

A REPORT ON THE

# Contingent Faculty Workforce in Communication

NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION | JANUARY 2018

NCA

## **PURSUANT TO A CALL BY NCA PRESIDENT STEPHEN HARTNETT,**

the National Communication Association (NCA) commenced an investigation into the extent and nature of the contingent faculty workforce in the discipline of Communication. In preparing this report, NCA culls and coordinates data from various sources, and from NCA's own data collection efforts, to provide the most complete and accurate picture of the current state of the academic workforce in the discipline. The concern about the nature of the academic workforce in Communication is relevant to several domains covered by NCA and its mission; minimally, as NCA seeks to advance the discipline of Communication, understanding the nature of the academic workforce that studies and teaches that discipline is critical.

### **A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY**

As with all reports and data about higher education and the discipline of Communication, there is in the consideration of the academic workforce some ambiguity as to terminology. For the discipline itself, Communication is often categorized alongside Journalism and other related disciplines. Such classification is entirely dependent upon the data source used.

There is also some confusion as to the specific definition of "contingent" faculty. Typically, contingent faculty members are those individuals who teach at an institution of higher education and who do not hold a "tenured" or "tenure-track" position. These individuals, in other words, do not have the possibility of securing tenure at the institution where they are employed. Such individuals may be part-time or full-time; they may be temporary, semi-permanent, or permanent employees; they may teach a full load of courses or simply one or two courses each semester; and they may be compensated by salary or per individual course. They may also receive other employment benefits, or they may not receive such benefits. Sometimes, the label "contingent" faculty includes graduate student teaching assistants; it may also sometimes be synonymous with "adjunct" faculty.

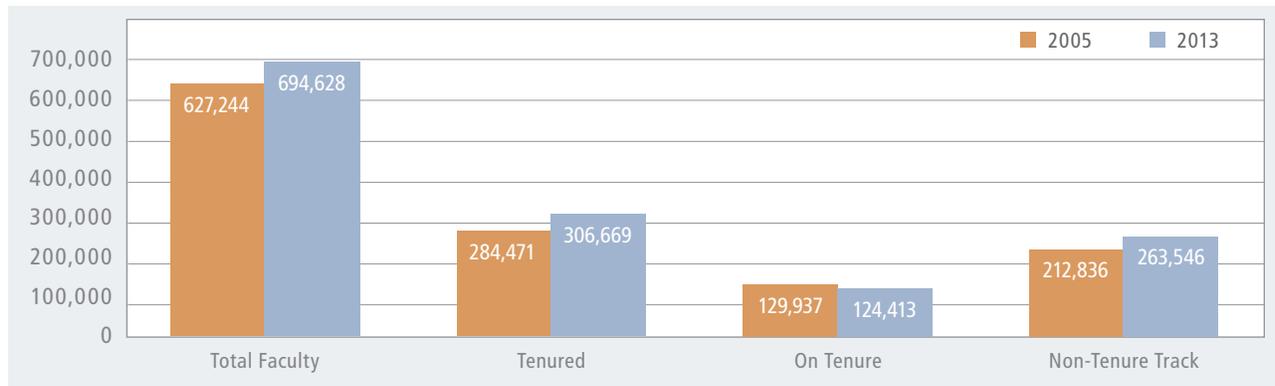


## CONTINGENT FACULTY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

NCA is an elected member of the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW), “a group of higher education associations, disciplinary associations, and faculty organizations committed to addressing issues associated with deteriorating faculty working conditions and their effect on college and university students in the United States.” Of particular concern to CAW is the question of contingent faculty. In assessing the levels of contingent faculty in U.S. institutions of higher education, CAW relies on data from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

AFT’s data on faculty in higher education are drawn from Department of Education information based on information reported annually by institutions of higher education. These data come from 7,265 institutions (for 2014–2015), including 2-year and 4-year, public and private college and universities as well as for-profit schools. The eight years from 2005 to 2013 saw a 10.7 percent increase in the total number of faculty members in higher education, a 7.8 percent increase in the number of tenured faculty members, and a 23.8 percent increase in non-tenure track faculty members. The only decrease in numbers occurred in the “on tenure track” category, where there was a 4.3 percent decrease from 2005 to 2013 (See Figure 1).

