teaching in higher education their primary employment.<sup>37</sup> The third and most persistent myth is firmly entrenched in the minds of many well-meaning people due to the connotation of the word adjunct itself. This is the myth that adjuncts are not core staff and are supplemental to the university. The idea of part-time faculty as adjunct—as supplementary and not essential—is fundamentally false. At Georgetown University there are nearly 1,100 part-time faculty, 224 non-tenure line full-time and 544-tenure line faculty.<sup>38</sup> Part-time faculty are essential faculty but have

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<sup>35</sup> American Federation of Teachers, "A National Survey of Part-Time/Adjunct Faculty," *American Academic* 2 (2010), 8. See also The Coalition of Academic Workforce, *A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members*.

<sup>36</sup> I have worked part-time teaching a two/two course load for the past seven years as of fall 2018. Tenured-track faculty at Georgetown teach either a two/one or a two/two; Non-tenure full-time faculty teach a three/three course load.

<sup>37</sup> The Coalition of Academic Workforce, *A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members*.

<sup>38</sup> A few readers may want to point out that some of the 1,100 adjunct faculty at Georgetown University have other jobs. That misses the point. Nearly 70 percent of faculty members are contingent (working full-time on one, three or five year contracts and part-time on a semester by semester basis); 59 percent are adjunct (part-time). If roughly two-thirds of faculty have no benefits, cannot compete for internal funding and have no office space, clearly mission is affected. Universities and colleges have

been marginalized due to hiring practices, low pay, and lack of institutional support.

Part-time faculty pay is notoriously low, and some part-time faculty members work at multiple institutions to meet their financial needs. Rarely are there mechanisms for merit rewards or automatic Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA). Even when a department chair wants to raise pay, the dean or provost's office can thwart his or her efforts. Most institutions calculate a low hourly estimate per three-credit course to come up with a full-time equivalency percentage that avoids paying benefits. In most cases, faculty work far beyond this amount. To avoid paying benefits, institutions hire more adjuncts, often defending this decision on the basis of giving more people teaching experience. However, such experience is irrelevant when there are simply not enough full-time or tenure-track jobs. Some adjuncts have to reapply for their job every year; few have multiple year contracts, leaving them in near constant anxiety about being rehired. Low wages, income instability, and lack of the most basic employee benefits are also sources of stress on part-time faculty. Only 28 percent of adjuncts receive healthcare from their institutions.<sup>39</sup> More often than not institutions expect part-time faculty to pay for health care themselves or to have access to benefits from a partner. This latter practice relies on an employee being partnered and being partnered to someone with a job with benefits. In the former, part-time faculty members pay disproportionate amounts of their own income to obtain health care on the market.<sup>40</sup> Part-time faculty rarely have sick pay or maternity leave. They rarely have retirement matching, and, if they do, it is done on the basis of one's income and will be disproportionately low. Most cannot access tuition remission. Most cannot compete for internal grants and funding and will lose their part-time positions if external funding is obtained. In short, adjuncts work with no economic safety net, and institutions make no investment in adjunct well-being or professional growth.

Hiring practices for adjuncts set up a framework for marginalization. Adjuncts may or may not be interviewed, and, more often than not, no one other than the department chair is involved. (This is often

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focused on positive effects of employing faculty with experience outside of the academy while ignoring the harm to faculty themselves, students and community.

<sup>39</sup> Of these 28 percent of adjuncts that reported receiving healthcare, 42 percent worked at public four-year institutions and just a third worked at private four-year institutions, see The Coalition of Academic Workforce, *A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members*.

