

The Future of Lecturer Faculty

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Good morning! I'm going to present an overview of the challenges faced by Lecturer Faculty at San Francisco State, what organized Lecturer Faculty have identified as priorities, and how Lecturer Faculty are working with tenure-line allies to improve our working conditions.

I'll address how the **two-tier faculty labor system** produces **precarity, disparity, and exclusion** and outline proposals to achieve **security, equity and inclusion** but I'll start with context.

Our society is currently structured by extreme levels of **material inequality**, produced in part by **state disinvestment** in institutions, like the CSU, that improve conditions for those at the bottom of material wellbeing. In response to disinvestment, the CSU has become reliant on an increasingly disparate **two-tier faculty labor system**, to the detriment of staff, Lecturer Faculty and students. Twenty years ago, Assistant Professors earned just 5% more than Lecturer Faculty with terminal degrees, now they earn 34% more. Tenured faculty pay kept pace with inflation, except for last year when all faculty lost ground. As of 2018, Assistant Professors gained 8% since 2002, relative to inflation but Lecturer Faculty lost 18% of their pay relative to inflation. These data expose the accelerating disparity of two-tier employment at San Francisco State.

Precarity was dramatically demonstrated this month when low-enrolled courses were stricken from the schedule. In many cases, these were courses taught by tenure-line faculty, and to make up for these losses, courses assigned to Lecturer Faculty were reassigned to them. This was demoralizing for all faculty and created a cascade of harm. Not only did Lecturer Faculty, already the lowest paid instructors, lose income, they also lost the time they invested in course preparation. Instead of teaching courses they had prepared, tenure-line faculty were reassigned, in some cases, to courses they had never taught, leaving them scrambling to prepare on short notice. Students were harmed if a course they needed to graduate was cut, and it's possible that a course created in two weeks will less effectively support student success than a course crafted through years of preparation, practice, revision and redesign.

Because only 6% of Lecturer Faculty at San Francisco State are full-time, most piece together incomes from multiple jobs that may also be **contingent**, and because our Lecturer Faculty are at the rock bottom of the **pay-to-housing cost ratio** of the CSU, many are **housing insecure**. For some Lecturer Faculty, a reduction in time base also means the loss of health insurance.

In addition to precarity and disparity, the two-tier system produces **exclusion**. Lecturer Faculty are **structurally excluded** from **shared governance** and research, scholarship and creative activities, normally receiving 0% of their compensation for non-instructional labor vs. 40% for most T/TT faculty. Due to lack of access to compensation for service, Lecturer Faculty are severely underrepresented on campus democratic bodies, undermining the principle of shared governance while increasing the service burden of tenure line faculty.

Most campus awards for service and for Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity (or RSCA) exclude Lecturer Faculty but our advocacy is starting to change that. As of this Academic Year, the College of Liberal and Created Arts has made their Excellence Awards inclusive of Lecturer Faculty and staff, who now receive the same number of awards as tenure-line faculty. We challenge all campus awards committees to follow the example of LCA and end the exclusions of Lecturer Faculty in campus awards.

Last semester, almost 30% of Lecturer Faculty responded to a survey about their experience at San Francisco State. Here are some salient findings:

- 40% teach at multiple institutions; many experience burnout due to long commutes, schedule challenges, and the need to master the operations of entirely different institutions.
- 84% said their compensation was unfair. Many noted better pay at community colleges and other Bay Area universities, failure to earn a living wage, or living below the poverty line
- 62.5% felt **insecure** about their jobs at San Francisco State. I imagine that percentage just went up.
- 96% want **progressive pay raises**, meaning those lower on the salary schedule would get larger raises than those at the top. Our current system, where everyone receives the same percentage raise, awards those on the top with the largest raises and those on the bottom with the smallest, increasing and compounding pay inequality over time.
- 60% of respondents want **Range Elevation** eligibility to be automatic with each new three-year appointment and 76% favor a 9% minimum raise with each range elevation, on par with the 9% minimum raise tenure-line faculty receive with promotion.

What can we do to improve the working conditions of our lecturer faculty colleagues?

Some improvements are best achieved through our statewide **union contract**.

1. We shouldn't vote to ratify **regressive** Collective Bargaining Agreements that increase faculty pay disparity. Raises must either be **equity neutral**, for example a fixed dollar amount rather than a fixed percentage, or **progressive**, giving a larger percentage to those at the bottom.
2. Lecturer Faculty want range elevation reform. Assistant professors gain access to promotion after 6 years and get a minimum 9% raise, often more. The way range elevation is currently calculated, average Lecturer Faculty aren't eligible until they've worked 13 ½ years, and only receive a 5% raise.
3. We can support provisions like these that help Lecturer Faculty in the next contract negotiation, which is currently underway.

Some improvements can be gained through campus policies and administrative procedures.

1. Lecturer Faculty want equitable pay for service labor. As tenure density continues to erode, the service burden for tenure line faculty has become unsustainable. Let us share that burden and let us have a voice in shared governance.
2. Only 6% of Lecturer Faculty are full-time, many want to increase their time base and this is something we can improve. Through strict adherence to Article 12.29 of our contract, qualified incumbent Lecturer Faculty must be offered work, up to and including full-time employment, before any work is offered to external or non-entitled candidates.

Some of what we can do is departmental or individual

- Cite and otherwise uplift the Research, Scholarship and Creative Activities (RSCA) of your Lecturer Faculty colleagues
- Nominate your Lecturer Faculty colleagues for awards
- Invite your Lecturer Faculty colleagues to partner in research with equitable compensation and recognition.
- When you have a tenure line opening, write inclusionary rather than exclusionary job descriptions oriented toward the expertise of your qualified lecturer faculty.
- Most importantly, interrupt the institutional culture of dealing with tenure-line faculty issues first and putting off Lecturer Faculty issues until later. That is how we got here.

