

# ADJUNCT FACULTY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

## ISSUES THAT MATTER TO YOU!

### Editors' Note: In This Issue

**It has been four months** since most everyone's lives changed abruptly and significantly, due to the emergence of Covid-19. In response, society is changing in nearly every facet. This month we offer a variety of articles that address this change - or need for change - even/especially in the unique world of adjuncts. **Taking on the issue of Covid-19** as it affects adjuncts is *Paula Krebs* in **"COVID-19: How Adjuncts are Impacted."** In **"Barely Getting By,"** *Colleen Flaherty* reveals the current plight of highly educated adjuncts as they strive to earn a living beyond poverty level. *John Staddon* evaluates the overall impact on higher education due to the increasing expanse of administration in **"Administrative Bloat: Where Does It Come From and What Is It Doing?"**

UMGC long-time adjunct, Professor of Writing/ Humanities and newsletter contributor, *Albert Nekimken, PhD*, speaks with *UMGC Ombudsman Dr. Blair Hayes* regarding his duties as he sees them and as they affect adjuncts.

Another long-time adjunct, *Ron Roman*, provides his thoughts on his time as a professor at UMGc and where he sees it heading in his editorial, **Suggestions From a Departing Long-Time UMGc/UMGC Professor.**

**The Turnitin Resource Guide** offers easy access to the university's Turnitin feature. And the article **Regional Chapters Are Forming!** explains the formations of regional chapters for UMGc for adjuncts who live nearby and would like to get to know each other!

**Financial Bottom Line: Estimating the Cost of Faculty Adjunct Turnover and Attrition for Online Programs** speaks for itself.

**Finally, "Forward Together"** brings it all together by addressing the overall issue of adjunct inequality in higher education, encouraging an understanding and offering a means to action for improved change.

**In solidarity...**

### COVID-19: How Adjuncts are Impacted

*Paula M. Krebs*, Executive Director, Modern Language Association



As colleges and universities move from face-to-face instruction to online teaching and learning, students have been sent home from residence halls, classroom buildings are closed, and professors are scrambling to find out how they can help their students learn for the rest of the semester. But not all students are in the same situation. And not all instructors are either...

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Once a middle-class job, many college and university faculty now working part time for poverty-level pay, isolated from colleagues without job security, benefits or even office space. Even tenure and tenure track professors struggle with the impacts of funding cuts and decreased faculty input. Students are increasingly saddled with crushing debt that could take a lifetime to get out from under. Parents are struggling to stay afloat in the face of skyrocketing tuition bills. As faculty, we have the power to help reverse these trends...

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### Barely Getting By

*Colleen Flaherty*  
*Inside Higher Ed*



Nearly 25 percent of adjunct faculty members rely on public assistance, and 40 percent struggle to cover basic household expenses, according to a new report from the American Federation of Teachers... Nearly a third of the 3,000 adjuncts surveyed for the report earn less than \$25,000 a year... That puts them below the federal poverty guideline for a family of four...

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### An Interview with UMGc Ombudsman, Dr. Blair Hayes

*Albert Nekimken, PhD, UMGc Adjunct Faculty*



Even though the Scandinavian term "ombudsman" has been used since the Swedish parliament installed the first one in 1809, in modern times, few of us are likely to be familiar with the office - a recent import into higher education - or how it functions at UMGc. Although we have an ombudsman at UMGc, Dr. Blair Hayes, who was installed in this position in 2013 following a request by faculty, the position hasn't been without some general controversy: "The major advantage of an ombudsman is that he or she examines complaints from outside the offending state institution, thus avoiding the conflicts of interest inherent in self-policing. However, the ombudsman system relies heavily on the selection of an appropriate individual for the office, and on the cooperation of at least some effective official from within the apparatus of the state. The institution has also been criticized: 'Ombudsmen are relics of absolutism, designed to iron out the worst excesses of administrative arbitrariness while keeping the power structures intact'" (*Wikipedia*).

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## EDITORIAL

*Ron Roman, Former Adjunct Professor English/Humanities,  
UMUC/UMGC [ron\\_roman@hotmail.com](mailto:ron_roman@hotmail.com)*

### ***Suggestions From a Departing Long-Time UMUC/UMGC Professor***

I've been asked to proffer a few reflective, parting words and suggestions to our faculty representatives. What I have to say, pro and con, is meant in good spirit going forward. Here goes....

I first started full-time college teaching in 1979 and in January 1996 with then-UMUC back in its halcyon days, retired in 2009 and later, not much later, resumed teaching part time, all the while in Asia.

