

Chapter 3

A Turning Point: The Fifth Contract

1995-1998

“The problem that we had was that the school was being run on our backs.” Christine O’Connor
“Everyone knows that part-timers are exploited.” John McCluskey

Old Issues, New Blood

Why, in the mid-1990s, did a more energized Adjunct Faculty Association emerge? Perhaps it began with the Oakton Adjunct Faculty Association supporting an IEA/NEA lobbying effort in Springfield, Illinois. The Illinois State Senate was considering a bill which would increase the teaching-load requirement for inclusion in an adjunct faculty union, thus weakening the union. Oakton adjuncts joined others in buses and vans paid for by the American Federation of Teachers to travel to Springfield. The group from Oakton consisted of Barbara Dayton and fifteen other adjuncts. Thanks largely to pressure applied by the IEA supporters, the bill was defeated.

One of the participants in the Springfield trip was David Schall who had joined Oakton in 1994. Mr. Schall also taught at Milwaukee Technical College where he had been on the negotiating team for that college’s part-time faculty union. Mr. Schall had been approached by Lorraine Murray to join the lobbyists in Springfield, and from that time forward he became active in the association. His experience soon proved crucial to AFA’s negotiating team.

Since the fourth contract between the AFA and Oakton Community College expired on August 30, 1996, negotiations began during the spring of 1996. The adjunct faculty’s negotiating team consisted of Mr. Schall, Ms. Dayton, and Ms. Murray. Mr. Schall was the lead negotiator and the “workhorse of the negotiations” whereas Ms. Dayton was the “face of the organization.”¹ Mr. Schall had benefited from the training provided by the American Federation of Teachers and presented the Oakton Board with more than forty pages of requests. Rather than basing these negotiations on past contracts, Mr. Schall wanted to open discussions on all issues.²

The Association’s goals, however, included many of the same old issues: job security and seniority. Other requests included “bumping rights” based on seniority, pay increases (moving

¹ Roundtable discussion with Dave Schall, Christine O’Connor, Jan Magoc and Barbara Dayton, February 10, 2011.

² Ibid.

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towards “equity pay per credit hour”³ with full-timers), “fair share” (whereby non-union members would be required to pay “fair share” dues), a higher ceiling on the number of hours part-time faculty could teach, and better access to full-time faculty positions. When John McCluskey, the IEA Unserv Director, read the association’s demands, his observation was, “You don’t have a chance.”⁴

At this point, Mr. Schall realized that any chance for success depended on a new approach: the union needed to launch a publicity campaign to educate the public and put pressure on the Board of Trustees. Fortunately, a new group of energetic part-timers, in addition to Mr. Schall, were now part of the Adjunct Faculty Association: Christine O’Connor, Jan Magoc, Ann Fay, and Art Omohundro. This infusion of “new blood” helped provide leadership within the organization to support the new approach.

Pressure on the Board of Trustees

At the June 1996 OCC Board of Trustees meeting, part-time faculty members showed up wearing buttons that read “Pay Professional Work.”⁵ John Franco, a part-time philosophy professor, remarked that the Oakton administration had taken advantage of “cheap pools of adjunct faculty,” and that some part-timers’ salaries were below the federal poverty level. Part-timers were allowed to teach up to eleven credit hours each semester, but the majority taught between six and nine. For the 1995-96 academic year, adjunct faculty made between \$447 and \$567 per credit hour.⁶ This amounted to less than 45 percent of what full-time instructors were paid per hour.

After the meeting, the co-presidents of the AFA, Barbara Dayton and Lorraine Murray, declined to talk about salary increases because they did not want to jeopardize the negotiations. However, they did speak about job security, saying that the administration needed to implement “a system that guarantees assignments for part-timers who have been teaching at the college for several years.”⁷ Although technically the college was doing this, the AFA wanted it in the contract. The AFA also wanted additional office space. There were only two small offices to accommodate the 450 part-time faculty. Moreover, although part-time faculty taught 54 percent of the courses at OCC, many said they were not afforded the same respect as their full-time colleagues.

