

# Woven Into Its Very Fabric

A Report on Contingent Labor at the University at Albany,  
Survey Data Analysis and Policy Proposals

Issued by the **Albany Chapter of United University Professions**

November, 2015

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## Executive Summary

This report from the Albany Chapter of United University Professions (UUP) evaluates contingent labor at the University at Albany, SUNY, and offers a set of concrete proposals to transform contingency on our campus and elsewhere. In particular, the report presents and analyzes data from a survey of UAlbany academic contingents, conducted by our Chapter in November and December 2014. We supplement the data gathered from this survey with demographic information from the University, from our UUP membership data, and from external sources. When taken collectively, this data provides a rich portrait of academic contingent employment at UAlbany. Contingency, we contend, is woven into the very fabric of the contemporary university, affecting all aspects of the university's mission, and the conditions of those who work and study there.

We build upon this data analysis to develop a series of ten concrete policy proposals about transforming the University's relationship to contingent labor. These proposals range from relatively simple efforts to produce a more inclusive environment for contingents, to more far-reaching calls to create pathways to permanent employment and to vastly reduce the proportion of contingents relative to tenure-line faculty.

### *Summary of Key Findings from the Survey*

UAlbany's reliance on contingent labor has been both rapid and extensive. In the two decades since 1995, the University's percentage of tenure-line faculty has dropped from 69.3% to 45.3%. Even more concerning, tenure-line faculty now teach only 41.6% of all courses and only 36.5% of the students at UAlbany. We argue that this 20-year trend towards heavy reliance on contingent faculty must be reversed.

Our survey of academic contingents produced a number of important findings, including the following:

#### **Characteristics of the Workforce**

- More often than not, contingents have lengthy careers at UAlbany; they are not temporary, short-term employees. On average, our respondents worked between 3-5 years and 6-10 years (and counting) at UAlbany, with many who have worked at the University for more than 16 years.
- Job insecurity is a defining feature of contingent employment. Nearly three quarters of part-time respondents work on one-semester contracts and nearly all work on contracts of one year or less. Even among full time contingents, over 40% work on contracts of one year or less.
- Around a quarter of our respondents are current graduate students.
- Contingents teach at all levels of the undergraduate and graduate curricula, and many work on thesis and dissertation committees.
- Some contingents have appointments that include research and service obligations. Many more do research and service because it is necessary for their jobs, but this work remains effectively uncompensated.

#### **Priorities**

- Among the strongest findings from the survey is that contingents overwhelmingly rank the material concerns of their employment as the most important areas in need of change. Contingents quite clearly rank compensation, contract duration, pathways to permanency, and health benefits as their top priorities.
- Although the priority for material issues was emphatic, contingents indicated the need to improve a range of "working environment" issues such as better office space, more holistic evaluation practices, more opportunities and resources for professional development, more

accommodations in scheduling, greater involvement in departmental and university life, and greater representation in UUP.

### **Labor and Compensation**

- Survey respondents reported that they work more than the presumed 10 hours/course figure upon which their appointments are calculated. We estimate that on average, academic contingents make between \$12 and \$16 dollars an hour, putting them in the middle of current political debates over the minimum wage.
- Nearly three quarters of contingents (72%), including a surprising 44% of so-called “full-time” contingents, hold jobs outside their UAlbany employment. Furthermore, a majority of respondents (including nearly three-quarters of part-time contingents) indicate that they rely on UAlbany contingent teaching for 25% or less of their total household income. It appears that many of these employees rely on a spouse, partner, family member, or public assistance to subsidize their wages. We hypothesize that in addition to shunting larger and larger percentages of the cost of higher education onto students and their families through tuition hikes, the contemporary university subsidizes the costs of higher education on the backs of the families of contingent employees and, ultimately, the welfare state.

### **Member Education and UUP Organizing**

- Survey respondents indicate uncertainty or confusion about a range of issues, including the degree to which they are expected to do service as part of their appointment, whether they are teaching in the General Education Curriculum, and whether they are eligible for health benefits. These are important areas for member education and outreach.
- We note that many contingents indicate that they would like to become more involved, which is an important opening for union outreach
- Finally, we identify a number of areas in which the attitude and practice of tenure-line faculty, perhaps most importantly department Chairs, contribute to the marginalization and insecurity of contingents. We identify a role for the Chapter in helping to transform the culture of departments when it comes to the treatment of contingents.

### *Summary of Proposals*

Although occasioned by our survey of academic contingents, the primary objective of this report is to articulate a series of principles and policy proposals directed at transforming the relationship between the University at Albany (indeed, higher education more broadly) and the contingents who currently perform so much of the necessary labor on our campus. An extended discussion of each proposal appears in the final section of the full report.

1. **Tenure is the solution:** We believe that UAlbany should strive to return—within a five year transition period—to the instructional balance of the mid-1990s, where 70% of academic instructional faculty worked on tenure-line appointments. An equivalent percentage is more difficult to establish for professional contingents; however we believe the University should create or convert professional positions with the possibility of continuing appointment.
2. **Salary Equity:** This report argues for the urgent need to raise compensation. We propose that per-course compensation for part-time academic contingents be pegged to a pro-rated portion of the salary for recently hired full-time Lecturers, amounting to approximately \$5700 per course. Most professional faculty have such pro-rata salaries, however this does not extend to hourly wage workers, hence we must attend carefully to this group as well.
3. **Steps to Stability:** We propose the implementation of a stepped system to extend the duration of contingent contracts and add stability to employment. For example, an employee who has worked at UAlbany for 2 years would automatically become entitled to a 1-year contract; after 4 years, a 2-year contract; after 6 years, a 3-year contract.

4. **Full-Time Employment:** Wherever possible (and unless part-time loads are explicitly requested by employees), we propose that long-term and effective contingents be moved into full-time positions.
5. **Expand Health Benefit Eligibility:** As a rule, departments should assign academic contingent faculty a minimum of two courses, or for professional contingents, a salary above \$14,147 to ensure benefits eligibility. Exceptions can be made when an employee specifically chooses to take an appointment of less than 50%.
6. **Workload Creep:** Because contingent employment, by definition, lacks job security, employees often feel the need to do considerably more work than is stipulated by the appointment. The University must compensate contingents for work beyond the boundaries of their appointments.
7. **Expand Graduate Student Assistantship Funding:** We advocate a substantial increase in university allocations for graduate student Assistantship funding (both stipend amount and duration of appointment). This has the dual benefit of aiding graduate students in their course of study and reducing the number of graduate student Lecturers teaching on a per-course basis, allowing for the possibility of moving more current part-time Lecturers into full-time positions.
8. **Develop Substantive Methods of Evaluation:** We urge the development of fair, substantive, holistic evaluation procedures, based on an employee's stated professional obligation. If new tenure-line positions are created (e.g., Instructors), tenure guidelines, expectations, and procedures will need to be developed. This problem is less acute for professionals who have performance programs, but the University must make every effort to ensure such programs are up to date and collaboratively established.
9. **Increase the Participation, Representation and Recognition of Contingents:** Here we include a range of proposals, including governance representation, office space, recognition procedures, professional development funds, pathways for internal promotion, and other mechanisms to include contingents in everyday university life.
10. **Prioritize Contingent Organizing within UUP:** UUP needs to redouble its efforts to increase communication and participation with and among contingents. Likewise, we need to educate tenure-line members about their role in the exploitation and subjugation of contingent labor, and clarify the obligations of UUP tenure-line faculty in providing redress.

## Woven Into Its Very Fabric: A Report on Contingent Labor at the University at Albany Survey Data Analysis and Policy Proposals

Issued by the Albany Chapter of United University Professions<sup>1</sup>

No single issue highlights the crisis of contemporary higher education more starkly than the role of contingent labor in the university. No issue tells us more about the transformations within public higher education over the past three decades. No issue will play a greater role in determining the future of the public research institution and of higher education more broadly. Contingency is woven into the very fabric of the contemporary university.

The Albany Chapter of United University Professions (UUP) commits itself to working for the fundamental transformation of contingent labor conditions on the University at Albany campus and beyond. We draw upon the excellent work of a growing national and international movement of contingent faculty organizations and initiatives. UUP has played an important role in this movement, and many of the ideas presented below were first raised in the excellent [Task Force on Contingent Employees Report](#) (2010)<sup>2</sup>, among the contributors to which is Jil Hanifan, longtime contingents' advocate on the Albany campus. Those ideas have been recently updated in a new [UUP Statement on Contingent Employment](#). This current report issues most immediately from data collected in a survey of contingent academic faculty conducted in November and December of 2014. In developing the ten proposals presented below, we contextualize and supplement data from that survey with information taken from UUP membership data, UAlbany demographic data, and ideas gleaned over several years of public fora, workshops, committee meetings, and chapter discussions.

### Background

UUP defines contingents as those employees who have no pathway to a permanent, tenure-line position. Our focus on contingency, as opposed to terms such as “adjunct” or “part-timer,” highlights the common feature of jobs where the employee is permanently expendable. The ranks of contingents vary widely, including academics and professionals, full- and part-time employees, casual academics who enjoy teaching as a supplemental activity and adjunct instructors who

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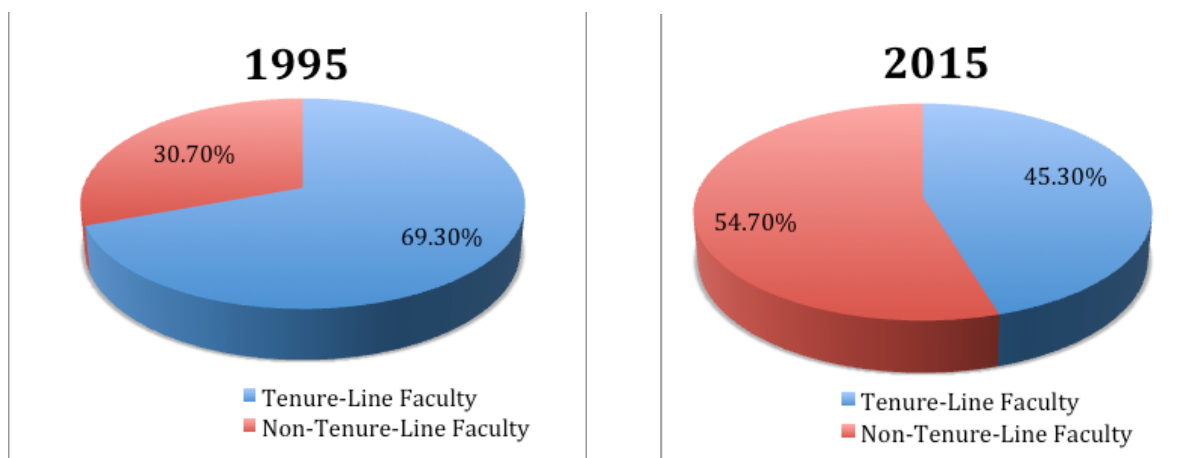
<sup>1</sup> Chapter President Bret Benjamin served as Principal Investigator on this project. The initiative, however, has been broadly collaborative. Without the expertise, guidance, and labor of many people, it would not have been possible. The Chapter thanks all the people who responded to our survey, who attended open fora and meetings, who read and responded to earlier drafts, and who helped to shape the arguments set forward in this report. In particular, we recognize the following individuals, whose contributions were indispensable, listed in alphabetical order: Joel Bloom, Jim Collins, Vincent Commisso, Mitch Earlywine, Janna Harton, Janine Jurkowski, Jake Lopata, Aaron Major, Dennis McCarty, Holly McKenna, Julie Novkov, Rebekah Tolley, Annette Richie, Paul Stasi, Barry Trachtenberg, Roberto Vives, and Laura Wilder. We thank Provost James Stellar for inviting us to present an earlier draft of this document to the University's Task Force on Contingent Faculty, and we have benefited from the ongoing dialogue between the union and the University on this issue. We look forward to working with the Provost's Office and the Task Force on the implementation of the policy proposals contained in this report. Comments or questions about the report can be directed to Bret Benjamin [bret.benjamin@gmail.com](mailto:bret.benjamin@gmail.com).

<sup>2</sup> [http://uupinfo.org/reports/reportpdf/TFCE Report.pdf](http://uupinfo.org/reports/reportpdf/TFCE%20Report.pdf)

scratch together a living teaching at multiple institutions. Even with such differences, contingent faculty undoubtedly remain the most exploited, most vulnerable employees at the university. Their compensation is unconscionably low. Many are ineligible for health benefits because their appointments are less than half-time. They have little or no job security, and little or no opportunity for professional advancement. They are perpetually disenfranchised from participating in the decisions that most affect their own work-lives. And in many cases, they have few or no prospects for exiting this cycle.

Distressingly, contingent labor has become a defining feature of the contemporary university. On our campus this process has been both rapid and extensive. According to statistics published by the Modern Language Association (MLA), as late as 1995 UAlbany employed 604 tenure or tenure-track faculty, who comprised 69.3% of its instructional faculty.<sup>3</sup> UAlbany's own data for the 2015 spring semester indicates that it employed 590 tenure or tenure-track faculty, who comprised 45.3 of its total instructional faculty, a net loss of 14 full-time tenure-line faculty, and a proportional drop of 24.7%. In the mean time, the University's student population has grown by a total of 1220 students and become more undergraduate-heavy: from 16,053 (10,947 undergraduates and 5,106 graduate students) in 1995 to 17,273 (12,929 undergraduates and 4344 graduate students) at present.<sup>4</sup> Simply put, the past two decades at UAlbany have witnessed a decrease in the number of tenure-line faculty members, an increase in students, and a vast increase in the proportion of its contingent labor force.

*“Simply put, the past two decades at UAlbany have witnessed a decrease in the number of tenure-line faculty members, an increase in students, and a vast increase in the contingent labor force.”*



Figures 1 (left) and 2 (right), Percentage of Tenure-Line Faculty, 1995 and 2015

<sup>3</sup> See the MLA's Academic Workforce Summary Data available online: [http://www.mla.org/acad\\_work\\_data?id=196060](http://www.mla.org/acad_work_data?id=196060). Note that the MLA data only breaks out tenure-line faculty and non-tenure-line faculty, making precise comparisons with current UAlbany data difficult.

<sup>4</sup> For 1995 figures, see *University at Albany Self-Study Report, 1990-2000*, prepared for the Middle States Association of Colleges and Universities, Appendix 5.1a and 5.1b. For 2015 figures, see [http://www.albany.edu/admissions/assets/UAlbany\\_Viewbook\\_3\\_2015.pdf](http://www.albany.edu/admissions/assets/UAlbany_Viewbook_3_2015.pdf).

The 54.7% of UAlbany's current instructional staff who are not in tenure-line positions is largely comprised of academic contingents within UUP's bargaining unit, but additionally includes UUP professionals who teach part-time, graduate students on TA/GA lines, some Deans and Management Confidential employees, and other unspecified staff. The detailed breakdown of spring 2015 instructional faculty is as follows:

Category	Number	% of Faculty
Tenure-line	590	45.3%
Academic Contingents Total	451	34.6%
(Part-Time Contingent)	(347)	(26.6%)
(Full-Time Contingent)	(104)	(8.0%)
GA/TA	168	12.9%
Other	95	7.3%
Total	1304	

Table 1: Instructional Staff UAlbany Spring 2015

We do not have comparative historical data for professionals, but we speculate that the move towards contingent positions during the past two decades in our professional ranks may well be even greater than what we see with academics. Currently, contingents make up half of all professional faculty at UAlbany: 509 of 1012 (50.3%) (this includes those appointed to Appendix A and B titles, directors and athletics respectively, who are contractually prevented from receiving permanent appointment).

The pivotal role played by contingents in the core educational mission of the university becomes evident when we look at the number of sections and students taught by tenure-line and non-tenure-line faculty at UAlbany. Figures 3 and 4 show the current proportions.

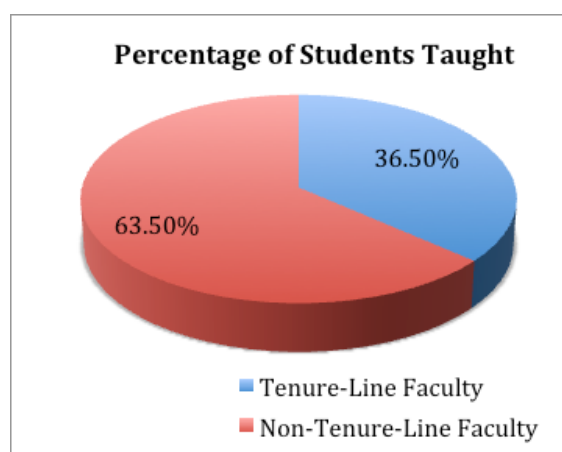
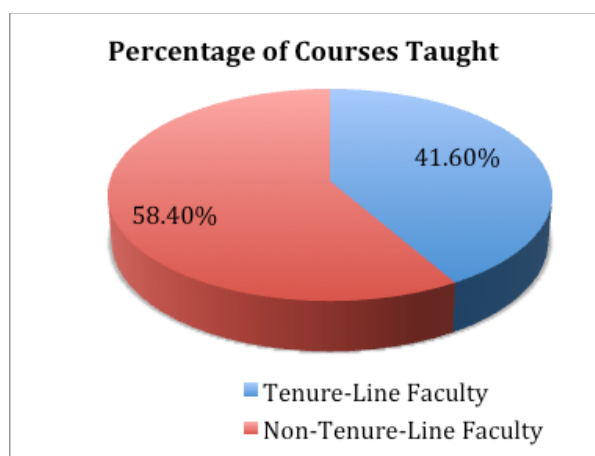


Figure 3 (left): Percentage of Courses Taught by Tenure- and Non-Tenure-Line Faculty, 2015

Figure 4 (right): Percentage of Students Taught by Tenure- and Non-Tenure-Line Faculty, 2015

A more detailed breakdown allows us to better understand the instructional composition of UAlbany at present. Table 2 illustrates the total number of courses, including graduate classes, discussion sections and labs. Table 3 shows undergraduate courses, and Table 4 shows General Education courses.

	Courses	Seats	Seats/Course	% Total Courses	% Total Seats
TT	1094	28256	25.8	41.6%	36.5%
PT Inst.	807	26334	32.6	30.7%	34%
FT, non TT	379	15893	41.9	14.4%	20.5%
GA/TA	266	6684	32.3	10.1%	8.6%
Other	82	327	4.0	3.1%	0.4%
Total	2628	77494	29.5		

Table 2: Lectures, Seminars, Discussion Sections, Lab Sections (Grad and Undergrad)

	Courses	Seats	Seats/Course	% Total Courses	% Total Seats
TT	664	22279	33.6	34.2 %	32.9%
PT Inst.	627	23591	37.6	32.3%	34.9%
FT, non TT	330	15039	45.6	17.0%	22.2%
GA/TA	247	6457	26.1	12.7%	9.5%
Other	75	267	3.6	3.9%	0.4%
Total	1943	67634	34.8		

Table 3: Lectures, Seminars, Discussion Sections, Lab Sections (Undergrad Only)

	Courses	Seats	Seats/Course	% Total Courses	% Total Seats
TT	193	10338	53.6	29.7 %	32.2%
PT Inst.	248	12556	50.6	38.1%	39.1%
FT, non TT	123	6006	48.8	18.9%	18.7%
GA/TA	79	3139	39.7	12.1%	9.8%
Other	8	37	4.6%	1.2%	0.1%
Total	651	32076	49.3		

Table 4: General Education Courses (Undergrad Only)



Note first that contingents now teach both considerably more classes and more students than our tenure-line faculty. Full-time, tenure-line faculty teach only 41.6% of the total courses, and 36.5% of all students. Furthermore, the role of tenure-line faculty diminishes both when we consider only undergraduate education, and only general education courses. In these areas, tenure-line faculty are teaching fewer than a third of UAlbany students. To the degree that undergraduate instruction remains the core mission of a public university, that mission is disproportionately fulfilled through contingent labor.

The reasons for this shift towards contingent labor are many, having to do with repeated budgetary crises, and how campuses have responded to these crises with shifts in their funding priorities. The result is that UAlbany, like so many other campuses across the country, has become entirely dependent upon contingent employees—both the necessary services they provide, and the low costs at which they provide them.

*“To the degree that undergraduate instruction remains the core mission of a public university, that mission is disproportionately fulfilled through contingent labor.”*

Indeed, contingency touches nearly every aspect of our institution. For instance, as a research university, UAlbany has many contingents who are currently enrolled in, or recently graduated from, our own doctoral-granting programs.<sup>5</sup> No review of contingency can proceed without a careful investigation of graduate student funding, completion rates, time-to-degree, placement rates, and the role of graduate student teaching in the undergraduate curriculum. Likewise, no review of contingency can ignore the foundational role

that contingent faculty play in delivering instruction within the undergraduate curriculum; nor can it ignore the pivotal positions held by contingent professionals throughout the university, affecting student support services, faculty support services, athletics, and virtually every unit on campus.

Ultimately a challenge to the institution of contingency will require a careful review of our University’s finances. Budgets, as we know, reflect institutional priorities. They are moral statements as much as accounting exercises. To transform the institution of contingency will undoubtedly require additional expenditure. We weigh this cost against the malignancy of the current system. Our reliance on cheap, disposable contingent labor has debilitating consequences for the individuals who work as contingents, for our students, for our departments, and for the university as we know it. The short-term financial costs of the proposals outlined below must simultaneously be understood as long-term investments in the essential quality and well-being of the University at Albany, its employees, its students and the citizens of New York State who we serve.

## **Key Findings from the Survey of Academic Contingents:**

Below we present data from a survey of UAlbany academic contingents conducted by the Albany Chapter of UUP in November and December 2014. Of a total of 496 eligible contingents, 191 completed the survey, generating a response rate of 38.50%. Although quite respectable for a

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<sup>5</sup> 23% of our survey respondents are currently graduate students in the program in which they teach, and 49% of respondents are graduates of those departments. This is even more pronounced among part-time contingents, 54% of whom are graduates compared to 37% of full-time contingents who are products of UAlbany graduate programs. (See Appendix Figure 6). This corresponds closely with the University’s 2015 figures, which indicate that 26.38% of instructional staff is currently enrolled as students in UAlbany graduate programs.

survey of this sort, such a response rate means that the data collected cannot be understood to represent *all* UAlbany academic contingents. However, especially when supplemented with other demographic and membership data about contingency, we believe that this data can substantially enrich our understanding of academic contingency at UAlbany and allows us to draw substantive conclusions about contingents' working lives and priorities.

Here we identify some key findings from the survey. For those interested in seeing more detail and data from the survey, we have included the most significant questions and responses, typically broken down by full-time and part-time respondents in Appendix 1.

### *A Portrait of Contingent Academics at UAlbany*

Many of the questions and responses in the survey give us an interesting portrait of the characteristics and diversity of contingents on our campus.

First, we see that contingents often have long histories with the University. The mean duration of contingent employment falls between 3-5 years and 6-10 years. Over 13% of our survey respondents have worked at UAlbany for 16 years or more. It is true that 24% indicate that they have worked at UAlbany for two or fewer years; however that only indicates two or fewer years *thus far*. Many of the employees in that category will likely continue teaching at the University in some form. This confirms and updates the most recent data provided by the University about duration of service from 2013, which found that 70% of academic contingents had 3 or more years of service, while 34% had 10 or more years of service. We find, then, that many contingents spend most or all of their careers at the University and that most contingents have long tenures at the University.

Not only experienced teachers, these faculty are also highly educated. Nearly 45% of contingents who answered our survey have doctoral degrees. Roughly the same percentage have Master's degrees (many of those are terminal degrees in their field such as MFAs, and many others are currently working towards their doctorates). (See Appendix Figure 4.)

