

The PLRB Decision on Adjunct Unionizing: A Victory for Faculty Solidarity

by Steve Newman, Department of English and Vice President, TAUP

Last week, The Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board (PLRB) ruled in favor of Temple adjuncts asking to be allowed to hold an election that, if successful, would mean their joining TAUP. In supporting this decision, the PLRB held that full-time and part-time faculty members “clearly share an identifiable community of interest.” Picking apart the position set forth by the Administration over the months of hearings they insisted upon—and the hefty legal fees that went with them—the PLRB noted that both groups have “identical teaching responsibilities,” working “on the same campuses and in the same classrooms,” teaching “the same courses,” and having “nearly the same educational requirements.” Both groups are “typically expected to have a terminal degree in their field.” Adjuncts “have offices in the same areas as full-time faculty members, and sometimes even share offices with” them. “If that were not enough, adjunct faculty members interact with full-time faculty members on a regular basis.” And so: “Temple’s argument that there is an alleged conflict of interest between the adjunct and full-time faculty, which destroys any community of interest, is untenable.” (You can read the full decision [here](#).)

This is not, of course, to say that part-time and full-time faculty are identical in all respects. The Union that TAUP hopes will emerge from this process will have to acknowledge differences among various groups of faculty, just as we do currently between tenure-track faculty and faculty on the teaching/ instructional, research, and clinical tracks, as well as librarians and academic professionals. But beyond these differences stands our fundamental solidarity as teachers committed to the well-being of our students and Temple University. *That* is a foundation on which to build a more comprehensive union.

Of course, before our part-time colleagues become part of our union, much work needs to be done. Part-time faculty in favor of unionizing will have to win the election that will be held sometime this semester. Moreover, TAUP’s constitution and by-laws will have to be amended to integrate part-time members, and these changes will require approval from 2/3rds of our current members.

As these processes unfold, we urge the Faculty Senate to continue to hew to its wise policy of neutrality on this issue.

We urge the Administration to adopt the same position of neutrality. Now that the PLRB has ruled that an election can go forward, the Administration should let the adjuncts make their decision without the sort of divisive rhetoric that they have resorted to throughout this process. We also trust that the administration will not attempt to intimidate adjuncts or any other faculty members; we will be watching closely to make sure that that does not happen and will respond forcefully if we see any hint of it.



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