

Whereas: Faculty on visiting and adjunct contracts generally have the highest teaching loads, are paid less than other faculty, receive little to no research support, and have little to no job security. Such faculty are more likely to be women, people of color, or members of other traditionally marginalized communities. Yet, visiting and adjunct faculty have experienced heightened job insecurity in the midst of a pandemic, threatening them with unemployment, lost income, and cancellation of health insurance precisely when many academic institutions are not hiring new faculty. Abrupt termination of visitor and adjunct faculty contracts ignores the significant work that goes into preparing a course, even before the quarter begins.

One of the key issues that mobilized visiting and adjunct faculty and brought them to the attention of the AAUP was a clause added to new visitor contracts that heightened insecurity in an alarming and unnecessary manner, threatening immediate termination under a variety of COVID-induced adjustments.¹ For faculty on visas, in particular, the threat of immediate termination would put them out of legal status and force them to leave the country.

I move that the Faculty Senate adopt the following general principle and two motions with respect to visiting and adjunct faculty.

The general principle: Our most vulnerable, most burdened, lowest paid faculty should be protected as much as possible from cuts in the event of a pandemic. This is important if we wish to address the lack of diversity among DU faculty. Decisions about adjustments to the teaching and curriculum of the university in the event of pandemic-induced adjustments should be discussed by the faculty as a collective. That collective should include visiting and adjunct faculty. As a collective, we should protect our most vulnerable colleagues, and that begins by recognizing that terminating visiting and adjunct faculty in moments of crisis should be far from first option.

Motion 1: We move that DU amend unsigned visiting faculty contracts to guarantee (1) a 30-day notice period in the event of early termination and (2) severance pay in the amount of one-quarter the time remaining on the contract. We move that visiting faculty who have already signed contracts be offered replacement contracts that guarantee a 30-day notice period in the event of early termination as well as severance pay in the amount of one-quarter the time remaining on the contract.

Motion 2: We move that DU amend adjunct contracts whereby DU will pay compensation equal to one-quarter the total contract amount if an adjunct-taught class is cancelled.

¹ The paragraph in new contracts reads as follows, “Please note that the term on this offer is contingent upon enrollment levels continuing at their current level through the end of your contract. If enrollment levels drop unexpectedly, the University may cancel courses or reassign courses to tenured faculty, and this could result in eliminating visiting teaching positions. This could require the university to cancel or end your contract earlier than anticipated and pay you in proportion to time worked.”