Job insecurity is a defining feature of contingent work. Nearly three quarters of the part-time faculty who responded to our survey worked on one-semester contracts, and nearly all of them worked with contracts of one year or less. Even among full-time contingent faculty, over 40% worked on contracts of one year or less. (See Appendix Figure 22.) This lack of job security is most damaging to the employees, of course. From semester to semester or year to year they do not know whether they will have employment in the coming academic term. Fully 40 individuals who responded to our survey reported being non-renewed at some point in their time at UAlbany. Of those, just over half felt that it was "likely" or "almost certain" that they would be hired back. We know that many contingents are non-renewed for a semester because of shifting enrollments or course offerings and return to the rolls after one-semester absence. However 43% were "uncertain" about the prospects of being renewed. Furthermore, nearly 30% of part-time contingents and 15% of full-time contingents indicate having their course-load involuntarily reduced. (See Appendix Figure 24.) This amounts to more than simply disappointment; it means that contingents cannot count on the fact that their income will be stable, nor that they will maintain health benefit coverage from semester to semester. In addition to being devastating for the employees, this chronic instability is also wasteful for the University. Placing such a huge portion of contingents on one-semester contracts means that the Office of Human Resources must process appointment paperwork each semester for employees who typically stay at the University for years on end.

A sizable portion of our respondents are currently enrolled as graduate students in the department in which they teach. This is particularly true of our part-time contingents. Of the contingents who responded to our survey, 27% of part-timers, and 13% of full-time contingents are currently

enrolled graduate students. (See Appendix Figure 5.) There are two ways of looking at these figures. On the one hand, over a quarter of our part-time lecturers are in graduate programs. This indicates the interdependence of contingency, graduate education, and (via their teaching) undergraduate education at UAlbany, which means that changes to the duration of graduate TA/GA stipends would directly reduce the number of lecturers on campus. On the other hand, it also means that roughly three quarters of contingents *are not* graduate students. The overwhelming majority of our lecturers must therefore be conceived of in a straightforward fashion as academic faculty full-stop, without any of the qualifying claims about apprenticeship relations that often muddy the discussions about graduate student employees.

Contingents teach at all levels of the curriculum. We expected to find an overwhelming percentage of instruction in lower-division undergraduate education, and indeed that is where the bulk of teaching for respondents takes place. Likewise, most contingents teach General Education courses of some sort. However we were surprised to find that over 25% of respondents taught primarily at the graduate level. We were also surprised to find that, of those, the teaching was done not only (or indeed primarily) in the professional schools, but also across the College of Arts and Sciences. This points to the diversity of academic contingents, and to their essential role in all aspects of the university's curriculum. (See Appendix Figures 10 and 11.)

*“Indeed, contingency is woven into the very fabric of the university and touches nearly every aspect of our institution.”*

A small but notable percentage of respondents serve on Doctoral dissertations and/or Master's theses (15.8%). (See Appendix Figure 13.) Surprisingly, a smaller number of respondents serve on Bachelor theses. Although contingents provide a large portion of university undergraduate education, it appears they play a very small role in the “capstone” experiences of our undergraduates. Of course, in most cases, such work is not part of the professional obligation of contingent faculty and hence uncompensated. In other words the small numbers reflected here represent the fact that most contingents are not paid to do this work, and we suspect that many of those contingents who do serve on Doctoral, Masters, or Bachelors theses, probably perform this role *gratis* out of a laudable commitment to the students and the university.

A modest but not insignificant portion of respondents (13%) held appointments that include expectations of ongoing research. (See Appendix Figure 26.) Indeed research remains a contradictory issue for contingents. On the one hand many contingents believe that they must actively keep up with published research (if not produce new research themselves) in order to remain effective teachers and scholars. On the other hand, there are precious few resources made available to contingents for research, and the pursuit of a research agenda frequently (for 87% of respondents) falls outside their professional obligation. We are well aware of the cycle that this produces: a lack of time and resources prevents or considerably restricts research productivity, which in turn severely limits the prospects of landing a tenure-line position. Further, it means that contingent faculty either cannot offer the same level of research-informed teaching to UAlbany students, or that the time spent keeping up with current research remains entirely uncompensated.

Contingents, particularly full-time contingents, perform essential service work for the university. Nearly 60% of full-time contingents indicate that their appointments include an expectation of service (along with 13% of part-time contingents). (See Appendix Figure 27.) Most of our respondents were assigned minimal advisement duties, however 15% of full-time lecturers carry heavy advisement loads of 40 or more students per semester. (See Appendix Figure 12.) Both full- and part-time contingents regularly do things such as write letters of recommendation. (See Appendix Figure 15.) Again, although we typically think of contingents as teaching-only faculty,

many report having research, service, and advising obligations in addition to their teaching (both undergraduate and graduate).

Contingents feel a marginally greater role in shaping decisions at the departmental level than at the university level. However in both cases, they feel broadly excluded from such active participation. Over 90% of part-time respondents indicate that they play either a “minor role” or “no role” in departments, and the overwhelming majority report effectively that they play “no role” at the university level. Full-time contingents, predictably, feel more integrated, but only marginally so. 41% indicate that they play a “major role” at the department level, though that figure plummets to only 4% at the university level. And even in departments, which contingents perceive to be relatively more welcoming than the university as whole, a third of full-time contingents play “no role.” Nearly two-thirds of respondents report playing “no role” at the university level. (See Appendix Figures 35 and 36.)

When asked whether they would like to have a full-time, tenure-track position, contingents overwhelming (72.16%) said yes. Both full- and part-time contingents feel strongly here; nearly 80% of full-timers and 70% of part-timers would like a tenure-track position. These figures are more telling when we further break out the responses of graduate student contingents. 97% of all part-time contingents who are currently graduate students responded affirmatively to this question. (See Appendix Figure 28.) Despite the fact that nearly every graduate student who responded to our survey would like a tenure track job, we know that the reality is rather bleak for these aspiring academics. Indeed, it is precisely because of the reliance on contingent faculty nation-wide that such tenure track positions are so rare. “Tenure is the solution,” then, to contingency in a variety of ways. We hope that UAlbany can become a leader in a national trend to reverse the decline in the relative proportion of tenure-line to contingent hiring.

Although nearly all contingents want tenure-track employment, when asked whether they were actively searching for such a position, only 37% responded affirmatively (44% of full-timers, and 33% of part-timers). (See Appendix Figure 29.) Of those, the vast majority, nearly 70% were in their first or second year of an active search. This is especially true of part-timers. While roughly half of full-time contingents were also in their first or second years, a considerable number, nearly a third, indicate having searched for four or more years. We speculate that there may be a high overlap of active job searchers and those part-time contingents who are currently enrolled or recently completed graduate students. For many contingents, then, we can assume that although they would like to find a full-time, tenure-track job, the window for an active search lasts only a few years. After this point, the increasing likelihood is that they have resigned themselves to permanent contingency.

### *Priorities*

One of the strongest pieces of data that emerges from the contingent academic surveys is a clear and unambiguous statement of priorities. (See Appendix Figure 38.) In order to address a problem as complex and deep rooted as academic contingency in the contemporary university, we know that a range of policy changes will need to be made. Our respondents made it clear that all of these changes matter. However, the results of the survey strongly support the premise that the material matters of pay, contract duration, permanency, and health benefits matter the most. When asked to prioritize their top five issues, more respondents cited raising per-course pay and salary increases as their single most important issues. Likewise, those two issues were rated in the top five more frequently than any other two. Following just behind, respondents prioritized the ability to move into a tenure-line position, ensuring health benefits, and gaining longer contracts. These five bread-and-butter issues clearly stand out as the top priorities for our respondents. (See figure 5 below)

With that preference for material concerns strongly stated, it is notable that a range of what might be termed “working environment” issues were all ranked in the top five by many respondents, and in each case, quite a few respondents rated each of these issues as their single top priority. These include better office space, more holistic evaluation practices, more professional development opportunities and resources, more accommodations in scheduling, greater involvement in departmental and university life, and greater representation in UUP.

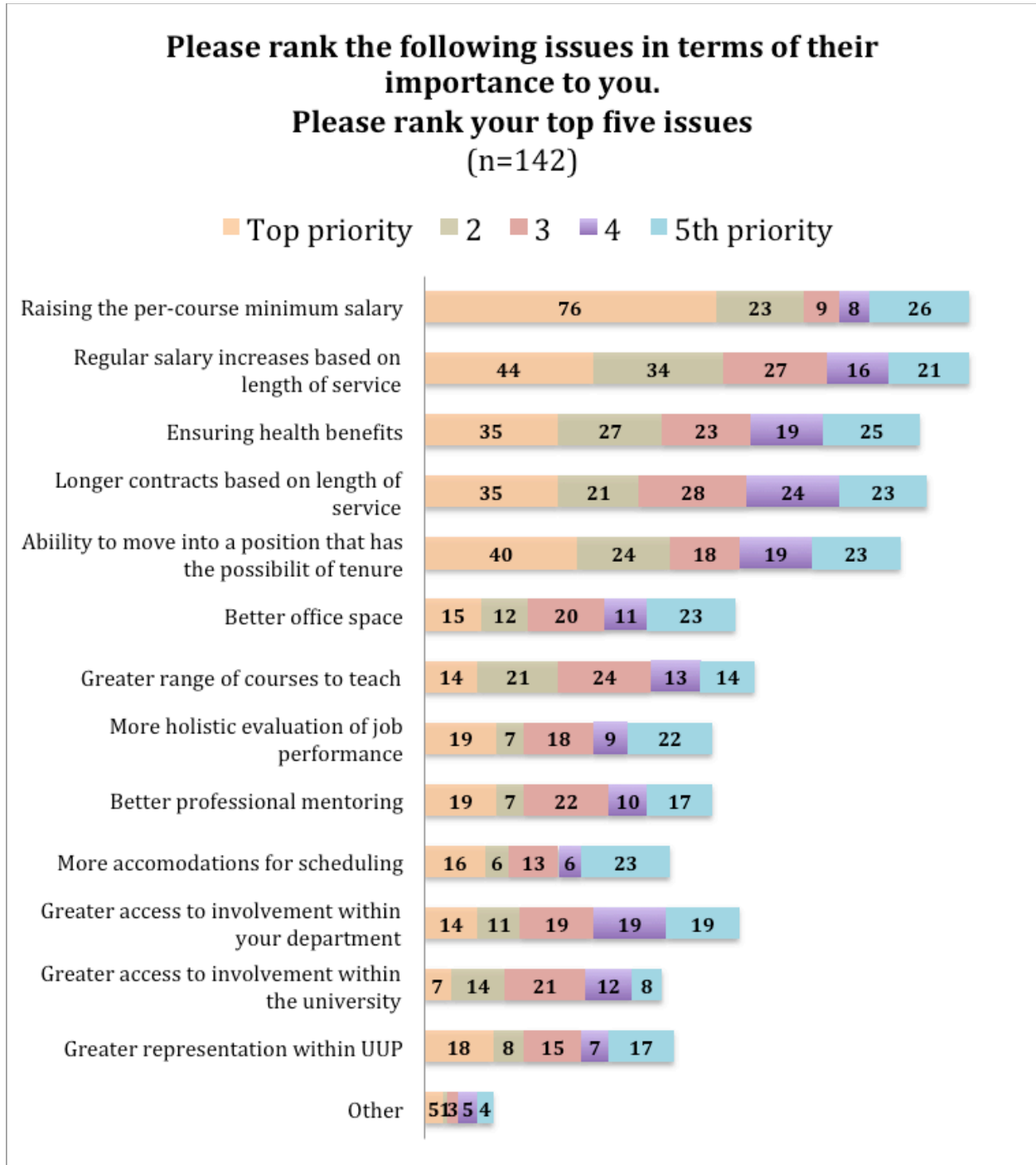


Figure 5, Contingent Priorities

What we take from this very helpful ranking of priorities, is that respondents were most concerned with the material issues of their employment—pay, permanency, duration, and benefits—and thus these must remain the focus of UUP advocacy. A sharp focus on improving material conditions for contingent employment, however, need not preclude the many other issues that could improve the quality of work life for contingents. Such changes are important and should constitute a secondary but concerted site for UUP policy proposals.

### *Labor and Compensation*

Any focus on material issues begins with the wage, and the duration of the working day and week. It will come as no surprise to hear that contingents work a lot and receive shamefully little compensation. The data from our respondents makes this point emphatically.

Subjective estimates about the number of hours worked are often not as reliable as researchers might like. Nevertheless, we asked our survey respondents to quantify their hours of work in two different ways. First, we asked them how many hours they work in a given week (See Appendix

*“Any focus on material issues begins with the wage, and the duration of the working day and week.”*

Figure 17). Second, we asked them to estimate the number of hours they spend *outside of class* each week to help account for the time that goes into preparation, grading, office hours, writing letters of recommendation and so forth (See Appendix Figure 16.)

When calculating the total number of hours worked per week, 100% of those teaching four courses indicate that they work between 41 and 50 hours per week. Over 60% of those teaching three courses per semester indicated that they work more than 40 hours per week, and over 80% indicate that they work more than 31 hours per week. Following a similar pattern for a half-time appointment, roughly 60% of those teaching two courses report working 21 or more hours each week. This number may be somewhat inflated, since just over 10% indicate working 50 or more hours per week, more than any of the respondents who taught four courses. Notable here, of course, is that a per-course calculation cannot account for non-teaching obligations that many contingents carry.

On average, our full-time respondents indicate that for each course that they teach they work *outside the classroom* for between 11-15 and 16-20 hours per week, per course (much closer to the latter range). Part-timers report working between 6-10 and 11-15 hours per week, per course (again closer to the latter). If we add the typical three hours per week inside class, we can begin to estimate the typical number of hours that contingents work. Based on these reports, we might estimate that a typical full-time lecturer, teaching a 3/3 load, spends 15 hours outside of class, plus 3 hours inside class, plus service obligations equates to between 50 and 60 hours in a work-week. Part-timers in our survey spent comparatively less time outside of class. Based on the estimates from these respondents we calculate that a typical part-timer will spend roughly 11 hours outside of class, plus three hours inside for each course taught. A so-called half-time position for such an employee (i.e., two courses) amounts to approximately a 28-hour week. Notable as well is that although part-timers (almost by definition) have fewer unique course preparations each semester—since they are teaching fewer classes—our respondents report they have proportionately more new preps than their full-time colleagues. That is, part-time contingents are routinely asked to spend more of their time preparing to teach different courses each semester rather than being able to teach multiple sections of the same course. (See Appendix Figure 9.)



Legitimate questions can be posed about the reliability of such self-reporting. Without careful time keeping exercises over substantial durations to account for the variable rhythms of academic work, a precise accounting is difficult. The data does, however, suggest that contingent faculty subjectively feel themselves to be overworked, or to be working more than the 10-hour per week per-course calculation that has been used to determine the percentage of their appointment (i.e., two courses is considered to be a half-time appointment, and hence might be expected to be a 20-hour per week obligation).

And their compensation? We calculate that part-time contingents—many of whom have doctoral degrees, and many years of university experience—make between \$12 and \$16 per hour for each course they teach. We base the former figure on the following formula. Using salary data that UUP receives from the state, we calculate the median per-course salary for UAlbany part-time Lecturers at \$3215. We assume a 16-week academic semester. Lecturers work on 20 pay periods to account for the time that it takes to prepare courses before the semester begins and to grade after the semester finishes. We use the same figure of 14 hours per week multiplied by 16 weeks. We estimate 11 hours per week (no in-class time) in the remaining four weeks to account for preparation and grading. To teach a single course in an average semester, then, a lecturer works 268 hours at a pay rate of \$3215, equating to approximately \$12 per hour.

This calculation relies, as we have indicated, on subjective reporting that may not be entirely reliable. We can develop a more blunt calculation as well, which avoids any presumption that contingents work longer hours than the time for which the State pays them. UAlbany Lecturers are paid for 10 hours per course over a 20 pay-period duration, totaling 200 hours per semester. Using the same median salary figure, we calculate that if there is no overwork at all (i.e., they work only 10 hours per week, per course), UAlbany Lecturers make only \$16 per hour.

*“Our reliance on cheap, disposable contingent labor has debilitating consequences for the individuals who work as contingents, for our students, for our departments, and for the university as we know it.”*

Soon fast food workers in New York State, in no small part because of strong union campaigns, will be making \$15 per hour. This wage has been extended to our fellow public sector unionists at CSEA through their collective bargaining process, and there are powerful efforts, backed by the current Governor, to extend the \$15 per hour wage to all New York State workers. We applaud such efforts and note the essential role that unions have played in each victory. However, that we find ourselves comparing highly educated, experienced faculty members who are teaching approximately half the courses at UAlbany to fast food workers indicates the shameful degree of exploitation our contingent faculty currently face, and the urgent need to raise their compensation.

Given these compensation figures it is to be expected that contingents look for outside employment beyond UAlbany. The rate is extremely high—72% of our part-time contingent respondents. Perhaps more surprising is that 44% of our full-time contingent respondents also worked jobs outside of their UAlbany positions (see Appendix Figure 32). Recall that many of these employees were already working more than 40 hours per week at UAlbany. Furthermore, a majority of respondents (including nearly three-quarters of part-time contingents) indicate that they rely on UAlbany contingent teaching for 25% or less of their total household income (see Appendix Figure 34.) One possible explanation for their continued role in university teaching despite this heavy reliance on external salaries is that our contingents get satisfaction from being in the classroom and/or in a university environment. Another is that many contingents may rely on UAlbany for health benefits but not salary. However the high rate of contingents who are not eligible for health

benefits partly undermines this argument. A third, more likely, scenario is that contingents often rely on spouses, partners, parents or public benefits to subsidize the meager wages they receive for teaching. If this is the case in a large number of households, then we might venture an argument that in addition to shunting larger and larger percentages of the cost of higher education onto students and their families through tuition hikes, the contemporary university subsidizes the costs of higher education on the backs of the families of contingent employees and, ultimately, the welfare state. Further investigation is needed, however, to fully explain the persistence of so many contingents who receive a relatively small percentage of income from teaching.

A further word on health benefits, which provide an important but somewhat more veiled form of compensation for UAlbany contingents. Thanks to UUP's contract negotiations, contingent academics who teach two or more courses and contingent professionals making above \$14,147 automatically become eligible for health benefits. Such benefits are ranked among the top priorities among all contingents in our survey (see Appendix Figures 21 and 38). However, fully two thirds of our part-time contingent respondents do not receive health benefits. We know from our membership data that approximately 48% are ineligible for such benefits because they teach fewer than two courses per semester. This is a major shortfall in compensation and in employee compensation and well-being. A surprisingly high percentage of respondents—40% of part-timers, and 29% of full-timers—indicate that they do not know whether they are eligible for health benefits (see Appendix Figure 20). This gives further support to the argument made above that our contingent faculty frequently rely on a spouse, or family member to subsidize their continued employment at such low wages.

### *"I Don't Know": Places for Member Education*

One telling aspect of our survey was that a number of questions, such as the one just mentioned, included response rates with a high, indeed troubling, percentage of respondents who answered, "I don't know."

For instance, it comes as little surprise that most contingents teach General Education courses. Of real concern, however, is the fact that nearly 16% of contingent respondents (18% for part-timers) *do not know whether they teach in the General Education Curriculum*. (See Appendix Figure 11.) This points to an important area for member education. Since department Chairs are typically members of the UUP bargaining unit, this is a place where we need to work with our own members to ensure that contingents are getting sufficient orientation, instruction, and mentoring about their teaching assignments.

Likewise, nearly 40% of respondents (again mainly part-timers) indicated that they do not know whether they are eligible for health benefits. This is another important area where UUP can play a role in member education, perhaps in coordination with the Office of Human Resources. (See Appendix Figure 20.)

Over 15% of our respondents (slightly higher for full-time contingents) do not know whether their appointments include an expectation for service. (See Appendix Figure 27.) A lack of clarity about such an issue makes it all the more likely that contingents will, if asked, feel compelled to do uncompensated service. Indeed, even when there is no expectation for service, contingents often feel obligated to say yes to such "invitations," given their lack of job security.

We suspect that uncertainty is a regular feature of contingent life, and that these questions highlight but a few of the places where contingents simply do not know the parameters of their work obligations or opportunities. This is a challenge for the University first and foremost, but also for UUP.



## *UUP Organizing*

Indeed, as the issue of respondent uncertainty suggest, the survey data points to a number of challenges and opportunities for UUP as we seek to organize contingent faculty.

For example, contingents who responded to our survey overwhelmingly believe that they are members of the union. This is numerically possible, but statistically very unlikely. Our contingent membership rates at UUP Albany hovered around 55% at the time the survey was released. Nearly 87% of respondents said they were members. We believe that this means that many contingents wish to be UUP members and indeed assume that they are members. This presents an important membership recruitment challenge (and opportunity) for the Chapter. (See Appendix Figure 7.)

When we asked about the barriers to participation in university decision-making, our respondents tended to focus on material constraints on their time. However many respondents also list the attitude of tenure-track faculty (34%), departmental by-laws/policies (23%), and University by-laws/policies (21%) as important barriers to participation. (See Appendix Figure 37.) These three areas all fall broadly within the purview of UUP and UUP members. This poses an important challenge for us as we work to educate our full-time, tenure-track members about the challenges of contingency. Of further note is the fact that fully one third of respondents indicate that they would like to participate more but do not know how. This represents an important opportunity to increase contingent activism within the Chapter and the university. We need to reach out to such members and invite their active participation.

*“UUP has a crucial role to play in educating colleagues and transforming the professional environment in which contingents work.”*

A range of other issues fall on UUP and UUP members. For instance the need for more holistic and substantive processes of evaluation—flagged as a priority for many respondents—is essential both to any fair practice of renewing contingents, and any imagined future process in which current contingents would be placed onto a pathway to permanency. SIRF scores and casual conversations provide no basis for evaluation. Taking evaluation seriously will mean more work for departments, where in many instances tenure-line faculty will need to conduct peer observations, review of materials, and other substantive measures of evaluating performance. This work, as we mention above, should be compensated as well. Furthermore, the consistent concerns voiced by contingents about having little to no role in departmental and especially university life points to the need for a major culture change in the way that contingents are viewed at UAlbany. UUP has a crucial role to play in educating colleagues and transforming the professional environment in which contingents work.

## **UUP Albany Chapter Proposals**

These proposals proceed from the following three assumptions: 1) Contingency exists alongside, but in obvious juxtaposition to, tenure and tenure-track employment. Similar work—in some cases identical work—is compensated at vastly different levels. Equity must emerge as the guiding principle in university calculations about contingency. Given the systemic inequity at present, we argue that both union and university have an obligation to protect those who are most vulnerable and those who have the least representation. 2) Tenure is the solution, not the problem; any call for contingent rights should aim to broadly expand the protections of tenure and the provisions of

stable employment with full academic freedom at a livable wage. 3) The working conditions of our contingent employees are simultaneously the living and learning conditions of our students; contingency undermines the University's capacity to provide the highest quality education to its students. By contrast expanding stable, secure, well-compensated employment will directly enhance the overall institutional quality of the University at Albany.

1. **Tenure is the solution:** We believe that UAlbany should strive to return—within five years—to the instructional balance of the mid-1990s, where 70% of academic faculty worked on tenure-line appointments. This goal can only be achieved by simultaneously hiring new tenure-line faculty and moving current contingents into tenure-line positions. The same principle holds true for both academics and professionals, though the University is constricted somewhat by the contractually stipulated Appendix A and B titles. Changes to those titles will require contract renegotiation with the State. However, there are many

professional contingent lines that do not fall within these restricted categories and the University should make every effort to create or convert lines with the possibility of permanent appointment.

*“By taking such steps UAlbany will become a national leader on the issue of contingency, and by extension elevate its national academic reputation and competitiveness overall.”*

Given its ambitious plans for growth, and its assurances about building academic excellence in all fields (many of which have lost faculty in recent years), we anticipate that the University will be entering a period in which new research faculty are being hired. We applaud such efforts. In addition to this hiring, however, we here explicitly promote the idea of creating a parallel

cohort of tenure-line teaching faculty. Such models exist at many other institutions. One currently available option for academic contingents within the SUNY system is to utilize the Instructor job title, which unlike Lecturer offers the possibility of tenure. Many of the full-time Lecturers could move into Instructor titles, once tenure guidelines were established. This could be done at little or no initial cost (though we would urge the University to consider the question of equity between teaching and research tenure-line faculty in such a model). Some, no doubt, would choose to remain in their current Lecturer positions. However our survey data suggests that the vast majority would choose to move into a tenure-track position if available.<sup>6</sup> Comparable pathways and titles could be developed for many professionals currently working in job titles that preclude tenure.