³ Based on a study in California which showed that full-time faculty members spent 75% of his/her time on teaching and related activities and 25% on “other” activities (such as curriculum development, committee meetings, etc.), the AFA began to think of “equity pay” as 75% of full-time pay.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ S. U. Mahesh, “OCC profs on part-time shifts say they get full-time shaft,” *Lincolnwood Life*, July 4, 1996.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

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None of the issues was directly addressed by the Board, although the Board Chairman Jody Wadhwa did say, “You are part of our family. We respect you. We’re not here to negotiate a deal.”⁸ The president of the college, Margaret Lee, later responded that “Negotiations are proceeding the way we’ve anticipated they would, and we look forward to a mutually agreeable settlement.”⁹

Negotiations, however, were deadlocked. After the August 1st negotiating session, the administration declared an impasse requested a federal mediator. “It is not binding, but simply a way for each side to hear what the other side is asking or saying through a neutral voice,” said Mary Mittler, Vice President for Academic Affairs.¹⁰ According to the co-leaders of the Adjunct Faculty Association, part-timers wanted “pay proportionately equal to the educators who teach full time, contractual consideration for full-time positions, recognition of seniority status or re-hiring rights, paid office hours, health benefits and last but not least – respect.”¹¹

Publicity

Under the leadership of Jan Magoc, AFA membership chairman, and Christine O’Connor, publicity chairman, flyers explaining the AFA’s cause were passed out at various commuter train stations. Several part-time faculty members wrote “Letters to the Editor” in local papers. On August 15, 1996, Christine O’Connor’s letter appeared in the *Skokie Review*; she wrote that “the morale is low among part-time teachers because of the fragile nature of their jobs...It is interesting that a school unconcerned about its low employee morale and high faculty turnover officially describes itself as a “caring community.”¹²

At the September 1996 meeting of the Board of Trustees, part-time faculty members again took their case directly to the Board. According to an article in the Pioneer Press, “Oakton Community College’s adjunct faculty members, in the midst of stalled contract negotiations...are waging a no-holds-barred campaign to have their complaints heard.”¹³ Three part-time instructors told the board...that they were “committed to the students, but are unappreciated and unrecognized as part of the college’s scholastic team.”¹⁴ Three teachers, Ann Fay, Marilyn Sweeney, and Jan Magoc, all testified that they were under paid and not treated as professionals.¹⁵ The Board, “unhappy that the teachers had taken their demands from private negotiations to the

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Pat Krochmal, “Administrators ask for mediator in contract talks,” *Evanston Review*, August 8, 1996.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Christine V. O’Conner, “Faculty member criticizes Oakton,” *Skokie Review*, August 15, 1996.

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¹⁴ Pat Krochmal, “Part-time faculty take case directly to board,” Pioneer Press, September 1997.

¹⁵ Ibid.

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public board room,” stated that to answer the teachers’ complaints they would be violating the negotiating process while seeking mediation.

On September 23, 1996, an open letter to the student body from the OCC Adjunct Faculty Association appeared in the student paper. Some of the highlights are listed below:

1. Over 50 percent of your classes are taught by part-time faculty members.
2. Part-time instructors are paid less than half the amount of full-time faculty teaching the very same classes.
3. Part-time instructors have no job security. They don’t know from one semester to the next if they have a job.
4. Many part-time instructors teach at two or three other colleges because they can’t make a living by teaching only at Oakton.
5. Although part-time instructors are as qualified as their full-time counterparts, they are rarely considered for full-time employment when positions become available at Oakton.¹⁶

The AFA leadership distributed flyers and fortune cookies to students on “Student Street” on the Des Plaines campus. Christine O’Connor had driven to Chicago’s Chinatown to buy the cookies whose “fortunes” included such phrases as: “Full-time justice for part-time faculty.”

In October 1996, the student newspaper *Occurrence* reported that “the negotiations are centered on two major concerns of the part-time faculty: job security and salary.”¹⁷ According to AFA’s co-president Barbara Dayton, “the administration has offered no counter-proposal to the adjunct faculty association.”¹⁸ The administration, through its spokesperson Evelyn Burdick, said that “by definition, adjunct faculty are hired to accommodate the needs of students at particular points in time....To guarantee employment to adjuncts currently employed could preclude the College from hiring those faculty members needed to best serve the students.”¹⁹

By November the Board’s negotiating team presented its “best offer” to the AFA. In making its report to its membership, the AFA leadership could only “recommend” or “make no recommendation.” The negotiating team made “no recommendation” on whether or not the membership should accept the contract. On November 18th and 19th members of the AFA voted 60 percent to 40 percent to reject the contract, much to the surprise and delight of the negotiating

¹⁶ OCC Adjunct Faculty Association, “An open letter to the student body from the OCC Adjunct Faculty, *Occurrence*, September 23, 1996.

