

Testimony Before Legislature 3/23/23 re SB 416 (part time faculty pay equity)

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of SB416 – Its passage is long overdue and imperative for all part-time faculty in community colleges throughout Oregon.

My name is Maria Julia Sorrentino. I am a proud first-generation American and mother to wonderful twin daughters.

Despite the challenges I share with you today, I want you to know that I love my job as Associate Faculty. I love to teach and encourage my students, and care deeply about CCC, our community, and the overall state of education and educators.

I have been employed as part time faculty teaching primarily for the Business and Computer Science Departments at Clackamas Community College since 2001.

It has been difficult and challenging for me throughout my career with the college. I had to survive financially in a very insecure job. As I stand before you, I am entering my 63rd year with hardly any retirement savings and have surrendered to the reality that I will have to work until I die.

I find myself particularly concerned for the younger part-time faculty. All those hard-working PTF with young families and student loans. It breaks my heart! It also bewilders and infuriates me that in 2023, part-timers are still expected to endure unfair treatment, inequitable payment, and a forever insecure financial future.

There have been terms where due to insufficient course load together with my inability to generate additional income through my own business, I was forced to sell furniture and other belongings or borrow money from my daughters and friends more times than I care to admit, to pay my bills .

I would not wish the stress and overwhelm of this situation on anyone.

To supplement my income, I found work as a contract computer consultant and instructor to a wide range of businesses and individual clients. When I work for clients, I am paid the same rate regardless of what I do. I am the one who determines what projects I will work on, when, and for how much.

PTF are often assigned much of the course load for our departments without much guidance. We are asked to take up classes at the last minute. We have classes taken away at the last minute. Every term is filled with insecurity and/or hours of hard work, many of which we are not compensated for.

Thanks to a recent bargaining, PTF at CCC are finally provided compensation for participating in college committees to provide support to the college with hiring, DEI, Shared Governance, Innovation, and other college-wide goals and needs.

These activities require participating faculty to engage in high-level decision-making and processes that advance college-wide priorities requiring the same duties and time commitments, but while our FTF colleagues are paid their full rate, PTF are paid a lesser rate for ours. Further, it is our responsibility to track our time and deliver our timesheets monthly and check our paychecks to make sure we are paid for that time.

But as PTF, though I provide excellent teaching, course materials, student and college initiative support equal to my Full-time colleagues, the college pays me at half of what my Full-time colleagues earn. How is this fair?

My fellow PTF are quality instructors too, often with lots of industry experience in their fields. We care deeply for our students and our college community's well-being and make every effort to belong and contribute.

PTF throughout Oregon are dedicated to changing the narrative that has plagued us for far too long already. Two years ago, my college's Association voted to rename ourselves "Associate Faculty" in order to draw attention and redefine what being "part-time" faculty means because what it has meant is inaccurate and mistaken. I believe it has become an insidious implicit bias that we must rid ourselves of.

PTF deserve respect not only for who we are but for all we contribute to the college both in what we do and how we do it. We deserve a long overdue equal playing field with our full-time faculty colleagues because we work beside them, not behind them.

I think ensuring PTF are paid the same will create the necessary culture change that will transform the way both FTF and PTF see themselves and each other and will encourage collaboration. This is important if we are to reframe ourselves as a collaborative learning team rather than competitors for teaching assignments. I believe if we are able to achieve this goal, it will improve our working relationship with each other with the added benefit of allowing us to better serve our students' and the college individually and as a collective.

I cannot believe that I have to sit here today and ask for what should be clearly unacceptable. Part-Time faculty are expected to perform to an equivalent level to our FTF colleagues and we often not only do that but exceed in certain practical skills because of our exposure and experience gained from working outside academia.

It is time to change the false narrative about PTF and encourage fellowship with our FTF colleagues by ensuring we are paid and treated equally. PTF should be paid the same regardless of what we are doing, and we should get paid for every hour we spend doing it.

We are not working for charity, for fun or as a hobby, we are working to earn a living wage.