Back when I began, the University was just that, a traditional school with robust academic standards, standards that were mutually enforced by faculty and administrator alike. Faculty weren't scared of failing non-performing students for fear of being "bad for business." Those were our Golden Days, when our administrators were just that, not today's corporate representatives; students weren't "customers," and we professors weren't "classroom guides/facilitators/mentors" - now fast becoming nothing more than classroom monitors. Yes, it was a different era - a different era, indeed.

But today? It's digitize it, automatize it, commoditize it and, ultimately, corporatize it. UMUC/UMGC's past two presidents have done a remarkable job doing just that. Gotta give 'em credit there, huh? Hats off! It's the new UMGC brand. But perhaps we shouldn't lament it so; after all, they were handpicked and approved by the USM chancellors to do just that. Signs of changing times. It's happening. Everywhere. So, while our president gets **two \$50K/year raises**, we adjuncts jump in glee over how blessed we are to be given our annual \$250 training stipend. For sure, we've had our good share of administrators ("managers" now). We had Senior Vice President Joe Arden for 39½ years, a staunch defender of academic standards if there ever was one (before being fired by UMUC's incoming corporate President, Susan Aldridge) and the more recent Senior VP and CAO (Provost) Alan Drimmer, who lasted 17 months - both of them not corporate enough. However, administrators like them are becoming increasingly rare at UMGC, or any institution of higher learning. Toe the new corporate line. Or else.

On the positive side... Our adjunct pay, while good, yes, on an hourly basis vis-à-vis what many other "professionals" in other fields earn, is not much to smile over, given the fact that UMGC, Inc. takes approximately \$400 million in revenue with a rumored \$40 million alone going into advertising the new corporate logo and everything that goes with it. Massive expenditures to engage and entertain massive numbers of customers (aka "students") for the predominant financial benefit of all but a select few persons at the top of the corporate ladder. When I began with UMUC, I remember three vice presidents; now there are a good two dozen.

**Bottom line:** If the AFA, or any faculty organization, is going to have any real, meaningful existence in today's new corporate scheme, faculty must kibbitz with Annapolis legislators for collective bargaining rights, i.e., unionize (we're talking in Maryland; it's not possible overseas.) Otherwise, AFA's efforts to improve the treatment of UMGC's gargantuan adjunct workforce will continue to be futile. Several adjuncts have been strong advocates for faculty representation by SEIU 500 (union). Why not lock arms with them to effect some real change for UMGC faculty? Otherwise again, without a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), UMGC professors will never have any real say in academic affairs, nor job security/protection. To think otherwise is to always be pissing in the wind -- and against the wind at that.



### **TURNITIN RESOURCE GUIDE**

Beginning January 2020, Turnitin was fully integrated into the LEO classroom so that Program Directors and Faculty Members can enable assignments for use of this version that is directly available in assignment folders... submissions are analyzed for authenticity against Turnitin's repository:

<https://engage.umuc.edu/docs/DOC-139434>

### **NEWSLETTER CONTACT INFORMATION**

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**CONGRATULATIONS** to UMGC's  
*Joyce Shelleman, PhD, UMGC, and  
Jeffrey Shields, UNC Asheville!*

Their submission, "Sustainability Dashboards: A Tool for SMEs to Manage and Report on Sustainability Performance," was awarded the Best Applied Paper Award at the Small Business Institute's 2020 Annual Conference. Dr. Shelleman teaches Organizational Theory and Behavior in the School of Business, Dept. of Business Management, and has been an Adjunct Professor at UMGC since 2013.

***(If you are a UMGC adjunct and have recently marked a professional milestone in your life, please let us know!)***

## REGIONAL ADJUNCT GROUPS ARE FORMING!

Recently, the Fun Florida Committee – comprised of 88 UMGC adjuncts with ties to Florida – had its first meeting. Forty members participated in a Zoom call; 68 adjuncts sent in PowerPoint introductions. The members are encouraged to network among themselves, especially with those in their local areas. The Fun Florida Committee even has its own Engage page: <https://engage.umuc.edu/message/61736-afa-fun-florida-committee>. Meanwhile, similar groups of UMGC adjuncts are forming throughout the U.S.

If you would like to organize a group in your region (other than those mentioned below) - or for an area of interest - contact **Susan Malone** (as our AFA Communications Committee Chairwoman, she can get the word out for you).

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### Financial Bottom Line: Estimating the Cost of Faculty Adjunct Turnover and Attrition for Online Programs

Turnover and attrition of online faculty and adjunct faculty is a reality. While there are no reported national statistics or data on annual turnover/attrition for online faculty/adjunct, the overall costs of recruiting, training, and replacing faculty/adjunct can be staggering. Moreover, the short and long term effects of online faculty/adjuncts who are not properly trained through recruitment and retention plans can result in faculty/adjunct attrition, student attrition, low graduation rates, legal action, and negatively affect the reputation of an institution. Therefore, online programs administrators must be cognizant of “costs” associated with faculty/adjunct turnover/attrition and understand the inherent importance of recruitment, retention and incentive plans related to program sustainability...

