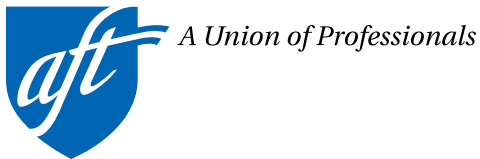




An Army of Temps
AFT Contingent Faculty
Quality of Work/Life Report
2022





Randi Weingarten

PRESIDENT

Fedrick C. Ingram

SECRETARY-TREASURER

Evelyn DeJesus

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Our Mission

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

Copyright © American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO (AFT 2023). Permission is hereby granted to AFT state and local affiliates to reproduce and distribute copies of the work for nonprofit educational purposes, provided that copies are distributed at or below cost, and that the author, source, and copyright notice are included on each copy. Any distribution of such materials to third parties who are outside of the AFT or its affiliates is prohibited without first receiving the express written permission of the AFT.

Executive summary

This new report, the third in a series from the American Federation of Teachers, further documents the troubling reality faced by the millions of professional educators who make up the ranks of contingent and adjunct faculty at the nation's colleges and universities.¹ This report illustrates how contingent faculty struggle with low pay, inadequate access to benefits, little or no job security, and a lack of professional respect.

At a time when we see significant legislative incursions into faculty's right to teach, fewer than half of the faculty surveyed believe that their administrations will defend their academic freedom. It is not surprising then that more than 66 percent of respondents have contemplated leaving the academy in the past two years. And the reality of adjunct life not only affects the lives of these faculty and their families; as our survey documents, it also negatively affects the educational experience for many of America's college students.

Despite all this, the contingent faculty members who responded to this survey continue to prioritize students, without the appropriate working conditions or pay. More than 40 percent of respondents advise students informally and, at least once a month (without compensation), help students with class content that was not from the course they were assigned to teach. The majority hold uncompensated office hours. Despite not being paid for it, many contingent faculty participate in the shared governance that keeps their colleges and universities functioning.

This most recent edition of "An Army of Temps: AFT Adjunct Faculty Quality of Work/Life Report" details feedback from 1,043 respondents to a survey of contingent faculty at public and private two- and four-year institutions. The survey was disseminated to AFT members and shared via social media with faculty who are not union members. The 58-question survey, completed between May 4 and June 23, 2022, follows up on surveys conducted in 2019 and 2020. Of the AFT's 300,000 higher education members, 85,000 are contingent and 35,000 are graduate employees—making the AFT the largest union of contingent academic workers.

This recent survey adds to our understanding of how contingency plays out in the lives of millions of college and university faculty.

- More than one-quarter of respondents earn less than \$26,500 annually. The percentage of faculty respondents earning below the federal poverty line has remained un-

changed through all three reports, which is not surprising with real wages falling behind inflation throughout the academy.²

- Only 22.5 percent of respondents report having a contract that provides them with continuing employment, even assuming adequate enrollment and satisfactory job performance.
- For 3 out of 4 respondents, employment is only guaranteed for a term or semester at a time.
- Two-thirds of part-time respondents want to work full time but are offered only part-time work.
- Twenty-two percent of those responding report having anxiety about accessing adequate food, with another 6 percent reporting reduced food intake due to lack of resources.
- Only 45 percent of respondents have access to employer-provided health insurance, and nearly 19 percent rely on Medicare/Medicaid.
- Nearly half of faculty members surveyed have put off getting needed healthcare, including mental health services, and 68 percent have forgone dental care.
- Fewer than half of faculty surveyed have received the training they need to help students in crisis.
- Only 45 percent of respondents believe that their college administration guarantees academic freedom in the classroom at a time when right-wing legislators are passing laws removing control of the curriculum from educators.

The results of this survey reflect the larger national context. Over the last four decades, the academic labor pool has shifted dramatically. Forty years ago, 70 percent of academic employees were tenured or on the tenure track. Today, that ratio has flipped; 68 percent of faculty are in positions that are not eligible for tenure, and 48 percent hold positions that are not just "contingent" (on enrollment, funding or some other variable) but part-time.³

This casualization of the academic workforce—a forerunner to the gig economy—is often portrayed as a necessary response to the dramatic disinvestment in higher education by the federal and state governments. While it is true that disinvestment has had a major impact on college finances, it is also true that the past four decades have witnessed an upward explosion in administration compensation and in the number of adminis-

¹ We will use the phrase "contingent faculty," but we mean "adjunct and other contingent faculty," which includes full-time nontenure-track faculty, instructors, lecturers, graduate employees and more. While the academy uses many terms to describe these faculty, what they all have in common is that their jobs are not guaranteed; their jobs are precarious and "contingent" on factors they do not control.

² American Association of University Professors, "The Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession, 2022-23," June 2023, <https://www.aaup.org/report/annual-report-economic-status-profession-2022-23>.

³ Glenn Colby, "Data Snapshot: Tenure and Contingency in US Higher Education," *Academe* 109, no. 1 (Spring 2023), <https://www.aaup.org/issue/spring-2023>.

trators on campus.⁴ The last 40 years have also seen a dramatic increase in student tuition and student debt.⁵

Through collective bargaining, AFT locals have established a pathway to job security and multiyear appointments as an industry standard in higher education. At the City University of New York, the Professional Staff Congress collective bargaining agreement provides for consideration for a three-year appointment for adjuncts who have worked six teaching hours per semester within the same department of the college for the 10 most recent consecutive semesters. At Rutgers University, the AAUP-AFT faculty union has negotiated four-semester appointments for part-time faculty who have taught at least six credits per year for 12 consecutive academic years. And at the University of California, the University Council-AFT's contract mandates faculty in contingent appointments should receive an initial appointment of one year; for the second reappointment, the guarantee is two years, and for all subsequent appointments, the guarantee is three years. These contract provisions offer a level of economic security to adjunct faculty that improves material conditions for them and their families. The AFT will continue to fight to ensure that we build on these important gains.⁶

The AFT and its affiliates remain committed to engaging in political advocacy, organizing and collective bargaining to win equitable treatment of contingent faculty, with an eye toward social justice regarding their work, their students and the communities our members serve. As we argued in our 2020 report, prior to the pandemic it would have taken \$15 billion in higher education funding over two years to get back to pre-recession levels of public investment, an amount that still falls short of the level of investment that is needed. While we have seen some increases in funding, there is much more to be done. Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act and state reinvestment in higher education are necessary initial steps in addressing the issues of contingency in the academy and the effects on faculty and student success.