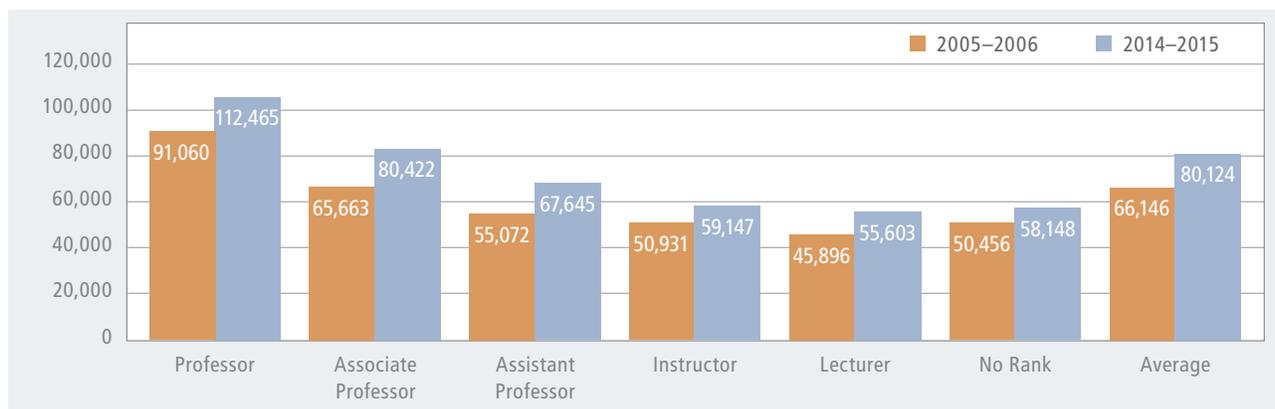
Figure 1. Number of Faculty in U.S. Higher Education, 2005 and 2013



Source: <http://www.aft.org/higher-education-data-center>

AFT also reports on the 9/10-month salary figures on average by rank across higher education faculty (See Figure 2). The average faculty salary, regardless of rank, showed a 21.1 percent increase from 2005–2006 to 2014–2015. Figure 2 reports the faculty salary levels by rank for 2005–2006 and 2014–2015. Faculty who are Professors saw the largest percentage increase in salary (23.5 percent), while faculty with “No Rank” saw the lowest percentage increase (15.2 percent). Importantly, data on faculty by rank and 9/10-month faculty salaries do not include benefits.

Figure 2. 9-10 Month Faculty Salaries by Rank, 2005–2006 and 2014–2015



Source: <http://www.aft.org/higher-education-data-center>

## CONTINGENT FACULTY IN COMMUNICATION

According to the Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), there were 28,180 individuals employed in the category of “Communications Teachers, Postsecondary” as of May 2016. Of that total, 19,970 were employed by colleges, universities, and professional schools, and 8,040 were employed by junior (community) colleges. The remaining 70 were employed by technical/trade schools. BLS reports that the median salary for individuals in this employment category was \$65,640. The mean annual wage was \$74,360.<sup>1</sup>

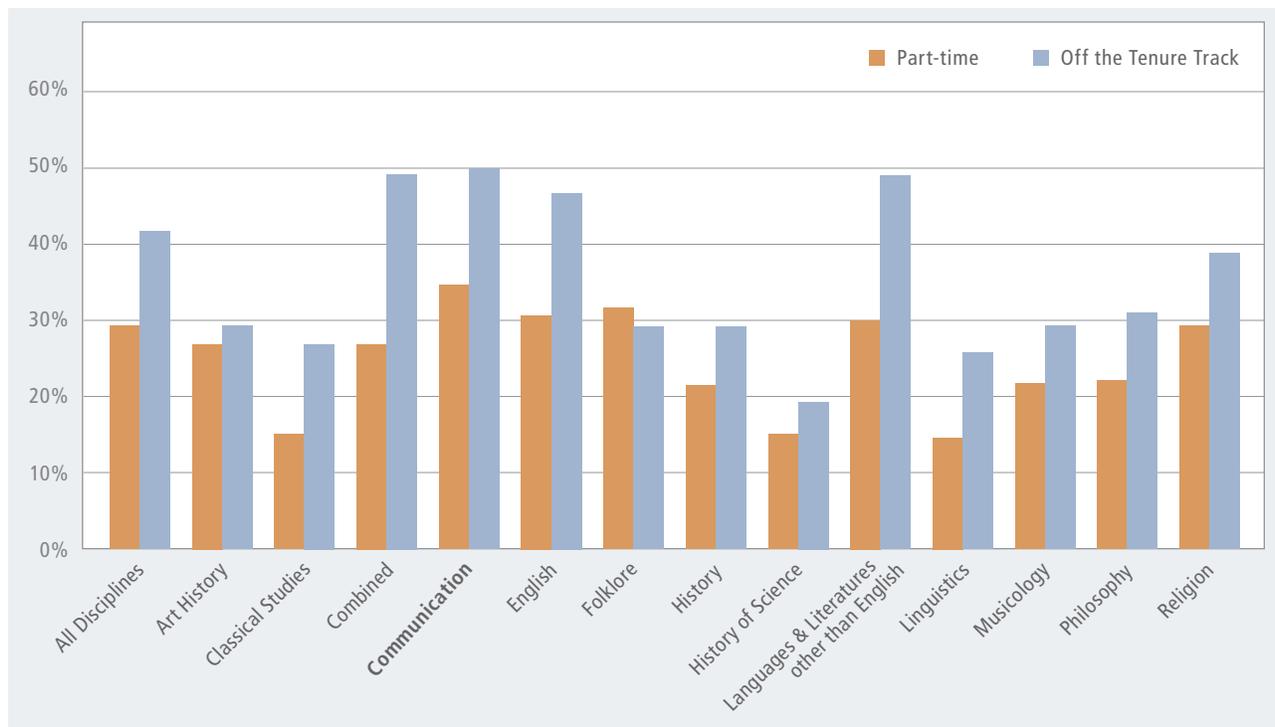
The BLS data say nothing about the tenure status of these Communication teachers. Such data are hard to come by. There are two primary sources of information about the composition regarding the tenure status of faculty in Communication and hiring trends in the discipline: the Humanities Indicators departmental survey of 2012-2013, and NCA’s annual report on job postings in the discipline.

