

time facilitated these efforts, and the communications were supplemented by an email list, now known as adj-l@adj-l.org, which currently has more than 650 subscribers from the United States, Canada, and Mexico, including numerous journalists from several major higher education periodicals.

Over time, COCAL has developed into an expanding network of activists. One coordinated activity, Campus Equity Week (CEW), was initiated at the January 2001 COCAL conference in San Jose. It was modeled after the week of activities known

The outside status of COCAL has allowed for a space where contingent academic labor activists could meet others in the same boat and share their grievances and strategies with a receptive audience. This has helped to build camaraderie and solidarity among the participants.

as Action 2000 (A2K), which was a campaign to raise awareness of contingent faculty issues in California. CEW has evolved into an annual week of activism which has garnered media attention and has helped contingent faculty activists and their supporters to be part of a continuing dialogue. The major academic labor federations in the United States—American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, and American Association of University Professors—and many of their local chapters have coordinated and provided resources for these events.

In terms of practice, COCAL has survived through a combination of organization and anarchy. It is not a membership organization and it does not collect any dues. There is a loosely structured steering committee that comes into play when it is needed, mostly to assist the local organizations with running the COCAL conferences and to decide where the next one will be held. Money raised for the conferences comes from conference fees and union donations. However, all decisions regarding the agenda and other conference matters remain with the local organizing committee supported by the steering committee. The conferences put a spotlight on local issues every time and allow for ongoing network building through face-to-face discussions. Participation in COCAL has allowed activists to raise questions that are not always heard inside the larger labor federations or in their local union chapters. The outside status of COCAL has allowed for a space where contingent academic labor activists could meet others in the same boat and share their grievances and strategies with a receptive audience. This has helped to build camaraderie and solidarity among the participants. In a small way, COCAL has played a role in raising consciousness about contingent faculty issues, and it has raised the level of dialogue as to how these inequities shape the function and role of the modern system of higher education. ■

NOTES

1. The author is one of the founders of COCAL and was a steering committee member for 16 years. His reflections presented here are supported by those experiences. He is also the founder and co-administrator of the Contingent Academic email list (adj-l@adj-l.org).
2. Maria-Teresa Lechuga, co-coordinator of COCAL Mexico. Personal email correspondence with the author, October 11, 2018.

REFERENCES

- Berry, Joe. 2005. *Reclaiming the Ivory Tower: Organizing Adjuncts to Change Higher Education*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Berry, Joe, and Helena Worthen. 2014. "COCAL: A Tri-National Workforce Self-Organizes to Abolish Contingency." *Academe Blog: The Blog of Academe Magazine*, posted August 29. Available at <https://academeblog.org/2014/08/29/cocal-a-tri-national-contingent-workforce-self-organizes-to-abolish-contingency>.
- Moser, Richard. 2015. "What Is the Inside/Outside Strategy?" *Be Freedom*, posted April 9. Available at <https://befreedom.co/introduction-to-the-insideoutside-strategy>.

REPORT ON THE COALITION OF CONTINGENT ACADEMIC LABOR (COCAL) XIII CONFERENCE

Julia M. Lau, *Independent Scholar*

DOI: 10.1017/S1049096519000453

The Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor (COCAL) held its biennial conference in San Jose, California, in August 2018. It featured panel discussions and workshops for contingent faculty working in higher education and in K–12 institutions, and it included activists and union leaders involved in challenging precarity in the teaching profession. On its website, COCAL is described as "a grassroots coalition of activists in North America working for contingent faculty: adjunct, part-time, non-tenured, and graduate teaching faculty"; it is run entirely by volunteers. COCAL originated in the 1996 Annual Conference of the Modern Language Association and the first National Congress of Adjunct, Part-time, Graduate Teaching Assistants, and Non-Tenure Track Faculty, which were held concurrently in Washington, DC, that year.² COCAL's members and the 150 attendees of this conference share common challenges in finding workable strategies to gain recognition and to secure fair working conditions for contingent faculty and staff in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

The relevance of this conference to the APSA is that it dovetails with APSA's ongoing efforts to acknowledge the challenges of and hear from contingent and adjunct faculty who teach political science. COCAL XIII also provided learning points specifically for APSA's Committee on the Status of Contingent Faculty in the Profession. My role as a representative of this committee and as a first-time attendee was to learn from COCAL about the broader picture of precarity in the teaching profession and to convey lessons learned to APSA and the political science community.