Overview of the respondents

Type of employment

- Full-time instructor: 14.4 percent
- Part-time instructor: 81.5 percent
- Professional staff: 0.6 percent
- Other (other academic positions): 3.6 percent

Type of institution (Note: Respondents could report multiple places of employment, which explains why the total exceeds 100 percent)

- Four-year public: 37.4 percent
- Four-year private, nonprofit: 7.6 percent
- Four-year private, for-profit: 2.9 percent
- Two-year public (community college): 68.2 percent
- Two-year private, nonprofit: 0.6 percent
- Two-year private, for-profit: 0.3 percent

Level of education

- Doctoral degree: 23.9 percent
- ABD ("all but the Ph.D. dissertation"): 5.7 percent
- Master's degree (not terminal): 41.4 percent
- Terminal master's degree (e.g., MFA, MLS): 16.3 percent
- Professional degree (e.g., J.D., M.D., MBA): 6.2 percent
- Bachelor's degree: 5.18 percent
- Associate degree: 0.6 percent
- Some college, no degree: 0.3 percent
- Other: 0.5 percent

Race

- White, non-Hispanic: 76.7 percent
- Black, non-Hispanic: 5.3 percent
- American Indian or Alaskan Native: 1.2 percent
- Hispanic/Latinx: 6.56 percent
- Asian or Pacific Islander: 3.9 percent
- Multiracial: 3.0 percent
- Prefer not to answer: 7.1 percent

Gender

- Female: 64.0 percent
- Male: 32.3 percent
- Gender queer/nonconforming: 0.7 percent
- Transgender: 0.5 percent
- Prefer not to answer: 2.5 percent

Age

- Under 25: 0.2 percent
- 25-29: 2.1 percent
- 30-39: 16.1 percent
- 40-49: 21.5 percent
- 50-59: 24.7 percent
- 60-69: 25.7 percent
- 70 or older: 9.7 percent

⁴ James M. Saslow, "Losing Our Faculties," *Academe* 98, no. 3 (May-June 2012), <https://www.aaup.org/article/losing-our-faculties#.Yrldi-B3Eo>.

⁵ Melanie Hanson, "Average Cost of College by Year," Education Data Initiative, January 9, 2022, <https://educationdata.org/average-cost-of-college-by-year>.

⁶ See PSC and CUNY contract, <https://psc-cuny.org/contract/appendix-e-multi-year-appointment-teaching-adjuncts/>; PTLFC and Rutgers contract, <https://rutgers-ptlfc.org/fac/>; and UC-AFT and University of California contract, <https://ucaft.org/content/2021-2026-teaching-faculty-contract-summary>.

Background

Over the course of the last 40 years, there has been a transformation in the academic workforce in American higher education. Colleges and universities have replaced tenured positions with an army of contingent faculty, including nontenure-track professors, adjuncts, lecturers, postdocs, teaching assistants, instructors and graduate employees. Today, nearly 70 percent of college and university faculty are contingent faculty without adequate compensation or recognition of their professional achievement and expertise, and without adequate access to institutional support or adequate protection of their academic freedom.

Faculty positions have traditionally been considered professional jobs, with the attendant expectations of professional labor. Most faculty positions, regardless of their status, require advanced degrees. As such, these jobs are Fair Labor Standards Act-exempt, which means they lack key federal labor law protections that might otherwise apply. There are no limits on hours worked, no overtime is paid, and work is largely self-guided.

Contingent faculty, however, do not experience the benefits of their academic achievement, nor are they treated as professional employees. According to the data we present here, their compensation often doesn't allow them to meet basic expenses; they have limited job security that lasts a few months at a time; they are offered minimal or nonexistent benefits; and they experience a pervasive lack of institutional support—beginning with lack of access to assigned office space or a computer, and extending to systematic exclusion from participation in the governance of their departments and institutions and from adequate training to assist students in crisis. And at a time when faculty's right to teach and students' right to learn are increasingly under attack, these faculty do not have adequate protection for their academic freedom.

Colleges and universities rely on these academic professionals to educate the next generation and prepare them to be full participants in the economy and in our broader society. At the same time, these faculty are denied the economic security and full participation in the academic community that they could once have anticipated. As such, they are a living rebuke of the proposition that brought their students into their classrooms in the first place: This generation of students is told they should take on tens of thousands of dollars in debt because a college education is the key to success, but every day in their classrooms they witness this promise betrayed.

While a college degree is increasingly necessary for economic and social mobility, state and local governments continue to dramatically decrease their levels of public investment in public colleges and universities. Colleges and universities increasingly rely on contingent faculty to do the bulk of undergraduate instruction, justifying this shift by pointing to shrinking state appropriations, even while institutional revenues per full-time equivalent student grow, student loan indebtedness soars, and high-level, highly paid administrator positions rapidly expand.

Historically, the American college or university was a workplace where faculty had the freedom to innovate, educate and participate in key decisions on their campuses, free from the fear of being fired for exploring new ideas, teaching challenging topics or engaging in controversial research. The casualization of the academic workforce has turned this model on its head. Now, only a shrinking cadre of faculty enjoy full access to academic freedom, while most faculty understand that their continued employment is contingent on the whims of their department chairs or deans, and—increasingly—on state legislators who see higher education as another front in the culture wars. In states such as Florida and Texas, the people controlling institutional budgets are the same people proposing and passing legislation dictating what subject matter is appropriate in the college classroom. These laws affect all higher education faculty, but contingent faculty—especially those in the humanities and social sciences—are the most vulnerable in the face of these restrictions.