<sup>40</sup> Since my partner's field also has moved to a contract model and few companies offer benefits, we purchase our healthcare on the market for \$1500 per month. Three-quarters of my pay goes to cover my family's healthcare. Our monthly premium has risen roughly \$250 per month in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

also the case for full-time faculty working on annual contracts.) Adjuncts are rarely introduced to the rest of departmental staff, much less the dean. By and large, tenure-track faculty do not feel invested in part-time workers—they do not know their credentials and, sometimes, do not care. Often, even after years of employment, part-time faculty members are not seen as colleagues but as temporary employees. Most adjuncts do not have offices. Many do not appear in directories, have business cards, or even access to letterhead. They may or may not be invited to staff meetings and are almost never invited to staff retreats. Sometimes departments rely only on course evaluations to assess adjunct performance, with few, if any, classroom observation or considerations of other types of contributions. Other adjuncts may be over-managed, enduring near constant assessment. For example, adjunct faculty employed by the 14 regional state colleges making up the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education are reviewed five times per academic year.<sup>41</sup> When and if full-time faculty positions open up, it is rare for an adjunct to be hired. The lack of material and spiritual support undermines the good of workers, and, in turn, undermines the good of their families and ability to contribute to the larger community. The Christian message of good news is replaced by economic anxiety and isolation; the pursuit of truth and knowledge is stunted.

### *Exploitation by the Market*

During a 2018 panel at the Annual Meeting of Society of Christian Ethics, Jason King argued that the move toward the hiring of contingent faculty is motivated by Catholic universities' and colleges' quest for survival.<sup>42</sup> He pointed to the business practices (and pressures) of 1) remaining financially viable; 2) attracting students and parents; 3) controlling costs through increased donations and cutting salaries, and 4), and perhaps most troubling, the valuing of administrators over faculty. As already noted, these last two points appear across the university landscape. However, in truth, many universities, even Catholic ones, have a long history of paying poverty or near poverty wages. What has changed is who is receiving them. These changed business practices and their impact on teaching as a profession and the real or perceived fiscal pressure continue to undermine mission.

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<sup>41</sup> See the Agreement Between Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties (APSCUF) and The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (State System) July 1, 2015, to June 30, 2018, 26, [www.apscuf.org/contracts/APSCUFfacultyCBA2015-18.pdf](http://www.apscuf.org/contracts/APSCUFfacultyCBA2015-18.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> Jason King, "Contingent Faculty and the Heart of Catholic Education," Presented at the Society of Christian Ethics, Portland, Oregon, January 6, 2018.

These business practices include exploiting a labor pool that these schools have helped to create. There are 26 doctoral degree-granting programs in theology and religious studies that create the market. From 2006-2016, there have been about 6,050 doctoral degrees conferred in biblical studies, Judaic studies, religious studies, and theology/theological education.<sup>43</sup> Every year since 2010, there were between 560 and 613 degrees conferred. In that same period, anywhere from 184 to 232 job advertisements per year were placed at the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature Employment Center for assistant-level full-time positions, which included one-year and non-tenure-track appointments. In 2016, fewer than 300 jobs were posted, at any level, the lowest since 2002.<sup>44</sup> While postgraduate statistics are only available from the National Science Foundation (NSF) every five years, their data confirms a similar trend. The 2006, 2011, and 2016 statistics show a downward shift from 66.7 percent to 52.1 percent in the rate of a recent PhD having a “definite placement.” However, NSF’s placement numbers also include post-doctorates, full-time non-tenure line positions, jobs outside of the academy, and potentially adjunct work, making these placement rates significantly lower.

According to the American Academy of Religion’s employment trend report there has been anywhere from a high of thirty three (2016) to a low of thirteen (2012) advertisements for Christian ethics positions, of any rank and type, in the past ten years. Catholic universities and colleges advertise the majority of these positions, as they tend to require courses in theology and religious studies. While the numbers need more rigorous tracking and analysis, it is clear that there are simply too many qualified candidates for too few jobs and that the market becomes increasingly flooded every year. Moreover, if one has care-giving responsibilities or otherwise cannot move for a one-year appointment, the chances of acquiring full-time academic work decline. Every chair and graduate advisor, and certainly every incoming graduate student, should understand the complexities of the current environment. Administrators continually defend low per course compensation based on market conditions, even though Catholic social teaching clearly rejects such appeals. In *Mater et Magistra*, John XXIII wrote:

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<sup>43</sup> Data compiled from “Table 13: Degrees Granted by Subfield 2004-2014,” *National Science Foundation*, [www.nsf.gov/statistics/2016/nsf16300/data-tables.cfm](http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2016/nsf16300/data-tables.cfm).