The Humanities Indicators (HI) is a project of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences that collects comprehensive, up-to-date statistical information. In 2008, the HI conducted a survey of humanities departments in U.S. colleges and universities—Communication was not included, but was added when HI re-administered the survey in 2012, along with Classical Studies, Folklore, Musicology, and Philosophy. Among the characteristics about humanities departments asked about in the survey was the composition and tenure status of department faculty.

In all, 766 Communication departments completed the HI survey; those departments employed 13,300 faculty members. Departments employed an average of 17.4 faculty members.

As Figure 3 reveals, Communication departments employed the most faculty members in non-tenure track positions of any discipline, barely edging out English, Combined English/Languages, and Languages & Literature other than English.

Figure 3. Percentage of Part-Time/Non-Tenure Track Faculty, by Discipline, Fall 2012<sup>2</sup>



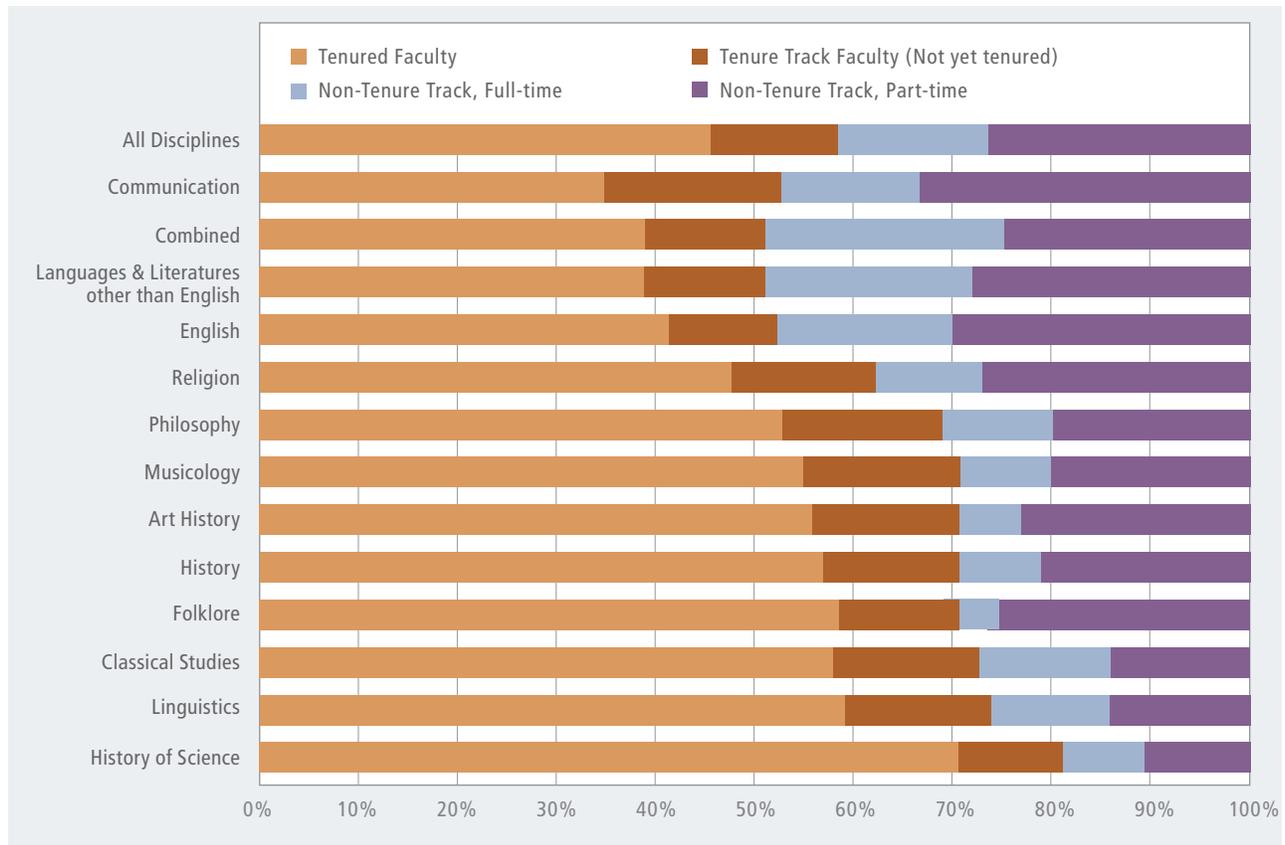
Source: Humanities Indicators 2014, American Academy of Arts & Sciences