The impact on students of this lack of support for contingent faculty should not be downplayed. Students who are the first in their families to attend college tend to be most affected, because first-generation students are less likely to enroll in college and less likely to complete their degrees unless they have strong academic support.⁷ Academic advisers, mental health counselors, facilities directors and professional staff all play a crucial role in student success, but faculty are the linchpin, both in the classroom and through interactions outside the classroom. Student-faculty conversations during office hours, the opportunities for collaboration on research, and the ongoing mentorship and development of relationships of all types throughout college, not only breed academic success but also produce the innovative thinkers and engaged citizens a thriving democracy requires.

Contingent faculty often find themselves without the professional support they need to provide the highest-quality edu-

⁷ Emily Forrest Cataldi et al., "First-Generation Students: College Access, Persistence, and Postbachelor's Outcomes," U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, February 2018, <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018421.pdf>.

cation to their students. Faculty who are not assigned office space or given compensated time to meet with students cannot easily hold office hours. Faculty who are not paid to design or adjust their syllabuses—who may not even be permitted to do so—cannot change their reading lists to adapt to developments or questions that arise during a semester, modify assignments to incorporate new research, or adapt their modes of instruction to meet students' needs without running the risk of losing their jobs for doing these things. A lack of professional development resources results in faculty sacrificing personal and family time to keep up with the latest developments in their field and incorporate them in their teaching.

Faculty in contingent positions are often cut out of departmentwide and institutionwide planning, even though they may teach the majority of some types of courses, especially in community colleges and at the introductory and developmental levels in four-year institutions.

When this happens, the knowledge they have about the students and the curriculum is not included in feedback and review processes that could improve course-level, department-level and institutional outcomes. In short, while many contingent faculty members are excellent teachers, their expertise and commitment are not adequately supported, acknowledged and rewarded by their departments or institutions.

In treating contingent faculty as temporary workers rather than as full members of the profession, colleges and universities also run the risk of undermining the well-being of the entire campus community. Our survey shows that instructors who are hired just weeks or days before classes begin are often unable to receive institutional trainings meant to ensure campus health and safety, trainings their colleagues with no employment end dates are routinely provided and required to regularly renew. Faculty members, whether contingent or not, are often the first to see and respond to problems as they arise for students—but without training they are not prepared or able to put this information to use for the protection of everyone on campus.

The AFT believes that the continued disinvestment in public higher education—and the resultant contingent faculty crisis—is having disastrous consequences for our nation, our members and the communities they serve. Faculty who do not have economic security or the appropriate institutional support are not able to best support their students. And faculty who are not free to engage their students in discussions of challenging topics or to engage in controversial research because they fear losing their jobs are hamstrung in fulfilling the role academics play in a free society. To secure the economic and social prosperity and justice that our members, our students and our communities deserve, we must address the problems afflicting higher education.

Survey results

Professional life

Contingent instructors are not typically new employees looking to find a foothold in the academy. The majority of our respondents bear this out: They were over the age of 50 (60.1 percent), held master’s degrees, professional degrees or Ph.D.s (93.5 percent), and had more than 10 years’ classroom experience (66.1 percent).

Of our survey respondents, 81.5 percent reported working part time. This comports with data reported elsewhere, including the American Association of University Professors’ annual data snapshot on faculty contingency. College administrators frequently claim that most contingent faculty want to be part-time. These claims typically fall into one of two categories: that contingent faculty are community professionals who teach college courses as a sideline to their regular careers, or that they enjoy the flexibility that part-time work gives them. Our survey reveals a contrary reality: More than 63 percent of part-time faculty respondents would prefer to be full-time.

If you are currently part-time, would you prefer to be full-time?

Yes..... 63.2 percent
 No..... 36.8 percent

Although most contingent faculty are hired to teach a specific class and typically are not paid for service or advising work, colleges and universities still rely on their labor to ensure student and institutional success.

Contingent faculty are often asked to perform invisible and/or uncompensated service work. In a typical academic term, do you perform any of the following functions?

Help students with other course content/
 material (not your assigned courses) 40.1 percent

Academic advising for students
 formally assigned to you..... 25.2 percent

Academic advising for students not
 formally assigned to you 40.2 percent

Help students in crisis..... 65.6 percent

Review dissertations/theses 8.3 percent

Design department- or
 college-wide curriculum 32.3 percent

Participate in faculty meetings 68.2 percent

Participate in departmental events
 (e.g., social, symposia, etc.)..... 53.3 percent

Serve on department governance committees 15.9 percent

Serve on college/university
 committees/groups..... 30.1 percent

Participate in university governance
 (senate) meetings 10.2 percent

Attend mandatory trainings..... 70.0 percent

Receive mentoring (informal or formal)..... 21.8 percent

Provide mentoring to colleagues
 (informal or formal)..... 33.4 percent

Write letters of recommendation 81.1 percent

Almost all instructors will tell you that a key part of student success is the one-on-one teaching that happens during office hours. While 65.8 percent of faculty surveyed reported holding office hours, only 56.9 percent reported being compensated for this work. A full 77.2 percent of the respondents who are not compensated for office hours hold them anyway. Even when paid for office hours, our survey respondents typically hold more sessions than they are paid for.

If you are compensated for office hours, do you work more office hours than you are compensated for?

Yes..... 53.3 percent
 No..... 46.7 percent

One of the hallmarks of professional academic work is participation in the system of shared governance. The faculty as a collective whole is charged with working with administrative bodies to set program, curriculum and admissions standards and to help shape the future of the college or university. Frequently, contingent faculty, especially those who are in part-time appointments, are excluded from participation in shared governance. When the majority of faculty are excluded from participation, shared governance is weakened and vulnerable to administrative and political manipulation.

A small majority of survey respondents report participating in shared governance on some level.

Do you participate in shared governance on your campus(es)?

I attend department meetings 58.2 percent

I serve on departmental committees 22.8 percent

I participate in college- or
 university-wide committees 24.1 percent

I participate in the college or university senate 9.2 percent

I do not participate in shared govnrance 38.6 percent

In places where contingent faculty are included in shared governance, their participation is often another form of uncompensated labor. Only 14.9 percent of our survey respondents report receiving compensation for their shared governance work.