¹⁷ Scott Tharp, “Adjunct contract talks continue,” *OCCurrence*, October 21, 1996.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

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team.²⁰ According to an AFA flyer, the “administration’s proposal did not address the adjunct faculty’s most important issue, that of job security. The large voter turnout has demonstrated the members’ concerns about the current educational policies at Oakton.”²¹ The issue of formalizing the “informal practice” in class assignments had not been resolved. The adjunct faculty waited for the scheduling of another negotiation date from the administration.²²

Back to the Bargaining Table

After the AFA membership rejected the administration’s “last best offer” of November 1996, the bargaining teams went back to the negotiating table. A second offer was extended by the administration in December, 1996. According to Lorraine Murray, “It wasn’t much different than the last one. The salary scale was the same and they changed the verbiage regarding job security.”²³ Even Evelyn Burdick, OCC’s executive director of institutional relations, agreed that the contract, which offered a four percent wage increase over three years, was basically the same as the one presented in November.²⁴ The adjunct faculty rejected the second contract offer as well! The AFA leadership was surprised, but pleased. Part-time faculty members continued to work “in good faith” without a contract, still hoping for increased wages, greater emphasis on seniority for class assignment, earlier notification of class cancellation, and more office space.

The drawn-out negotiations were taking their toll on Barbara Dayton. The stress of negotiations, the restrictions placed upon her to avoid discussing negotiations with the AFA membership, plus some dissension among members of the negotiating team, put tremendous pressure on her. Sometimes Ms. Dayton and Mr. Schall disagreed, but they usually had the same gut feeling of when to settle. They worked long hours, and took their jobs very seriously. Luckily, they had the support of the AFA membership throughout the process.

After about a month with no face-to-face talks, the administration and the Adjunct Faculty Association got back to the negotiating table on February 3, 1997. Discussions had been put on hold during winter break, but now sessions were back on a schedule.²⁵

²⁰ OCC Adjunct Faculty Association Press Release, “No Happy Thanksgiving for Adjunct Faculty at Oakton, November 1996.

²¹ Ibid.

²² “Adjunct faculty rejects proposal, *Pioneer Press*, November 28, 1996.

²³ Pat Krochmal, “Part-time faculty union snubs second contract,” *Evanston Review*, January 9, 1997.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “Oakton, Union Back Bargaining,” *THE JOURNAL*, February 14, 1997.

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To keep up the pressure on Oakton's Board, the union circulated petitions in March 1997 calling for the college administration to continue talks and to improve their working conditions. Petitions were presented to Oakton Community College trustees with a total of 1,060 signatures.²⁶

Three-year Contract Approved: 1996-1999

In April, 1997, after teaching without a contract since August 1996, the Adjunct Faculty Association finally approved a new three-year contract offered by the Board. The contract provided pay raises averaging four percent for each of the contract's three years, retroactive to January 1. Pay raises from August to January (that had not yet been paid) were built into the salary increases.²⁷

"This is the fairest contract we've ever had in terms of the adjunct faculty getting the same dollar amount," said Barbara Dayton. "We have stronger language about seniority in terms of getting assignment of classes now. We were able to change one particularly arbitrary paragraph about the assignment of classes that stated it would be based on qualifications and 'other factors''Other factors' might not even be pertinent," Ms. Dayton said.²⁸

The "eligibility roster" that had previously been submitted by the AFA was replaced by a "preference form" that was attached to the contract. Each department chair was to use this form to solicit scheduling input from the adjunct faculty members. (See Appendix) The contract also specified that full-time teaching positions be posted in each adjunct faculty office. For the first time, the administration agreed to maintain one official file in Human Resources for each faculty member.