<sup>44</sup> Job Advertisement Data 2015-2016, American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature, [www.aarweb.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Career\\_Services/AARSBLJobsReport2015-2016.pdf](http://www.aarweb.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Career_Services/AARSBLJobsReport2015-2016.pdf).

We therefore consider it our duty to reaffirm that the remuneration of work is not something that can be left to the laws of the marketplace; nor should it be a decision left to the will of the more powerful. It must be determined in accordance with justice and equity; which means that workers must be paid a wage which allows them to live a truly human life and to fulfill their family obligations in a worthy manner. (no. 71)

The current situation, in its clear exploitation of market conditions, is made worse through an exploitation of vocation.

### *Exploitation of Vocation*

An often-overlooked factor in conversations about contingent faculty, whether from the perspectives of contingent faculty themselves, tenured or tenure-track allies or administrators, is the powerful narratives, some more true than others, about vocation. Most people pursue doctoral degrees in theology because they not only want to do so, they feel called to do so by their skills and interest and relationship with God. Both the spiritual and professional aspects of vocation highlight what makes the current landscape of higher education so ripe for exploitation.

The term vocation shows up nearly fifty times in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and its recurrent theme is the interdependence of personal and humanity's vocation to union with God. Most of those who choose to commit to doctoral studies in theology have discerned that study, teaching and research are the way to foster communion with God for themselves and others. Catholic contingent faculty (even more so those with doctoral degrees in theology) are likely to know and be committed to the teaching of *Lumen Gentium*,

Upon all the laity, therefore, rests the noble duty of working to extend the divine plan of salvation to all [people] of each epoch and in every land. Consequently, may every opportunity be given them so that, according to their abilities and the needs of the times, they may zealously participate in the saving work of the Church. (no. 33)

Catholics may exhibit an even greater willingness to labor under unjust conditions *for* the church. Those faculty members familiar with the founding and maintaining of Catholic higher education will know the sacrifices made for its existence. Vowed religious men and women shouldered much of this sacrifice to found the great majority of our Catholic universities and colleges. Such commitment should and does inspire gratitude, but, when the bulk of faculty members are or will be married with families, the burden of fidelity to Catholic identity and evangelization is heavy indeed. It blurs what faculty expects of themselves and what we expect of our colleagues. For many of us, teaching

theology or teaching at a Catholic university or college is an act of fidelity, an act of fidelity I fear many administrators are unconsciously willing to exploit.

Many colleges and universities neither compensate nor support the majority of their own faculty as professionals anymore. One may have a vocation to teach in a secular sense, but most university and college faculty members are no longer part of the professional class. Mary Crane writes,

The reality is that for many, being a professor in America can no longer be considered a middle class job, which involves a significant shift in how we understand the vocation: A professor belongs to the professional class, a professor earns a salary and owns a home, probably with a leafy yard, and has good health insurance and a retirement account. In the American imagination, a professor is perhaps disheveled, but as a product of brainy eccentricity, not of penury. In the American university, this is not the case.<sup>45</sup>

Crane's point is that the link in the imagination between the vocation of being a professor and its ability to yield the economic benefits thought of as a professional's has persisted while the reality is broken. Nonetheless, the burdens of being a professional remain, particularly with regard to the structure of compensation and expectations of self and others. Part-time faculty are not paid an hourly wage but neither are they paid a professional wage. They meet with students until their questions are answered, grade papers until they are done, and review potential course material. While Mary McCartney is writing about medical school, her description is alarmingly accurate about the reality of the majority of today's faculty: "In the end, vocation is what it's all about. We're tested on its presence before we enter [a doctoral program]. We're implored to hold ourselves to the highest standards. *We're judged according to these standards, even when the resources to achieve them are willfully withheld.*"<sup>46</sup> In short, part-time faculty are held to professional standards but not supported by their institutions in this capacity. Yet, a strong sense of professional—and often religious or secular vocation—remains. Perhaps this is even more so if we love to teach and research, are invested in the project of higher education, or have simply invested so many years, and perhaps debt, in pursuit of our vocation to God, the church and the academy.