Shared governance and tenure are foundational to academic freedom. Since contingent faculty—whether full-time or part-time—lack the protections of tenure and are frequently excluded from participation in shared governance, it is not surprising that less than half of the respondents believe that their institution’s administration will defend their academic freedom.

Do you feel like your administration guarantees your academic freedom in the classroom?

Yes..... 45.9 percent
No..... 18.1 percent
Sometimes..... 36 percent

In a political environment where right-wing legislators are restricting what can be taught in college and university classrooms and where faculty face online attacks and doxing for teaching difficult topics, faculty in precarious appointments feel more vulnerable and less supported.

Tenured and tenure-track instructors usually have private offices, personal office phone extensions, a personal printer, stability and paid professional development; contingent faculty often lack access to these resources. Only 39.3 percent of survey respondents had access to a private workspace on campus. Often, they prepared for classes, graded papers and did other work for the college or university in public spaces or in their homes. Fewer had a private space to meet with students, which meant private conversations, such as those touching on academic performance or personal challenges, happened in a public space—if students felt comfortable enough to have those conversations in these circumstances.

To perform the functions of your job, do you have access to the following?

Private space on campus to work..... 39.3 percent
Private space to meet with students..... 34.4 percent

The exclusion of survey respondents from the professional life of their institution also extends to a lack of access to the information they need to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment for students. The majority of survey respondents report that they have not received basic information and/or training on how to help students in crisis.

Has your institution provided you with adequate training and/or information to prepare you for the following?

Directing students who come to you and have been victims of crimes on campus 38.8 percent
Directing students who come to you and have been targets of prejudice/discrimination on campus. 40.6 percent
Directing students who come to you and have witnessed an act of bias/intolerance on campus..... 36.1 percent
Taking steps if a student comes to you with signs of depression or other mental health issues 44.1 percent
Taking steps if you feel a student is a threat to themselves or others 39.9 percent
Taking steps if a student comes to you and reports experiencing unwanted sexual advances from another campus employee..... 49.4 percent

Job security

Workers in professional settings typically expect that their employment will continue as long as they do their jobs well or unless some economic necessity compels their termination. This is not the case for contingent faculty. No matter the economic health of their college or their performance, they are kept in a state of uncertainty about their continued employment.

Only 22.5 percent of survey respondents report having an employment contract that provides them with continuing employment the following term, assuming adequate enrollment and satisfactory evaluations. The overwhelming majority of our respondents have appointments that last only three to four months at a time, terminating at the end of a semester, with very little notice of rehire.

More than three-quarters of respondent faculty report having contracts that last only one term.

[What is the] length of [your] average employment contract?

Less than an academic term..... 7.0 percent
Academic term..... 73.9 percent
Academic year..... 14.2 percent
Multiple academic years..... 9.1 percent

When contingent faculty are (re)hired, they receive only the barest notice of their appointment, affecting their ability to properly prepare their courses.

For your most recent contingent appointment, how far in advance of the first day of classes did you receive an appointment (or appointment renewal) notification from the institution?

Less than 1 week prior 7.8 percent
1 to 2 weeks..... 14.1 percent

3 to 4 weeks.....	21.1 percent
5 to 6 weeks.....	11.4 percent
7 to 8 weeks.....	11.5 percent
More than 2 months prior	28.0 percent
After semester started.....	2.4 percent
Did not receive notice	3.8 percent

Compounding the difficulties raised by the short notice of appointment, contingent faculty also face having their courses, and thus their employment and income, canceled at the last minute. More than 57.2 percent of respondents report having their offer of employment terminated for lack of enrollment or another nonperformance reason. When employment is canceled, it is frequently with very little notice.

If you have had an offer of employment terminated due to lack of enrollment or other non-performance reason, how much cancellation notice were you given?

Less than 1 week prior	40.7 percent
1 to 2 weeks.....	37.4 percent
3 to 4 weeks.....	10.8 percent
5 to 6 weeks.....	2.3 percent
7 to 8 weeks.....	1.4 percent
More than 2 months prior	3.2 percent
After semester started.....	4.2 percent

Low pay and public assistance

Nearly 28 percent of respondents earn less than \$26,500 a year, placing them below the federal poverty guideline for a family of four.⁸ Another 32 percent earn less than \$50,000, which keeps them just above the poverty line but trapped in a cycle of poverty—never earning enough to reach financial security.

What is your estimated total individual income annually, across all teaching and nonteaching positions?

Less than \$26,500.....	27.6 percent
\$26,501 – \$50,000	32.0 percent
\$50,001 – \$75,000	23.5 percent
\$75,001 – \$100,000	10.3 percent
More than \$100,000	6.7 percent

This low annual income is a consequence of the low pay for instruction. Despite ever spiraling tuition costs, that money does not go to the people teaching the students. The majority of respondents told us they are paid less than \$4,000 per course.

Contingent work is not only temp work; it is piecemeal. As described in the 2014 House Committee on Education and the Workforce report “The Just-in-Time Professor,” contingent faculty usually are paid a fixed amount of compensation for each unit produced, regardless of how much time it takes to produce. For these workers, the unit of production is a college course.⁹ Teaching a full-time “four-four” load (four courses in each of two semesters) would lead to less than \$32,000 in income before taxes and other deductions for most contingent faculty.

About how much do you earn, on average, for a typical credit-bearing unit (for a 3-hour, 4-hour or 5-hour credit course) from your anchor teaching position?

\$3,000 or less	28.6 percent
\$3,001 – \$3,500	14.1 percent
\$3,501 – \$4,000	9.9 percent
\$4,001 – \$4,500	7.2 percent
\$4,501 – \$5,000	7.5 percent
\$5,001 – \$5,500	8.6 percent
\$5,501 – \$6,000	5.3 percent
\$6,001 – \$6,500	3.4 percent
\$6,501 – \$7,000	1.8 percent
\$7,001 – \$7,500	2.0 percent
\$7,501 – \$8,000	0.9 percent
More than \$8,000	2.5 percent
Not applicable	8.2 percent

Contingent faculty are not the only ones affected by the low wages they receive. Whenever workers collect food stamps or enroll in Medicaid instead of receiving adequate employer-paid benefits, taxpayers subsidize the hidden costs of low-wage work. Among those who participated in the survey, a substantial proportion subsidized their low wages with public assistance: 35.8 percent of respondents reported applying for one or more public assistance program listed.¹⁰

Unfortunately, some faculty find themselves blocked from receiving needed public assistance due to archaic assumptions

⁸ Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, “Prior HHS Poverty Guidelines,” <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines/prior-hhs-poverty-guidelines-federal-register-references>.