Most importantly, the Adjunct Faculty Association felt they had earned respect from the administration. Twice the negotiating team had stood up to the Board, and twice the membership had rejected the administration's offer. The result was a contract with concrete gains and a foundation for future negotiations.

Revisions of AFA Constitution and Bylaws

During negotiations, John McCluskey observed that the AFA lacked a functioning Executive Board and that the two co-presidents were not communicating with each other. At the general membership meeting in November 1996, a suggestion was made to look at the by-laws. Members

²⁶ "Petitions presented in support of adjunct faculty contract at college, *Chicago Tribune*, March 24, 1997.

²⁷ "Oakton approves adjunct-faculty pact," *Chicago Tribune*, April 11, 1997.

²⁸ Pat Krochmal, "Part-time teachers OK 3-year pact," Pioneer Press, April 17, 1997.

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who volunteered to explore the possibility of changing the constitution were Dave Schall (chairman), Lorraine Murray, Sheila Schulman, Beverly Stanis, and Cheryl Wollin.

After negotiations were concluded in the spring of 1997, Dave Schall called a meeting of the *ad hoc* Committee on Bylaws. Mr. Schall laid out the problems that he experienced during the negotiations. These included the reference to the AFA as a “club,” a poorly defined executive board and the existence of co-presidents. There was general agreement that the Bylaws needed to be changed. However, there was some trepidation by other committee members about dropping the co-presidency because they did not want to offend either existing president. Mr. Schall then asked Lorraine Murray, one of the presidents, “Are the two of you functioning properly?” Ms. Murray confessed they were not. By this time Ms. Dayton and Ms. Murray were moving in different directions. If the bylaws were revised, both the problem of the co-presidency and weak board could be corrected.

On April 30, 1997, the AFA newsletter outlined the proposed changes in the AFA Constitution, informing the members that the revised Bylaws would be distributed in their mailboxes. The newsletter also announced that voting on the revisions, as well as nominations for new officers, would take place during the business meeting at the end-of-the-year picnic on May 10, 1997. At the forest preserve picnic, the revised Bylaws were “unanimously passed by all present.”²⁹ Voting on the new officers took place in May, with Barbara Dayton elected President, Sheila Schulman, vice-president, Christine O’Connor, secretary, and Art Omohundo, treasurer.³⁰

The revised Constitution and Bylaws of the Adjunct Faculty Association simplified the union’s organization and re-instated a single presidency. The terms for officers were extended from one year to two. The constitution created three new standing committees; Membership, Publicity/Newsletter, and Grievance. Dues were established by the Illinois Education Association with the AFA able to add local dues as needed. Finally, a quorum at general membership meetings was reduced from a majority of dues-paying members to 10 percent, or ten members, which ever is less.³¹

On May 29, 1997, the “approval of the constitutional and bylaw revisions and subsequent election of officers” was challenged by Lorraine Murray, Co-President, and Rosemary Shellander, Treasurer of the Oakton Adjunct faculty Association IEA/NEA. The formal challenge was filed with the ILELR board.³² This challenge was subsequently formally answered by Cheryl

²⁹ Cheryl Wollin, Donna Ryan, Brian Ogradowski, “Letter to Mitchel Roth, IEA Review Board Staff Liaison,” July 17, 1997.

³⁰ “AFA Newsletter,” Summer, 1997

³¹ Adjunct Faculty Association IEA/NEA, Oakton Community College, Constitution and Bylaws,” revised May 1997.

³² Lorraine Murray, Rosemary Shellander, Memorandum to Debbie Knox, May 29, 1997.

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Wollin, Donna Ryan, and Brian Ogrodowski, members of the AFA, in their letter to the IEA Review Board Staff Liaison Mitch Roth. Subsequently, the Illinois Labor Relations Board found the challenge had no merit, and Lorraine Murray and Rosemary Shellander stepped down as AFA officers.

