

For Adjuncts, By Adjuncts
Vol. 1, No. 3, January 2019

This month’s adjunct newsletter looks at the best way for adjunct faculty to organize and participate in collective bargaining. In a [commentary](#) published last June in The Chronicle of Higher Education, adjunct-faculty-rights advocate Keith Hoeller looked at how our position as “temporary” faculty affects our status in collective bargaining. A major premise of Hoeller’s commentary is that “joint” faculty unions, which represent full-time and adjunct faculty together, reinforce the second-class status of adjuncts because joint unions are inherently biased in favor of full-timers. Hoeller concludes that adjunct faculty should, at the very least, bargain separately from full-time faculty. In support of his conclusion, Hoeller points to the overwhelmingly greater number of adjunct faculty vs. full-time faculty at most public colleges and universities.

Adjuncts at SRJC are represented by the All-Faculty Association, which is of course a joint faculty union, so we were interested to see if Hoeller’s conclusion is supported by the data. Faculty at 54 of the 72 community college districts in California are represented by a joint union, while faculty at the remaining 18 districts are represented by separate adjunct and full-time faculty unions. The faculty agreements and salary schedules of all 72 districts are available online. The California Federation of Teachers (CFT) produces an annual survey of [adjunct faculty salaries](#) and [full-time faculty salaries](#), while SRJC’s All-Faculty Association (AFA) produces an annual survey of [full-time faculty salaries](#). We thus have a statistically meaningful sample of verifiable data to gauge whether adjunct faculty generally fare better in joint or separate unions within the community college system.

We started by looking at the ranking in the CFT adjunct faculty survey for the 18 districts that have separate adjunct faculty unions. The salary ranking and quartile are given for these 18 districts in Table 1. The data show that adjuncts in these districts fare poorly, with 12 of 18 in the bottom two quartiles.

Table 1. Salary quartile and ranking within the 72-district 2017-18 CFT adjunct salary survey for the 18 districts with separate adjunct faculty unions. Data are for adjunct faculty in year 5. (SRJC is ranked 10th.)

| Top quartile (Ranks 1-18) | Second quartile (Ranks 19-36) | Third quartile (Ranks 37-54) | Bottom quartile (Ranks 55-72) |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Mira Costa - 11 | Citrus - 30 | Desert - 38 | Allan Hancock - 57 |
| | Coast - 20 | Imperial - 43 | Butte - 61 |
| | Long Beach - 29 | Santa Clarita - 47 | Feather River - 68 |
| | North Orange - 27 | Sequoias - 51 | Mendocino - 59 |
| | Yuba -35 | West Hills -37 | Mt. San Jacinto - 60 |
| | | | State Center - 67 |
| | | | Victor Valley - 55 |

One potential flaw with comparisons based on raw salary data is that they do not control for cost-of-living differences and corresponding salary variations across different regions of the state. Many of the districts with separate adjunct faculty unions are located away from the urban coast, and so might have lower salaries for all district employees, including full-time faculty. To account for that possibility, we annualized the hourly faculty salary and then divided it by the full-time faculty salary for all 72 districts. We then re-ranked all districts by adjunct/full-time salary ratio to see where districts with separate

unions fall (see Table 2). Some districts move up or down in Table 2 vs. Table 1, but the general outcome is the same: adjuncts in 12 of the 18 districts are in the bottom two quartiles.

Table 2. Quartiles and ranking for the 18 districts with a separate adjunct faculty union when the annualized adjunct faculty hourly salary (year 5 data from the 2017-18 CFT adjunct survey) is divided by the full-time faculty salary (year 5 data from the 2017-18 CFT full-time faculty survey) for all 72 districts. (SRJC is ranked 9th.)

| Top quartile (Ranks 1-18) | Second quartile (Ranks 19-36) | Third quartile (Ranks 37-54) | Bottom quartile (Ranks 55-72) |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| | Citrus - 33 | Allan Hancock - 54 | Butte-Glenn - 61 |
| | Coast - 20 | Mira Costa - 41 | Desert - 59 |
| | Imperial - 26 | Mt San Jacinto - 47 | Feather River - 69 |
| | North Orange - 34 | Santa Clarita - 48 | Long Beach - 55 |
| | Yuba - 29 | Victor Valley - 45 | Mendocino-Lake - 62 |
| | West Hills - 35 | | Sequoias - 58 |
| | | | State Center - 71 |

Finally, we looked at the salary ranking of full-time faculty in the AFA faculty salary survey for the 18 districts where full-time and adjunct faculty bargain separately. Faculty in 11 of the 18 districts are in the top two quartiles, indicating that full-time faculty fare much better in separate-union salary negotiations than their adjunct colleagues.

Table 3. Salary quartile and ranking for full-time faculty within the 72-district 2018 AFA salary survey for the 18 districts with separate faculty unions. Data are for full-time faculty in year 5. (SRJC is ranked 21st.)

| Top quartile (Ranks 1-18) | Second quartile (Ranks 19-36) | Third quartile (Ranks 37-54) | Bottom quartile (Ranks 55-72) |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Desert - 9 | Coast - 22 | Allan Hancock - 52 | Citrus - 58 |
| Long Beach - 10 | Mendocino - 36 | Butte - 45 | Imperial - 59 |
| Mira Costa - 1 | North Orange - 27 | Feather River - 44 | |
| Mt. San Jacinto - 12 | Santa Clarita - 29 | Victor Valley - 38 | |
| | Sequoias - 24 | Yuba - 50 | |
| | State Center - 30 | | |
| | West Hills - 23 | | |

It actually isn't surprising that salary negotiations do not favor separate adjunct faculty unions in the California community college system. As Hoeller indicates in his commentary, adjunct faculty far outnumber full-time faculty at nearly every California community college, but numbers won't translate into superior bargaining power until the legislature stops classifying us as temporary workers that [can be terminated without cause or recourse](#). But we hasten to point out that adjuncts in joint unions aren't guaranteed a better outcome. The annualized adjunct salary is less than 45% of the comparable full-time salary at several districts where faculty are served by a joint union (e.g. Yosemite, Merced and Barstow), based on CFT salary survey data for faculty in year 5. Some districts with joint unions have only three

hourly salary steps (e.g. Rancho Santiago, Riverside and Chaffey) and others offer no salary bonus for adjuncts with a Ph.D. (e.g. West Valley, El Camino, Ohlone, and San Mateo). So adjuncts in joint unions can't sit back and hope for the best; we need to actively participate in our unions.