⁹ House Committee on Education and the Workforce Democratic Staff, “The Just-in-Time Professor,” January 2014, <https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/1.24.14-AdjunctEforumReport.pdf>.

¹⁰ This finding is in line with the April 2015 “The High Public Cost of Low Wages” report by the UC Berkeley Labor Center, which found that 25 percent of part-time college faculty received some form of public assistance. Ken Jacobs, Ian Perry, and Jenifer MacGillvary, “The High Public Cost of Low Wages: Poverty-Level Wages Cost U.S. Taxpayers \$152.8 Billion Each Year in Public Support for Working Families,” UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education, April 2015, <https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/the-high-public-cost-of-low-wages/>.

about academic labor. For the purposes of unemployment insurance, higher education faculty are treated the same as schoolteachers and are barred from receiving unemployment when they are not working. Federal and state laws were written with the assumption that teachers would have breaks in work with an expectation of ongoing employment the next fall. This is not the case for many contingent faculty, yet they are unable to access needed assistance.

At the end of Spring term, did your anchor institution provide you with a contract for the next Fall term?

Yes..... 29.8 percent
 No..... 57.1 percent
 Don't know 13.1 percent

Basic needs and food security

When asked about the ability to cover nonhousing, nonmedical expenses, 36.1 percent of respondents reported struggling at times when they're not actively teaching. Some struggle year-round. Because so many contingent faculty members work term-to-term, we find the same problems that affect other forms of temporary contingent work.¹¹

Which of the following best describes your ability to cover month-to-month basic nonhousing, nonmedical expenses?

Household can comfortably cover basic expenses 15.5 percent
 Household has other income (from spouse/partner, investments, trusts, etc.) that helps cover expenses 48.4 percent
 Household is usually fine but struggles during summer or winter breaks when I am not working..... 24.5 percent
 Household is struggling (e.g., either must borrow money, do without, or not pay some bills) 11.6 percent

Which of the following best describes your household's ability to cover month-to-month food expenses in the past 12 months?

Household had no problem or anxiety about consistently accessing adequate food..... 72.1 percent
 Household at times had problems or anxiety about accessing adequate food, but meals were not substantially reduced..... 22.1 percent
 At times during the year, eating patterns of one household member (or more) were disrupted and food intake reduced because the household lacked money or other resources for food..... 5.9 percent

Fewer than half of the survey respondents currently access health insurance through their employer. Employer-based health insurance for contingent faculty can be complicated and vexing. Some contingent faculty who work full time can be ineligible for health insurance because they teach classes on multiple campuses, failing to qualify for benefits from any particular employer. Other contingent faculty miss out on health insurance because of Affordable Care Act rules that dramatically underestimate the amount of labor it takes to teach a class.¹²

Where do you get your health insurance?

Your employer..... 45.0 percent
 Spouse's or domestic partner's employer 26.9 percent
 Purchasing individual or family coverage..... 12.6 percent
 Medicare/Medicaid..... 19.0 percent
 I don't have health insurance 3.1 percent

Like many low-paid workers, contingent faculty are often forced to deprioritize their health. Nearly, 42.6 percent of respondents have skipped needed doctor's visits, while about 68.4 percent have postponed dental health treatment. Many faculty find themselves forced to go without prescribed medication or cutting their doses to stretch their dollars.

Have you had to do any of the following in the past 12 months because of the cost of healthcare?

Put off/postponed getting dental care/checkups 68.4 percent
 Put off/postponed getting healthcare (including mental health services) that you needed 48.0 percent
 Did not go to see a doctor 42.6 percent
 Did not fill a prescription for medicine 20.3 percent
 Did not get a medical test/treatment that was recommended by a doctor 30.5 percent
 Chose a less expensive treatment than the one your doctor recommended..... 24.4 percent
 Cut pills in half/skipped doses of medicine 10.5 percent
 Skipped/postponed rehabilitation care that your doctor recommended 16.0 percent

Respect

The work that contingent faculty do is the core of the educational mission of our colleges and universities. At many institutions, contingent faculty's work is substantially identical to the work done by their tenure-track peers. Despite having professional credentials and working in a field normally

¹¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Contingent Workforce: Size, Characteristics, Earnings, and Benefits," April 20, 2015, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/670/669766.pdf>

¹² The rules for calculating the numbers of hours a contingent, or adjunct, faculty member works allow their employer to calculate only 1.5 hours of prep and grading time per hour of classroom time. This amount is significantly less than is reasonable. "Affordable Care Act: Final Rules on Coverage for Adjuncts and Students," National Association of College and University Business Officers, February 18, 2014, <https://www.nacubo.org/News/2014/2/Affordable-Care-Act-Final-Rules-on-Coverage-for-Adjuncts-and-Students>

considered to be professional, contingent faculty face low pay and an almost complete lack of job security. These difficulties are often exacerbated by the lack of respect most contingent faculty endure on the job.

Do you feel like you are treated as an equal member of the faculty by the administration at your institution(s)?

Yes..... 16.8 percent
 No..... 55.3 percent
 Sometimes..... 28.0 percent

Do you feel like you are treated as an equal member of the faculty by your colleagues at your institution(s)?

Yes..... 26.3 percent
 No..... 40.2 percent
 Sometimes..... 33.5 percent

Unsurprisingly, the low pay, lack of economic security and disrespect leads to two-thirds of contingent faculty respondents contemplating leaving academia.

In the last two years, have you thought about leaving academia?