New Developments

In June 1997, an article appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* which focused on second-class pay for adjunct professors. Many part-time professors believed that the state average of \$383 per course credit hour (or \$1149 per 3-hour class) did not “reflect the responsibility of preparing students for four-year universities and the working world,”³³ despite the fact that this reflected a 9.7 percent increase within the last five years. In Illinois at the time, 68 percent of professors at community colleges taught part-time; “at Oakton, 74 percent of the 609 instructors” taught part time.³⁴ Interestingly, Oakton was the first of four community colleges that had part-time unions in 1997, and it also had one of the highest pay rates: \$503 per hour (\$1509 per 3-hour course). This fact, unfortunately, often worked against the negotiating team. Repeatedly the administration would compare part-time pay at Oakton with that of other community colleges, arguing that Oakton’s adjuncts already had the highest pay.

In the fall of 1997, the North Central Accreditation Committee (NCA) came to Oakton for its evaluation and accreditation process. Cheryl Wollin participated in the preparation committee and represented the adjunct faculty’s continuing concerns. “The 1996 negotiations were difficult,” Ms. Wollin wrote in her Memo to the NCA Chairman, “and created a detrimental effect on part-time faculty morale. There was an increase in membership, however, and a renewed cohesiveness among part-time faculty as issues were discussed....the new contract was ratified on the third attempt.”³⁵

In an effort to establish better communication within its membership, a problem that had initially been identified by the Part-Time Faculty Advisory Committee (PTFAC), the AFA reestablished a AFA newsletter and created and published an Adjunct Faculty Directory. The directory was “designed to assist members in finding substitute teachers, accessing important Oakton phone numbers, building community and strengthening personal contacts.”³⁶ When Ms. Dayton showed the directory to then Vice-President Mary Mittler, Ms. Mittler immediately asked for a copy. Ms. Dayton refused to give her one, since the directory contained personal information. The AFA had

³³ Julie Deardorff, “Adjunct Professors Decry 2nd-class Pay Many find Wages Insulting, Full-Time Positions Scarce,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 16, 1997.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Cheryl Wollin, “Memo to NCA Chairman,” May 10, 1997.

³⁶ AFA Faculty Directory, June 11, 1997.

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decided that only people listed in the directory would have access to it. In addition to the directory, the association created an AFA website,³⁷ where members could access the most recent contract, answers to frequently asked questions, and links to websites of other part-time faculty unions.

The icing on the cake was a new voice, friendly to part-time faculty issues, who now had a seat on the Board of Trustees. During the fall school board elections, Jeanne Kriechbaum, an adjunct faculty member herself, had been labeled by the opposition as a “one-issue candidate” (the concerns of part-time faculty). No one expected her to win, but she did! The Board took note, giving the AFA the credibility it needed. Now the AFA had at least one “friend” on the Board of Trustees.³⁸

In November 1997, the Midwest Modern Language Association (MMLA) held a meeting in Chicago, and Barbara Dayton and Marilyn Sweeney presented a joint paper entitled “Unions for Part-time Faculty.” The presentation traced the chronology of Oakton’s Adjunct Faculty Association and its formation, and the gains made by Oakton’s part-time union. The conference also highlighted the plight of adjunct faculty in community colleges. In the spring of 1998 their paper was printed in the Midwest Modern Language Association’s journal, bringing attention to Illinois’ first union for part-time faculty in a community college³⁹

Also in November of 1997, IEA Unserv Director John McCluskey noted that relations between the full-time and the part-time faculty were particularly strained. Barbara Dayton had not been invited back to sit on the Faculty Senate, even though the NCA report spoke in glowing terms of the AFA participation. Mr. McCluskey acknowledged that since the beginning of the part-time union, there had been hostility from the full-time faculty, but since the contentious negotiations of the last contract, relations had worsened. Mr. McCluskey suggested that the AFA try to build bridges.

“Reaching Out and Joining Forces”

On March 20, 1998, Barbara Dayton, AFA president, mailed letters to six area community college leaders inviting them to be panelists for an April 22 workshop on working conditions at their respective colleges; the workshop was entitled “Reaching Out and Joining Forces.” “This is the first time in its 15-year history,” Ms. Dayton’s letter read, “that the Adjunct Faculty

³⁷ AFA Newsletter, summer 1997.

³⁸ Roundtable discussion with Dave Schall, Christine O’Connor, Jan Magoc and Barbara Dayton, February 10, 2011.

³⁹ AFA Newsletter, November 26, 1997.