Improving the ratio of tenure-line to contingent faculty will have transformative effects on the University, directly enhancing research productivity, teaching effectiveness, and faculty service. It will improve the University's overall academic quality, leading to increased enrollments, retention, placements, and national standing. By taking such steps UAlbany will become a national leader on the issue of contingency, and by extension elevate its national academic reputation and competitiveness overall. The bottom line is that expanding tenure will have both immediate and long-term benefits for the University.

2. **Salary Equity:** For those employees who remain in contingent positions, especially for part-time employees, there is an urgent need to raise compensation. We estimate that the median compensation for part-time academic contingents is \$3215 per course, a figure that

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<sup>6</sup> 72% of our survey respondents indicate that they would like a tenured position.

corresponds with our survey results.<sup>7</sup> This modest figure is after a contract that provided both on-base lump-sum raises and salary-percentage raises to all full- and part-time faculty.<sup>8</sup> It goes without saying that contingent academics are highly educated individuals, who often have considerable university teaching experience and many years of service at UAlbany. It is indicative of the scale and degree of this crisis that at a public research university in one of the wealthiest states in the nation approximately 50% of the undergraduate instruction—nearly 60% if one counts Graduate Student TA/GAs—would be delivered by faculty who do not make a living wage, and who in many cases do not receive health benefits. Our survey respondents, for obvious reasons, listed compensation as the single highest priority. Raising the per-course pay rate for part-time academics must be an immediate priority for the University.

We propose that per-course compensation for part-time academic contingents be pegged to a pro-rated portion of the salary for those full-time Lecturers recently hired in the Writing and Critical Inquiry (WCI) program, which comes to approximately \$5700 per course.<sup>9</sup> We choose WCI as a benchmark because that program has hired over 25 full-time Lecturers in a short two-year span, totaling nearly half of all full-time Lecturers on campus. These faculty also teach in core, General Education, undergraduate instruction, and hence have commensurate duties with the majority of Lecturers in the College of Arts and Sciences. The program's size, its recent provenance, and the type of teaching that it provides all make it a useful benchmark against which to measure contingent academic appointments campus-wide. Pegging per-course compensation to the WCI standard provides a living wage and equitable compensation for commensurate work. Moreover, this model removes the financial incentive to hire part-time lecturers, making possible more full-time and ultimately tenure-line positions.

*“Raising the per-course pay rate for part-time academics must be an immediate priority for the University.”*

This type of pro-rata salary, common for most professional faculty, does not extend one category of university employment that appears to be on the rise in recent years: hourly wage workers. Hence we must begin to scrutinize the appointments in that group as well. We note that in the past two years, over 100 employees have been hired as hourly workers, largely, though not exclusively, in the National Center for Security and Preparedness. We draw no conclusions about such positions at this point, but only mention the possibility that this group of professional faculty may share a need for a minimum salary similar to the part-time academic contingents we have discussed above.

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<sup>7</sup> For many years, the minimum per-course salary has been \$2800, and many of our members remain at this rate.

<sup>8</sup> The lump-sum raises available to everyone in this most recent contract—a pro-rated portion of \$500, \$250, and \$500 over the past three years respectively—have a proportionally greater benefit to low-paid contingents.

<sup>9</sup> We note that the MLA recommends a minimum per-course salary of \$7000, considerably higher than the pro-rata figure we propose.

The table below estimates the number of part-time Lecturers who would benefit from a pay increase and the per-semester costs involved with raising per-course salaries to either \$5000 or \$5700.<sup>10</sup>

	@\$5,000	@\$5,700
<b># of people benefiting if minimum is raised to the target figure</b>	292	335
<b>Total per-semester cost</b>	\$835,740	\$1,215,576

Table 5: Current Costs of raising per-course salary

We acknowledge that adding a recurring \$2.4 million in salary per year represents a significant expenditure for the University. Transforming the composition of the instructional faculty at UAlbany and reversing a 20-year trend towards the reliance on contingent labor across the university will not be accomplished without spending some money. The University reports an operating budget of approximately \$19.1 million, from which this new money would presumably need to be taken in some fashion (discounting the projected growth through University expansion).<sup>11</sup> A \$2.4 million allocation from this fund would take nearly 12% of this operating budget, a substantial, though not unreasonable sum.

However, the proposed salary increase is better understood in the context of the University's other salary expenditures. For instance, we estimate the total annual salary costs for the approximately 1600 UAlbany

*“Budgets, as we know, reflect institutional priorities. They are moral statements as much as accounting exercises.”*

employees<sup>12</sup> in the UUP bargaining unit at just over \$140.2 million. The 2015 compensation for 75 UAlbany Management Confidential (M/C) employees (e.g., President, Vice Presidents, Provost, Vice Provosts, Deans, and selected managerial staff) amounted to \$12.2 million. By contrast the roughly 360 part-time Lecturers (of which 335 currently make below the \$5700 per course figure) collectively earn approximately \$4.1 million. Such a comparison makes plain the

disparities between the University's top and bottom earners, and between the University's expenditures on administration and on instruction (recall that part-time contingents now teach about a third of all undergraduate courses).

<sup>10</sup> These figures are based on the number of part-time Lecturers currently below these two salary levels. There are likely employees in other job titles who would benefit from a per-course salary hike, but they represent a relatively small number and are somewhat difficult to definitively isolate in the data we have.

<sup>11</sup> For a summary of the 2014-15 UAlbany budget, see <http://www.albany.edu/administration/universitybudget.php>.

<sup>12</sup> This includes the part-time Lecturers considered here, but excludes hourly workers whose annual salaries are difficult to calculate

	Number of Employees	Total Salary Expenditure
<b>UAlbany UUP Unit</b> (excluding hourly workers)	1600 (approx.)	\$140.2 million
<b>UAlbany M/C</b>	75	\$12.2 million
<b>Part-time Lecturers</b>	365 (approx.)	\$4.1million

Table 6: UAlbany Expenditures on Salary

More important for our current purposes than the relative distribution of salary expenditures across the university, is the absolute magnitude of the proposed increase needed to achieve a \$5700 per course salary. When seen in the context of the total annual salary expenditures, \$2.4 million is an exceedingly small figure. It amounts to a mere 1.7% increase over current UUP bargaining unit salary totals, or a 1.6% increase if we include M/C salaries. Notably, these estimates do not include the quite considerable salary expenditures for CSEA, PEF, University Police, Food Service Workers, and GSEU employees, among others. Although we are asking for a roughly 60% raise for 365 contingents, this figure likely amounts to less than 1% of the total salary costs for the university.

Seen in light of the figures above we believe that a \$5700 minimum per-course salary is an entirely realistic goal within a short time frame. We would like to see it fully implemented within three years. This is both realistic and urgent if we remind ourselves that contingent faculty now teach more courses and more students than tenure-line faculty, and teach an even greater portion of undergraduate education. In other words, funds spent raising the per-course salary of contingent faculty are funds spent on the core mission of the University.

*“The working conditions of our contingent employees are simultaneously the living and learning conditions of our students.”*

The University, through its 2015 Compact Budgeting Process, has devoted \$400,000 in recurring funds towards contingent faculty salary increases, and \$500,000 towards graduate student stipends. We say, “good start,” but far more will be needed. \$400,000 represents less than a quarter of the funds required to bring contingents up to \$5000 per course, let alone \$5700.

3. **Steps to Stability:** We propose the implementation of a stepped system to extend the duration of contingent contracts and add stability to employment. For example, an employee who has worked at UAlbany for 2 years would automatically become entitled to a 1-year contract; after 4 years, a 2-year contract; after 6 years, a 3-year contract. We have found that many of our current contingents have long tenures at the University. The mean for survey respondents was between 3-5 and 6-10 years of employment at UAlbany. According to University data from 2013 70% of academic contingents had 3 or more years of service, while 34% had 10 or more years of service. Nevertheless, the vast majority of our survey respondents (81%) hold appointments of 1 year or less, with nearly three quarters of part-time contingents reporting that they work on one-semester contracts. As noted above, we work from the principle that stable, secure, fairly compensated employment will result in higher quality across the university. Nevertheless, even if we were to accept the bureaucratic-managerial notion that labor “flexibility” benefits the University through

greater semester-by-semester efficiencies (a dubious claim at best), it is unclear that any such benefits ever materialize given the very long employment histories of many contingents. Furthermore, the frequent reappointment process is a waste of university resources as well as a demeaning and anxiety producing experience for contingents. A step system such as the one we have proposed will actually increase operational efficiencies by significantly reducing the amount of processing transactions required in HR. Therefore, although the primary benefits of steps are secure employment, there are also cost and efficiency benefits associated with it for the University.

A final point about stability. Rather than having a stable, predictable, allotment from which contingent salaries will be paid (based, for instance, on instructional needs, the current number of contingents on payroll, and/or the step system we are here proposing), contingent salaries appear to be funded in an ad-hoc, annually variable manner, through moneys that seem cobbled together from variable sources, including recouped salaries from tenure-line faculty leaves. In other words, this variable pool of money—rising or falling in any given year based on a range of factors external to contingent faculty themselves—rather than the instructional needs of the university and the experience and credentials of the contingent faculty, appears to determine how many contingent faculty are hired and at what pay rate. In order for the University to adequately address the chronic instability of contingent faculty appointments, it must develop a rational and regular budget devoted to all instructional salaries.

4. **Full-Time Employment:** Wherever possible (and unless a part-time load is explicitly requested by the employee), we propose that contingents be moved into full-time positions. Again, this improves performance by creating more stable jobs that pay a living wage, and as noted above, if per-course compensation for academic contingents is pegged to full-time rates, there is no financial benefit to part-time employment. In fact by reducing the number of employees receiving health benefits, there may be some savings. Moving more employees into full-time positions will reduce the number of overall instructional faculty and hence help to improve the ratio of tenure-line to contingent faculty. We do not advocate the non-renewal of current contingents to make this happen. Rather, as we outline below, we believe that increasing graduate student assistantship funding can reduce the total number of part-time Lecturers, allowing other current Lecturers to add the vacated courses.

As a corollary, we propose that all so-called “part-time” professional contingent appointments at 80% or higher be converted into full-time positions (unless the arrangement is explicitly requested by the employee). We have seen past instances where the University uses such appointments as a mechanism to secure full-time work without the concomitant responsibility of tenure. Such cynical employment practices have no place at a University.

5. **Expand Health Benefit Eligibility:** Our data suggests that nearly half of current academic contingents (48%) teach less than a two-course, half-time load, meaning that they are ineligible for health benefits. Likewise, we have heard of other cases where departments want to “spread around” teaching opportunities to many graduate students as a means of professional development. Although well-meaning, such efforts strip away collectively bargained rights to health care coverage, which are an important piece of compensation and a crucial aspect of stable, secure employment. As a rule, departments should assign contingent faculty including graduate students a minimum of two courses to ensure benefits eligibility. Exceptions should be made only when an employee specifically chooses to take an appointment of less than 50%. Likewise, professional appointments that fall below the salary threshold of \$14,147 for benefits eligibility should be carefully scrutinized to ensure that these appointments are not intentionally or inadvertently denying health benefits to employees.



6. **Workload Creep:** Our survey respondents who are part-time academics suggest that a half-time teaching appointment typically equates to more than 20 hours per week. Likewise we have spoken with many contingent professionals who regularly work long hours, including nights and weekends. Service requirements for contingent appointments are often vague and unspecified, causing contingents to feel pressured to take on additional responsibilities. Because contingent employment, by definition, lacks job security, contingent employees

*“The University must compensate contingents for work beyond the boundaries of their appointments.”*

often feel the need to do considerably more work than is stipulated by the appointment. This speaks simultaneously to the dedication of contingent employees who want to do a good job, and to their vulnerability based on the nature of their appointments, which make contingents susceptible to coercive pressures to take on additional uncompensated responsibilities. The University must compensate contingents for work beyond the boundaries of their appointments. The model of

compensating part-time contingents for their service on the University’s Contingent Task Force chaired by Provost Stellar is a welcome step in this direction. This aspect of contingency will be improved somewhat if more full-time, and especially tenure-line positions can be created. However, workload creep is likely to always be a problem for contingents, and the University must, at a minimum, work to mitigate the most obvious examples of uncompensated labor.

7. **Expand Graduate Student Assistantship Funding:** We emphasize the importance of seeing academic contingency at UAlbany in relation to graduate student funding. Although not specifically about UUP members—indeed, this proposal would actually remove members from UUP rolls—we advocate a substantial increase in University allocations for graduate student assistantship funding (both stipend amount and, more important, duration of appointment). Expanding assistantship support will allow graduate students to devote more time to their research (and teaching) and by extension speed time to degree and raise placement rates. It will likewise help departments with recruitment. And, crucially for our proposals above, it will reduce the number of graduate student Lecturers teaching on a per-course basis, allowing for the possibility of moving more current part-time Lecturers into full-time positions.
8. **Develop Substantive Methods of Evaluation:** The current system for evaluating most contingent academics is entirely inadequate, often based on nothing beyond a casual review of SIRF scores (themselves a deeply flawed measure, as the University itself has repeatedly acknowledged). We must end the practice by which contingents are renewed and non-renewed without any meaningful evaluation of their performance. Moving toward longer-term contracts and tenure-line positions necessitates the development of fair, substantive, holistic evaluation procedures, based on an employee’s stated professional obligation, along with tenure procedures where applicable. This will require leadership and additional work both from the University Administration, and from tenure-line faculty (UUP members!), in particular department Chairs. Additionally, however, it may represent a hidden cost to the proposals presented here in that additional evaluation work cannot simply be added onto tenure-line faculty members without compensation or some equivalent reduction in their current workloads. We need to face this problem directly. Substantive evaluation is absolutely necessary, but it is not “resource-neutral”; it will require real commitments from the University.

**9. Increase the Participation, Representation and Recognition of Contingents:** Many of the proposals below can be easily implemented at little or no cost, to improve the working conditions of contingents.

- Expand representation and voting privileges for contingents in departments and on the University Senate. It is telling that there is a Part-Time Representative on the University Senate, who is elected only by full-time voting faculty. Part-time contingents receive little if any communication about Senate events. This is a distortion of the principle of representation.
- Ensure adequate office space, access to computers, photocopiers, telephones, and other basic university resources.
- Dedicate more funds for research and professional development.
- Establish awards to recognize exceptional contributions for academic and professional contingents.
- Establish a “Senior Lecturer” job title for academic contingents who have demonstrated sustained, quality service. Contingents currently have little to no opportunity for professional advancement. A sequence of job titles to allow promotion, including salary raises tied to each title, would recognize career growth and development.
- Encourage participation in Commencement, with commensurate compensation.
- Afford contingents greater priority for scheduling given the challenges of their work assignments.
- Departments might, wherever possible and desired by the employee, try to reduce the number of unique course preparations given to contingents by assigning multiple sections of the same class.
- List contingent faculty names on department websites, brochures, and programs.
- Identify additional measures that can incorporate more contingents into everyday university life, without creating new expectations for uncompensated service.

**10. Prioritize Contingent Organizing within UUP:** Many of the proposals above are addressed to the UAlbany Administration. UUP, however, also needs to redouble its efforts to increase communication and participation with and among contingents. Likewise, we need to educate tenure-line members about their role in the exploitation and subjugation of contingent labor, and clarify the obligations of UUP tenure-line faculty in providing redress.

*“UUP needs to redouble its efforts to increase communication and participation with and among contingents.”*

- Membership: 87% of respondents in our survey think they are UUP members; however, our membership rates for contingents hover around 55%. This strongly suggests that many contingent fee-payers believe they are members. We have launched a membership drive to educate contingents about the work of UUP, to listen to their concerns, and to encourage their participation within our Chapter.
- Our Contingent Concerns Committee is active and growing, but we need to activate more members: fully one third of our survey respondents say that they would like to participate but don’t know how. We would like to get those contingents active in our Chapter.
- Develop better lines of communication between the Chapter and contingents. We have begun to implement a Contingent Representatives structure that will work in tandem with our Department Representatives who are full-timers.
- The survey indicates considerable uncertainty and concern about health benefit eligibility, General Education teaching assignments, and attitudes of tenure-line faculty.



UUP needs to educate our contingent members as well as our tenure-track members about these concerns.

- Encourage departments and the University Senate to expand opportunities for meaningful participation by contingents. We pledge to work with our members to argue for expanded participation.
- Hold regular orientation programs with contingents on health benefits and resources. We would like to partner with HR to offer ongoing orientations for contingents.
- Work with Chairs and departments to develop and communicate best practices for contingent appointments.
- Expand contingent representation within our Chapter Executive Committee.

These recommendations remain open for debate and discussion; we welcome your feedback. Some of these items are relatively simple, others will require considerable resources and restructuring. Addressing the full slate of issues will require creative, dedicated, and persistent effort. We have been heartened by the UAlbany administration's stated goal of becoming a national leader on this issue, and by the serious attention being given to it by members of the University's Contingents Panel. UUP Albany pledges to contribute to those efforts in whatever ways we can, and to simultaneously continue to work for contingents in our contract negotiations, our legislative advocacy, and in our role as union chapter at UAlbany.

## **Appendix A:**

### **Questions and Results from UUP Albany's Survey of Academic Contingent Employees**

Below we present a series of charts compiling the questions and responses from a survey of UAlbany academic contingent employees conducted by the Albany Chapter of UUP in November and December 2014. Of a total of 496 eligible contingents, 191 completed the survey, generating a response rate of 38.5%

