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## **A Brief History of Campus Equity/Fair Employment Week**

*by Chris Storer, Central Coordinator, Campus Equity Week 2005*

The issues of contingent academic employment in higher education are, we believe, universal. They threaten the foundation of human intellectual development and socio-political progress worldwide.

CEW/FEW has its roots in a coalition established for a common week of action throughout California's 107 community college campuses (CCCs) in Spring 2000 (Called *Action 2000* or "A2K"). The motivation then was a common interest in specific state legislation and the California state budget. There developed active participation on 85 campuses which gained strong support in the legislature and from California's Governor. However, many long term benefits of the week of action were not really goals (though some of us hoped for and predicted these outcomes).

1st, we found that local campus groups used the week to focus on current local issues in addition to the state wide themes. As a result, they increased the involvement of contingent and tenured faculty in their local faculty organizations.

2ndly, we found that the core group of statewide faculty organizers was greatly expanded, and that new organizations on campuses that had no history of activism developed. Several moribund union locals were invigorated. Successful union organizing campaigns were initiated at other colleges. California community college faculty continues to make strong gains at both the state and local levels. Average salary gains statewide for contingent faculty were over 13% in the 2 years following the Action 2000 campaign. Contingent faculty also gained health benefits and some due-process rights at many colleges.

3rdly, the California campaign came to the attention of a nascent coalition of faculty on the East Coast of the US (the Conference on Contingent Academic Labor (COCAL - later becoming the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor), leading to the establishment of ties among several centers of faculty organizing that were confronting the increasing abuse of contingent assignments in higher education. Fueled by internet listservs and email communications, various faculty leaders throughout North America agreed that the A2K model of loosely coordinated but locally motivated and controlled action was worth attempting throughout US and Canadian higher education. At the COCAL IV Conference, Jan. 2001, San Jose, CA, a decision was taken to coordinate CEW 2001 across North America. CEW coordination was financed by support from 24 national, state and local faculty organizations (unions and professional associations). During the week of Oct. 28th to Nov. 3rd, actions took place at many of the original CCCs, as well as at colleges and Universities in 6 Canadian Provinces and over 30 of the 50 United States. Most of the faculty involved in local organizing of CEW activities were making their first contacts with the growing North American coalition, and about 10% were making their first forays into faculty activism on their campus.

4thly, since CEW 2001, Chicago-COCAL was formed as a strong regional coalition, COCAL V drew well over 200 participants to the Conference in Montreal, Canada, Oct. 4-6, 2002, and COCAL-California has been formed as a regional coalition among contingent academic labor throughout California's system of public higher education (The University of California, California State University, and California Community College systems). CEW/FEW was held Oct. 27-31, 2003 (and also in the Fall of 2002 and 2004 without central coordination).

The benefits of coordinated activity lie particularly in the increased visibility of local action through its connection to the greater whole. This has strong motivating force in drawing new faculty activists into the movement, helps provide training through information sharing and community building, increases press and public interest, teaches local administrators that their actions will no longer remain invisible but will become the object of public discussion throughout higher education, and strengthens our arguments through an extended common voice. We have been able to shift the focus from narrow labor issues to broader questions of institutional integrity and educational quality through the simple recognition that: 1. "Faculty Employment Conditions are Student Learning Conditions" and 2. "Equitable Educational Experiences for Students Require Equitable Institutional Support of All Faculty." Also, such broadly connected activities create a strong incentive for state and local politicians to become visibly involved with the issues.

CEW 2005 will continue these efforts. The threat to quality higher education and academic freedom created by the growth of for-profit colleges, the corporitization of private and public non-profit colleges and universities, and the corresponding increased use and abuse of contingent academic labor (now over 50% of faculty positions in the United States), continues to be a growing a world-wide problem. We strengthen each other by joining our voices. If you have questions, please visit <[www.CampusEquityWeek.org](http://www.CampusEquityWeek.org)> and/or contact: Chris Storer, CEW Central Coordinator.