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Association has organized such an event, and we are glad that you will be sharing your experiences as a part-time instructor with us.”⁴⁰

The goal of the conference was to “educate our membership about part-time working conditions across the Chicago area.”⁴¹ In order to accomplish this goal, each panelist submitted data relating to salary, faculty tiers, office hours, course assignments, evaluations, benefits, maximum loads, and annual turnover rate. This data was then organized on a chart that was available to each participant. (See Appendix) The colleges represented were McHenry County College, Triton Community College, Harper Community College, College of Du Page, DePaul University and Columbia College Chicago. Oakton’s Adjunct Faculty Association created a detailed agenda that included a welcome, a brief presentation by Ms. Dayton, an explanation of the chart and its data, and then a ten-minute presentation by each panelist. During a short break, the participants were asked to submit questions for the panelists on index cards. Finally, participants were asked to work in pairs to brainstorm ways that part-time faculty members could work together to improve working conditions.⁴²

A reporter for the *Chicago Tribune* was notified of the meeting and invited to attend. In July 1998 an article on part-time instructors appeared in the *Chicago Tribune Magazine*. This six-page article described the difficulties of part-time teaching, but also pointed out that part-time teachers were finding their voice. “Recently about 40 part-time college teachers from all parts of Chicago and the suburbs straggled into a hastily arranged meeting at Oakton Community College in Des Plaines. They came because they’re frustrated and fed up with working conditions that are often degrading, insecure and badly compensated.”⁴³ The teachers had met each other earlier at a professional conference in Chicago (the Roads [sic] Scholars Conference) “devoted to the problems caused by the over-reliance of colleges on part-time teachers.”⁴⁴ As had been pointed out by the American Federation of Teachers, more classes – 37% more – in Illinois’ community colleges were being taught by part-time teachers than in 1980.

The article failed to mention that AFA’s president Barbara Dayton had been the organizer of the Oakton meeting. It did state that the conference hoped to establish “an inter-college network” to discuss ways that part-timers could improve their working conditions. Ms. Dayton was quoted as saying that two-year colleges preferred to keep their faculties in “conditions of non-communication.” The meeting was held at Oakton because it was one of the few schools where adjunct faculty members had a union. The article pointed out that although “Oakton’s adjunct faculty members have few concrete gains to show for their union representation,” they felt that “they are treated with some respect.”⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Barbara Dayton, Letter to Panelists, March 20, 1998.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² “Reaching Out and Joining Forces: A Forum about Part-time Teaching in Chicago’s Colleges and Universities,” Detailed Agenda, April 22, 1998.

⁴³ Tammie Bob, “Part-time college teachers live the tough lessons of ‘90’s-style economics,” *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, July 12, 1998, 11-12.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 12.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

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At the meeting, Ms. Dayton presented data showing the gains Oakton's adjunct faculty union had made during their contract negotiations: early assignment of classes awarded by seniority; sick leave 'if not abused,' and a small reimbursement for mandatory department meetings. Moreover, Oakton's adjunct faculty had won office space so they could meet with students, and slightly higher pay than that of other community colleges.

Nevertheless, an adjunct teacher at Oakton earned about \$1800 a course after eleven years of service, compared to a full-time, tenured teacher who earned more than \$5000 to teach the same class, along with benefits. "It's not equitable, and it's not quite a living wage, and Oakton teachers know it."⁴⁶ Admittedly, some adjuncts were retirees, and others were pursuing advanced degrees or had spouses with more earning power. Other adjuncts, in order to survive, taught at several local community colleges simultaneously. A few "campus-commuting superheroes" such as Brian Ogrodowski, an English instructor at Oakton, at times had taught up to eighteen courses at four different schools. The article pointed out that such a stressful life was for the young and healthy. "Even Mr. Ogrodowski, 30, was optimistic that he would find full-time employment."⁴⁷

The *Tribune* article reported that the meeting at Oakton ended on an up-beat note. The speaker from Columbia College, John Stevenson, said that part-time faculty members at Columbia voted to unionize in February 1997. He had been told that most of the adjuncts at Columbia were "successful arts professionals with 'glamorous jobs'" and were not teaching for the money. When these adjuncts voted 379-80 to unionize, the facts suggested otherwise.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 17.