Yes..... 66.7 percent
 No..... 33.3 percent

Invited to share with us the reasons they were thinking about leaving, the respondents had a lot to say. The thoughts below are a representative sample:

- “I teach 8-9 graduate and undergraduate courses per year as an ‘adjunct’ at [redacted], more than anyone else in my dept., and I make half of what non-tenure track teaching faculty do for the same exact job. When my dept. chair asked to convert me to FT status, the dean told him that this was impossible. ... I’m told it’s because of finances, but there seems to be enough for football coach to fly around in a private jet. Academia is no longer about education, not even a little bit.”
- “There is no communication and it feels like I am never heard.”
- “Pay disparity between part-time and full-time appointments. Lack of full-time opportunities. Discrepancy in administrative policies when balanced against part-time and full-time faculty. Increased importance placed on class success metrics placed on Colleges by State Legislation that increasingly puts pressure on adjunct faculty.”
- “Extreme anxiety and stress caused by my job; no guidance about advising students during COVID; poor communication from admin about COVID procedures and expectations; low pay; no health benefits; crushing student loan debt with no way to pay it off; no way to save for retirement or health emergencies.”

- “I barely make \$40,000 a year, including working summers and multiple hourly jobs on top of teaching. There is no consistency or guarantee of my employment from one quarter to the next even after working at the same college for a decade.”
- “The amount of work is not proportional to the rise in the cost of living and pay. The pandemic has caused me to consider finding another career that I can have weekends free, less workload, and more time for rest for what I am paid and how much work I produce.”
- “Constantly being told I’m ‘invaluable’ while treated as expendable. Working double the hours I’m paid to work to take care of students with no support! Earning less than minimum wage trying to do extremely hard work with community college students.”
- “Overworked, undercompensated, devalued, and complete loss of work-life balance during the pandemic. 12-14 hour days seven days a week have become the norm due to online teaching. Increasingly disheartened by focus on equity and inclusion without connecting this to equity and inclusion for faculty. When it does get raised, full-timers and admin take it is a threat. Apparently the only equity we can’t talk about on campus is equity for part-time faculty. The psychological toll this takes is immense and exhausting. I love my job, I love my students, but it’s a constant struggle to not give up in the face of such exploitation and devaluation despite our essential role.”
- “I continuously feel insecure about being able to plan my life out long term due to the semester-to-semester nature of my job. I cannot seem to get a full-time position despite being qualified in my field and having excellent student reviews, and original curriculum development. Sometimes I cannot help but wonder if I do not receive opportunities for these roles because I am transgender, and when I see transgender peers succeeding in other fields, it discourages me from continuing to invest in this field—even though I love it dearly.”
- “I have to work the equivalent of two full time jobs to get by. I’ve been doing it for a decade and a half and it’s exhausting. I am also not respected by my [tenure-track] colleagues despite work that has resulted in increased enrollments for the department. I see no ability to do anything else or move upward, gain more salary or stability. I don’t want to die having only done this my whole life, a job that I love but I feel little respect in and have to hustle to make enough money to support my family.”
- “This is my dream job, but it’s become too hard and unstable. I don’t know when I will have to leave, but I wonder if it will give me more peace of mind to work somewhere that doesn’t have the looming threat of unemployment. I also work so, so hard to accommodate students during the pandemic that I’m exhausted.”

Next steps

The way out of the contingent crisis is not a mystery, but it will be neither quick nor easy. What follows are broad recommendations for policymakers, union leaders and higher education administrations.

Reinvestment in higher education

We need to reinvest in higher education at the federal and state levels. This includes the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and supporting funding to high-need institutions for instruction and other services for students. We also need to push for more investment in instruction at the state level. These efforts would provide much-needed resources for colleges and universities, some of which could be used to improve the working conditions of contingent faculty while also easing the burden of ever-increasing tuition.

Labor reforms

We need to support labor reform, including passage of the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, increased funding for the National Labor Relations Board and state labor boards, and expanding contingent faculty access to unemployment insurance. We need mandated financial transparency standards for state institutions and mandated standards of good practice for employment of faculty in precarious positions.

Accountability for administrators

The explosive growth in the number of administrative positions on college and university campuses and of their salaries undermines the argument that contingency is driven by economic necessity. A thorough examination of the assumptions of self-interested decision-making by administrators would go a long way toward identifying solutions to the crisis of contingency.

Strengthening intellectual property rights and controlling workload

During the pandemic, we experienced a significant increase in online teaching, forcing a reimagining of how instruction can be best delivered to a rapidly changing student population. Many of these online classes are taught by faculty in contingent appointments. A thoughtful analysis of this transition and the development of strong workload language and protections for faculty intellectual property are overdue.

Job security for all faculty

The tenure system in higher education developed to ensure that those teaching and researching in higher education had the economic security and the freedom to develop new

knowledge and share that knowledge with their students and the public through teaching, publication and research. The erosion of the tenure system has fundamentally changed every aspect of faculty work, including how students are educated. It has also created a landscape in which political attacks on academic freedom are likely to have a more profound impact. We need to resist these attacks and fight for economic security for all faculty. This includes negotiating strong job security language for faculty in nontenure-track and part-time positions as well as rebalancing the ratio of tenure-track faculty to contingent faculty and the ratio of administrators to faculty. These steps are necessary if we are going to maintain a sustainable corps of faculty who can best meet the challenges of higher education in the 21st century.

Shared governance

Colleges and universities function better—and students are more successful—when faculty of all ranks and appointment types have a meaningful role in shared governance. Both the AFT and the AAUP have called for including contingent faculty and compensating them for their service on shared governance bodies.¹³ This can be achieved through legislation, contract language or internal faculty senate documents.

Academic freedom

We must fight back against legislative assaults on academic freedom like anti-critical race theory bills, the application of which will have a disproportionate effect on those without the protections of tenure. The quality of higher education depends directly on the faculty's freedom to teach their subject matter, limited only by the norms and standards of scholarly inquiry. Attempts to weaponize the curriculum for political gain must be resisted.