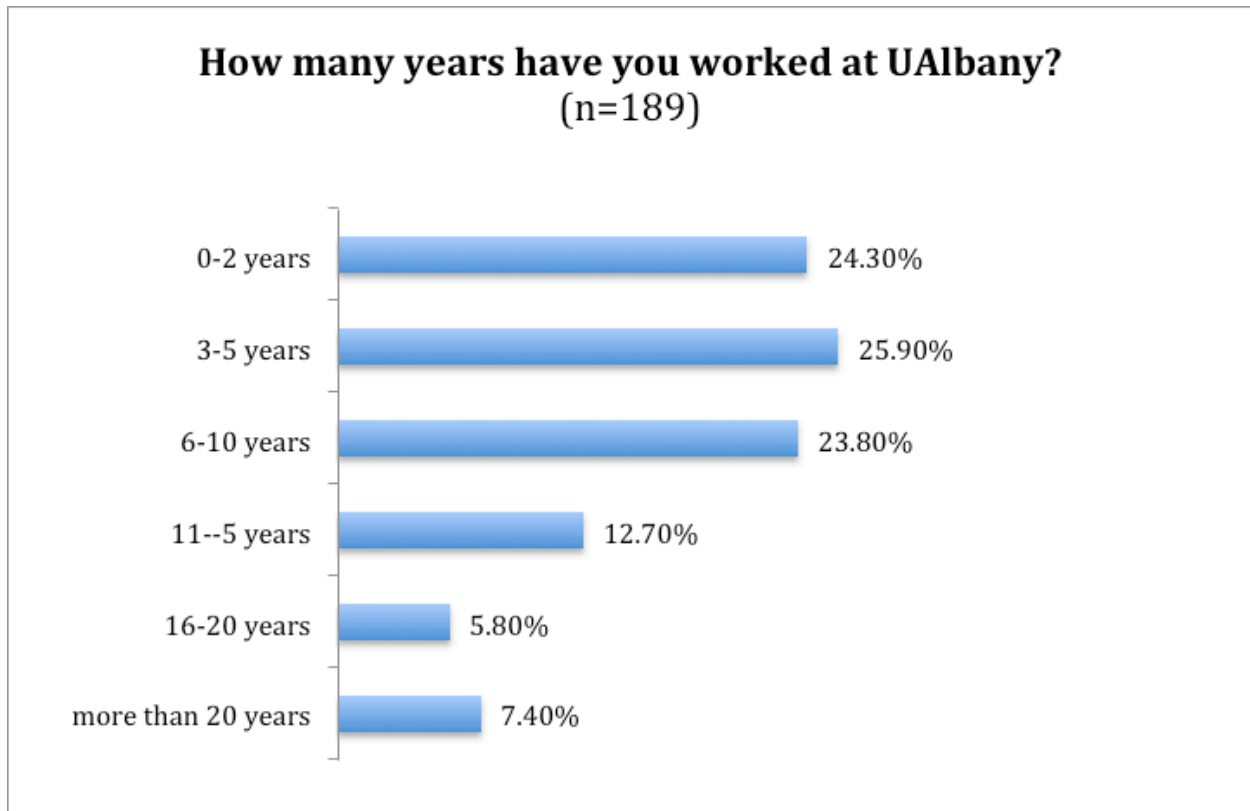


Figure 1: Years of Employment at UAlbany

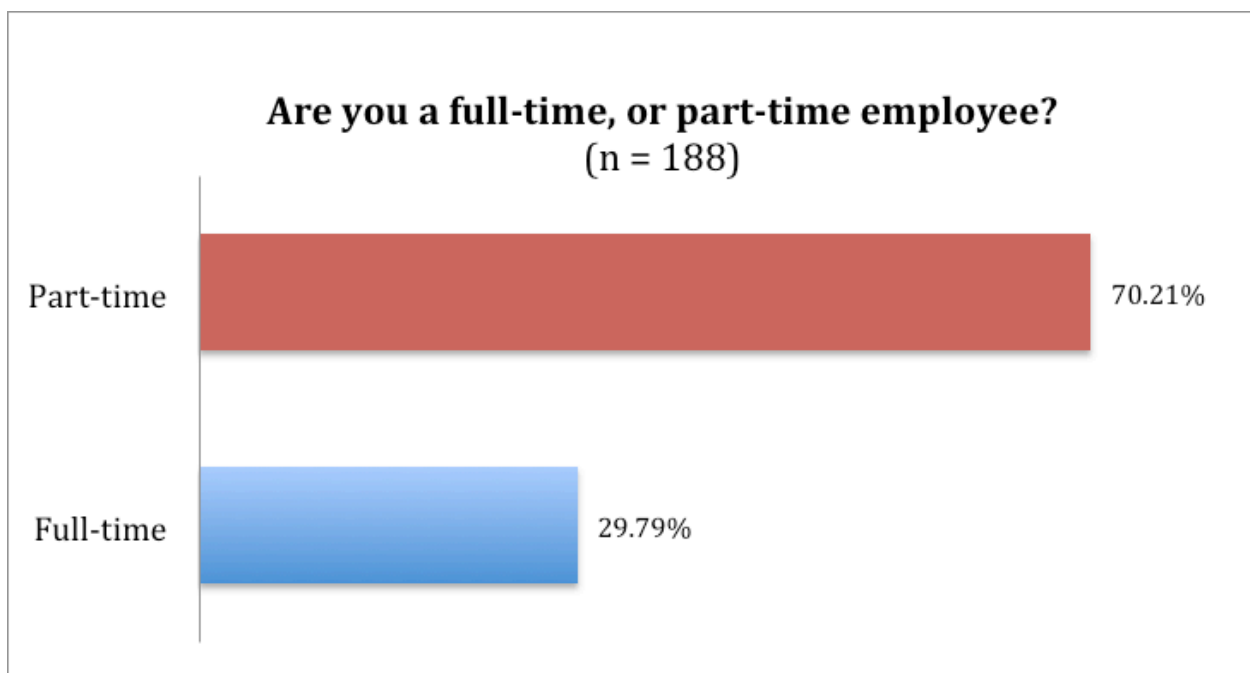


Figure 2: Full-Time or Part-Time Employee

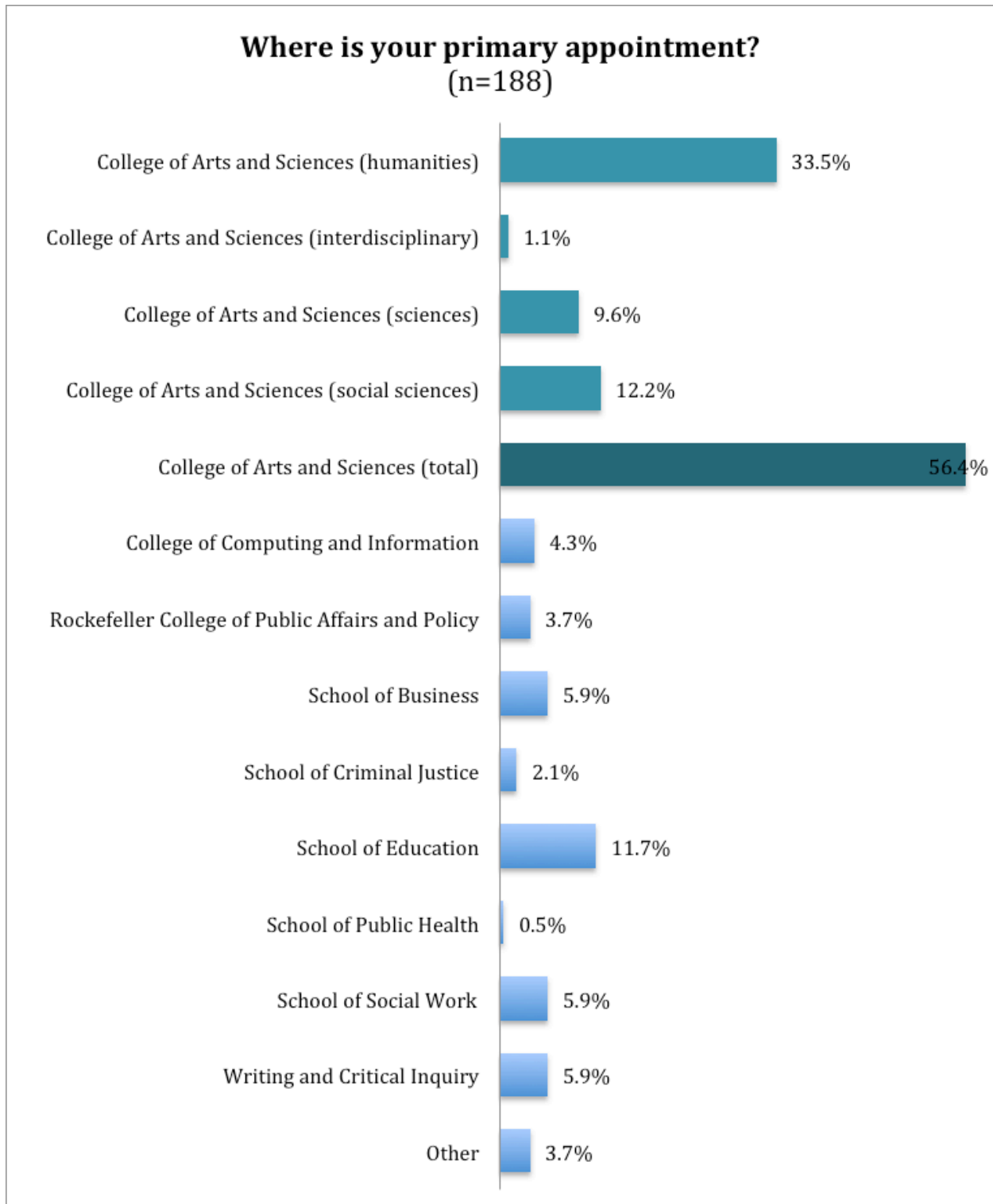


Figure 3: Primary Appointment by College/School

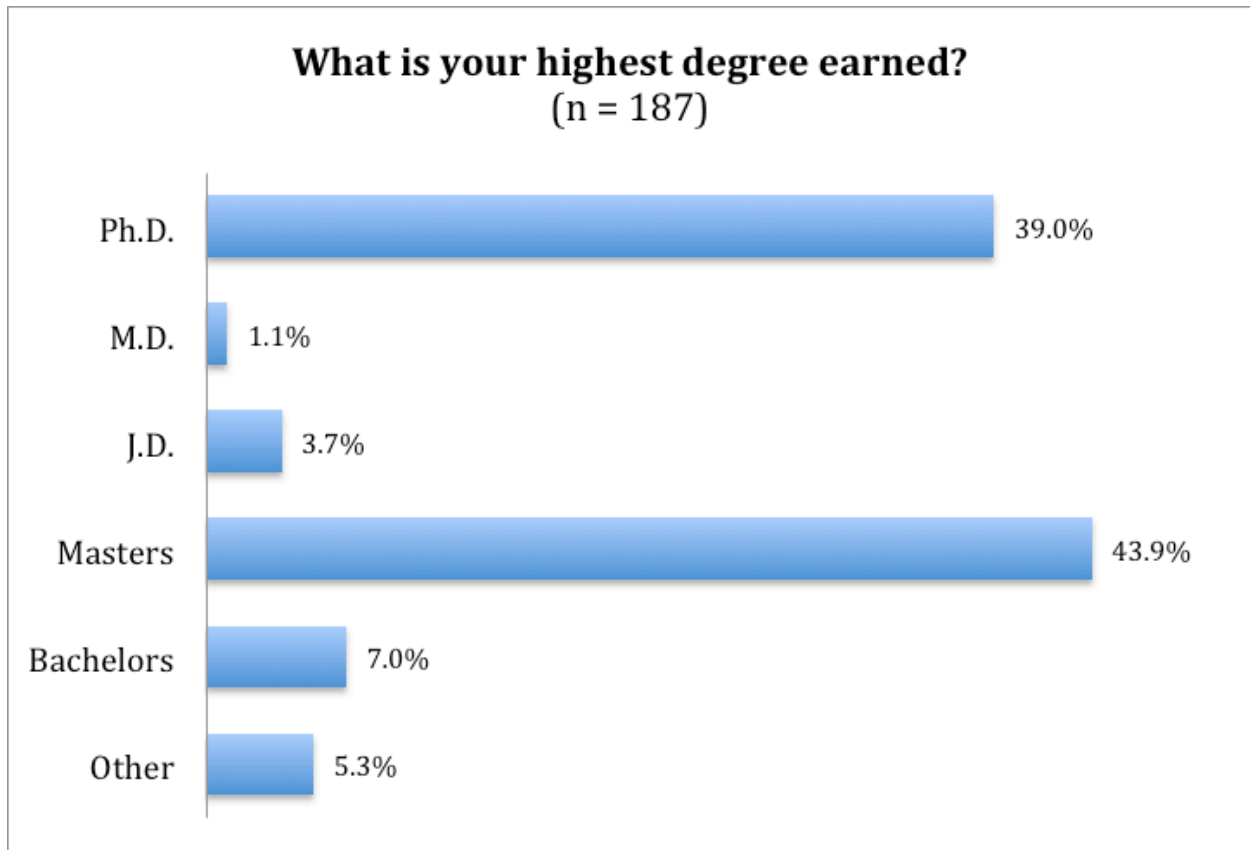


Figure 4: Highest Degree Earned

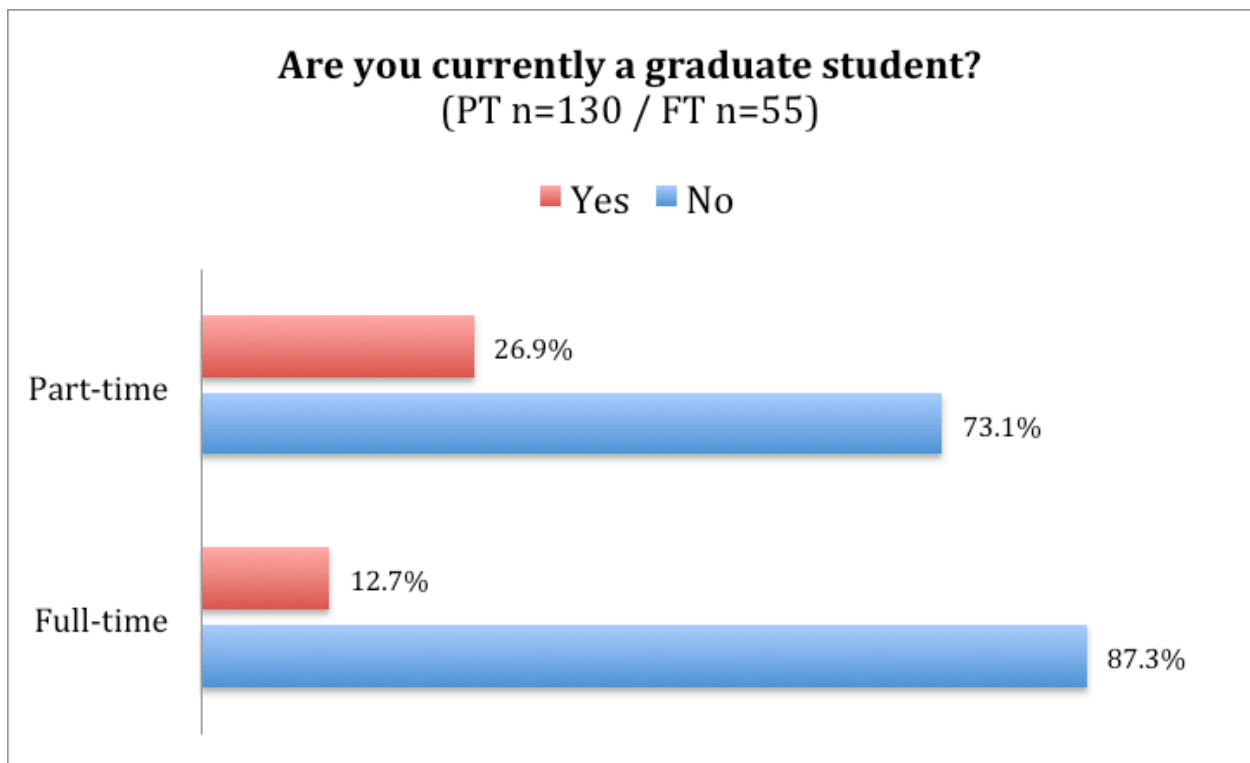


Figure 5: Current Graduate Students

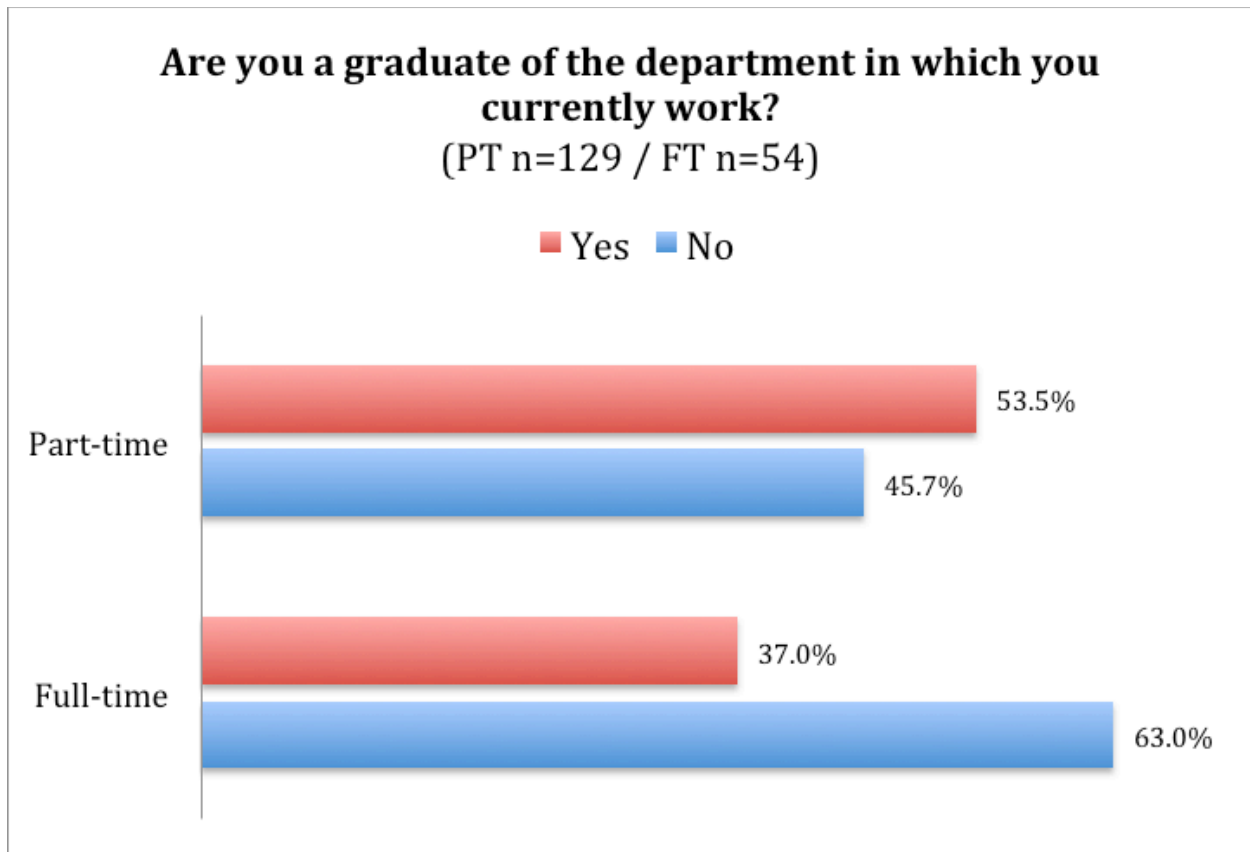


Figure 6: Graduate of Department

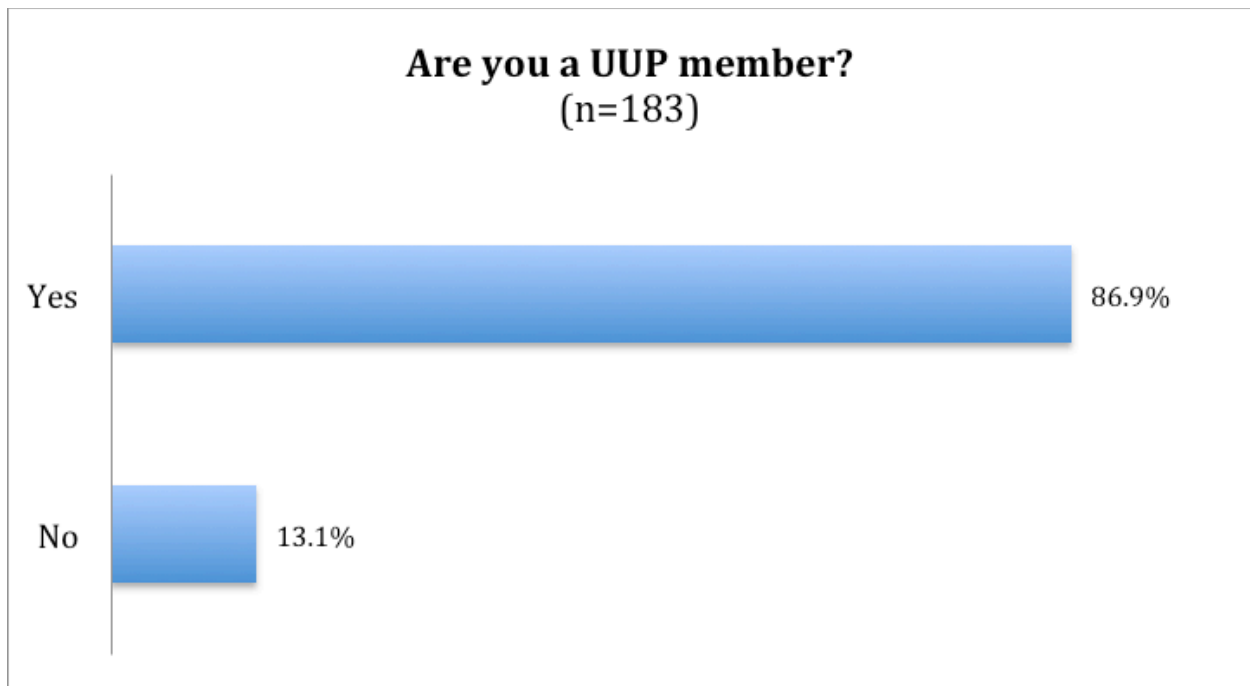


Figure 5: Current Graduate Students

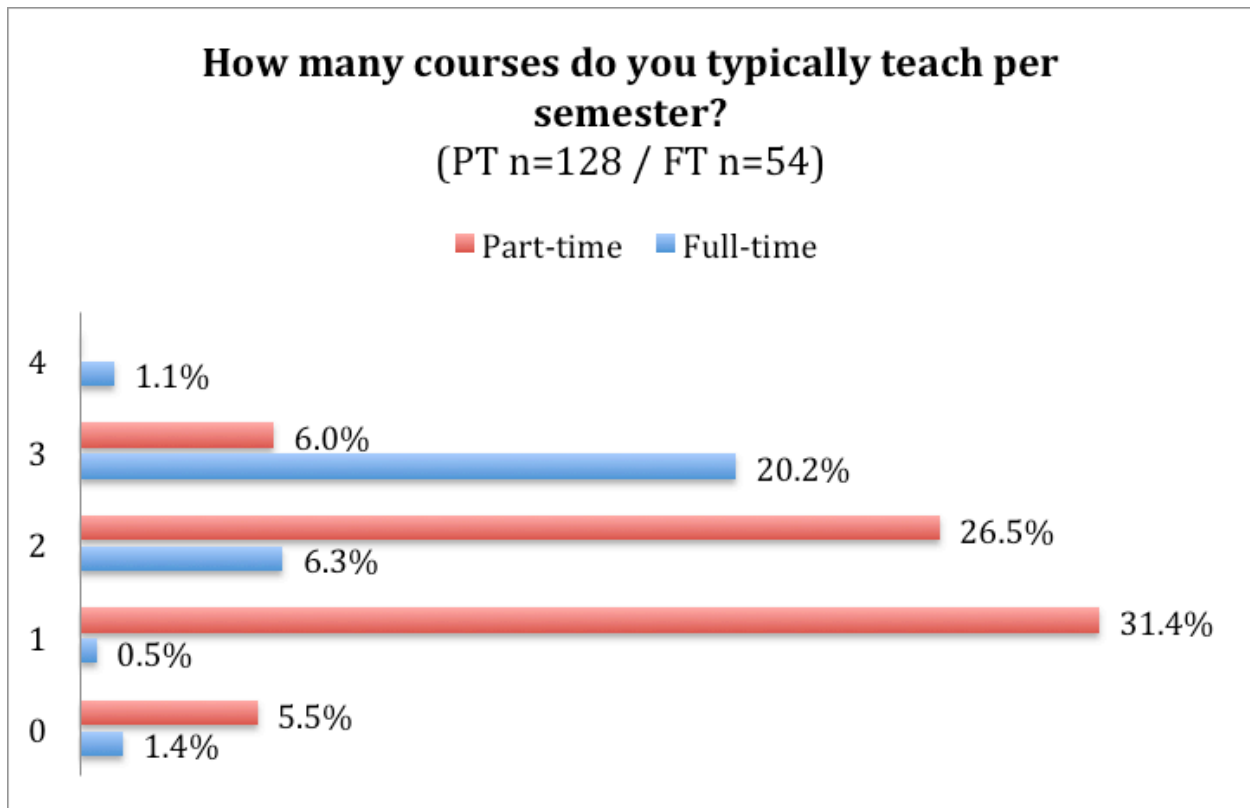