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<sup>45</sup> Mary Crane, "Stop Defending the Liberal Arts," *Inside Higher Ed*, January 17, 2011, as cited by Marc Cortez, "Theological Vocation and the Academy" *Journal of Markets & Morality* 18, no. 2 (2015): 429–437, 429.

<sup>46</sup> Mary McCartney, "Vocation, Vocation, Vocation," *BMJ: British Medical Journal* (2016): 355, dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.i6526. Emphasis mine.



The hope of affirmation from these institutions is persistent. There are stories that work to foster hope for just employment: someone we know began as an adjunct and ultimately got a tenure-track position or an adjunct got hired full-time. Such stories are the *exception*, and they favor those without partners, without primary care-giving responsibilities, and with independent sources of wealth. The reality is that more often than not contingent faculty members are viewed as not being good enough or not wanting a tenure-track job enough. In regards to the study of ethics and the mission of Catholic higher education, this is painfully ironic for contingent faculty: lived fidelity to people and communities harms your career.

I have heard, more often than I would like to, department heads or administrators explain that adjunct teaching is a career stepping stone.<sup>47</sup> The argument goes that it provides much-needed teaching experience for adjuncts to obtain full-time positions. This is simply fallacious. As noted above, every year in which one is not hired, one becomes less competitive. Further, some institutions limit the number of years an adjunct can work for a university or college. To whose benefit is such a policy? Clearly it is not a benefit for the worker, students, or wider community, particularly when another adjunct will simply take that worker's place. Frederick Buechner famously said that vocation is the "place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."<sup>48</sup> Students are hungry for passionate, committed faculty and, often, ignorant about adjunct work conditions. Institutions are hungry too, perhaps even gluttonous, and often do not show care in what (or who) gets consumed to meet their hunger. Without a commitment to systemic change, contingent faculty members will continue to be food for hungry universities, quickly devoured and expelled when too old or enrollment dips. The challenge then is to relieve the burdens of contingent faculty without simultaneously normalizing contingent faculty to the point of easy acceptance of unjust and damaging practices that undermine mission and exploit vocation.

### **TACTICS TO RECLAIM INTEGRITY AND PROMOTE SOLIDARITY**

I have argued that temporary, low-paid work with few benefits is ethically indefensible from the standpoint of both Catholic social teaching and the specific role and mission of Catholic universities and

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<sup>47</sup> I have had many opportunities to discuss these issues directly with department heads and indirectly through panel discussions. For the past four years, I have worked with American Academy of Religion's Academic Labor and Contingent Faculty Working Group on these issues and served on their Board of Directors to represent contingent faculty concerns.

<sup>48</sup> Jordan J. Pallor, "Editorial," *Journal of Markets & Morality*, 18, no. 2 (2015): 251–254, 254. Pallor is referring to Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 95.

colleges. For the good of workers and the church, efforts must be taken to provide just pay, promote inclusion and increase advocacy of contingent faculty. Faith and solidarity require it.

*Providing Just Pay, Accessing Benefits, Creating Job Security*

How does one figure out what just pay is? Since these issues are so complex, I focus only on a few obstacles here. It is common knowledge that as tenure-line or tenured faculty in research universities, faculty members are to spend one-third of their time teaching, one-third on research and one-third on service. However, to my knowledge, we do not know how much this is actually practiced. Often, research is done during breaks and summer; this is particularly true when teaching loads are high. Actual time spent on research and service ebbs and flows from week to week and year to year. Further, sometimes research rates decline after tenure. My point is that this formula itself may need to be rethought. Second, it is common for faculty teaching in the humanities to be paid significantly less than those paid in the sciences due to an appeal to the market, even though doing so to avoid paying a just wage is contrary to Catholic social teaching. Fundamentally, any attempts by higher education administrators to justify low adjunct pay undermines the very value of the education the same institution is offering its students. Such rationalizations need to be constantly challenged.