1 <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes251122.htm#ind>

2 The source for all HI tables and data is Susan White, Raymond Chu, and Roman Czujko, *The 2012-13 Survey of Humanities Departments at Four-Year Institutions* (College Park, MD: Statistical Research Center, American Institute of Physics, 2014). Study conducted for the American Academy of Arts & Sciences’ Humanities Indicators Project.

Figure 4 indicates that among the Humanities departments surveyed by HI, Communication has the smallest percentage of total faculty who are either tenured or on the tenure track, while Figure 5 offers the precise numerical breakdown of faculty status for the Communication departments that responded to the survey.

Figure 4. Distribution of Humanities Faculty Members Across Tenure Statuses, by Discipline, Fall 2012



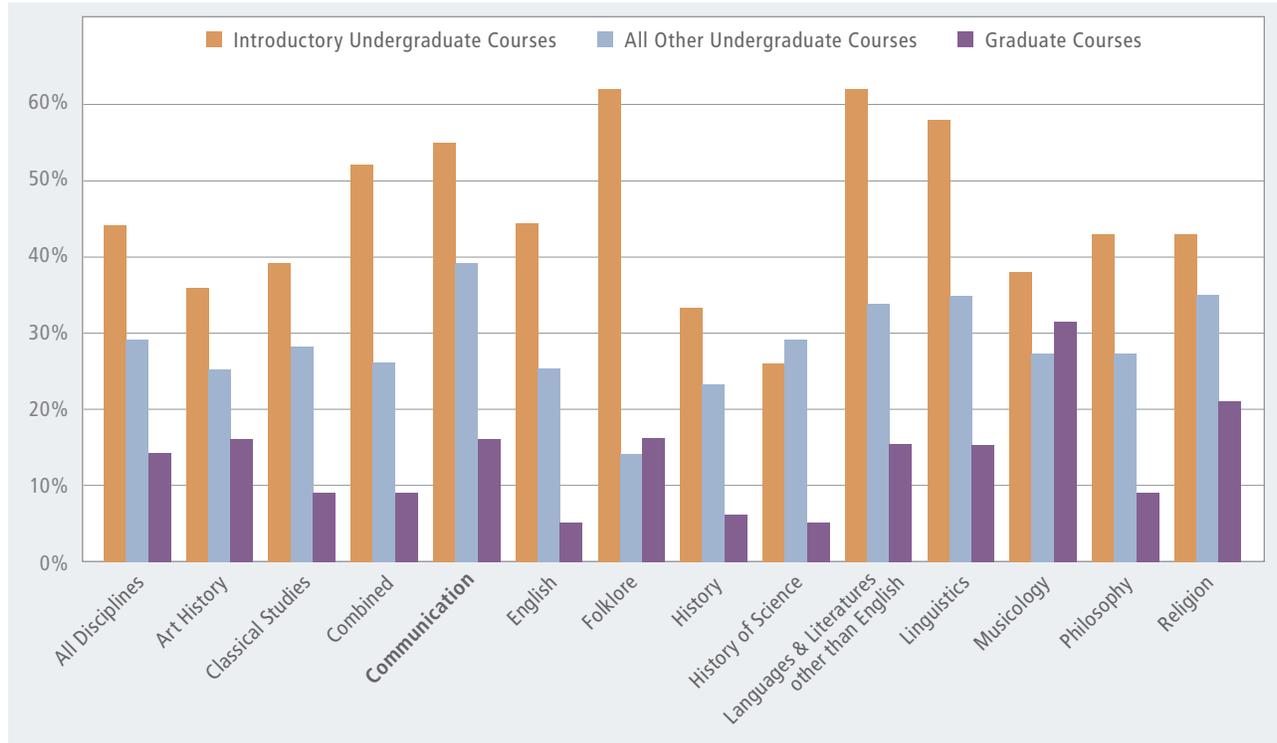
Source: Humanities Indicators 2014, American Academy of Arts & Sciences