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### Administrative Bloat: Where Does It Come From and What Is It Doing?

John Staddon, Duke University

Philip Hamburger [recently published](#) a piece in *The Wall Street Journal* arguing that Congress should control administrative bloat by limiting student loan funds given to colleges with too many administrators. He is dead right about the vast increase in non-faculty bureaucracy in recent decades and the need to reduce it. But the sources of the problem are many and the solution not, perhaps, as simple as professor Hamburger suggests.

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### Student Asked to Change Her Name to Make it Sound English...

A college professor has been placed on administrative leave following a racist incident in which he refused to call a student by her given name and instructed her - twice - to “Anglicize” her name.

Phuc Bui Diem Nguyen, a Vietnamese American freshman college student at Laney College in Oakland, California, was on her second day of classes and was looking forward to using her legal name after years of being called “May” when she received an abrupt email request from her trigonometry professor, Matthew Hubbard.

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# An Interview with UMGC Ombudsman, Dr. Blair Hayes

*By Albert Nekimken, PhD, UMGC Adjunct Faculty*



## Continued from Page 1...

Fortunately for us, Dr. Blair Hayes does appear to be a very “appropriate” individual for his position and he does work closely with “some effective official from within [the administration],” President Miyares who appointed him and with whom he works closely.

Hayes holds a Ph.D in Organizational Psychology from Temple University and had prior work experience at Booz Allen. Initially, he came to UMUC in 2010 as Director of Diversity, a responsibility that he retains along with his newer ombudsman duties. Currently, he is a member of the President’s cabinet along with two dozen other vice-presidents who meet bi-weekly. He believes firmly that being a trusted “insider” is one key to his success as a mediator.

Hayes describes his primary ombudsman activities as comprising confidential conversations with all employees of UMGC, regardless of status. He has talked with higher-ranking administrators, staff members, full-time and adjunct faculty around the world. Hayes also talks with students to help them better understand university policies and personal options. He is quick to clarify that his role is NOT to become an advocate or in-house attorney dedicated to solving individual problems. He sees himself more as a neutral adviser even if, on rare occasions, he has asked for permission to disclose a person’s identity in order to investigate particular situations, such as financial aid problems.

### Retribution?

Hayes stressed that the issue seldom arises because he keeps no notes and all conversations are “one-off” – not intended to fill in a protocol of documentation for any file. He sees his role more as that of a mediator able to understand, explain, provide background and empower people to seek their own solutions to problems. For this reason, he hasn’t (yet) incurred anyone’s ire.

In the future, he sees his position splitting into multiple ombudspersons who might be assigned to specific organizational units. He also envisions them acquiring formal training in mediation. Overall, he stressed that any ombudsman must have a positive attitude, a desire to avoid escalation of problems, honesty and trust. Any “leaks” about the content of his private discussions could seriously undermine an ombudsman’s reputation and effectiveness. Currently, he works with a small group of nine colleagues.

When Dr. Hayes compared his work in the private sector at Booz Allen to his work at UMGC, he mentioned two salient points: less office politics, but much similarity insofar as UMGC operates largely like a corporation. However, he stressed that the role of confidential, neutral problem-solvers or mediators was equally important.

Also, he sees his work in promoting diversity as equally beneficial because he believes, both from personal experience and his academic training, that diverse organizations are the most successful.

Beyond diversity of race, gender, religion and the like, Hayes described a range of problems that people have brought to him, including:

- Personality problems between managers and their staff members
- People unhappy with their performance evaluations
- Faculty members unhappy with their class assignments (or lack thereof)
- Students whose financial aid is threatened

Of special interest to adjunct faculty, he has discussed problems with course staffing decisions, questions about academic status and promotion, and frictions with Program Directors. Hayes stressed that he strives always to treat full-time and adjunct faculty the same. His methodology: explain policies, investigate complex situations, clarify processes and protocols. “I don’t try to influence a process unless I see an error.”

Wearing his academic hat, Hayes identified a few important criteria for measuring the organizational health of an enterprise whether a private-sector corporation or a university. He recommends looking at:

- Turnover and retention of personnel
- Levels of demography and diversity
- Numbers of job applicants and their trends (“Attractive workplaces attract larger numbers of job applicants.”)

Finally, he commented that, true to his fundamental perception of his position, he is neutral on the idea of unionization for higher education faculty, seeing both potential problems and benefits.