April 2010

The Culture of Amiability and the Maintenance of the Adcom System

Alan Trevithick
Fordham University

Follow this and additional works at: https://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba

Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.58188/1941-8043.1229
Available at: https://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba/vol0/iss5/26
We’ve All Been Through it: Recent Remarks by a “Traditional”—a Tenured Professor—about the “Adcom” Experience

Well, (laughing) I think the truth is that we were all, almost all full-time faculty, were part-time faculty at some point. We know what that’s like. You know, you do this because you love it. You do it because you love being with students, because you love teaching. I think we all appreciate that. It’s very clear to anyone who looks at it that the pay is terrible. Sometimes the conditions aren’t great. Lack of office space, lack of resources, those sorts of things, and I think by and large anyone who sees that is sympathetic. I suppose on the other hand, because we’ve all done it, we know we got ourselves into it because it’s something we wanted to do. So it’s not necessarily forced labor as much as it is underappreciated labor. And I think that some of the things that part-time faculty have been asking for and wanting to have some attention paid to are really absolutely straightforward and doable.

Source: Adjunct Matters, Mini-Documentary: Part-time Faculty. Full-time Impact, produced by the Associate Faculty Advisory Board at IUPUI in Indianapolis, accessed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHb0PnpgWIw, March 25, 2010.

The Hawthorne Effect.

Perhaps the most widely publicized and discussed example of a serendipitous discovery of a hidden and baffling aspect of human behavior is the so-called Hawthorne effect. Supposedly, productivity in a Western Electric plant increased not because of changes in material incentives, systematic hiring and hiring, or increased managerial discipline, but because the “unanticipated consequence” of being studied made the workers feel “special.”


Recent Self-Reports by Adcom Faculty, from Raye Robertson’s Recent Survey: Characterizations of the Job

- Being an adjunct instructor is the highest form of exploitation since indentured servitude, especially in the state of California where
education and funding are going down the tubes! Yeah, I’m TOTALLY bitter. When the only appreciation you get is from your students (and not from your colleagues or “superiors”), you realize how meaningless your work is in the grand scheme of things.

- Truly excellent colleagues and good collegial atmosphere makes a tremendous difference. I could not support myself, though, with just my own earnings.

- Being an adjunct has been a wonderful experience as I have really enjoyed working with college students. I like the college campus atmosphere. I also like not being involved in too much of the office politics.

- I love, love, love teaching. I have a good relationship with my deans and chairs. I feel that this is what I want to do with my life. However, to make a decent living, I typically must teach at four different schools. This can be quite taxing sometimes when I have 150+ essays to give feedback on or have to grade, but I have to drive 30-some miles one way between schools.


Fresh Faces

Sorry it won’t work this semester. But we are always interested in fresh faces.

Source: Excerpt from a tenured professor’s email response to an Adecn seeking a teaching contract.

The Culture of Amiability and the Maintenance of the Adcom System

Alan Trevithick —dralt@optonline.net—Tel. 914-630-4809