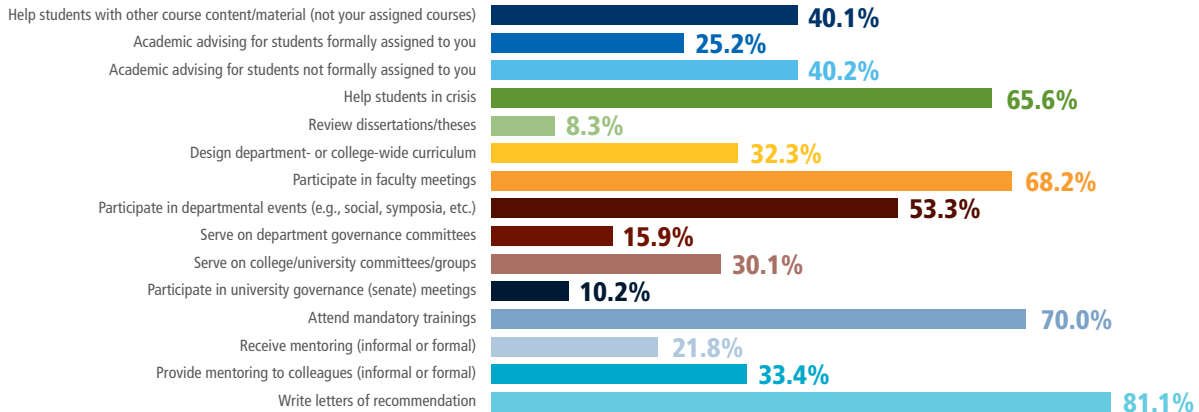
¹³ American Federation of Teachers, "AFT Resolution: Encourage Contingent Faculty Participation in Shared Governance" (2020), <https://www.aft.org/resolution/encourage-contingent-faculty-participation-shared-governance>; American Association of University Professors, "The Inclusion in Governance of Faculty Members Holding Contingent Appointments" (2012), <https://www.aaup.org/report/inclusion-governance-faculty-members-holding-contingent-appointments>.



A Union of Professionals

PROFESSIONAL LIFE

Contingent faculty are often asked to perform invisible and/or uncompensated service work. In a typical academic term, do you perform any of the following functions?



Almost all instructors will tell you that a key part of student success is the one-on-one teaching that happens during office hours. While 65.8 percent of faculty surveyed reported holding office hours, only 56.9 percent reported being compensated for this work. A full 77.2 percent of the respondents who are not compensated for office hours hold them anyway. Even when paid for office hours, our survey respondents typically hold more sessions than they are paid for.

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

Randi Weingarten
PRESIDENT

Fedrick C. Ingram
SECRETARY-TREASURER

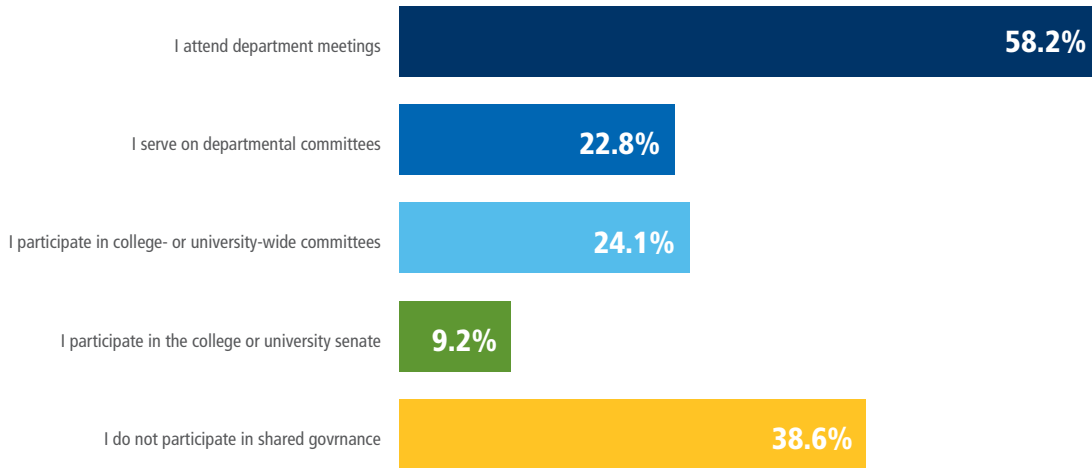
Evelyn DeJesus
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT





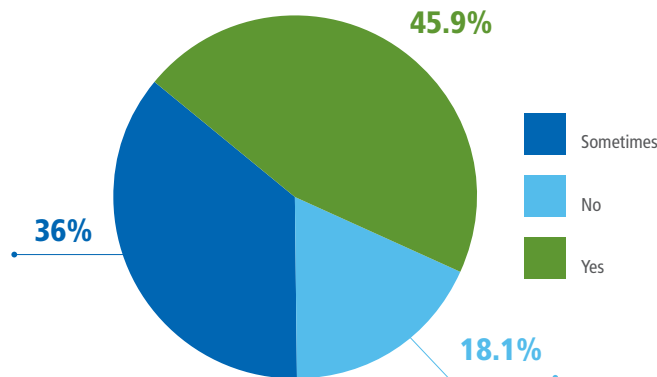
A Union of Professionals

Do you participate in shared governance on your campus(es)?



In places where contingent faculty are included in shared governance, their participation is often another form of uncompensated labor. Only 14.9 percent of our survey respondents report receiving compensation for their shared governance work.

Do you feel like your administration guarantees your academic freedom in the classroom?



In a political environment where right-wing legislators are restricting what can be taught in college and university classrooms and where faculty face online attacks and doxing for teaching difficult topics, faculty in precarious appointments feel more vulnerable and less supported.

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

Randi Weingarten
PRESIDENT

Fedrick C. Ingram
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Evelyn DeJesus
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT





A Union of Professionals

To perform the functions of your job, do you have access to the following?



Has your institution provided you with adequate training and/or information to prepare you for the following?



