

Greetings,

My name is Armelle Denis, I was an instructor in French and Anthropology at Oregon State University for almost 15 years, first as a graduate teaching assistant, then as a non-tenured instructor. I was lucky enough, combining employment in two departments at the same institution, to be near full-time for the major part of my time at OSU, so that for a long time I received full benefits and I didn't have to worry about healthcare access for my family.

But liberal arts in general and world languages in particular have never been well funded at OSU, and our unit was repeatedly targeted for budget cuts over the last decade, so that classes who didn't meet enrollment minimum were canceled, and soon entire programs were eliminated. For non-tenured faculty, that meant living in constant fear of losing the better part of your job, and with it your health insurance. It did happen to some of my colleagues: being told, barely 3 days before the start of a term, that 2 of your 3 classes were canceled and that, effective the 1st of the following month, your benefits would be discontinued.

Institutions of higher education rely increasingly on part-time, non-tenured instructors and adjuncts to teach the bulk of undergraduate programs, including very large introductory courses. Adjuncts are on the front lines of educating our Oregon students, which is a mighty responsibility, but we are not given the means to do a good job. Our precariousness is detrimental to students' education. Many among us have little job security, and juggle teaching assignments at several institutions, leaving us with little time to focus on what really matters: engaging young minds with creative curriculum, giving extra help to struggling students, encouraging excellence... In these conditions, it becomes much harder to be an effective teacher. And when teachers can't teach, we all lose.

SB 196 would make a world of difference for non-tenured faculty in Oregon, especially in these times of great uncertainty regarding the future of healthcare in our country. Many of us only have healthcare thanks to the ACA, which is clunky and expensive, but at least provides some access, for the time being. Having healthcare safety would be huge, and I strongly urge you to support SB 196.

Sincerely,
Armelle Denis
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