OAH Issues Statement on Collective Bargaining and Part-Time, Adjunct, and Contingent Faculty

Posted on January 3, 2016 by Rosemary Feurer

At its November 2015 Executive Board meeting, the Organization of American Historians (OAH), passed a resolution endorsing “the principle that collective bargaining can be, and in many instances has proven to be, an important tool that historians might deploy to secure fair working conditions for contingent faculty members, as well as to support good teaching, study and practice of American history, and provide first-rate history education for students.”

The resolution is a response to the growing concern over the continuing reliance on and growing use of part-time, adjunct, and contingent historians in higher education and recognition that their conditions of work that are not consonant with the OAH mission to promote excellence in the scholarship, teaching and presentation of American history. Through its Committee on Part-Time, Adjunct, and Contingent Employment, the OAH advocates for contingent historians.

In a 2013 report using data collected for a 2012 Coalition on the Academic Workforce study on part-time and adjunct faculty (entitled “A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty”), the OAH found work conditions for part-time, adjunct, and contingent historians to be seriously wanting. The OAH report determined that 13 percent of part-time historians had no office space and only 4 percent of the 76 percent of the adjunct historians who held office hours were paid for those hours. Fifteen percent had no school provided email accounts and only 34 percent received any clerical assistance. Half of the contingent historians teaching at universities did not receive, or were not eligible for, any university sponsored health insurance.

The OAH recognizes that collective bargaining may not suitable for every institution of higher education in every part of the country. However, as indicated in their recently passed resolution, the OAH “submits that where particular collective

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bargaining campaigns promise to achieve the kind of ‘best practices’ outlined in the OAH’s ‘Standards on Part-Time, Adjunct, and Contingent Employment’ (as revised April 2014), members of the American history profession should strongly consider warmly endorsing and actively supporting such campaigns to advance the kind of faculty employment conditions that are essential for excellent historical practice.”

Read the full resolution at the OAH website.

Author

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