Plenary Sessions on Working Conditions of Contingent Academic Labor

The first half of the conference featured panels on the working conditions of contingent academics—which, in COCAL's definition, includes K–12 teachers and university professors—and current efforts of unions and other groups to lobby for improvement in wages and other recognition. Plenary speakers from various

institutions in the United States, Canada, and Mexico were almost uniformly critical of the commercialization and corporatization of higher learning and education, as well as the inability of universities and schools to pay their contingent labor a fair wage or to provide equitable working conditions.³ Jonathan Karpf, the conference chair, described the current landscape as “lamentable”; Ernesto Ortiz, executive committee member of *Secretario de Trabajo y Conflictos Académicos del STUNAM*, warned that in today’s higher-education campus, “[k]nowledge is turned into merchandise.”

In the first plenary, Karpf—reading remarks from Adrianna Kezar (University of Southern California)—highlighted how the average wage for adjunct lecturers for one course was \$2,700, which yields an annualized salary equivalent to that of fast-food workers in America. Kimberly Ellis shared how 12,000 contingent faculty members in Eastern Canada went on strike to protest their working conditions in 2017, supported by their full-time colleagues and students. Malini Cadambi Daniel, National Director of SEIU Faculty Forward, cited a Berkeley Labor Center report stating that a quarter of all contingent faculty were on some form of US government assistance. Finally, Chandra Pasma of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) briefed the audience on a forthcoming publication about contract faculty in Canada,⁴ with statistics from CUPE’s research project. Pasma noted that more than 56% of university faculty in Canada are contract faculty across all teaching disciplines, and she emphasized that it was an institutional choice whether universities hired full- or part-time professors—even after considering government funding cuts.

Malini Cadambi Daniel, National Director of SEIU Faculty Forward, cited a Berkeley Labor Center report stating that a quarter of all contingent faculty were on some form of US government assistance.

The insights of and sharing by the panelists provided useful context on the working conditions for contingent academic labor. However, it would have been helpful if alternative perspectives on trends in higher education or opportunities for dialogue with guest speakers with positions in university administration or leadership also were provided.

Overall, the conference proceedings would have benefited from inviting other speakers representing a more diverse range of political, institutional, and personal perspectives beyond COCAL’s immediate focus.

Workshop and Breakout Sessions on Strategies to Improve Working Conditions

The workshop sessions in the second half of the conference provided useful learning points and strategies for individual contingent faculty members or for those considering unionization to negotiate fairer working conditions. The California Faculty Association (CFA)—the “exclusive collective bargaining representative for the California State University faculty, including tenure-track faculty, Lecturers, Librarians, counselors and coaches”⁵—provided most of the workshop facilitators. They ran sessions on “How to Use Social Media Effectively to Run a Contract/Pressure Campaign” (Niesha Fritz, CFA Communications Specialist) and “Communicating with Reporters...and How to Write an Effective Press Release” (Alice Sunshine, CFA

Communications Director); making masks and puppets for campaigns; nonviolent direct action; and using political pressure to improve contingent working conditions. In their workshop for the last topic, CFA Director of Government Relations Djibril Diop and CFA Legislative Director Mario Guerrero presented how CFA secured strong contracts for contingent faculty in the California State University system. CFA members, including contingent faculty, may receive wages pegged to full-time salary scales and even pensions, depending on their length of service at an institution. CFA also advocates strongly for universities to convert lecturers to full-time faculty instead of hiring new professors.

Learning Points for APSA and the Profession

The persistence and enthusiasm of the COCAL organizers in forging a venue for contingent faculty to meet likeminded colleagues and partners, as well as to educate one another about political action and activism, is a positive development. The current crisis facing academia in terms of precarity and contingency in employment for the majority or a large minority of faculty members, including in political science, is at its root a political, social, and economic crisis. It is timely for APSA and its members to seriously examine the state of the profession as it pertains to contingent academic labor in the teaching of political science and, more broadly, the repercussions of recent trends in higher education on society and our students. From this perspective, COCAL provides a potential model for

interested political scientists to study the dynamics of political organization by contingent labor. ■

NOTES

1. Available at <https://cocalinternational.org>.
2. For details of COCAL’s early history, see <https://cocalinternational.org/aboutus.html>.
3. For the full conference program, see <https://cocalinternational.org/COCAL%20XIII%20Program%20as%20of%20May%2027%202018.pdf>.
4. Erica Shaker and Chandra Pasma’s report, “Contract U: Contract Faculty Appointments at Canadian Universities” (November 1, 2018), is available at www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/contract-u. At the conference, Pasma requested that the audience keep details of her presentation off the public record because the report was pending publication at the time.
5. CFA’s website is available at www.calfac.org.

THE DISCIPLINE IS OVERDUE FOR A SET OF MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR EMPLOYING CONTINGENT FACULTY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE: HERE IS THE BLUEPRINT

Veronica M. Czastkiewicz, *University of Colorado, Colorado Springs*
Jennapher Lunde Seefeldt, *Centre College*

DOI: 10.1017/S1049096519000465

During the 2018 APSA Annual Meeting, we organized a group of contingent faculty and other political scientists interested in