

Statement to Harper College Board of Trustees

Janice Cutler  
March 29, 2005

Good evening. My name is Janice Cutler. I am a resident of Palatine, a tax payer, a voter in Harper College elections, and a member of the 6 hour adjunct bargaining unit. I have been employed as an adjunct faculty member in the mathematics department for six years. For the last 5 years, I have taught 3 courses every fall semester and 2 or 3 courses every spring semester. But I have no assurance I will be given an assignment to teach in the fall of 2005.

I came to my job teaching math at Harper College with excellent credentials. I have a doctorate in Mathematics from the University of Illinois. I gained teaching experience from my 6 years teaching at the University of Illinois, followed by 6 years at Louisiana State University. In addition, I have earned the designation of Fellow of the Casualty Actuarial Society and worked full-time as an actuary for 20 years. For the last 6 years I have continued to work part-time as an actuarial consultant while teaching at Harper. I feel passionate about both teaching and mathematics. That is the reason I decided to return to teaching.

I am fortunate that I can afford to teach at Harper. I do not have to try to live on the salary I am paid, and my husband's job provides health insurance coverage for us. Many of my adjunct colleagues are not so fortunate. I had been aware of the unfair treatment of adjunct faculty at the college level, but it became a personal issue when I joined the Harper workforce.

I would like to read a quote I found on the web pages of the American Association of University professors:

The AAUP believes that excessive use of, and inadequate compensation and professional support for, such contingent faculty exploits these colleagues and undermines academic freedom, academic quality, and professional standards. It is essential to improve the compensation and professional support opportunities for contingent faculty.

In May of 2003, the IEA-NEA invited Harper adjuncts to a meeting to discuss forming a union. I attended that first meeting, and countless meetings since. I helped to draft our first contract proposal, and have been a member of the negotiating team which has been working since last June with little success to get our first contract. I am deeply disappointed at the lack of progress and the lack of respect the administration appears to have for our contribution to Harper.

Harper cannot continue its past practices. Harper cannot expect excellent adjunct teachers to want to stay at Harper if Harper does not start giving adjuncts what they deserve.

Statement to Harper College Board of Trustees

Anna Lewis  
March 29, 2005

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen, Respected Members of the Board.

My name is Anna Lewis. I have worked as a part-time faculty member at Harper College for 6 years and at Elgin Community College for 7 years. For almost a year now I have been participating in the ongoing negotiations with the College to reach an agreement that will ensure fairness for all Harper adjunct faculty.

Today I would like to speak to you from my own experience hoping for a better understanding on your part of what we are really fighting for and why.

One of the most critical issues is job security; something we have so far been denied at Harper. I have been a member of the Elgin Community College Faculty Association since 2001 but I didn't fully understand the significance of my membership in that union and the provisions of the Elgin contract until facing the reality of Harper's opposition to job security for its adjunct faculty. According to Elgin's contract the union adjuncts are guaranteed 6 credit hours of teaching per semester. In addition, they have the opportunity to select their desired courses based on seniority, with the first choice offered to the most senior members of the unit. It is simple: the longer you stay with the college, the more seniority you gain. The more seniority you have, the better is the chance you will receive the preferred courses. This works both ways. It provides the part-time teachers with the only possible job security they can ever have; and on the other hand, it ensures the College a stable, committed and loyal staff of professionals who know that their dedication to the institution will be rewarded.

Here at Harper we have been told over and over that there is no job security possible for part-time teachers. Well, as it turns out, there is, although someplace else, in a different community college.

There is another job security issue that we, on the negotiating team, are gravely concerned about and so far have been unable to resolve through negotiation, and that is the extremely high probability of losing our membership in the bargaining unit due to inability to teach the required minimum number of hours. Again I will speak from my own experience. Last spring I voted for union representation as a qualified 6-hour adjunct faculty member. In the fall semester I was assigned two –four-credit hour classes but one of the classes did not fill and was cancelled. As a result, I automatically lost my membership in the 6-hour bargaining unit and now I represent the 3-hour unit. If I do not receive at least a 3-credit hour class this spring, I will lose my union membership altogether. My example clearly shows how easy it is to be out of the union. Technically, we may face a bizarre situation where none of the bargaining unit members are assigned the required minimum of hours and therefore lose their membership in our union. Wouldn't it be peculiar to have a negotiated, signed and sealed contract, and not a single member covered by it? Our being or not being in the bargaining unit relies entirely on arbitrary decisions on the part of the College, which may lead to the decimation of the union at any time.

Unlike Harper, Elgin has found a mutually satisfactory solution. Elgin's contract stipulates that those unit adjunct faculty members who are involuntarily inactive because no courses are available for them to teach shall retain their membership status for 4 consecutive academic years. What's more, if they choose to remain inactive, they have the right to do so for 2 consecutive academic years without losing membership in the unit.

This provision gives us at Elgin a strong feeling of security, of being an integral part of the institution, instead of mere temporary contractors one can dispose of at any time.

What we are really fighting for is the recognition of our right to be treated with the respect and dignity we deserve; for an agreement that will be advantageous to both sides. I know it can be done because it has been done, and not so far from here.