The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

Randi Weingarten
PRESIDENT

Fedrick C. Ingram
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Evelyn DeJesus
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT





A Union of Professionals

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

Randi Weingarten
PRESIDENT

Fedrick C. Ingram
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Evelyn DeJesus
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO • 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W. • Washington, DC 20001 • 202-879-4400 • www.aft.org

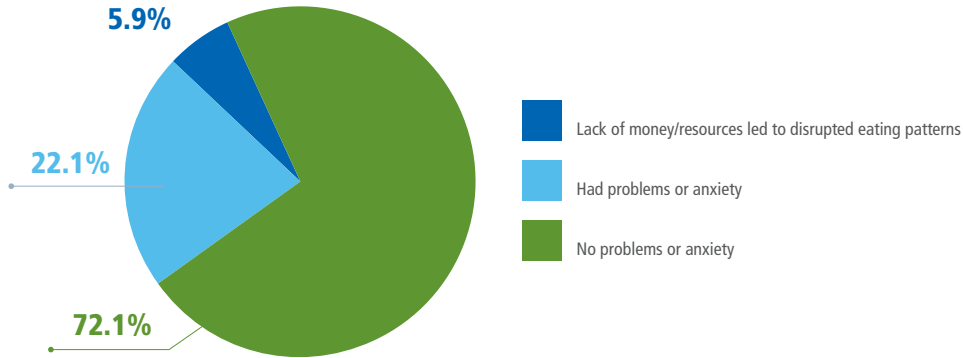




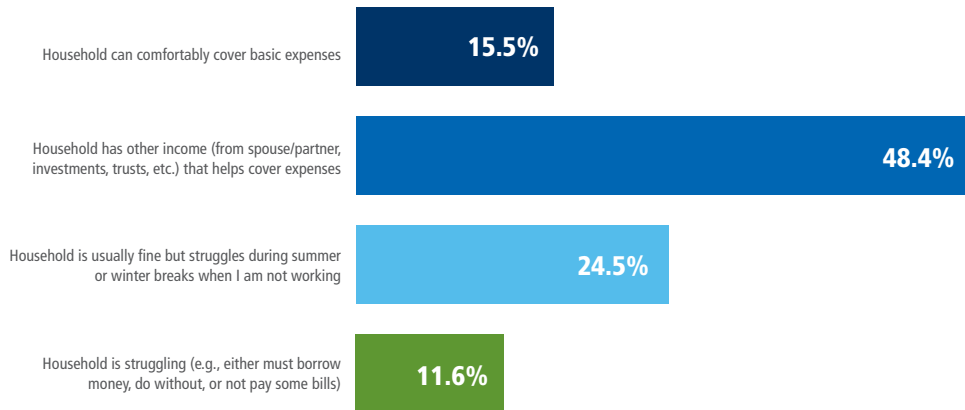
A Union of Professionals

BASIC NEEDS AND FOOD SECURITY

Which of the following best describes your ability to cover month-to-month basic nonhousing, nonmedical expenses?



Which of the following best describes your household's ability to cover month-to-month food expenses in the past 12 months?



The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

Randi Weingarten
PRESIDENT

Fedrick C. Ingram
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Evelyn DeJesus
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

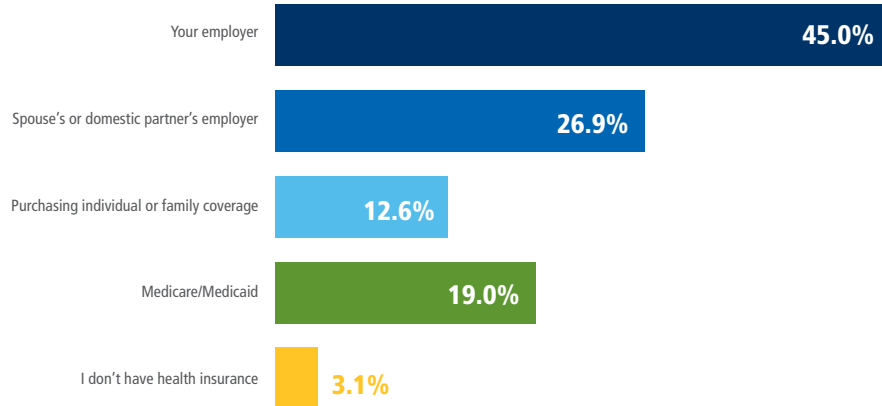
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO • 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W. • Washington, DC 20001 • 202-879-4400 • www.aft.org



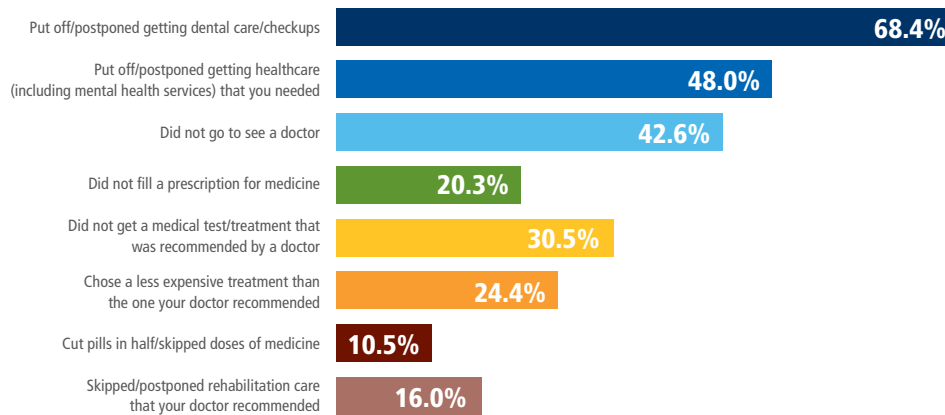


A Union of Professionals

Where do you get your health insurance?



Have you had to do any of the following in the past 12 months because of the cost of healthcare?



The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

Randi Weingarten
PRESIDENT

Fedrick C. Ingram
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Evelyn DeJesus
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT





A Union of Professionals

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
555 New Jersey Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20001
202-879-4400



aft.org



[AFTunion](https://www.facebook.com/AFTunion)



[@AFTunion](https://twitter.com/AFTunion)



[AFTunion](https://www.instagram.com/AFTunion)