Figure 8: Courses Per Semester

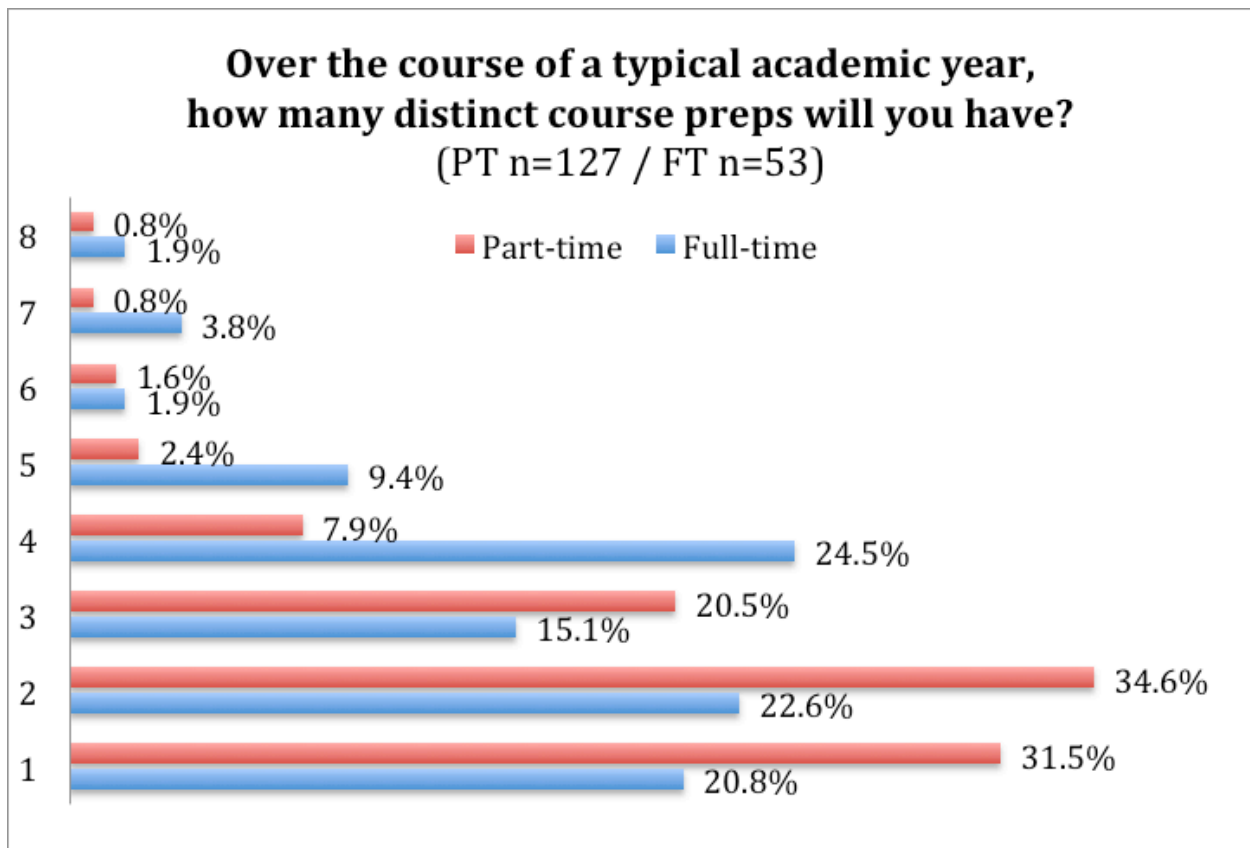


Figure 9: Course Preparations

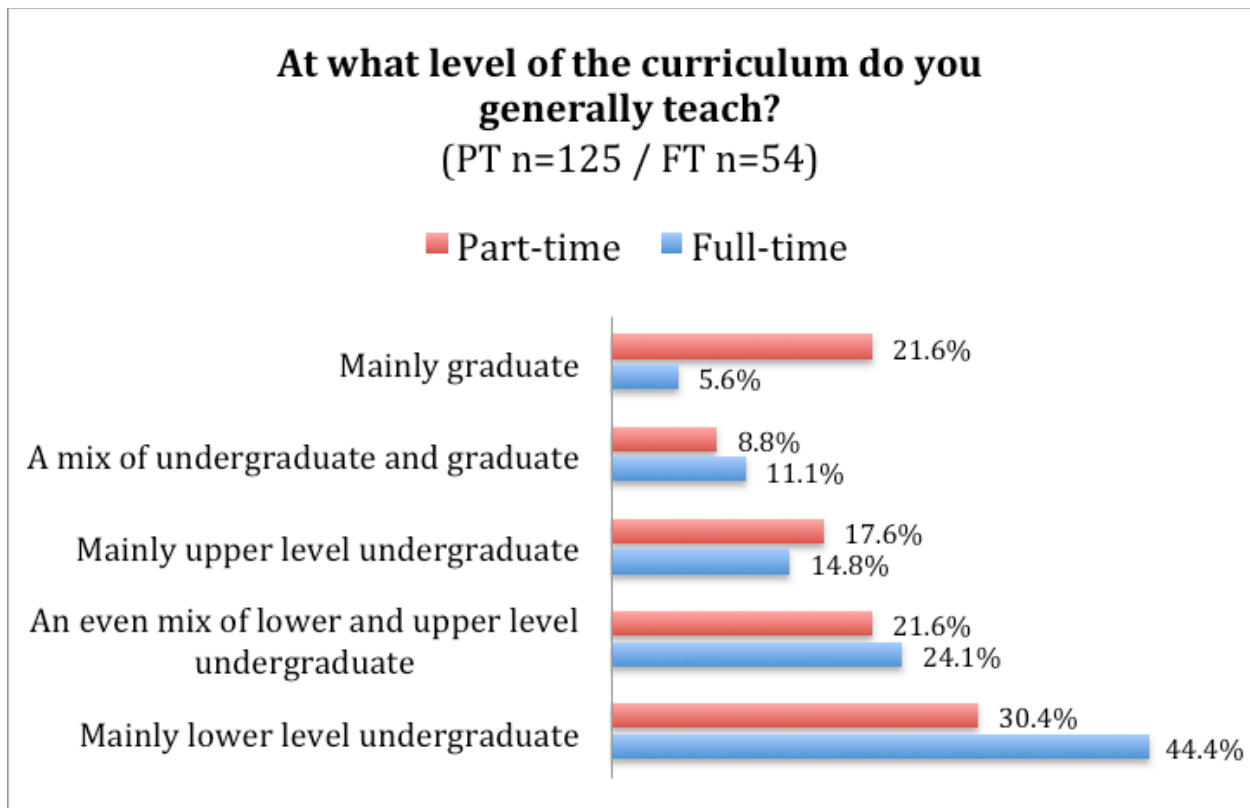


Figure 10: Level of Curriculum

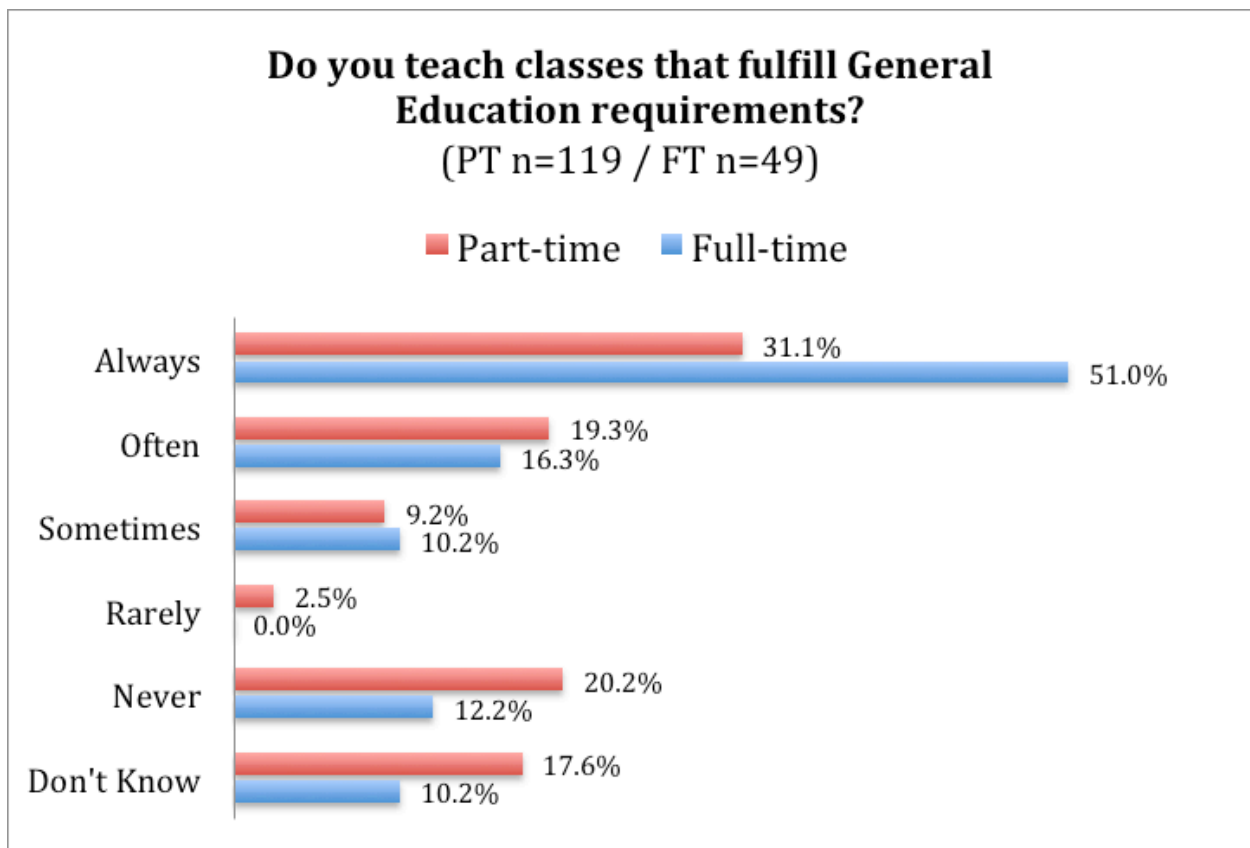


Figure 11: General Education Courses



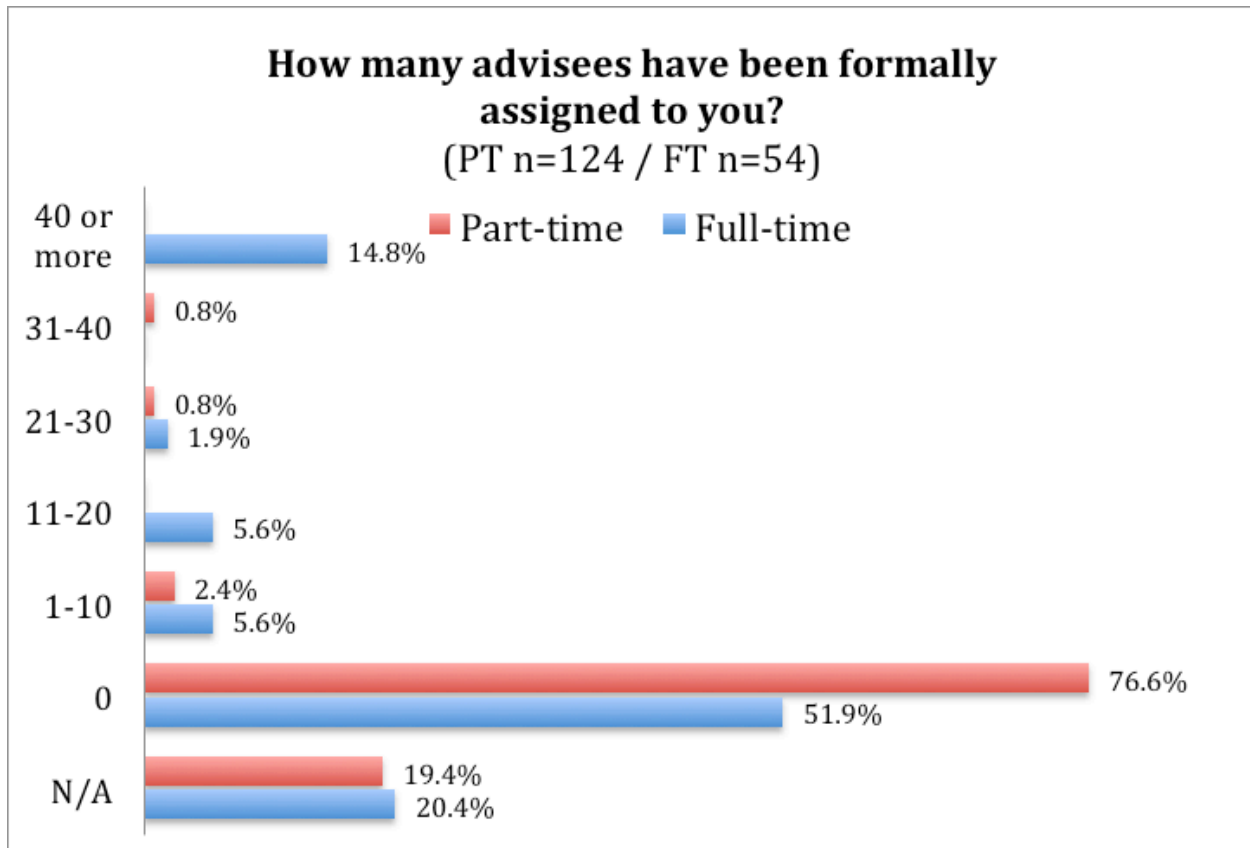


Figure 12: Advisement

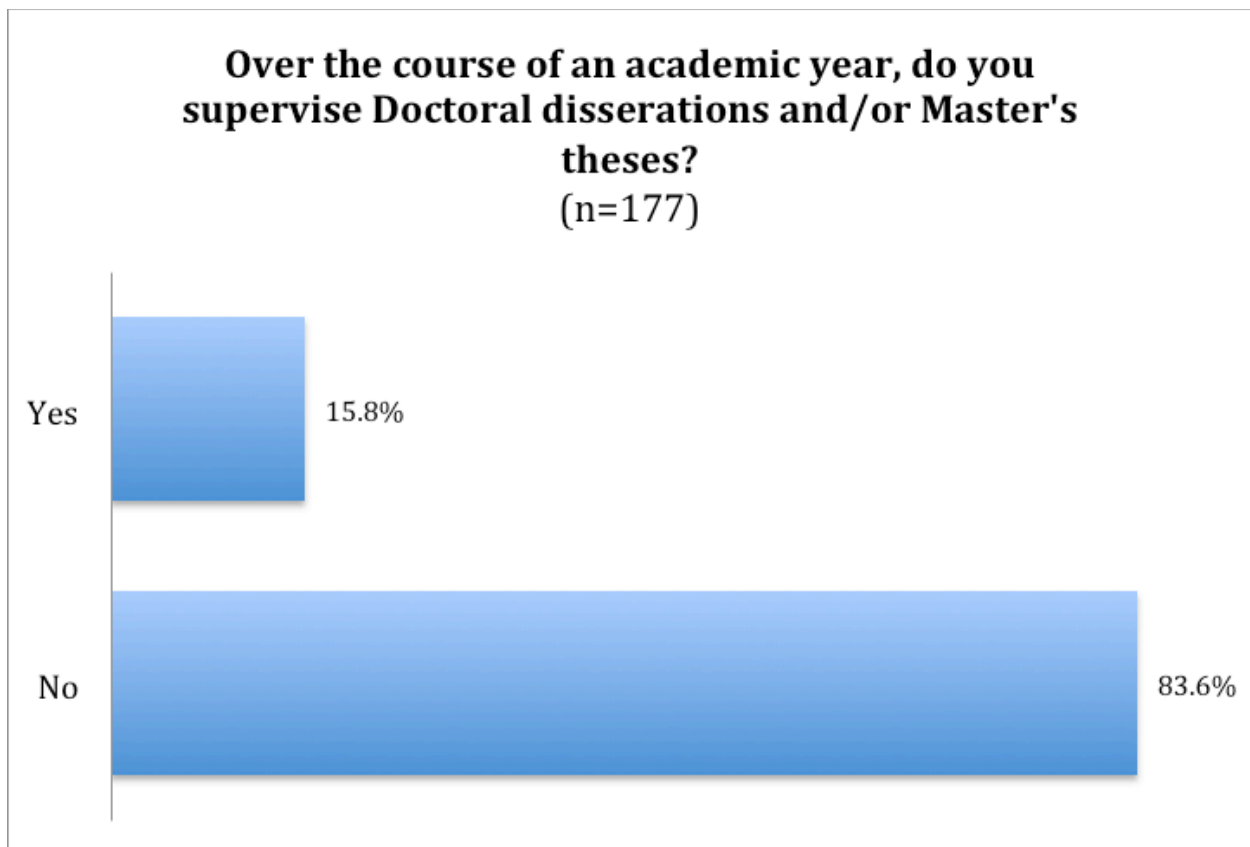


Figure 13: Doctoral and Masters Supervision

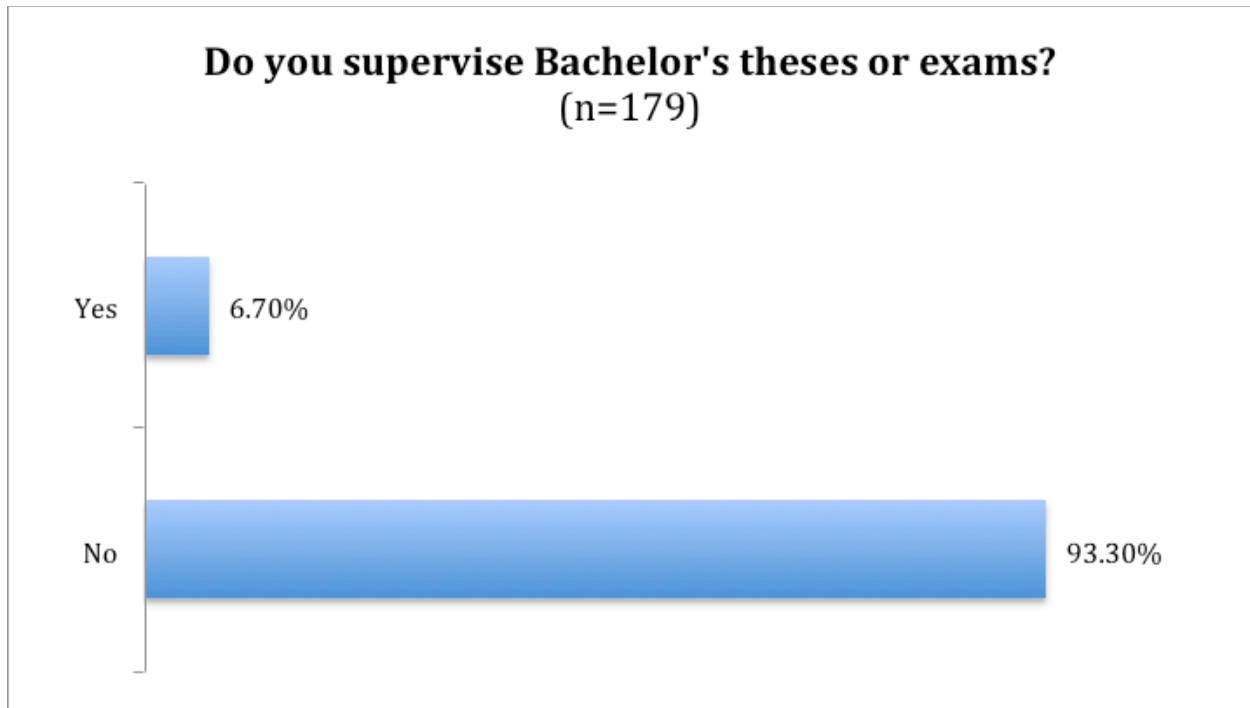


Figure 14: Bachelor's Theses or Exam

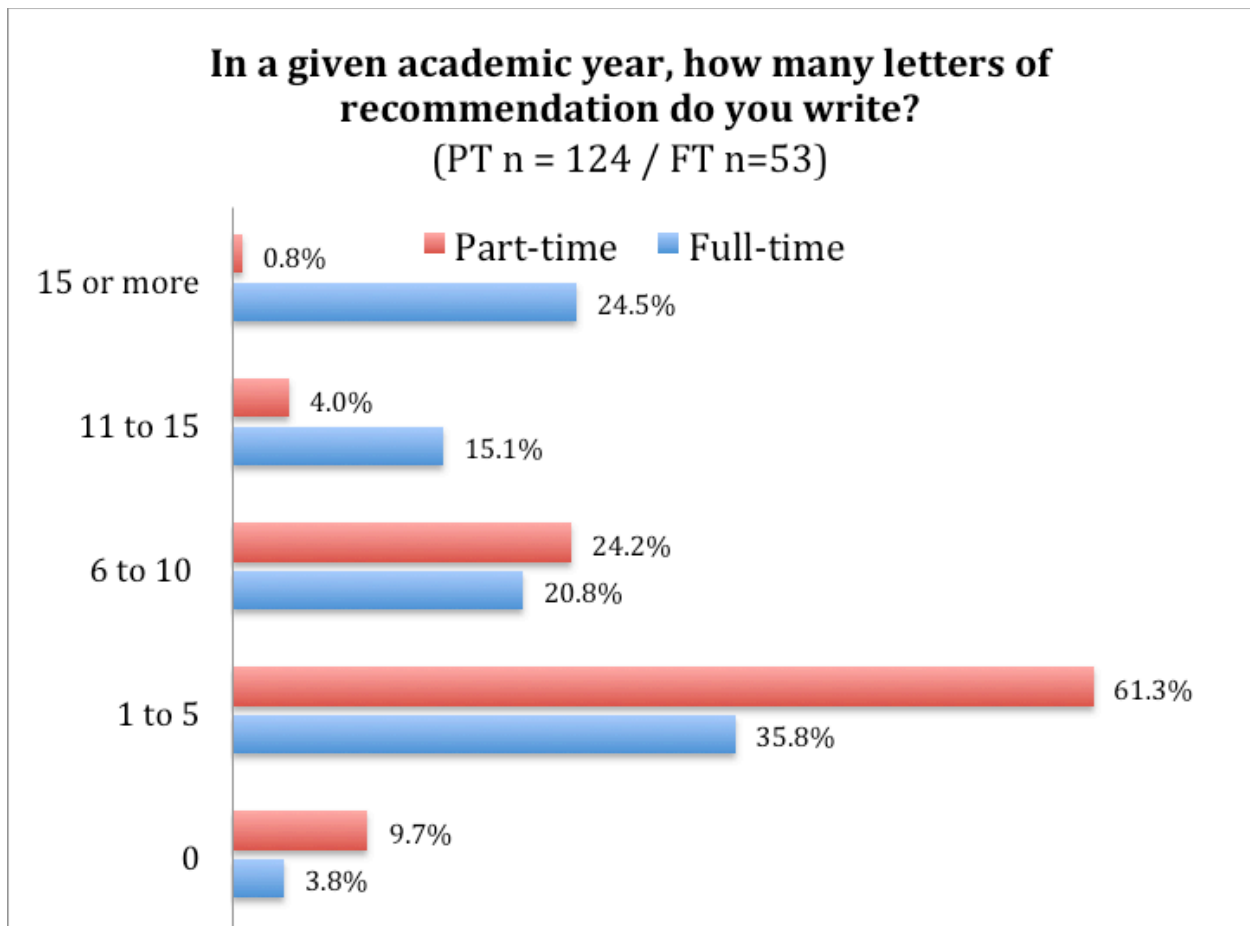


Figure 15: Letters of Recommendation

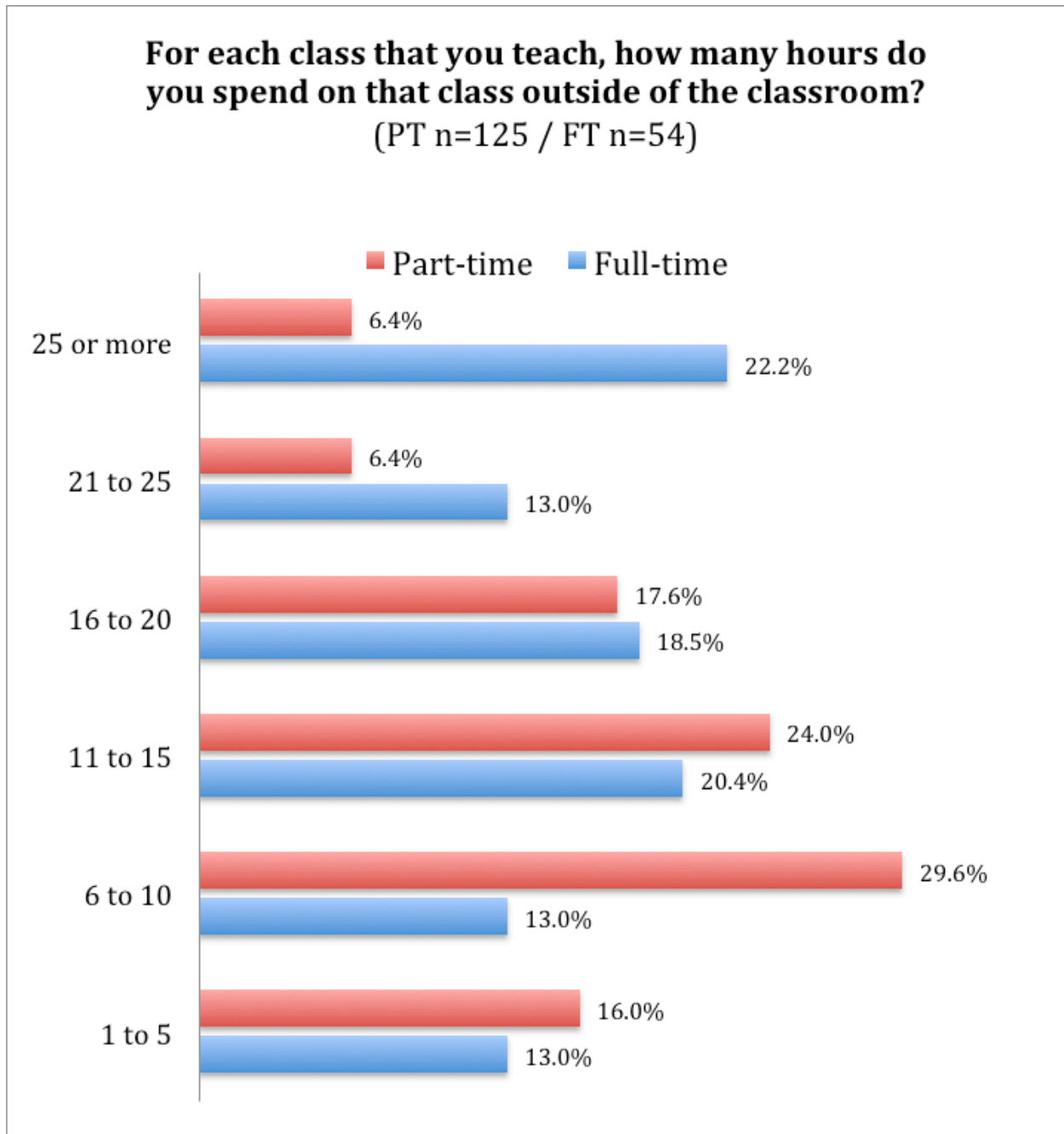