Contingent faculty advocates suggest a just compensation would be between \$10,300-\$15,000 per three-credit course depending on the local cost of living and comparative full-time faculty pay.<sup>49</sup> These levels of pay include compensation for benefits, including health and retirement, which an institution is not paying through other means. While many struggling institutions balk at such suggestions, it is simply false to say money is not available if other faculty receive disproportionately more pay and/or staff and coaches receive such. Administrators must realign spending with mission, potentially readjusting other pay scales and spending.

I am not convinced that advocating for additional tenure lines or full-time contract lines is a tactic that promotes security or welfare for contingent faculty. More often than not, if a department is granted an

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<sup>49</sup> The Modern Language Association's recommendation on minimum per-course compensation for part-time faculty members was \$10,300 for 2017-2018. See "MLA Recommendation on Minimum Per-Course Compensation for Part-Time Faculty Members," *Modern Language Association*, [www.mla.org/Resources/Research/Surveys-Reports-and-Other-Documents/Staffing-Salaries-and-Other-Professional-Issues/MLA-Recommendation-on-Minimum-Per-Course-Compensation-for-Part-Time-Faculty-Members](http://www.mla.org/Resources/Research/Surveys-Reports-and-Other-Documents/Staffing-Salaries-and-Other-Professional-Issues/MLA-Recommendation-on-Minimum-Per-Course-Compensation-for-Part-Time-Faculty-Members). The Service Employees International Union, which represents 54,000 faculty in higher education, launched their \$15K per course campaign in April 2015.

additional tenure or non-tenure line, a national search is conducted and preference is given to younger scholars with more publications and fewer years on the market. The adjuncts' fidelity and service to the institution with little pay, most often little investment in their growth as a teacher and no material support for publications, harms them in the job search. This is a painful and unjust reality of the current job market. Contingent faculty members are deemed good enough to teach a department's students, often for years, but, when a professional salary, benefits, and material resources needed to flourish or research are at stake, they are not "good enough." Not only is it demoralizing, it is very difficult to parse out how ageism, departmental or larger politics, or even personality factors into such decisions. The institution offers no fidelity to the worker. For these reasons, the more just tactic is to offer permanent part-time work with benefits and to create pathways for movement from adjunct to full-time and even adjunct or full-time non-tenure to tenured positions. Doing so acknowledges part-time faculty members existing contributions and professionalism.

In addition to raising pay, there are other ways that the welfare of part-time faculty can be addressed. Make sure they can access subsidized health care benefits and/or lower the threshold for when access can be reached. Universities and departments could set up preferred hiring status for other work at the university, changes that would allow many part-time instructors to gain desperately needed benefits, raise their compensation, and access retirement matching and tuition remission. In doing so, however, extra care has to be given to how to protect the academic freedom of the faculty member while also a staff member.<sup>50</sup> Create permanent part-time positions which offer just pay, access to COLA increases and merit rewards, and proportional benefits. Annual contracts should certainly be offered. Yet multiple year appointments provide better stability for the faculty member themselves, and the students, department, and wider campus community.

There are often differing visions of how best to respond to the rise in contingent faculty within departments. A common practice is to reinforce hierarchy based on labor category. Alternatively, universities could treat all faculty members equally. Or, finally, there is a preferential option for the most economically vulnerable.<sup>51</sup> I demonstrate

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<sup>50</sup> See Lincoln Rice's essay on academic freedom and contingency in this volume.