Figure 5. Distribution of Faculty by Tenure Status, Communication, Fall 2012

CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATION	Tenured	Tenure-Track	Neither Tenured nor Tenure-Track Full-Time	Neither Tenured nor Tenure-Track Part-Time
Primarily Undergraduate	480	300	210	560
Comprehensive	2,110	990	1,130	2,210
Primarily Research	2,000	710	930	1,670
HIGHEST DEGREE OFFERED				
Bachelors	1,680	930	740	1,520
Masters	1,780	710	1,170	2,280
Doctorate	1,130	360	360	640
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,590</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>2,270</b>	<b>4,440</b>

Of interest in the HI survey are the data concerning student teaching by non-tenure track faculty members. Figure 6 reveals that Communication is behind other disciplines in the teaching of introductory courses and graduate courses by non-tenure track faculty, even as it has the highest percentage of non-tenure track instructors teaching other undergraduate courses.

Figure 6. Percentage of Students Taught by Non-Tenure-Track or Part-Time Humanities Faculty Members, by Course Level and Discipline, Fall 2012

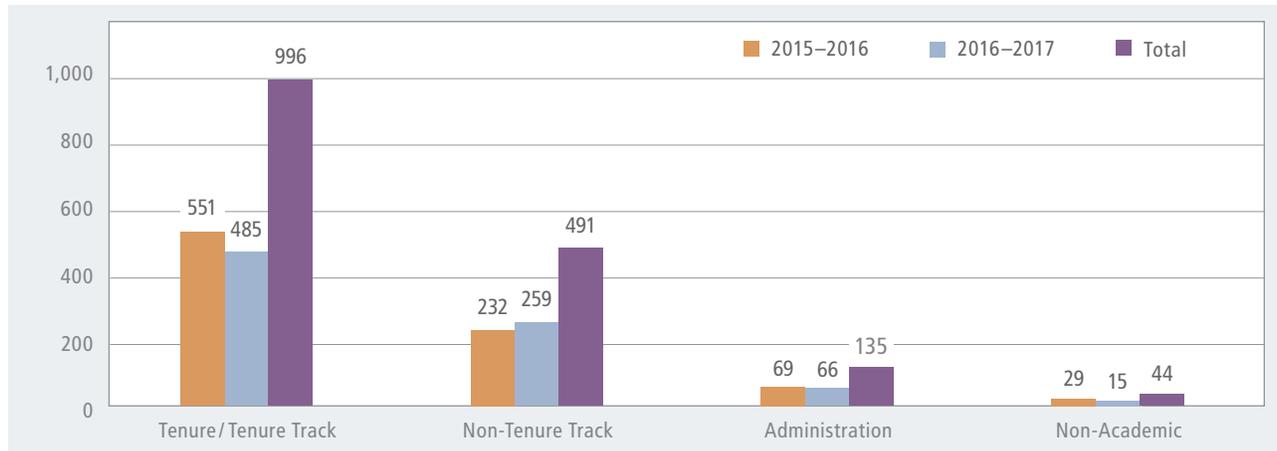


Source: Humanities Indicators 2014, American Academy of Arts & Sciences

NCA's annual *Job Listings in Communication Report* includes the nature and types of academic positions listed on NCA's career posting sites—the NCA Career Center, CRTNET, and *Spectra*. In 2014, NCA posted advertisements for 752 positions. NCA switched its jobs reporting to an academic year calendar for 2015-2016; in 2015-2016, NCA posted advertisements for 772 positions, while in 2016-2017, NCA posted advertisements for 825 positions. Figure 7 indicates the tenure/status breakdown of those 1,597 positions.

Of the 996 total tenure-track positions advertised, 644 postings were specifically for the assistant professor rank. The other 311 postings include advertisements for assistant or associate professors, open rank positions, etc.

Figure 7. Advertised Positions in Communication, by Tenure Status, 2015–2016; 2016–2017



Source: National Communication Association, *2015–2016 Academic Job Listings in Communication Report & 2016–2017 Academic Job Listings in Communication Report*. Available at [www.natcom.org](http://www.natcom.org).