This Position Statement is based on the “Resolution on Contingent Academic Labor” (2015) created by the Academic Labor Committee of the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM). It is updated here to be issued as an official Position Statement, and to renew advocacy in regards to this disconcerting and ongoing trend in higher education. Renewed attention to this issue is critical now that the COVID-19 pandemic will undoubtedly exacerbate the economic precarity of the majority of instructors in higher education who work mostly in part-time, contingent positions.

For many years now, the majority of university instruction has been done by an increasing number of part-time employees while the percentage of tenured or tenure-line faculty members has steadily decreased to less than 30%. Meanwhile, “contingent” labor—when defined as non-tenure track, part-time, and graduate student employees—now comprises at least 70% of instruction in higher education. The trend towards “adjunctification” and the reliance on contingent labor has significant deleterious consequences for tenure-line faculty, contingent employees themselves, research, and students at all levels. Most importantly, these trends represent a challenge to academic freedom, job security, and the very nature of higher education.

According to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the majority of teaching-intensive positions are now given to contingent faculty. As a result, contingent faculty with teaching-intensive appointments have less (or no) time for professional development, research, or creative activity, reducing their effectiveness in the classroom, the general advancement of knowledge, and often stymieing their own career advancement and job security. Despite extensive student contact, contingent faculty with teaching-intensive appointments rarely have time for student advising and have a lower level of campus engagement. Women and underrepresented minorities are disproportionately represented in contingent positions while their presence in tenured positions remains comparatively small. Furthermore, contingent positions are more likely to be cut in response to “fiscal austerity” measures, destabilizing student learning while reproducing the social and material marginalization of underrepresented minorities and women.

The widespread reliance on contingent faculty also has dire consequences for tenure-line faculty and the value they represent for higher education. Full-time non-tenure track faculty generally are not required to do institutional service, so the shrinking core of tenure-line faculty are burdened with rising service demands. Tenured faculty are also more likely, then,
to have an increased student advising load. More disturbingly, fewer full-time, tenured faculty members means less academic freedom overall and a weaker climate for invigorating, boundary-pushing research and intellectual thought. The dismantling of the tenure stream devalues tenured positions themselves as those faculty members are likewise seen as a “cost” for institutions of higher education rather than their primary resource. A world-class system of higher education requires a strong, united, and engaged faculty that receives the support necessary to carry out its professional and societal responsibilities.

In ethnomusicology, these trends are especially disconcerting. Our marginal existence in the academic hierarchy leaves our traditional teaching and research responsibilities especially vulnerable to this accelerating trend in academia. Furthermore, our own field’s reliance on contingent labor, especially for the part-time teaching of ensembles, has reinforced artificial divides between teaching theory and practice, as well as research and performance. Ultimately, PhD-granting institutions, and those considering creating or expanding a graduate program, must question the ethicality of creating more holders of a highly specialized PhD in a context of few and diminishing placements.

Statement of Core Principles Regarding Contingent Faculty
The Society for Ethnomusicology urges fair and equitable treatment for all faculty members across the academic workforce. SEM embraces the Coalition on the Academic Workforce’s motto of “One faculty serving all students.” Recognizing that contingent faculty make indispensable contributions to their institutions, the Society for Ethnomusicology supports the following principles:

1. Fair and equitable compensation, including medical and retirement benefits.
   a. Minimum levels of per-course compensation for all faculty members serving off the tenure track that are equal to those of tenure-track faculty members so that all faculty members have the support necessary to devote the time and effort required to teach college-level courses. To ensure fairness and transparency, compensation levels should be a matter of public record.
   b. Access to health and retirement benefits through the institution for all faculty who teach 50% or more of a full teaching load.
   c. Compensation of faculty for work outside of the classroom, including student advising, committees, and other service work.
   d. Regular support for professional development in regard to teaching skills, new course creation, scholarship, creative activity, and occupational promotion.
   e. Access to administrative and technical support from the department and institution.
   f. Fractional positions for faculty who may wish to remain part-time over the
long term, including fully proportional pay, eligible for tenure and benefits, with proportional expectations for service and professional development.

2. Pathways to job security for teaching service in excess of a defined number of years.

3. Enfranchisement to participate in the work and life of the department and institution, including curriculum planning, student advising, and shared governance.

4. Academic freedom, including freedom from retaliation, in all teaching and research.

5. Support for professional development, including institution-based research grants and financial support for conferences.


7. Access to administrative and technological support services, adequate office space, library, and other campus privileges.

8. Conversion of contingent appointments to appointments eligible for tenure, with only minor changes in job description.

9. Limiting use of contingent labor and avoiding new off-track hiring, except when such hires are genuinely special appointments or for short duration.

10. Support of contingent workers’ right to unionize.

**Conclusion**

The Society for Ethnomusicology is committed to reversing the shrinkage of tenure-line positions and asks its members who are involved in hiring and administrative decisions to advocate strongly against this deleterious trend in higher education. As we advocate for that goal, it is imperative that we ensure fair labor practices for contingent faculty who now hold them majorities of teaching positions. We also recognize that we must be responsible in training future doctoral students in the realities of the academic marketplace whether in tenure-track positions, as contingent labor, or beyond academic positions.

The SEM Core Principles rely heavily on the following sources:

**American Anthropological Association**

https://www.americananthro.org/ParticipateAndAdvocate/AdvocacyDetail.aspx?ItemNumber=22531

**American Association of University Professors Guidelines**

http://www(aaup.org/issues/contingent-faculty/resources-contingent-appointments
In 1975 full-time non-tenure track faculty and part-time faculty together comprised 43.2% of the faculty workforce (excluding graduate student employees); in 1993 the percentage was 57%; and in 2011 it was 70.2%. In that time, part-time faculty grew substantially, from 30.2% of the faculty workforce in 1975 to 51.1% in 2011, whereas full-time non-tenure-track faculty grew much more slowly, from 13% to 19.1%. In 2011 full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty comprised less than 30% of the faculty workforce, across all disciplines and degree-granting institutions in the U.S. (compared to 45% in 1975). (Statistics compiled by the American Association of University Professors [AAUP] using US Department of Education data.)