

The Working Group for Solidarity in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, an ASEEEES Affiliate Group, brings together scholars from across our field to focus attention on how a combination of crises—ongoing austerity in education, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the economic crisis it is engendering worldwide—threatens the professional development and livelihood of scholars least supported to face those challenges. Central to our concern are scholars in contingent positions: graduate students, international students, visiting and adjunct instructors, lecturers, postdoctoral fellows facing the end of their contracts, academic hourly employees, and colleagues without institutional affiliation.

For many, continuing to teach and produce scholarship in this situation will prove untenable. This spells a tremendous loss for the individuals in our profession. It threatens the future of our field, as junior scholars who are creating new directions in our field will be forced out by the crisis. Faculty and students of color will face even greater obstacles to entering or remaining in the field, as shrinking economic opportunities hollow out the latest Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives and augment systemic racism. In light of the overrepresentation of women scholars in contingent faculty, the crisis will also exacerbate problems of gender inequality in our field. The disproportionate distribution of domestic labor in two-parent, heterosexual households will be compounded by lack of access to child care. These and other cases of inequity in our field will be augmented by intersectional factors, including class, race, and sexual minority status. The instability of the economic crisis will be further compounded by basic safety concerns, as travel, relocation, and other facets of academic contingency become dangerous to community health.

By embracing more inclusive and transparent decision-making, by insisting on stability rather than contingency, we can withdraw from the exploitative practices of temporary employment—in the pandemic, and after it. With this in mind, our Working Group has sought to create a list of practices that departments, centers, and other institutions in our field can use to help address this situation. This list of practices has emerged from an ongoing conversation among scholars occupying a range of positions in our field, including senior and junior faculty, contingent academics, and academic staff. Our goal has been to identify concrete steps that could be within our control as a scholarly community.

## **BEST PRACTICES**

### **For Research Centers, Departments, and Committees Supporting Contingent Academics**

- Provide access to immigration law assistance.
- Create employment opportunities allowing currently-employed foreign researchers to stay in the US.

- Ensure transparency in decisions on funding: make decision criteria clear in advance, and give students and contingent colleagues access to spaces where decisions are being made (while preserving sensitivity to private information).
  - Consider making a stipend for student representatives at those meetings.
  - Make meeting minutes public to those who are impacted by the decisions.
- Ease application requirements for fellowships and grants by requiring fewer documents. This will alleviate the burden of application season on applicants as well as committees.
- Help people stay in their homes by considering colleagues who have lost their appointments for other positions in your department or center.
- Extend existing lectureship and postdoctoral fellowship appointments for those lecturers and fellows who have no other appointments.
- Upgrade the length of contracts/job specifications of contingently-employed faculty to ensure stability in this time of crisis.
- Arrange sabbatical replacements to allow for multi-year contracts.
- Support affirmative action in admissions and hiring. Recognize that negative comments about affirmative action, especially in direct reference to colleagues from underrepresented groups, function to further segregate our field.
- Schedule interviews for contingent positions after tenure-track hires have been made.
- Follow the [MLA Guidelines for Search Committees](#), including affording a minimum of two weeks for candidates to accept or decline an offer.
- Repurpose travel/conference funds to fund remote engagements by our contingent colleagues abroad or to fund living expenses for local contingent colleagues.
- Repurpose funds traditionally used for senior faculty (keynote speakers, etc.) to fund contingent academics.
- Offer research affiliation with library access for non-affiliated academics.
- Support contingent scholars, students, and staff in their efforts to protest against unsafe plans for university reopening, cuts, and layoffs.
- Convey the urgency and unsustainability of the adjunctification crisis in the COVID-19 era by highlighting the plight of contingent faculty to the political and donor classes and to the public at large.
- Urge universities to commit to de-incentivizing contingent hiring, e.g. by paying equivalent salaries to lecturers and assistant professors, or by voicing support for federal plans to make federal funding contingent on a certain minimum proportion of tenured and tenure-track faculty as part of the whole faculty.

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We have already received valuable information from colleagues at several research centers about 2020-2021 funding and programming. **If you are a staff member, administrator, or affiliate of a research center, please participate in [our survey](#).**