

Adjunct faculty make case for equality

By Kathryn Reed

She wheels around what looks like an oversized briefcase. It's heavy. People ask why she does it. Her answer – it's her office.

This is Julie Ewing's reality. For 12 years she has been an adjunct faculty member in Lake Tahoe Community College's English Department. As such, she doesn't have an office to store things. No adjunct faculty member does. That means taking everything with her every day she teaches. Taking it home. Taking it from room to room.

Adjunct faculty throughout the United States on Feb. 25 brought their issues to light in various ways. At some schools they walked out in protest. At LTCC there was an hourlong assembly where nearly 100 people – mostly students – heard the issues that face these part-time instructors.

Most of these instructors have the same education as full-time faculty. But being part time means they get paid less. On average they make \$25,000 a year. They don't have health benefits. They don't have contracts and there is no job security. With no offices, they can't have office hours for students.

At LTCC, the adjunct teaching non-credit ESL classes don't get paid for holidays or snow days.



Nearly 100 people listen
Feb. 25 at LTCC about the
plight of adjunct faculty.
Photo/LTn

These part-timers don't get to take sabbaticals every seven years for enrichment opportunities like the LTCC full-timers do. They don't get time to do research – at least not paid time. Ewing said she has never made \$25,000 a year. She was close one year. But that was the year she spent on the road working at schools here, in Reno and Incline Village.

For Maxine Alper, who has been an adjunct faculty member at LTCC since 1997, she is wondering how her rent will be paid in the fall. On Friday a full-time faculty member bumped her. Full-timers have first rights to a class. The loss in pay is equivalent to two-thirds of Alper's monthly rent.

It wasn't a woe-is-me pity party, but instead an informative session about the disparity between those who work full time as instructors and those who work part time and how this may be impacting students and the community at large.

"It damages student learning, faculty governance, and academic freedom. Each of these is an educational cost that institutions incur when they choose not to invest adequately in their instructional missions," Scott Lukas said. He teaches anthropology and sociology at LTCC – full time.

Lukas was one of four presenters Wednesday. Joining him were

Albert Ponce – full time political science professor, Alper and Ewing. Alper said adjunct at LTCC make one-quarter to one-third what full-time faculty make.

Colleges use adjunct faculty because they can be paid less and benefits are not included.

At LTCC in fall 2014 and winter 2015 there were 158 contracts for adjunct faculty. Both quarters there were 39 full-time faculty members on the payroll.

Ponce called it a two-tiered system.

“We need to delink from this neo-liberal logic. We need to follow a model other than this one,” Ponce said.

It was acknowledged that much of the problem is at the state level where funding decisions are made and that people should be addressing lawmakers.

Jessica Sota, who is part of the LTCC student senate, said students need to be more involved and aware of who is teaching them.

LTCC students were in Sacramento on Feb. 25 voicing their concerns. They will be returning Monday for the annual March in March, at which time they will also be speaking with individual lawmakers about concerns at community colleges.