



## Forging a New Way Forward

1. **Reclaiming Academic Democracy: Facing the Consequences of Contingent Employment in Higher Education: A National Summit** is the beginning of the solution we are proposing to the contingent faculty crisis in higher education in the U.S. We propose working together as a community in a democratic fashion to construct a practical, ethical way out of the morass. We offer NFM and its Foundation as the convener and chief facilitator for a broadly representative discussion, out of which will come a framework for action modeled on, and perhaps partnered with, The Presidents' Climate Commitment.

2. While this effort needs to be broadly representative of all sectors with a stake in the future of higher education, it needs to be led by, and facilitated by, an organization like ours that is exclusively focused on adjunct faculty in higher education. Only a coalition like ours can make sure that focus and momentum are maintained and that progress is made. **Therefore, we remain committed to continuing to build NFM's membership and its active involvement in public discourse about the future of higher education.**

3. In order to accomplish the ambitious goal of transforming the practice of contingent academic employment, we need to achieve certain **preliminary goals first -- like consensus about the broad assumptions, values, and principles that will guide reform.** Based on the discussions we have been having for the last couple of years with many respected voices inside and outside NFM, we have drafted the following goals assumptions, and principles about which we invite conversation and to which we seek broad consensus.

By convening this summit, NFM and the NFM Foundation (NFM) seek:

**I. Consensus around and affirmation of a set of assumptions and principles to guide any reform plans or actions that develop out of this summit or that are otherwise considered for adoption by institutions and policymakers. (See below for suggested assumptions and principles.)**

## **II. Commitment to strengthening adjunct faculty organizing efforts around the country.**

Organizing refers not exclusively to unionization efforts but rather to any efforts at assembling and establishing formal groups of faculty off the tenure track for the purpose of communication and collaboration on common goals.

- a renewed commitment by existing unions and disciplinary organizations to their adjunct faculty members in the form of invitation into leadership positions and adjustment of dues and fee structures to take into account their economic circumstances
- stronger resolve on the part of adjuncts themselves to establish and participate in unions, faculty associations, disciplinary organizations, or other groups focused on effecting change; and
- renewed commitment within and outside of higher education to ensure that all faculty (indeed all workers), no matter their appointment status, have the right to assemble or organize without fear of retaliation.

**III. Commitment to educating communities within and outside of higher education about the real working conditions of faculty and their effects on student learning.** It is important for all parties involved in the effort to reform contingent academic employment to understand and acknowledge the realities of contingent faculty work and the experiences of the diverse population that comprises the contingent faculty workforce. However, the fact that there is diversity of experience and opinion should not be an excuse for ignoring or refusing to correct unsatisfactory existing conditions.

**IV. The establishment of a broad-based coalition representing as many sectors of the community as possible that have a stake in higher education. This coalition will be dedicated to transforming (upgrading, regularizing) the terms and conditions of faculty employment in higher education .** We would like to invite the participants at this summit to help us form a Task Force charged with developing a project or initiative for practical action modeled on, or perhaps even partnered with, the Presidents' Climate Commitment. This initiative could have a name like "The Compact to Transform the Adjunct Professoriate" and signatories could be individuals, organizations, and institutions ready to commit to the work that is necessary to effect concrete changes in the working and learning conditions of faculty and students.

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Suggested Assumptions and Principles to Guide Reform of Contingent Academic Employment:  
**NFM proposes the following:**

1. The current contingent faculty hiring model that has produced a 75% contingent faculty population is problematic at best and exploitative at worst because faculty working conditions are, inevitably if not directly, student learning conditions.
2. The goal of reform efforts should be to *transform* the current system into one that ensures that all faculty, *regardless of appointment status* , are guaranteed by their institutions equal access to all of the conditions and tools that they need to ensure the highest quality education possible for students.

3. The conditions and tools that are necessary to ensure the highest quality education possible for all students include but are not limited to those articulated in NFM's seven goals: equity in

- compensation;
- professional evaluation and job security;
- academic freedom;
- participation in faculty governance and other representative bodies;
- professional development and advancement;
- access to health and retirement benefits; and
- access to unemployment compensation insurance for all faculty not on continuing contracts.

4. Developing specific plans to implement reforms should always be carried out in a collaborative, democratic, participatory fashion that includes all stakeholders especially the non-tenure-track faculty who are most directly affected.

5. Reform efforts that involve restructuring should prioritize upgrades for people rather than conversions of positions, in order to respect the value of the ongoing service that existing employees provide. All reform or restructuring efforts should build in some form of protection for currently serving faculty in order to prevent further harm to these faculty who have served in contingent appointments, without proper support or compensation, for so long.

In sum, we offer a broad framework for a way forward, to begin the process of identifying the most important points of consensus and conflict, and to invite participation in and commitment to the work that needs to be done. We pledge to engage with any efforts that share this goal.