Something you can do now is to endorse the *Equity for Lecturer Faculty Statement of Principles* and invite your colleagues to endorse it. You can connect through the Equity for Lecturer Faculty (ELF) iLearn page, where everyone is welcome.

Small actions can be lifelines to your Lecturer Faculty colleagues. But real change requires resetting the budget priorities of the state of California and the CSU.

Lecturer Faculty are standing up for themselves around the country. They went on strike at the New School in Manhattan, won massive pay increases, and now have one of the best contracts in the country. Graduate student academic workers in the UC system went on strike and won salaries higher than some of our Lecturer Faculty. I'm going to ask you a question: Do you value the wellbeing of your Lecturer Faculty colleagues enough to go on strike?

We've all been complicit in the abysmal conditions of Lecturer Faculty in the CSU, including Lecturer Faculty. The normalization of exploitation can lead us to internalize it, to think we don't deserve better, to accept our condition as individual failure. I have a message for my lecturer faculty colleagues: whenever you feel the unhealthy emotion of shame, transform it into good, healthy anger as a stimulus to action, because there's nothing inferior about you except the way you are treated by the two-tier system.

Many of our tenure-line colleagues are sympathetic. When your low-enrolled courses were cancelled, and our courses were reassigned to you, some of you felt sick to your stomachs. You didn't do that to us, the two-tier system did. But you can partner with us to change it. We need your active, engaged solidarity; you are in a position to make our conditions better.

I also invite our administrator colleagues to stand with us against the harms of the two-tier system. I ask that you don't hide behind the budget as if it were an immutable law of nature; a budget is a moral document that articulates the values of those who create it. Create a budget that shows you value the wellbeing of staff and Lecturer Faculty.

In closing, I ask you to imagine what could happen if we routinely prioritized the wellbeing of Lecturer Faculty.

Thank you.

Discussion Question and Response Example

Discussion question example:

Define the concept of the **two-tier labor system** in your own words. How does it apply to San Francisco State? Do you know of examples in other industries?

Response example:

A **two-tier labor system** is an employer cost-cutting measure where employees doing the same or similar work are divided into two groups, which receive unequal treatment. At SF State, faculty (including instructors, librarians, counselors and coaches) are divided into two main tiers:

- Tenure/Tenure-track (T/TT): receive higher pay, teach fewer classes for full-time pay, are compensated for participating in shared governance, meaning they have a say in how the campus is run, and have job security, which ensures a variety of rights such as academic freedom.
- Lecturer Faculty (LF): receive lower pay, teach more classes for full-time pay, are not compensated to participate in shared governance, meaning they have no say unless they donate their labor, and have no job security and can be let go at any time without cause. Only 6% are full-time so most piece together incomes from multiple jobs.

According to a 2021 [NBC News story](#), workers at Nabisco, Kellogg, John Deere and Kaiser Permanente are organizing against two-tier wage and benefit systems. In these cases, to cut costs, companies maintain good pay and benefits for long term employees but hire new employees at a lower pay rate and often with fewer or worse benefits. The article said that two-tier systems can chip away at the power of labor unions since new hires are less likely to join the union. These systems are demoralizing and can reduce productivity and safety.

Discussion Questions

1. Who are the Lecturer Faculty? How are they different from tenured or tenure-line faculty? Do you know which of your instructors are Lecturer Faculty?
2. Who is the audience? Who is explicitly addressed by the speaker? Why do you think the speaker addressed specific subgroups within the audience?

3. In what ways did the speaker *challenge* the audience to act? In what ways did the speaker *invite* the audience to act? Why do you think he both challenged and invited action?
4. Define the concept of **precarity** in your own words. How does it relate to the concept of contingency? What is an example of precarity mentioned in the text? Can you think of other groups of people in our society who also experience precarity?
5. Define the concept of **disparity** in your own words. How does it relate to the concept of **material inequality**? What examples of disparity are mentioned in the text? Can you think of other groups of people in our society who also experience disparity?
6. Define the concept of **structural exclusion** in your own words. How is it different from the type of exclusion that might be practiced informally, for example by a high school clique? In what ways are Lecturer Faculty structurally excluded at SFSU? Can you think of other people in our society who are structurally excluded? What are they excluded from and what are the structures that exclude them?
7. What percentage of Lecturer Faculty teach at more than one college? What are the consequences? What is a solution?
8. Explain the terms **progressive**, **regressive** and **equity neutral** with respect to pay raises using examples from the text. What is the impact of each of these types of raises on pay disparity? Is the current range elevation policy progressive, regressive or equity neutral? Are the proposed range elevation reforms desired by the majority of Lecturer Faculty progressive, regressive or equity neutral?
9. The speaker articulates a theory of change, that solutions to the harms caused by the two-tier system can be addressed at three different levels. What are those levels and what are examples of change from each level?
10. Based on the evidence presented about other universities, what appears to be the relationship between salary levels and organizing to go on strike? Do you think CSU management will give a meaningful raise to faculty if faculty don't go on strike?
11. What do you think it means that tenured faculty are in a position to help lecturer faculty? What is it about tenured employment that might provide advantages that make it easier to be supportive?
12. How do you interpret what the speaker said about budgets? What does the speaker imply is wrong with the current university budget? The speaker ends by asking the

audience to imagine what would happen if we prioritized the wellbeing of Lecturer Faculty. Do you think imagination is an important part of problem solving? Why or why not?