Figure 16: Hours Outside of Class

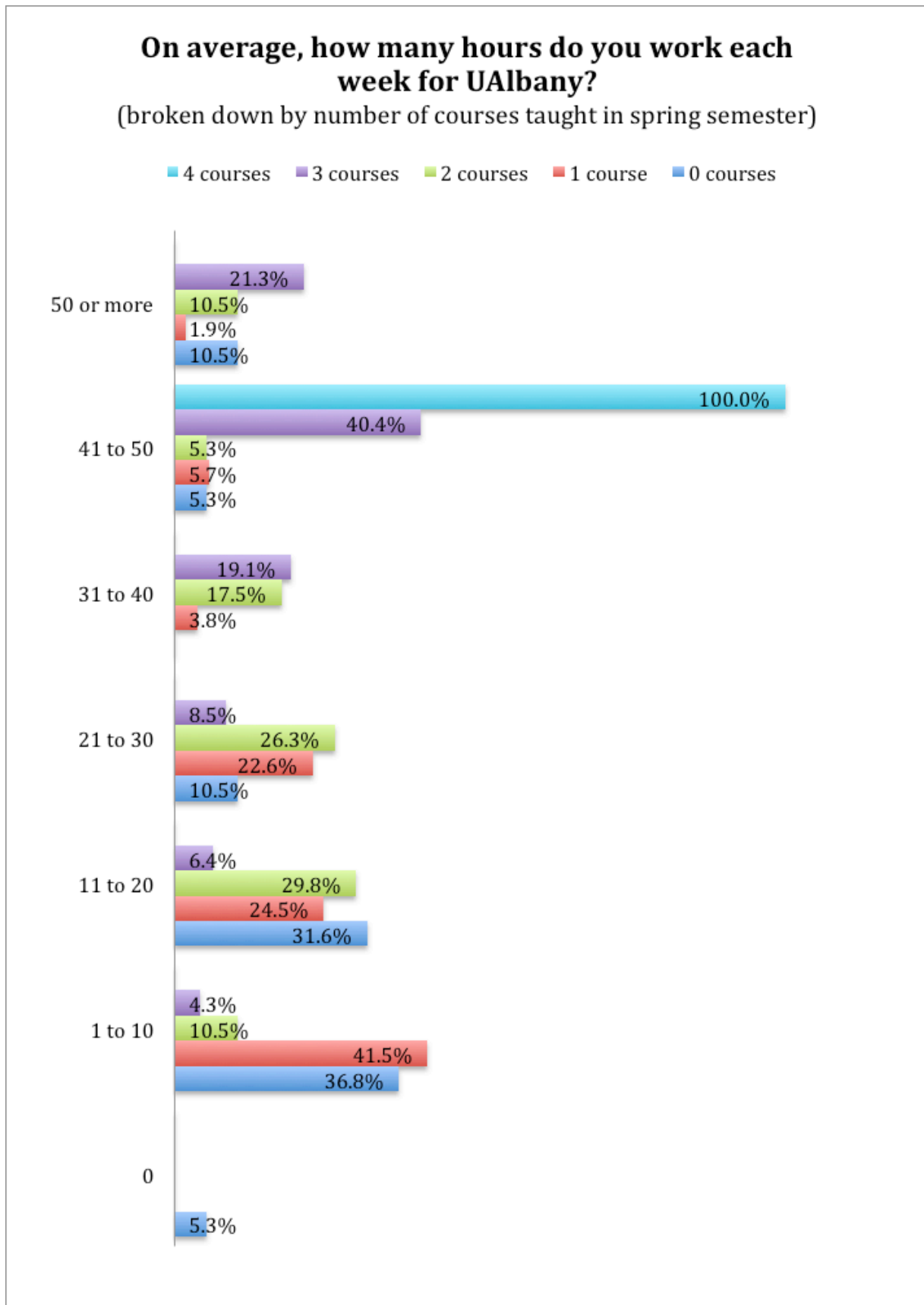


Figure 17: Hours Per Week

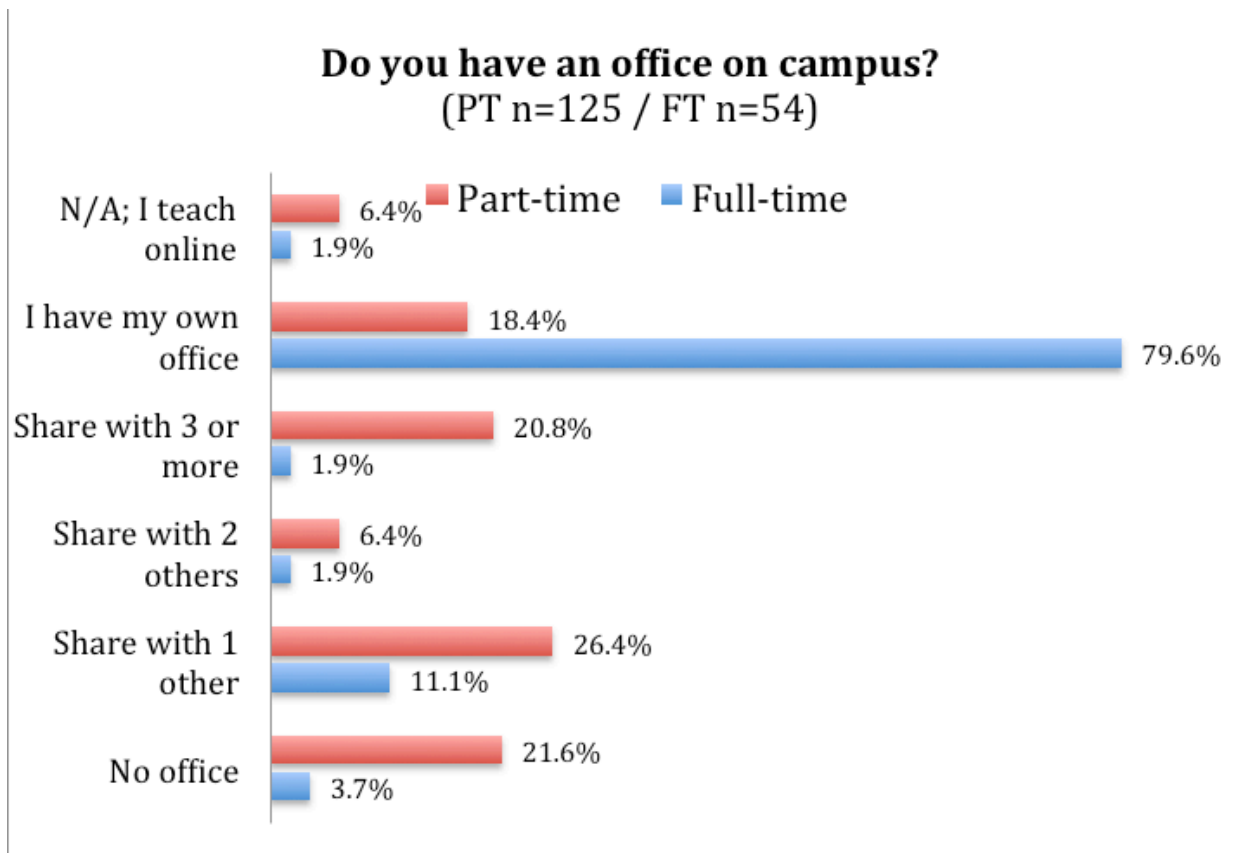


Figure 18: Office Space

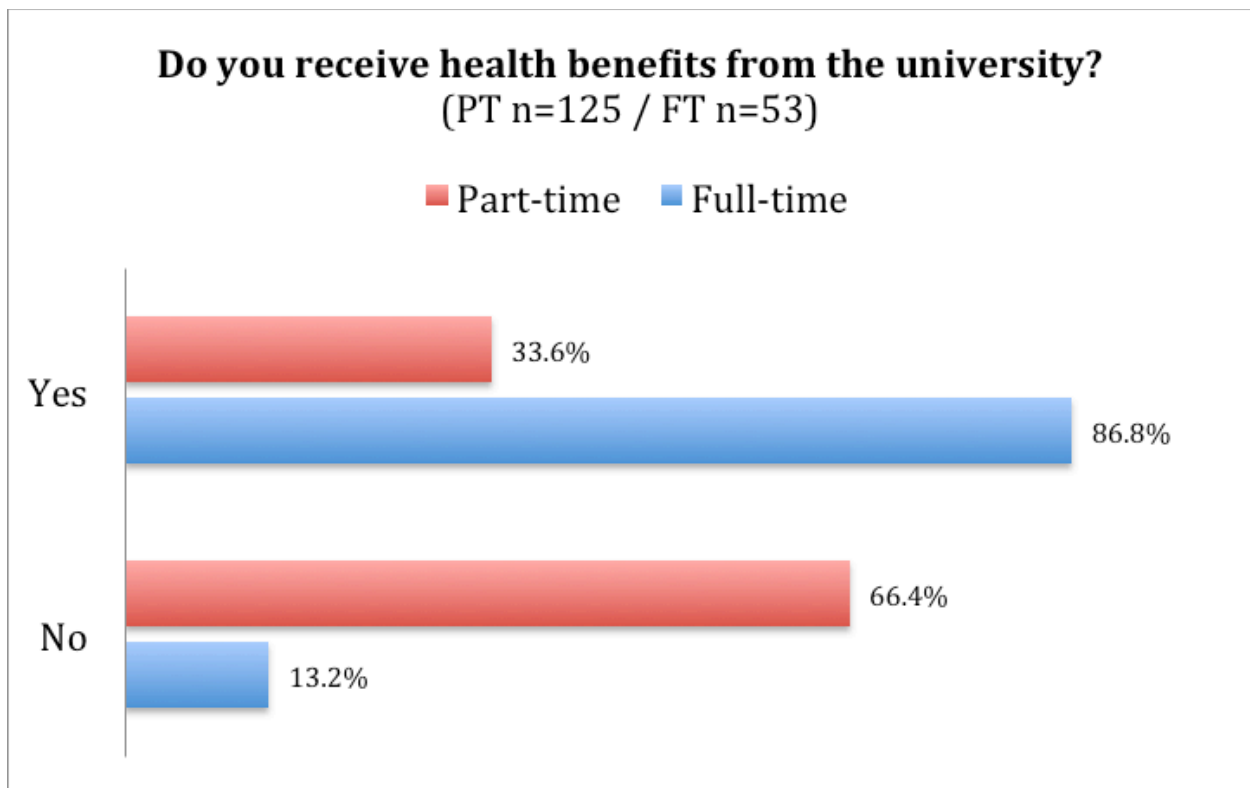


Figure 19: Health Benefits

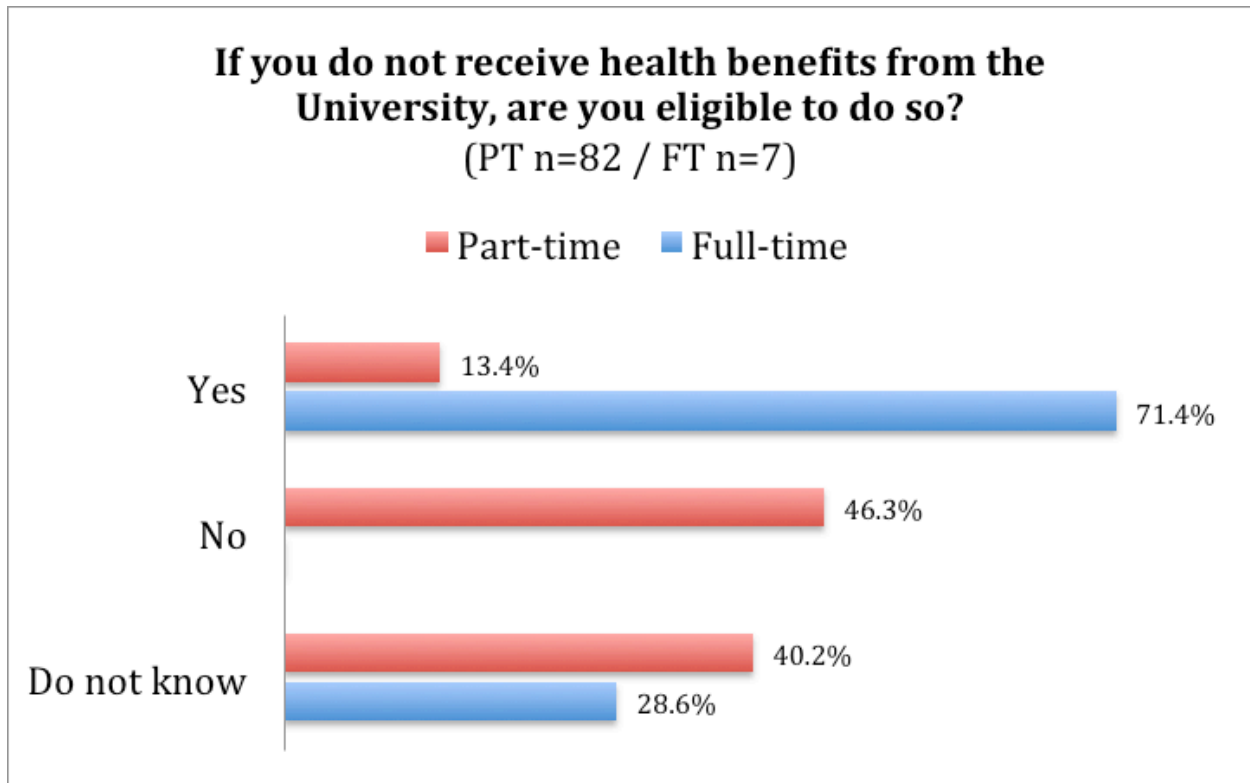


Figure 20: Health Benefit Eligibility

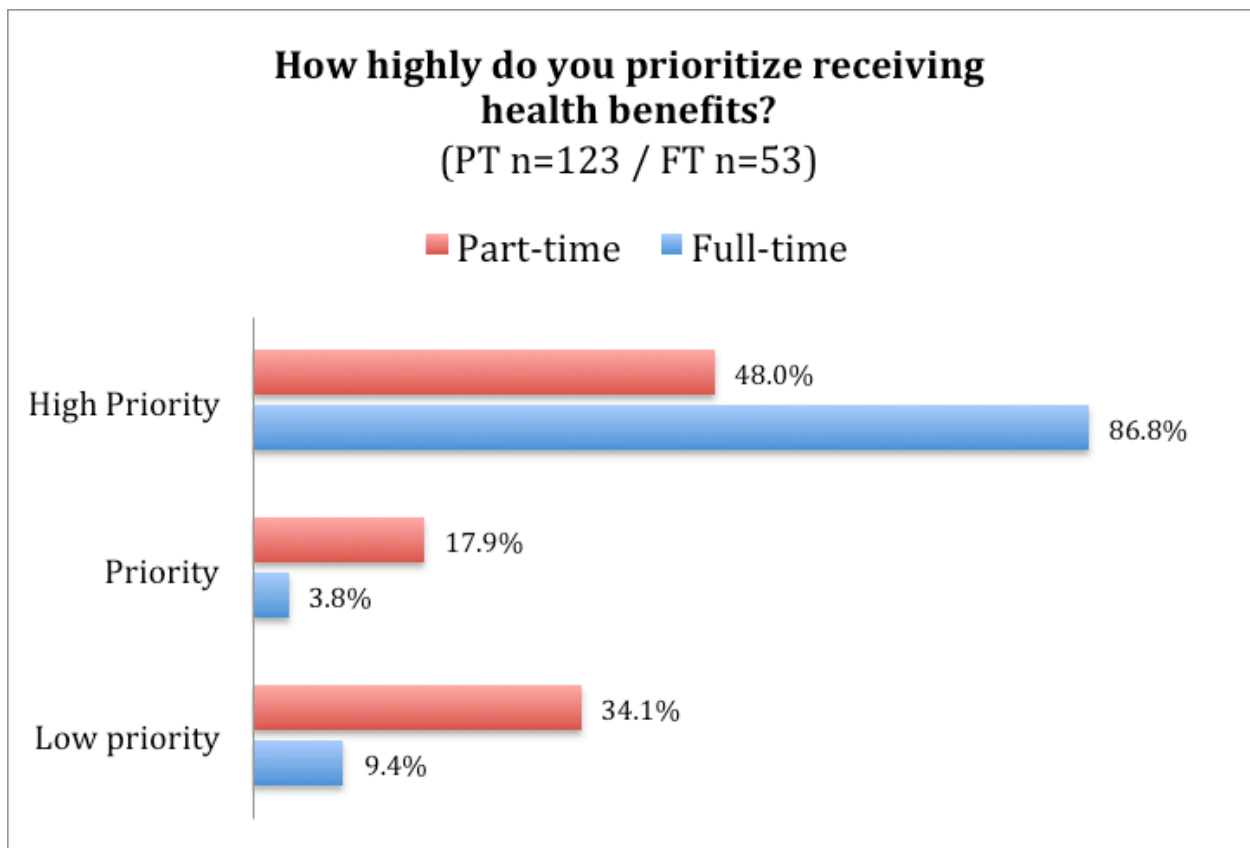


Figure 21: Health Benefit Priority

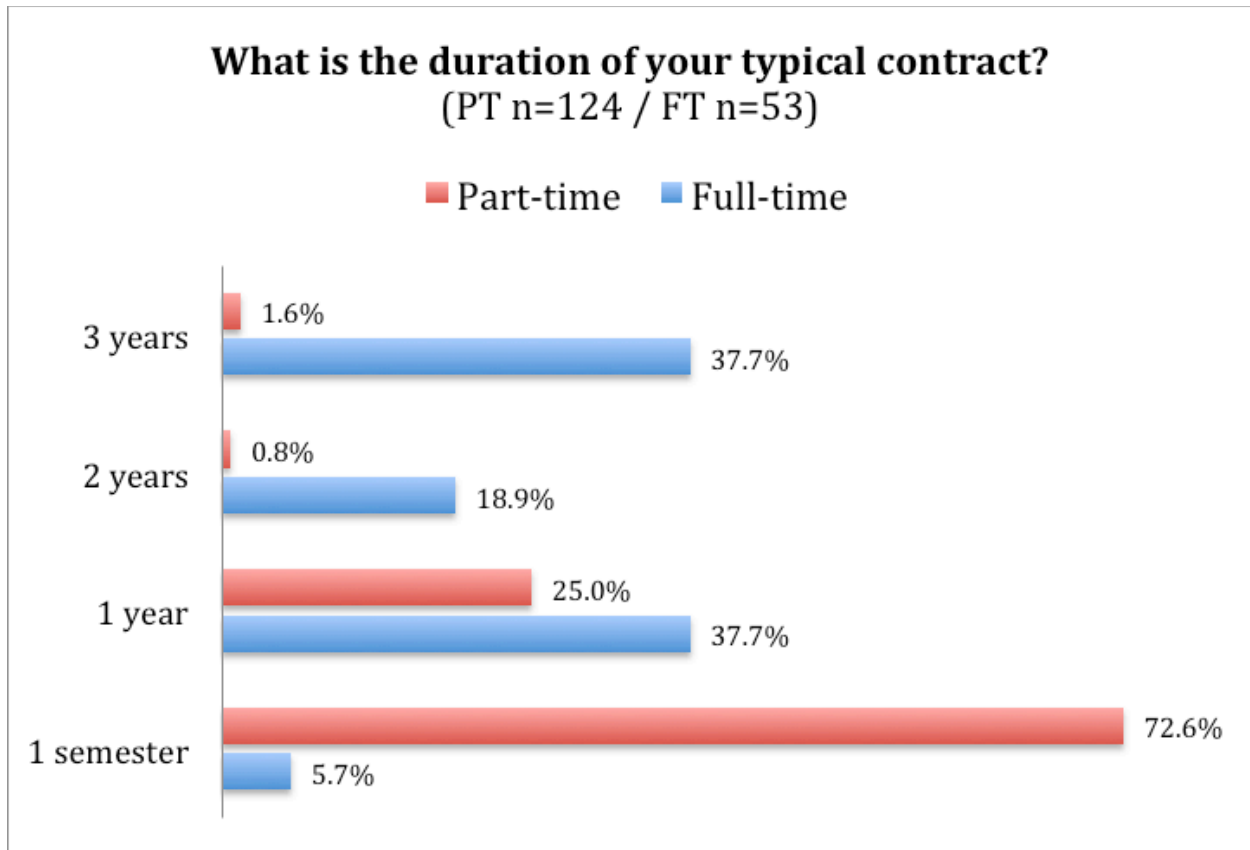


Figure 22: Duration of Typical Contract

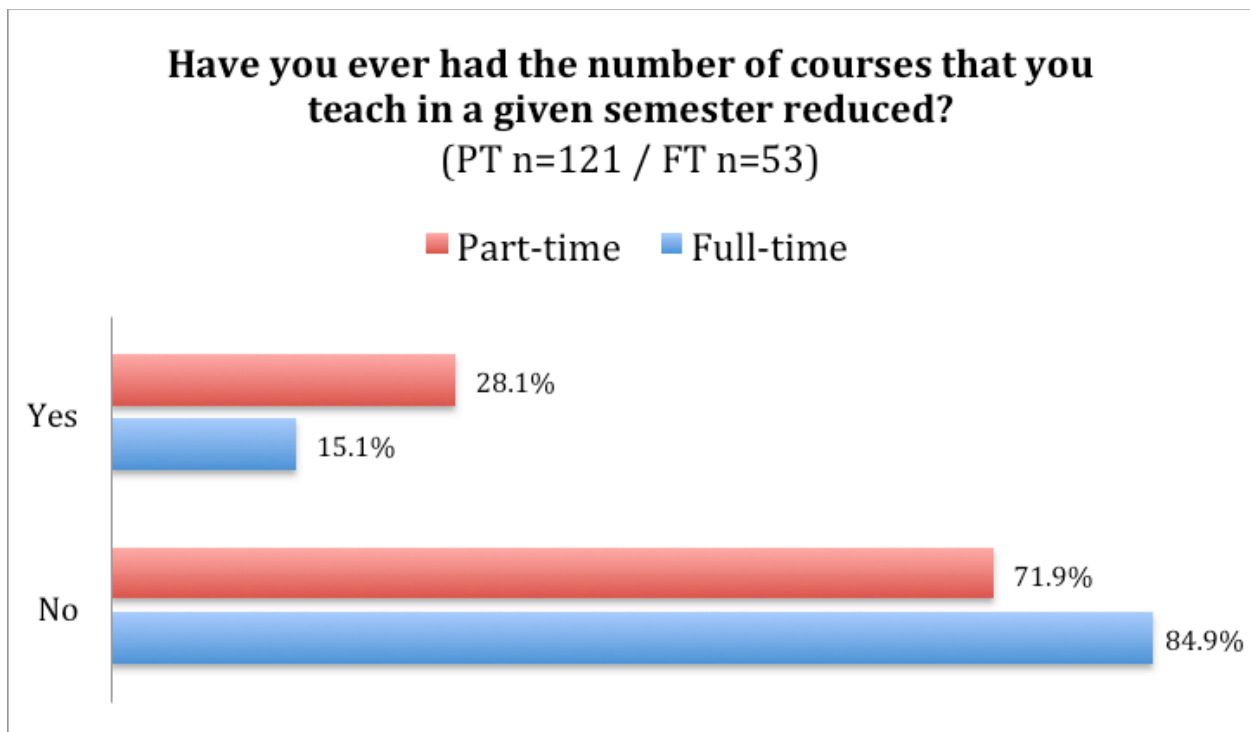


Figure 23: Course-load Reductions

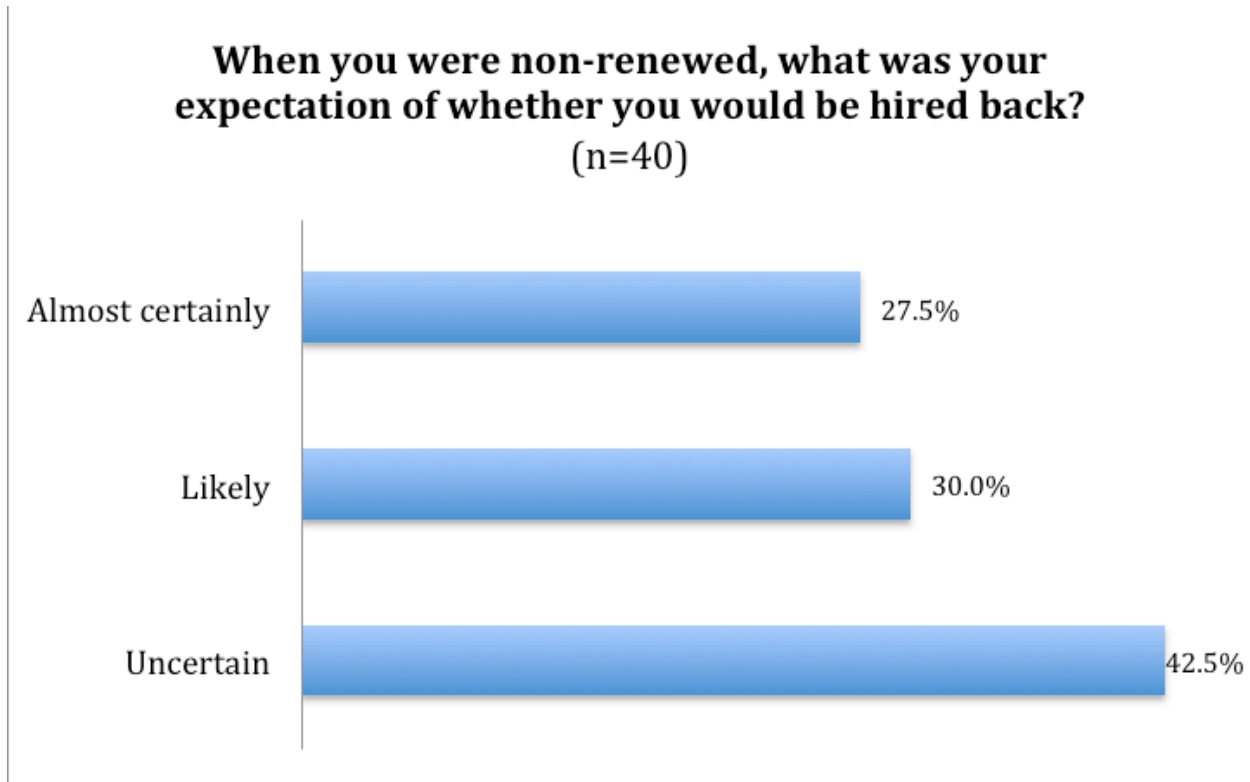


