CALL FOR PAY EQUITY FOR CONTINGENT ACADEMIC LABOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Whereas, New York’s colleges and universities have long been recognized as world leaders in higher education, both in instruction and in research; and

Whereas, access to and success in higher education are more important than ever to ensure that students reach their fullest potential and that New York continues to develop as a just society, a vibrant democracy and an engine of opportunity; and

Whereas, frontline academic workers—college faculty—are central to the mission of providing a high-quality education to students; and

Whereas, the promise of higher education is under attack in New York State by those who demand and pursue austerity, polarization, privatization and deprofessionalization; and

Whereas, state appropriations for public higher education in New York State have still not recovered to pre-recession levels even as enrollments continue to rise especially among first-generation, low-income and minority students, an ongoing disinvestment that disproportionately impacts the public institutions they serve; and

Whereas more than 75 percent of the jobs in the statewide instructional workforce are contingent, and there is a growing trend of replacing full-time faculty with underpaid contingents to save money and to balance college budgets; and

Whereas contingent faculty in some areas of New York State are paid as low as $2,500 for a three-credit course; and

Whereas the Modern Language Association has advocated for $7,000 for teaching a three-credit course; and

Whereas contingent faculty teaching the same three-credit course as a full-time faculty member should be paid proportionally (taking into account other factors like college service and committee work and research that full-timers perform); and

Whereas, many contingent faculty still face precarious employment situations from term-to-term, uncertainty about their prospects for being rehired, and uncertainty or late notifications about which courses they will be teaching when they are rehired, adversely affecting their ability to prepare for these courses; and

Whereas the reliance on contingent labor hurts not only adjunct instructors but the entire institution because their commitment and hard work notwithstanding, the low pay, lack of benefits and job insecurity make it extremely hard for adjuncts to offer their best to students inside and outside the classroom thus hurting the quality of education; further, adjuncts are unable to contribute meaningfully to work beyond classroom teaching like curriculum
development and student advising, and the lack of a career track and paucity of funding for professional development makes it very difficult for adjuncts to contribute through their research thus depriving institutions of both pedagogical work and diversity of research initiatives.

Whereas, polling data show that almost half of contingent faculty would prefer full-time, tenure-track positions; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that NYSUT reaffirm its commitment to improving the lives of contingent faculty by ending the rank exploitation of the majority of the higher education instructional workforce; and be it further

RESOLVED, that NYSUT will continue to work with its affiliates and promote their successes in collective bargaining to bring about:

• Pay equity, including compensation for class preparation time and office hours;
• Equitable access to employee benefits;
• Access to and compensation for opportunities for professional development;
• Meaningful job security, including job security comparable to tenure, long-term academic appointment contracts or certificates of continuing employment, which guarantee the presumption of rehiring;
• Opportunities for career advancement, including conversion opportunities to full-time, tenure-track positions;
• Enforceable standards for the timely notification of teaching appointments;
• Protections for academic freedom, regardless of tenure status; and
• Full inclusion in and compensation for participation in all institutional work, including service, protection of contingent staff, research and governance; and be it further

RESOLVED, that NYSUT will continue to work with and mobilize its affiliates to increase funding for instruction and student support services and ensure that funds are used to build a stable faculty corps and expand access for contingent faculty to healthcare, retirement and unemployment insurance; and be it further

RESOLVED, that NYSUT will continue to engage in collective action with our affiliates, our members, our students and our communities to build a movement that educates people about the impact of contingency on the lives of teachers and their students and effectively advocates for high-quality, student-centered public colleges and universities that are grounded by a stable, fair and equitably paid instructional workforce; that is, guided by the concept of equal pay for equal work among the whole instructional workforce; and be it further

RESOLVED, that NYSUT will work toward these ends in unity with students, parents, faculty, staff and the community to reclaim the promise of higher education.