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# Tufts part-time professors to get better pay, job security

By **Matt Rocheleau**

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Most part-time professors at Tufts University will get a 22 percent pay raise over the next three years and improved job security under a new contract that could influence negotiations at other schools where adjunct faculty have recently organized or are considering doing so.

The Tufts deal, a three-year agreement ratified Friday, will also keep an existing arrangement that makes professors who teach at least three courses over the course of an academic year eligible for health, retirement, tuition reimbursement, and other employee benefits, according to union officials.

Adjunct professors will also receive first notice and a guaranteed interview for full-time openings; they will be subject to a revamped performance evaluation process; and they can take advantage of a new \$25,000-a-year fund that will pay adjunct faculty up to \$500 a year to undergo professional

development related to teaching.

“Previously, we had some benefits and advantages to working at the university, but they were not protected at all,” said Andy Klatt, who has taught Spanish and translation part time at Tufts for 18 years and helped lead the unionization and negotiation efforts. “Now we have an agreement and some security.”

The contract, which was approved by more than 95 percent of the roughly 200 adjunct teachers, goes into effect Jan. 1.

Part-time faculty members will generally receive at least a one-year appointment, though the university can hire teachers on a per-semester basis in certain cases — for example, to cover a sabbatical or leave of absence.

Lecturers with more than four years of service will receive two-year appointments, if they are approved through a performance review process. Those with more than eight years of service will be eligible for three-year appointments, the maximum length available for part time.

Previously, part-time faculty were never appointed for more than one year.

A majority of part-time faculty will receive a 22 percent raise over the next three years. For example, most professors with four or fewer years of service earn \$6,000 per course currently. By September 2016, the final year of the contract, they will be paid at least \$7,300 per course, officials said.

Professors will also now receive additional compensation for work outside the classroom — such as advising, mentoring, and independent studies. And, if the university cancels a course taught by an adjunct faculty member who is on a three-year appointment, the professor will be fully compensated; professors with shorter appointments will receive \$750.

Professors will be required to pay union dues equal to 1.5 percent of their salaries.

Tufts spokeswoman Kimberly Thurler said the contract “successfully balances the needs and priorities of the lecturers and the university.”

The Service Employees International Union launched a national effort a year and a half ago to organize adjunct faculty at US campuses, including several in the Boston area.

In September 2013, Tufts adjuncts became the first local group within the SEIU campaign to unionize.

A month later, a push to organize at Bentley University in Waltham fell two votes short; however, adjunct

faculty there plan another vote in the coming months.

In February, about 700 adjuncts at Lesley University in Cambridge unionized, followed by about 960 adjuncts at Northeastern University who organized in May. Faculty from both of those schools are now in negotiations.

Campaigns to unionize are also underway at Simmons College and Boston University.

Laurie LaPorte, who has taught anthropology part time at BU since 2005 and is a member of the adjunct organizing committee there, said she and her colleagues were impressed by the Tufts contract.

“To see a contract come out where the university and the union have come together to say ‘let’s decrease that instability’ should be compelling to people [at BU] who are on the fence,” she said.

Meanwhile, BU, which was criticized by lawmakers who thought a recently launched website was too negative about unionizing, announced plans Monday to make more part-time employees, including faculty, eligible for health benefits.

The number of tenure-track positions has dropped as colleges have become increasingly dependent on the low cost and flexibility of adjunct faculty.

Today, part-time faculty account for more than half of college teaching jobs, and about 76 percent of higher education instructors hold non-tenure-track positions, according to the American Association of University Professors.

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