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Book Session: Kim Tolley, ed., Professors in the Gig Economy: Unionizing Adjunct Faculty in America

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Abstract

The unionization of adjunct faculty in American colleges and universities has become a national labor movement in recent years. This symposium brings together a group of scholars and faculty union leaders who have researched the historical causes and outcomes of unionization at public and private colleges and universities. Their talks, based on chapters in the forthcoming edited book, address the following questions: Why have colleges and universities come to rely so heavily on contingent faculty, and what has been the result? How have federal and state laws influenced efforts to unionize adjunct faculty? What happens after unionization—how has collective bargaining affected institutional policies, shared governance, and relations between part-time and full-time faculty?

Objectives

This symposium aims to illuminate 1) social, legal, and cultural trends in the history of efforts to unionize adjunct faculty; 2) the evolving legal landscape affecting the unionization of adjunct faculty; 3) tactics and strategies faculty have used to successfully organize, negotiate, and ratify contracts, including the wall-to-wall contract covering part-time faculty, and graduate student instructors in the CUNY system and the historic the wall-to-wall contract covering both adjunct and tenure-line faculty at Notre Dame de Namur University; and 4) the collective bargaining goals and outcomes of adjunct faculty, as evidenced in a sample of 35 contracts ratified since 2010.