<sup>51</sup> Jason King, "Contingent Faculty and the Heart of Catholic Education," and Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty, "Faculty Advocate and Middle Manager: Leveraging Privilege for the Sake of the University Common Good," presented at the Society of Christian Ethics, Portland, Oregon, January 6, 2018.

how this might work out in two areas: scheduling courses and distributing summer school courses.<sup>52</sup> Are the preferences of tenure line and tenured faculty given priority in course scheduling? Are they scheduled fairly, balancing the needs of all? Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty suggests giving priority to scheduling needs of contingent faculty.<sup>53</sup> Trying to coordinate childcare or other work when one does not know when one will teach or when one's office hours will be is extremely stressful. Allowing contingent faculty to have greater influence when they teach and over their office hours is not just a convenience. It allows these faculty members to save funds on childcare and travel, and, while just pay is always preferred, such efforts matter. Second, it is common for summer school courses to be offered to tenure-track faculty first, then non-tenure track full-time, and then adjuncts. This may be a policy of a dean or chair. However, the option of teaching summer school allows adjuncts, already the lowest-paid and without benefits, to raise their income. Increasing opportunities to teach summer school is a band-aid approach, but it at least acknowledges a wound. Creating jobs with just pay, benefits, and stability is not just about being fair to contingent faculty, it is about institutions living their mission and ensuring they are contributing to the well-being of community.

### *Promoting Inclusion*

While every contingent faculty member should be paid at a level that allows them and their families to flourish, they also need the material and community resources to do their job well. Part-time faculty should be introduced to other departmental faculty and the dean and participate in general orientations to the institution. Library privileges and copy services are essential as are regular and substantial access to office space (a few hours a week is not adequate). All faculty should have names on doors even when offices are shared or when a faculty member is working for only a semester. Part-time faculty should have access to assistance from departmental secretaries, if there is one, and have access to business cards, if they desire them. Not only is this critically helpful for students, it helps make the invisible adjunct visible.

All faculty should be invited to participate in departmental meetings, though participation should not be mandatory. If it is mandatory, part-time faculty should be compensated for their time. In fact, one of the most common complaints and frustrations by adjuncts and, sometimes, non-tenure-track faculty is that they are not invited or allowed to participate in departmental meetings. This seems to be rather low-

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<sup>52</sup> The difference in approach could be seen in King, "Contingent Faculty and the Heart of Catholic Education," and Hinson-Hasty, "Faculty Advocate and Middle Manager."

<sup>53</sup> Hinson-Hasty, "Faculty Advocate and Middle Manager."

hanging fruit and a way to erode the pervasive class mentality in many departments.

Chairs are not trained in personnel management and few get leadership training, and yet they are often contingent faculty's primary, even only, point of contact with the department. Care must be taken to expand the range of contact with departmental colleagues. Foremost, I suggest that chairs and/or undergraduate advisors get to know adjunct faculty members' expertise and professional goals. Who is actively on the job market? Who intends to stay in the location due to family and community obligations? What do they want to be teaching? Do they want to be teaching in the summer? Are they most in need of benefits or higher compensation?

Tenure-track and tenured allies can make efforts to get to know contingent faculty. They can also seek out colleagues for joint projects, which would increase inclusion and provide support and encouragement for otherwise lonely work. They can make sure contingent faculty are informed about issues within the department or curriculum issues within the college. Such efforts ameliorate the spiritual burdens of being contingent faculty, and, while essential, do not replace the necessary just pay and access to benefits.

### *Increasing Advocacy*

Advocating for contingent faculty is not a moral option; it is a moral necessity given the changed landscape of higher education and the risk to mission of Catholic universities and colleges. There are many tactics to build pressure for change. I note four: 1) advocating within one's department; 2) increasing student engagement on campus labor issues; 3) working with governance; and 4) establishing campus wide policies. Such tactics can build at least the attitude and duty of solidarity.<sup>54</sup>

I am thankful for and admire the courage of those tenure track faculty who have been vocal on these issues in a specifically Catholic context, notably Jim Keenan, Gerald Beyer and Joseph McCartin, as well as all those tenure line and tenured colleagues who have supported these issues at learned societies. Nonetheless, it appears to be largely contingent faculty themselves who talk about these issues.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Meghan J. Clark, *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought: The Virtue of Solidarity and the Praxis of Human Rights* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 107.

<sup>55</sup> This claim is made on my informal observation of those writing in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and those active on these issues in the Society of Christian Ethics and American Academy of Religion. In this volume, the majority of contributors (six of nine) are contingent faculty.