Figure 24: Expectation of Renewal

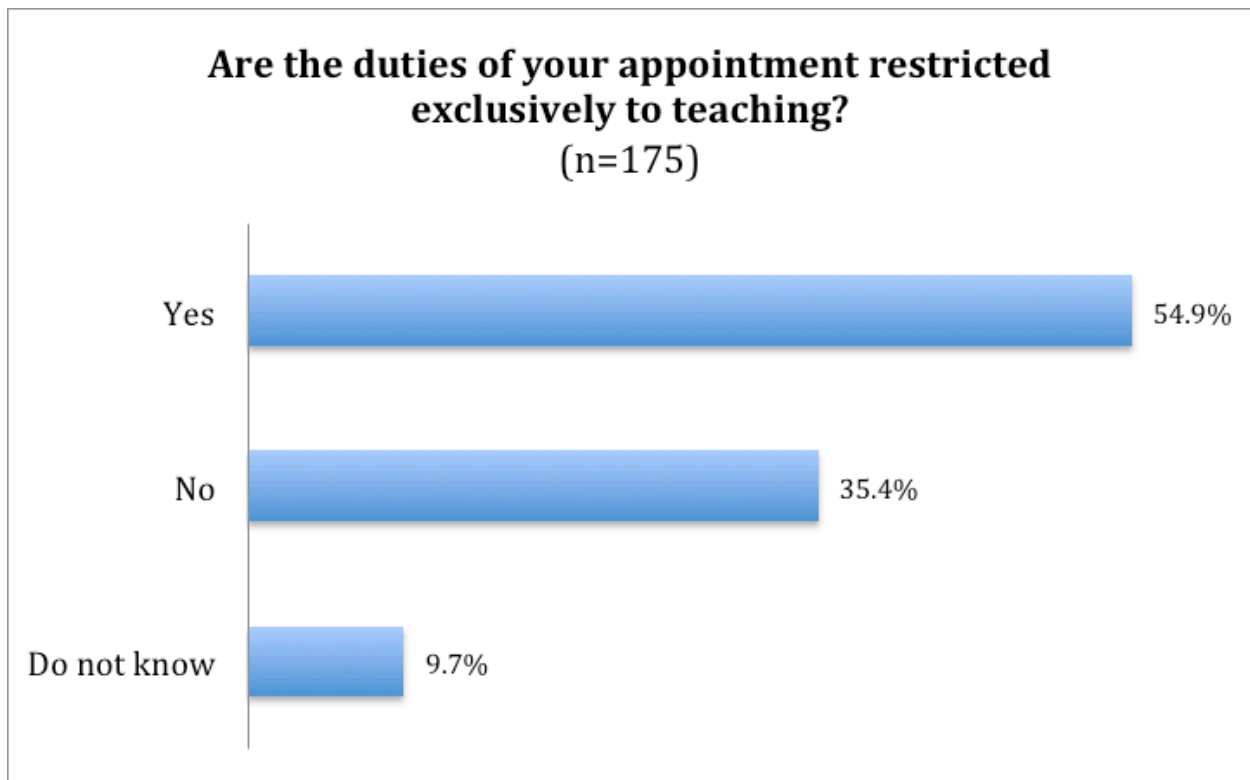


Figure 25: Duties Restricted to Teaching



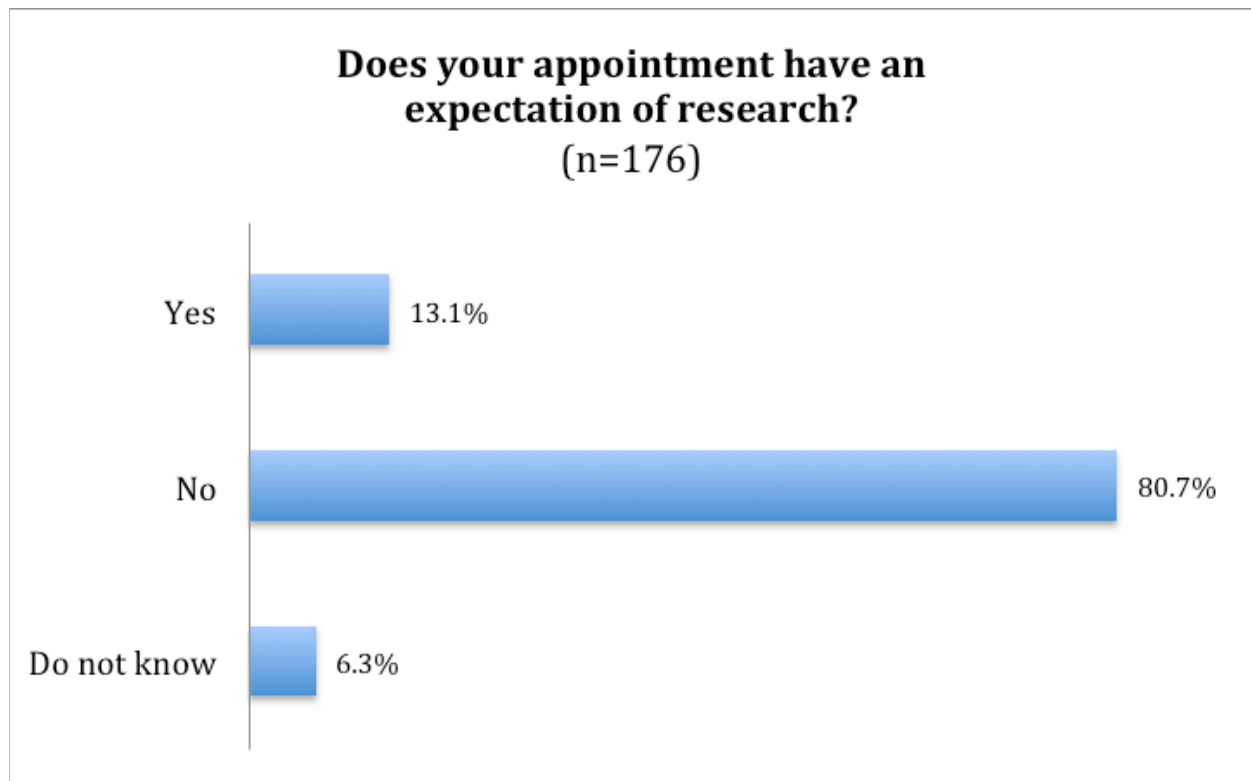


Figure 26: Expectation of Research

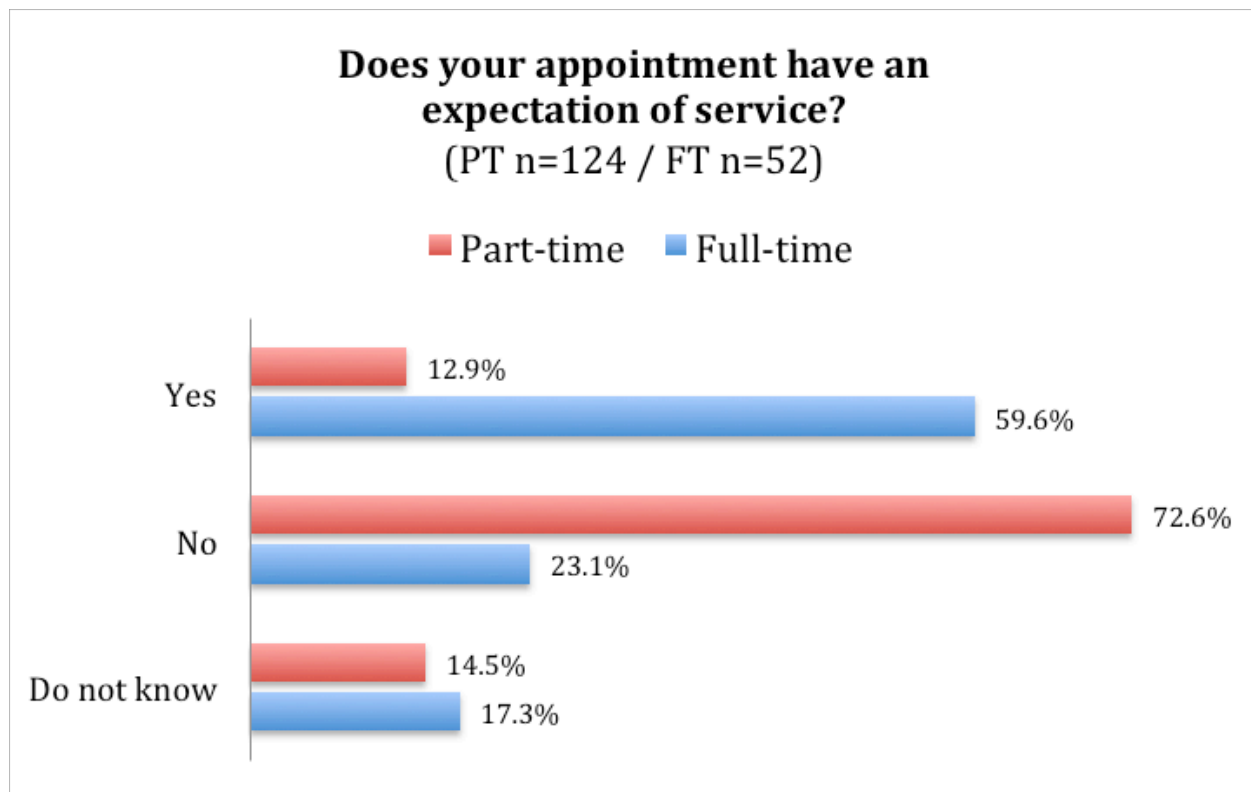


Figure 27: Expectation of Service

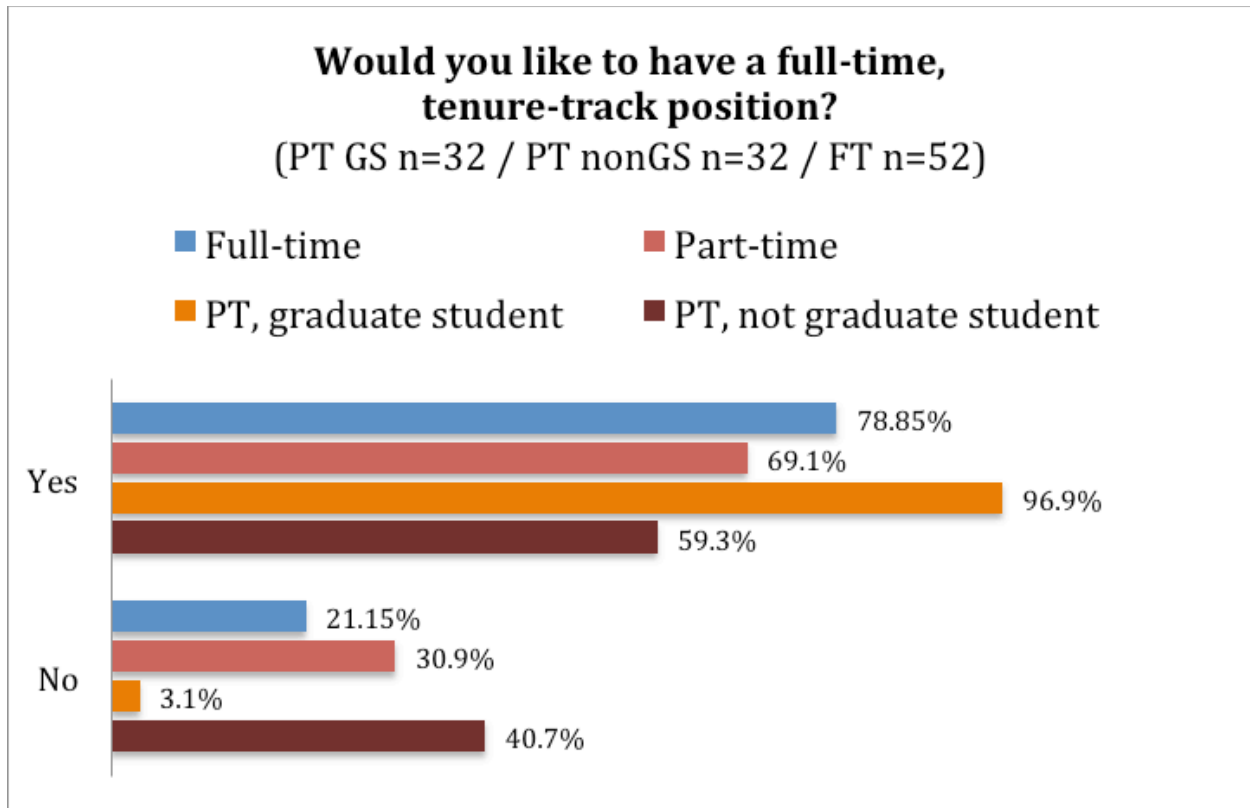


Figure 28: Preference for Tenure-Track

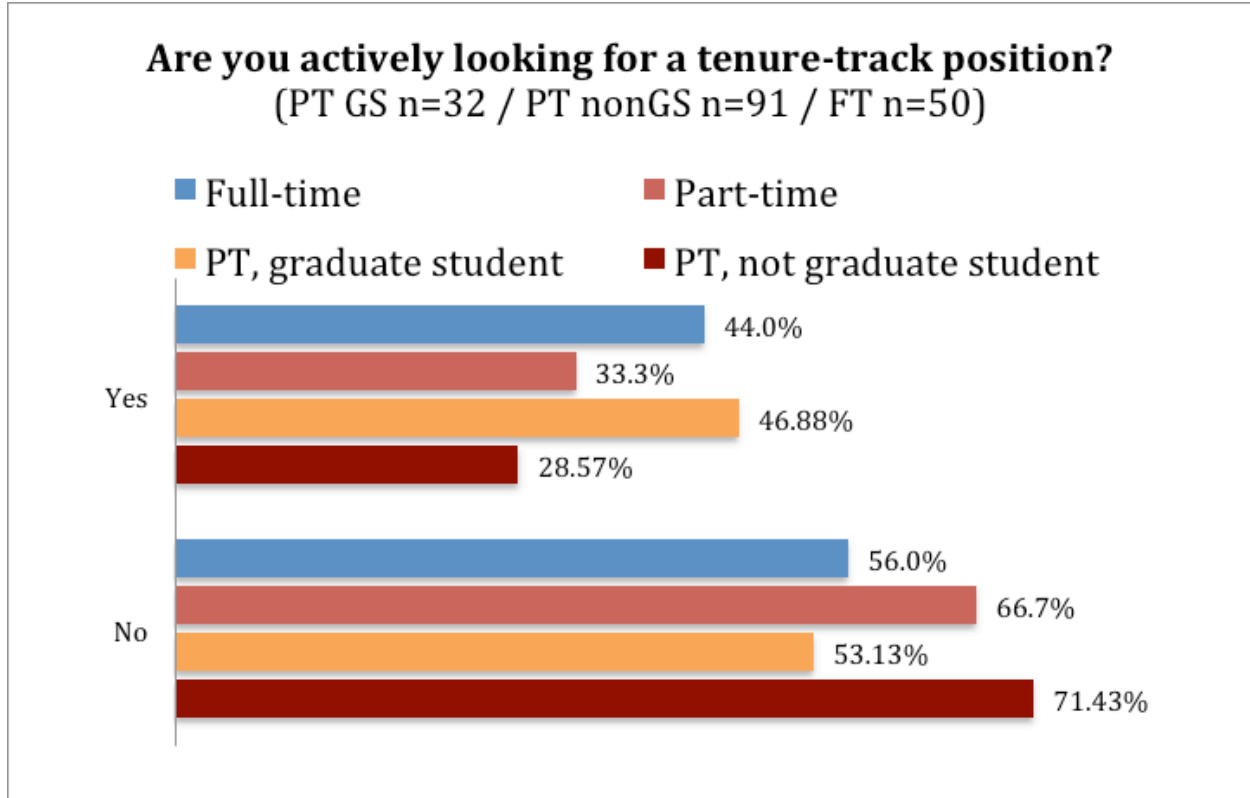


Figure 29: Looking for a Tenure-Track Position

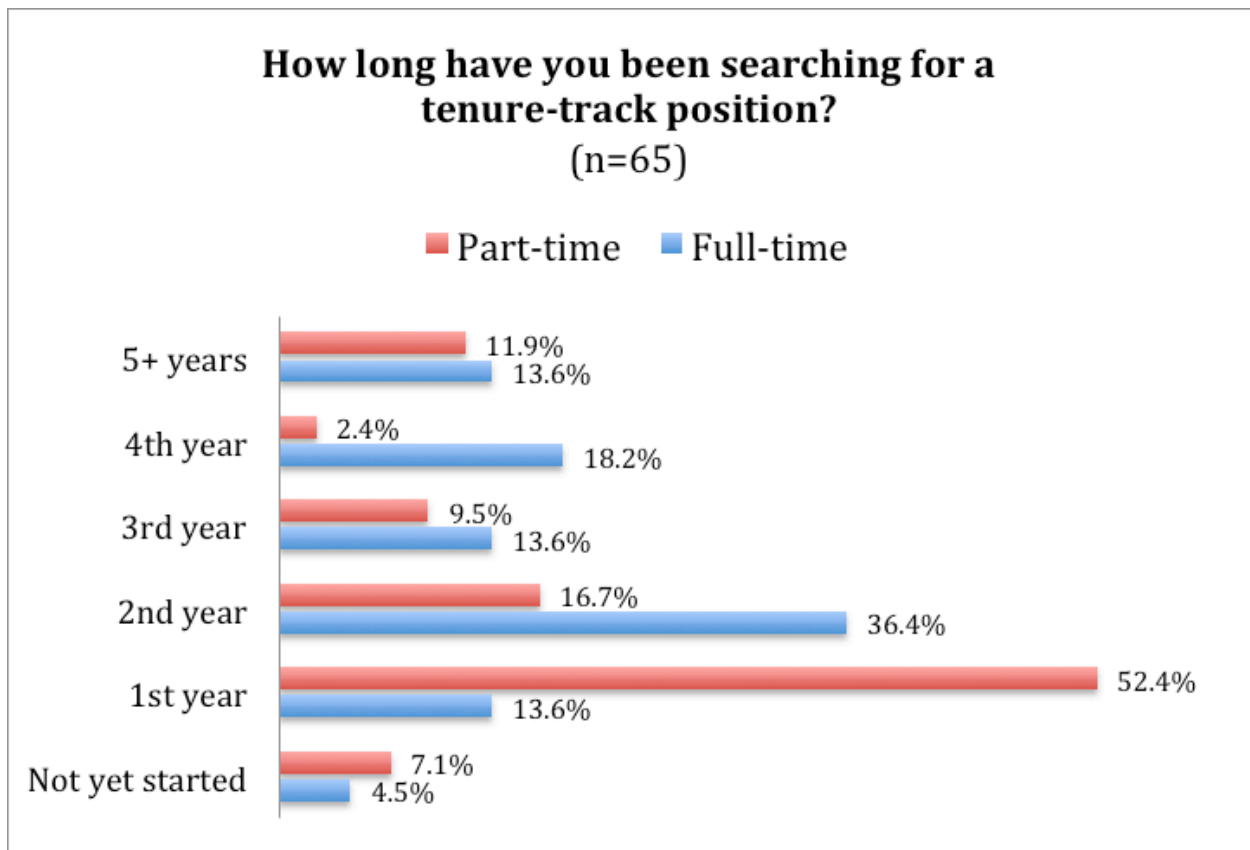


Figure 30: Duration of Job Search

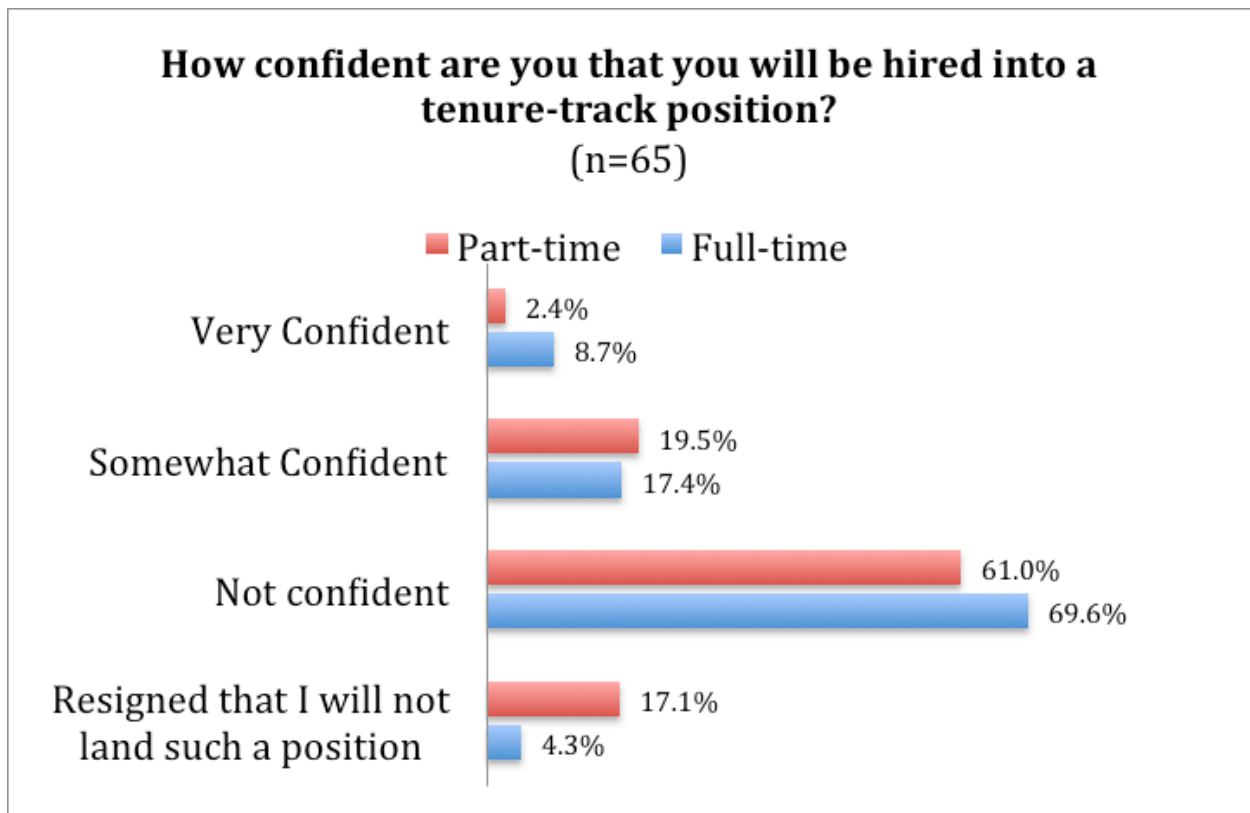


Figure 31: Confidence about Job Search