## ***Statement at Harper College Board of Trustees***

**Frank Brooks**

**March 29, 2005**

My name is Frank Brooks and I teach Political Science at Harper College. I began teaching here in the fall of 1999 and have taught here every fall and spring semester since then except for one. That one semester just happened to be the semester in which the union representation election was held (Spring 2004). Anna Lewis just described a scenario where she might fall out of the bargaining unit here at Harper. That scenario isn't just a possibility; it's already happened to me. I'd like to explain how that occurred and how my situation illustrates the need to protect job security among adjuncts.

When I began teaching here five and a half years ago, I had already been teaching part time at Roosevelt University for six years. Prior to that, I had full-time positions teaching political science in Texas and then in Louisiana. A persistent myth about adjunct faculty is that they are casual employees, not really committed to the profession. For me, and many like me, that's clearly not true. I have been a college teacher for most of my adult life. I have taught Introduction to American Politics at Harper College over twenty times. I am not a temporary employee; I am a teacher who, like many these days, cannot get one of the shrinking number of full-time positions that exist in academia.

When I began teaching at Harper, my department (History and Political Science) had two full-time faculty teaching political science. There is now only one. In the academic year of 2002-03, there were none. That year, including the summer of 2003, I taught seven sections of American politics. In the fall of 2003, I taught three more sections. If I had taught in Spring 2004, I would have been eligible to vote in the representation election, but the classes I was assigned did not get sufficient enrollment and they were canceled at the last minute.

This is not a "sob story," but an all-too-typical experience for adjunct faculty. We have no job security. Or rather, we haven't had any job security so far. We expect to get some through the contract we're negotiating with Harper College. We're not sure which form that job security will take, but it's clearly not fair that low enrollment in one semester should drop someone out of the bargaining unit.

I'm still not in the bargaining unit (either the six-hour or the three-hour teaching unit). I won't be in the unit until Spring of 2006 **at the earliest**. That's only **if** I teach this

fall and next spring. If my classes don't make in **either** of those semesters, then I would have to start from scratch and teach four more consecutive semesters to get into the bargaining unit.

This is not job security.

This is not rewarding committed teachers for their faithful service to the College and its students.

This is not a policy designed to build loyalty to the College.

This is a policy that makes it easier for the College to break the union by decimating its membership.

Is that what the Board of Trustees wants? Insecure, undervalued, sullen teachers looking for opportunities elsewhere?

I hope not. I hope the Board will instruct those negotiating on the College side to include some job security provisions in our contract.

Statement to the Harper College Board of Trustees, March 29, 2005  
By Arlene Bublick, President of the Harper College Adjunct Faculty Association

My name is Arlene Bublick. The last two times that I spoke to you, I was introduced as the chief negotiator for the Harper College Adjunct Faculty Association in its negotiations with the College. Since that time, I have been elected president. I would like to speak to you as president of the largest union at Harper College, a union with 300 members—adjunct faculty who teach half of the classes at Harper

It is important to us that you know that all of the adjuncts here tonight as well as those who could not attend this meeting care very much about our students and Harper College.

When I spoke to you in November, I stated the goals that we had presented to the administration when we first began negotiating with them last June—almost a full year ago. They were reasonable goals.

Foremost among them was our desire to have recognition and respect from the College. So far, judging by the attitude on the part of the College's negotiating team, we don't seem to have received either.

The second goal was to have an agreement before the fall term of 2004. Obviously, that term has long since come and gone. We are now past the middle of the spring term, and to date, we have not even begun to negotiate the truly difficult areas of the contract such as salary, benefits, and job security.

The administration does not seem to want our negotiations to ever end. I believe they have the hope that perhaps we'll go away. We won't! We are here to stay. Our backing is getting stronger and stronger, and the more we are not dealt with properly, the more determined we become.

The teachers who spoke tonight all spoke about our third goal—job security.

As you have heard, there is a waiting period to be in our union. An adjunct teacher must have been teaching here for at least 3 consecutive semesters in addition to the current one. Only after completing that two-year waiting period are adjuncts eligible to be in our union. We, therefore, have to earn the price of job security. Even on that point, we are held to a higher standard than any other employees on campus. In no other union, do employees have a waiting period before they can join their unions.

We can accept that difference. We can understand the college wanting that standard for us—if the purpose is to give job security to those who qualify after that long period of time.

However, when Frank spoke, you heard that even though he has taught well over the required amount of classes for many semesters—more than the number required, he is still not eligible to be in our union as there was one semester when his classes didn't run. As a result, he must begin the two-year waiting period all over again. Frank's situation illustrates the power that the administration currently has to destroy our union by making membership in it difficult at best and impossible at worst.

Anna mentioned how important Elgin Community College is to her because of the recognition, respect, and most of all, job security that college gives her. We would like Anna—and others similar to her—to start to consider Harper College as their preferred academic home.

The College must convince teachers like Janice Cutler—teachers with outstanding credentials and love for teaching—to remain at Harper where they will be valued.

It is my view, that the administration has shown its unwillingness to treat us in a truly honorable way. It is my hope that you were listening intently to what the speakers had to say and will start to question the administration about the negotiating process. It is my expectation you will make them accountable to you.

For those board members who will be leaving the board soon, we had hoped to complete the negotiation process prior to your departure. We regret the lost opportunity to work with you in a positive way.

For those of you who will be on the board in the future. We count on your determination to make the administration responsible to you. We look forward to working with you in a productive way in the future.

Thank you.

To any of our members who came to support us tonight— thank you for taking the time—even though it is your spring vacation time. Please feel free to leave now if you'd like. We know how busy your schedules are.