Yet, tenured faculty members are in fact in the safest positions to advocate for contingent faculty. Moving towards solidarity begins in conversation with colleagues.

In addition, it is vital to affirm the credibility of “critical university studies” and for departments and provost’s offices to affirm work on these issues as substantive and as work that clearly pertains to theology, religious studies, and Catholic institutions.<sup>56</sup> As contingent faculty members have little to no support for their scholarship, Catholic universities and colleges should count popular scholarship and service to the community as desirable accomplishments when making decisions in regards to hiring or renewing faculty contracts. Making these changes would help Catholic universities and colleges acknowledge false narratives of exceptionalism, embrace a diversity of activities and writing that count as service to the field and evangelization proper to the church.

Students hold a particularly powerful place in campus dynamics because they are the most likely to engage with other parts of the university horizontally and vertically.<sup>57</sup> They often know dining hall workers and janitorial staff more intimately simply because they live on campus. They are also in regular contact with their dean and other administrators. Adjunct faculty often know students better than their colleagues. More practically, as tuition-payers, they have a heightened ability to get the attention of the administration. Students have been pivotal in raising wages for direct and contract employees at Georgetown, Harvard, and the University of Miami.<sup>58</sup> Educating and mobilizing students is an effective strategy to protect the most economically vulnerable on campus.

Faculty, students and staff can work with governance as well. In November of 2016, United Campus Workers (UCW), an affiliate of the Communications Workers of America (CWA), in Tennessee—and therefore without collective bargaining rights and protections—successfully stopped the outsourcing of all janitorial and repair jobs across the University of Tennessee’s campus system. Workers approached governance about inflated savings estimates and harmful local effects of outsourcing and faculty listened. Such successes point to the importance of functioning faculty governance that allows diverse

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<sup>56</sup> Jeffrey J. Williams, “Deconstructing the Academe: The Birth of Critical University Studies,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 19, 2012, [www.chronicle.com/article/An-Emerging-Field-Deconstructs/130791](http://www.chronicle.com/article/An-Emerging-Field-Deconstructs/130791).

<sup>57</sup> Wertsch, “Just Employment on University Campuses.”

<sup>58</sup> Eisenberg, “Campus Workers’ Wages: A Disgrace to Academe.”

stakeholders, including community members and students, to bring issues to the attention of the faculty senate.<sup>59</sup>

Finally, departmental colleagues, students and governance can work together to protect the economically vulnerable on campus by establishing campus wide policies. Loyola University of New Orleans and Georgetown University have established a living wage policy.<sup>60</sup> Georgetown established a broad Just Employment Policy that protects the right to organize and includes an Advisory Committee on Business Practices.<sup>61</sup> It is not perfect. For example, the continual challenge to adjunct issues is how universities calculate the “time” involved in teaching a course. While it states that the university will “create full-time jobs when possible and part-time or temporary work only when necessary,”<sup>62</sup> holding administrators accountable is a harder task. Nonetheless, it is a step in the right direction.

### CONCLUSION: HEALING THE BODY OF CHRIST

Meghan Clark writes, “The attitude of solidarity begins with the *descriptive* recognition of radical interdependence.”<sup>63</sup> To begin to build solidarity on campus, it is critical to highlight how all campus workers—from faculty, to secretaries, dining hall workers and facilities workers—are all vital for the functioning of a university and demonstrate how income inequality on-campus undercuts the common good. Appreciation, while falling short of even the attitude of solidarity, at least opens the possibility of its formation. Solidarity moves to duty when each person recognizes each other person as an image of God and therefore “equality, mutuality, and reciprocity place a claim upon the human person.”<sup>64</sup> The tactics above—providing just pay, promoting inclusion, and increasing advocacy—can begin to protect the economically vulnerable on campus. Curbing outsourcing and reducing income inequality is vital for a flourishing campus life, the moral formation of students, and most importantly for the welfare of

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<sup>59</sup> See André L. Delbecq, John M. Bryson, and Andrew H. Van de Ven, “University Governance: Lessons from an Innovative Design for Collaboration,” *Journal of Management Inquiry* 22, no. 4 (2013): 382-392.