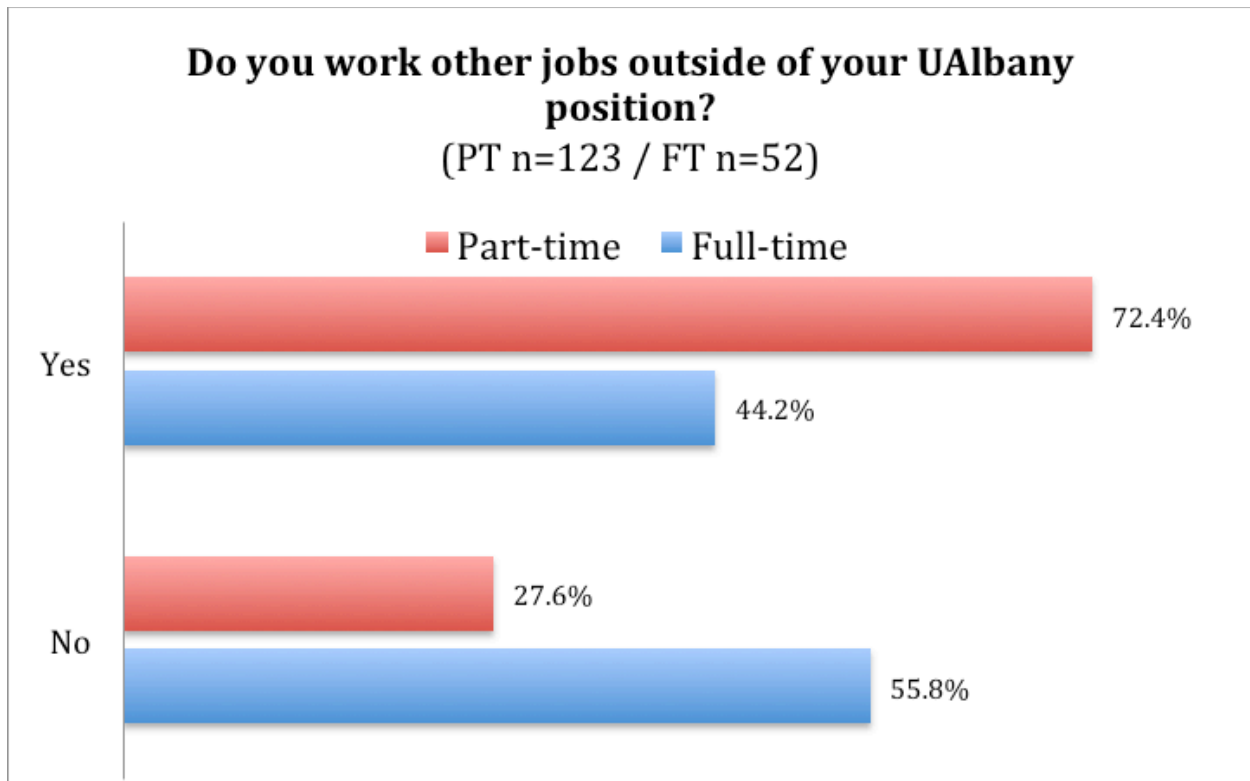


Figure 32: Outside Employment

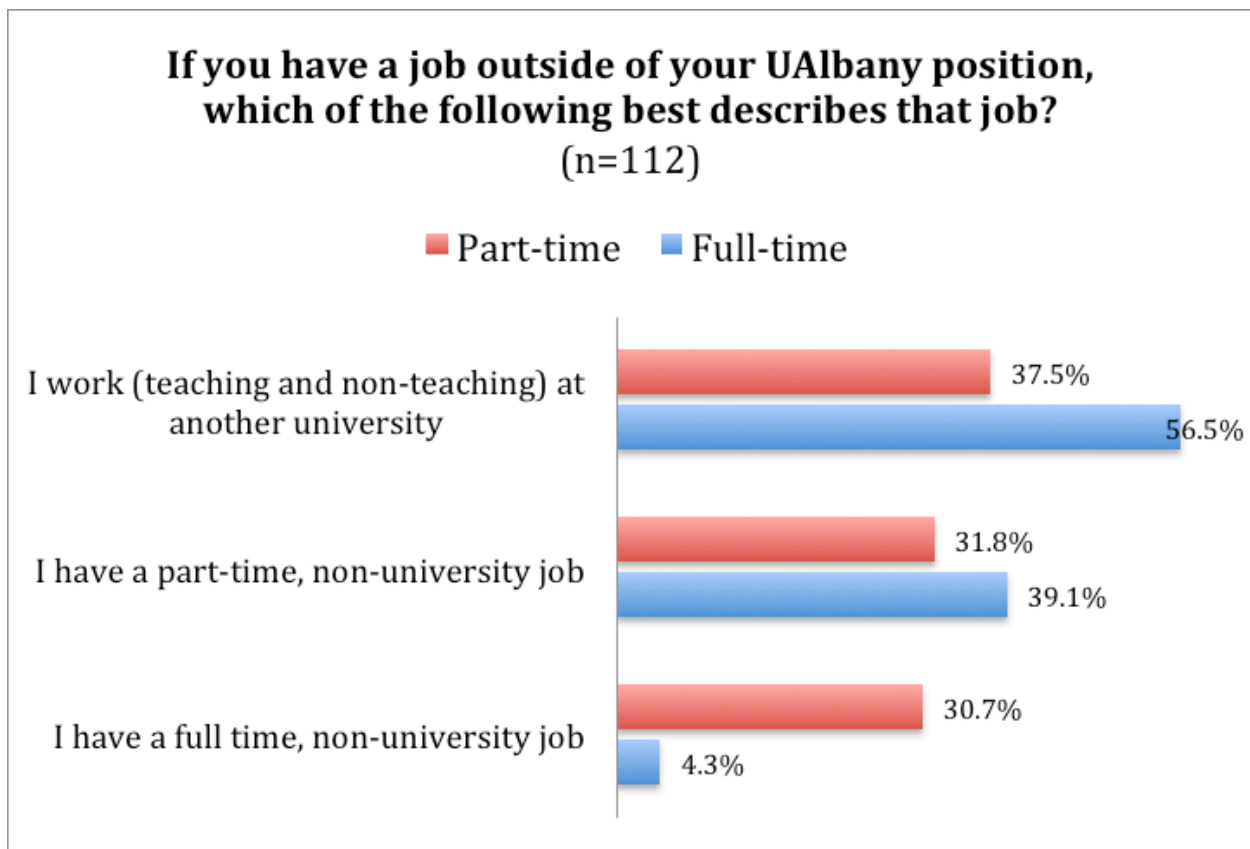


Figure 33: Type of Outside Employment

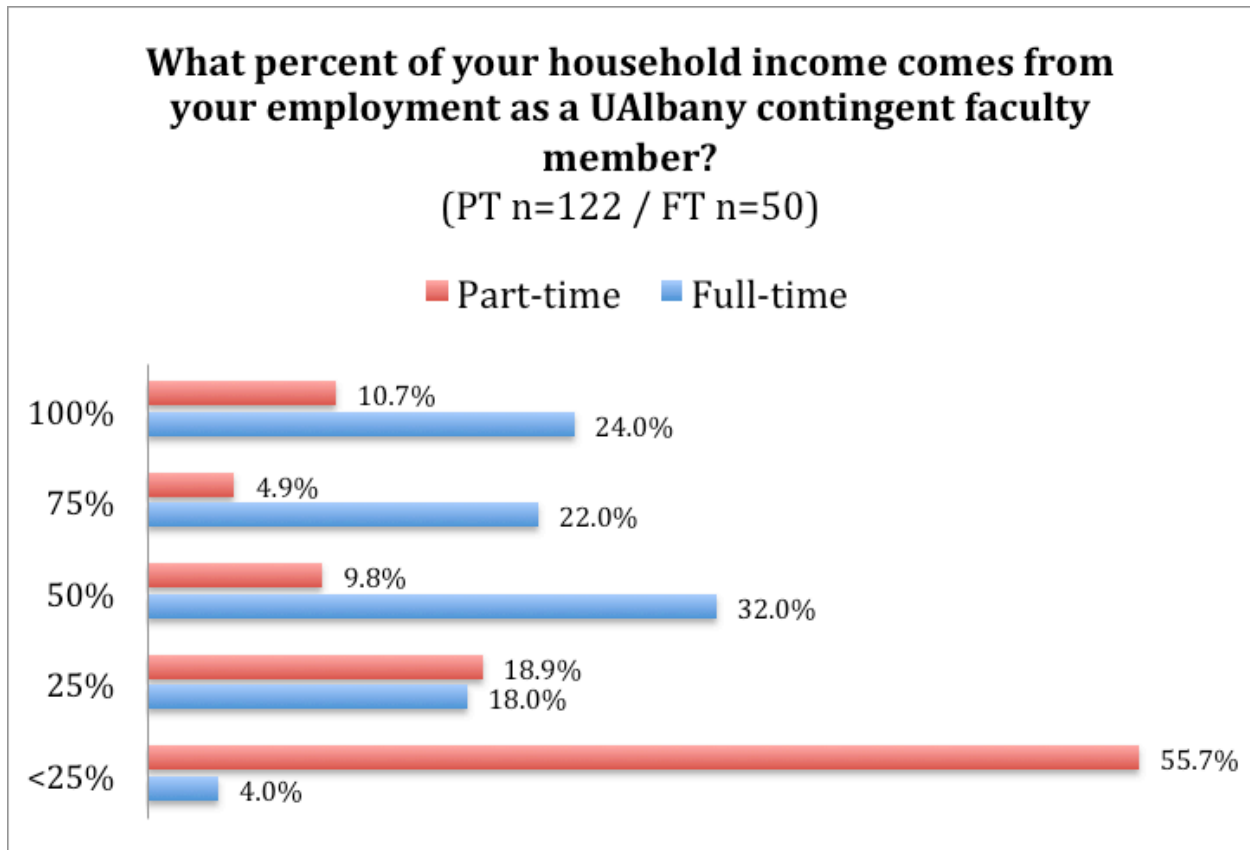


Figure 34: Percentage of Household Income

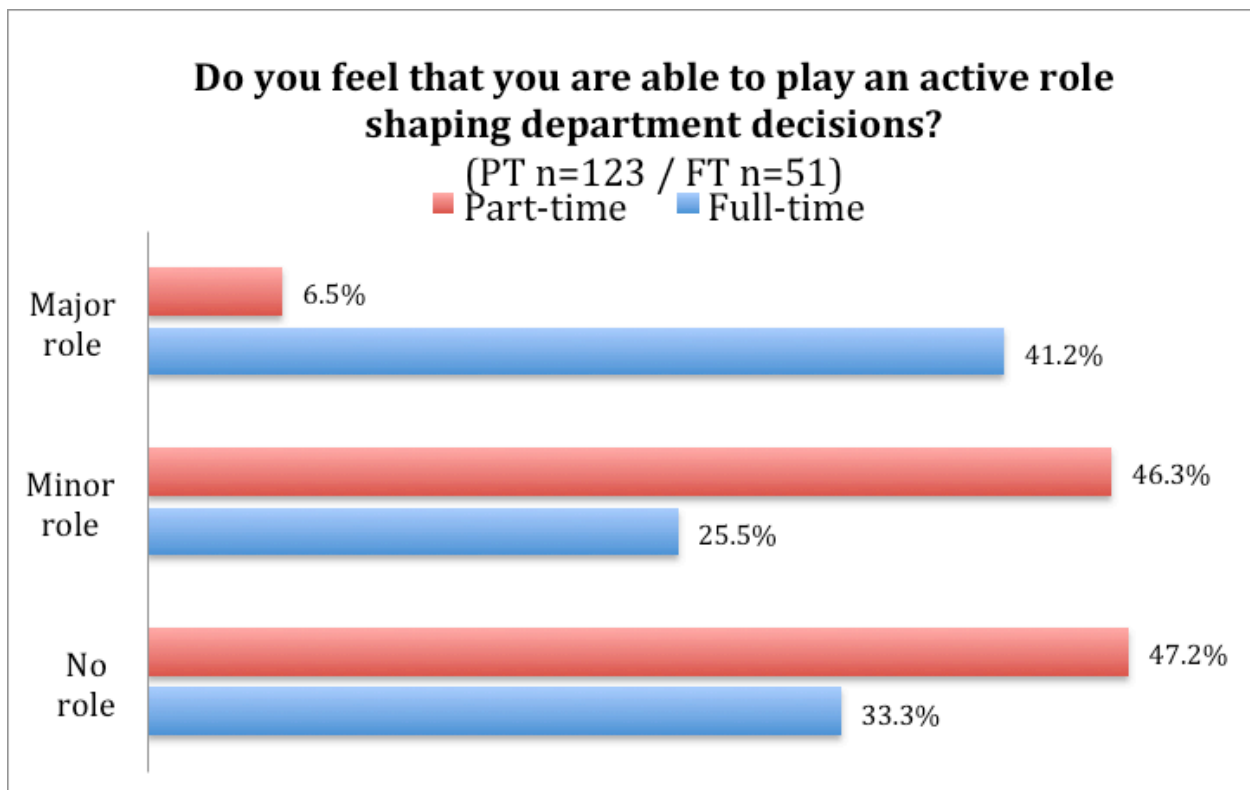


Figure 35 Active Role in Departmental Decisions

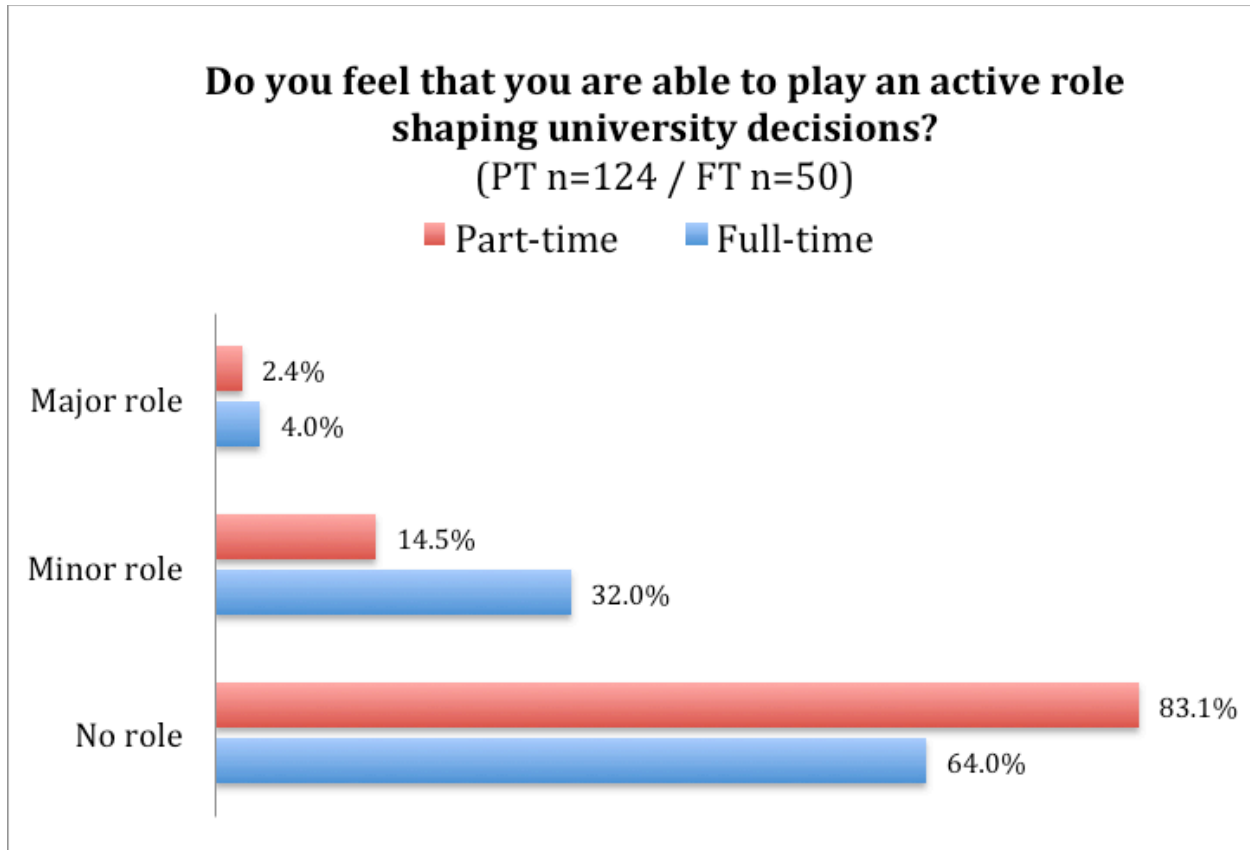


Figure 36: Active Role in University Decisions

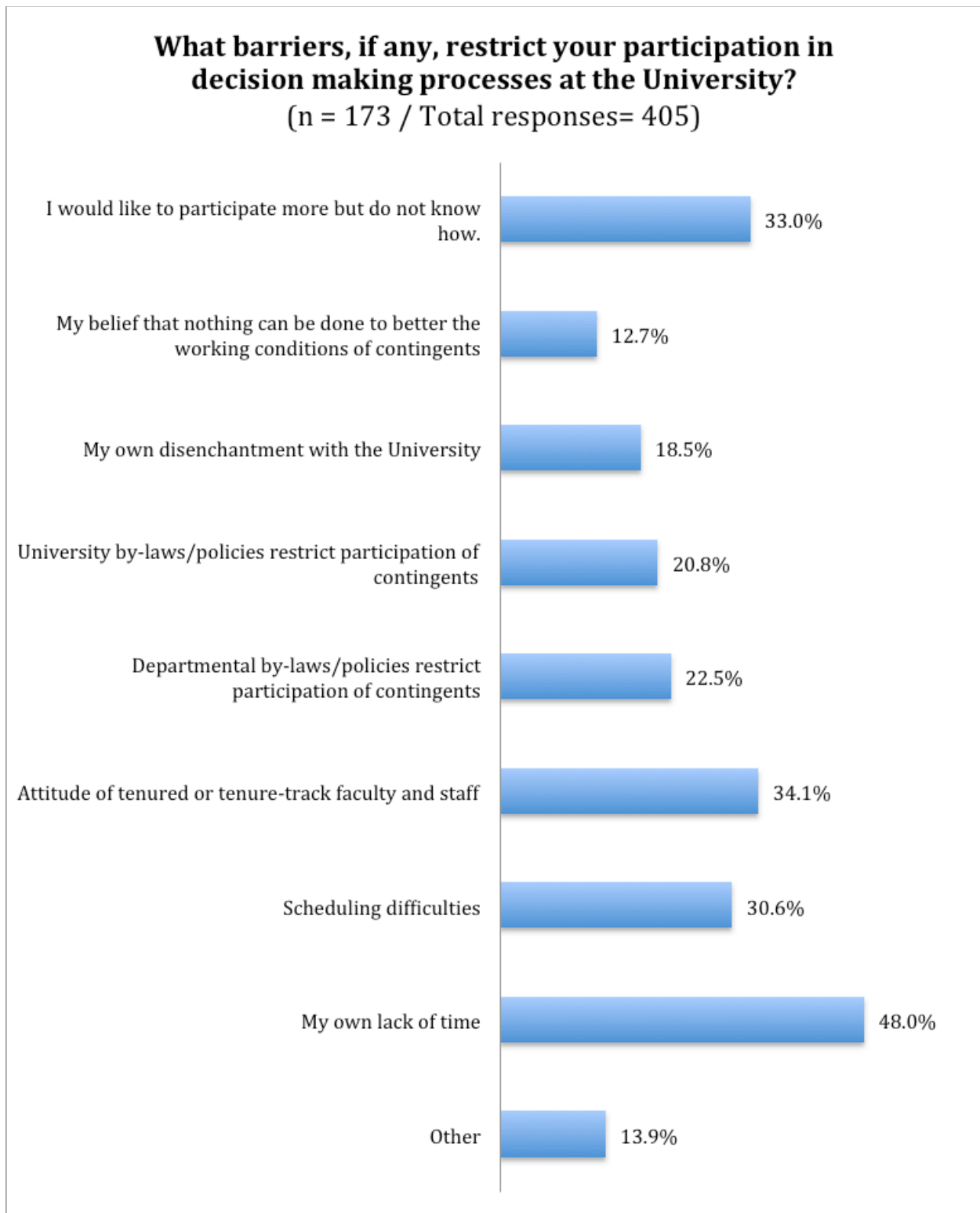


Figure 37: Barriers to Participation, Percentage of Respondents Listing Each Restriction

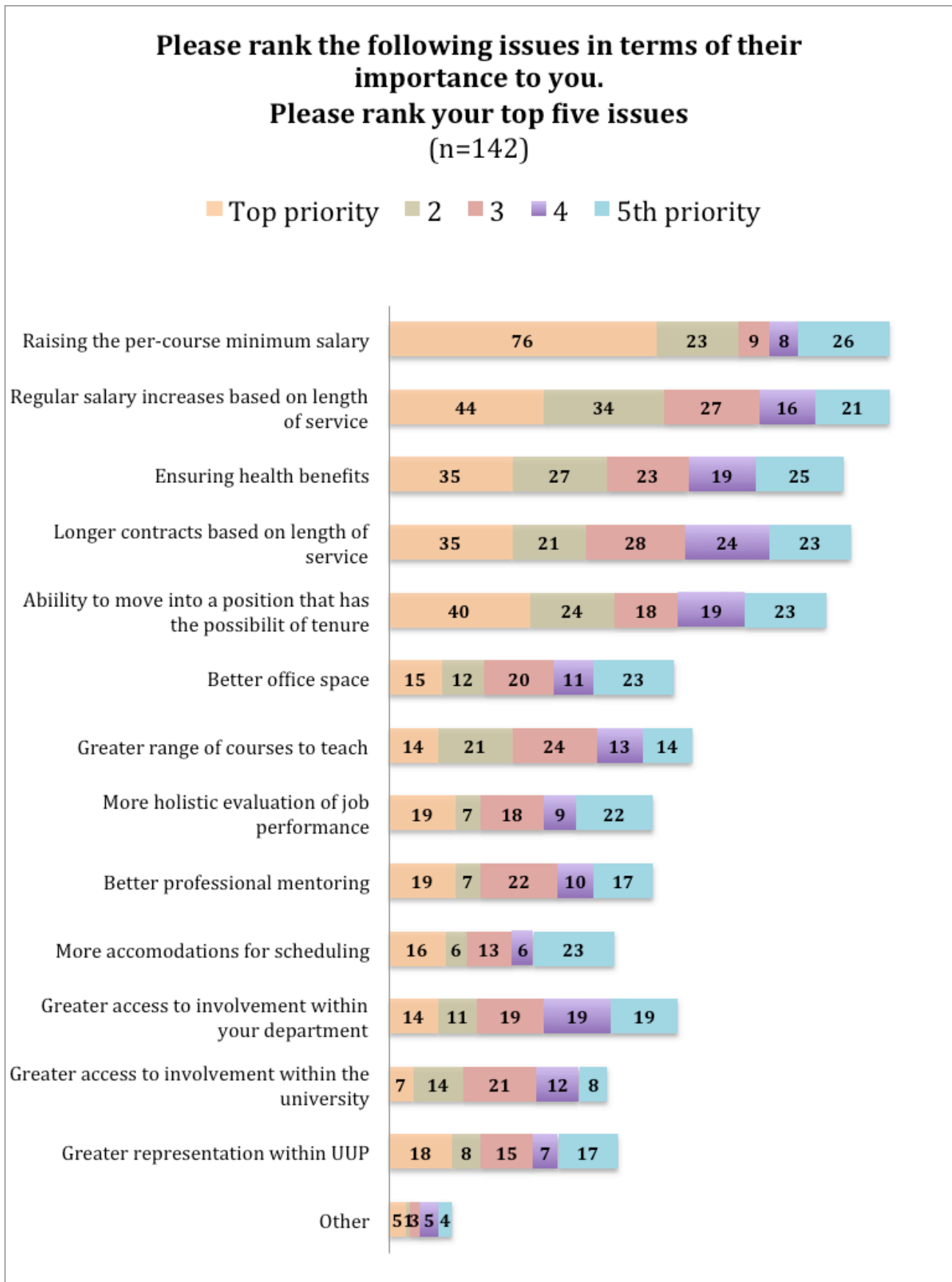


Figure 38: Top Priorities Ranked