<sup>60</sup> Loyola University Contract Committee, “Loyola New Orleans Vendor Contract Policy,” *Loyola University New Orleans*, [finance.loyno.edu/sites/finance.loyno.edu/files/loyola-university-new-orleans-vendor-contract-policy\\_5.pdf](http://finance.loyno.edu/sites/finance.loyno.edu/files/loyola-university-new-orleans-vendor-contract-policy_5.pdf).

<sup>61</sup> “Just Employment Policy,” *Georgetown University*, [publicaffairs.georgetown.edu/acbp/just-employment-policy.html](http://publicaffairs.georgetown.edu/acbp/just-employment-policy.html).

<sup>62</sup> “Just Employment Policy,” *Georgetown University*.

<sup>63</sup> Clark, *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought*, 108.

<sup>64</sup> Clark, *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought*, 109.

the workers themselves. Only when we move to work for the protection of others on campus is the virtue of solidarity possible.<sup>65</sup>

Catholic universities and colleges have been affected by business practices that obscure the responsibility of the employer/employee relationship, responsibilities repeatedly outlined in Catholic social teaching. These are responsibilities grounded not just in what is good for the human person, or worker, but good for specific communities and humanity. I have indicated that the willingness to pay teaching staff such extraordinarily low wages has fundamentally exposed an indefensible failure of Catholic social teaching and, thus, a failure of Catholic education and Catholics themselves. These policies are undercutting the well-being of contingent faculty as employees, and, I suggest, the moral fiber and ultimately the evangelization of our institutions and departments. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* makes this clear.

Scientific and technological discoveries create an enormous economic and industrial growth, but they also inescapably require the correspondingly necessary *search for meaning* in order to guarantee that the new discoveries be used for the authentic good of individuals and of human society as a whole. If it is the responsibility of every University to search for such meaning, a Catholic University is called in a particular way to respond to this need: its Christian inspiration enables it to include the moral, spiritual and religious dimension in its research, and to evaluate the attainments of science and technology in the perspective of the totality of the human person. (no. 7)

This calling transcends and infuses every aspect of the institution. Catholic universities and colleges, whether in research or labor policies, must consider the totality of the human person. Thus, the mission of such universities provides, particularly in their call to tend to the whole person, powerful rhetorical tactics in the court of public opinion and, perhaps most importantly, in the ethical imagination of students.

It is easy to claim that, as in the case of climate change, there is little an individual faculty member, dean or administrator can do. Promoting a narrative of powerlessness, instead of collective transformation, is certainly less risky, less time intensive, and, frankly, less exhausting and disheartening. Perhaps it is more comforting for some chairs and some contingent faculty too. However, it does not make it ethically defensible. The current landscape of higher education demands those of us who say we love the field—and perhaps even more so those who identify as ethicists—to curb its slow erosion. Lack of action to ameliorate the burden on contingent faculty and to make

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<sup>65</sup> Clark, *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought*, 111, citing *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 38.



structural changes in institutions of higher education exploits the vocation of the profession and bankrupts the integrity of our institutional missions and departments. Pope Francis writes, “Just as the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say ‘thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 53). Temporary and low-wage work without benefits burdens physical and psychological health and inhibits spiritual flourishing by exclusion and inequality, killing literally and spiritually persons and the full vision of Catholic higher education.

Nonetheless the potential for conversion and promise of embodying an economy of life offers a powerful remedy for the current economic landscape and for higher education. Catholic universities and colleges can be a potent form of resistance. Saying no to market rationalizations means risking anger and being ostracized from colleagues. To claim our faith at our institutions means living by and holding fast to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ proclaimed in the Word. It means giving up a narrative of powerlessness and to accept, along with the church, “the unruly freedom of the word, which accomplishes what it wills in ways that surpass our calculations and ways of thinking” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 22). **M**