

# Stories of Office Space from a Precarious Academic in Higher Education

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## Abstract

In the fall of 2021, faculty were preparing for a return to campus after the great COVID-19 pivot to online learning and teaching from home. In a post-pandemic world, as we get back to normal in society, many precarious faculty are wondering what “normal” they’re returning to. This reflective paper draws on the author’s personal experience with office space on campus as a precarious faculty member. First, this paper will review the literature on office space for precarious faculty, noting specifically the importance of office space for newcomers to the organization. Secondly, this paper will offer a series of personal reflections on being given office space as a precarious faculty member at four institutions between the years 2016 and 2018. Finally, this paper will compare the personal reflections with that of the literature and offer a discussion of the inconsistencies of resources that precarious faculty are allocated and the consequences that arise.

**Keywords** Contingent faculty, contract faculty, precarious faculty, office space

# Récits d'espaces de bureau d'un membre précaire du personnel enseignant du milieu de l'enseignement supérieur

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## Résumé

À l'automne 2021, le personnel enseignant se préparait à reprendre le chemin des campus après le grand virage COVID-19 vers l'apprentissage en ligne et l'enseignement à domicile. Dans un monde postpandémique, alors que la société revient à la normale, beaucoup d'enseignantes et d'enseignants en situation précaire se demandent à quoi ressemblera cette nouvelle normalité. Ce document de réflexion s'appuie sur le vécu de l'auteure relativement aux espaces de bureau consentis sur le campus aux membres du personnel enseignant en situation de précarité. Tout d'abord, cet article passe en revue la documentation sur les espaces de bureau attribués aux enseignants précaires, en soulignant en particulier l'importance des espaces de bureau pour les nouveaux arrivants dans l'organisation. Deuxièmement, il présentera une série de réflexions personnelles sur l'attribution d'un espace de bureau aux membres du personnel enseignant précaire de quatre établissements entre 2016 et 2018. Enfin, cet article comparera les réflexions personnelles avec celles de la documentation et discutera des incohérences sur le plan des ressources offertes aux enseignantes et aux enseignants précaires, et des conséquences qui en découlent.

**Mots-clés** personnel académique auxiliaire, personnel académique contractuel, personnel académique précaire, espace de bureau

In the summer of 2021, many faculty in the Canadian academic community were bracing themselves for the return to campus after 17 long months of working and teaching from home. We prepared our course syllabi while the COVID-19 Delta variant contributed to Canada's fourth wave of infections, and we anxiously waited as provincial ministries of education introduced vaccination disclosure policies for all publicly funded school employees. We braced ourselves as 95 per cent of Canadian universities were preparing to return to complete in-person course delivery in the fall of 2021—going “back to normal” (CAUT, 2021). This raised the question: what normal were we going back to? As a precarious academic, working contract-to-contract every term, “normal” doesn't exist. Post-pandemic, many academics prepared to return to their offices on campus. But, as many precarious academics know, not everyone has a space on campus to go back to. According to Pasma and Shaker (2018), contract faculty make up more than half of the faculty in post-secondary institutions in the provinces of British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador (as of 2018). As a significant category of employees in higher education institutions across Canada, precarious faculty, who have never quite fit within the existing post-secondary structures, are now asking themselves: *what normal are we going back to on campus?*

Physical space and resources are a reflection of any institution's organizational culture; it is a reflection of the organization's shared values, beliefs, goals and practices (Pinder et al., 2009). At all four post-secondary institutions in which I worked as a precarious faculty member before the pandemic (from 2016 to 2018), the resources that I was provided with varied significantly. At one institution, I wasn't given an email address and had to use my personal email address to communicate with my students, while at another institution I was required to pay \$28/day for parking. This paper explores my experience with office space as a precarious faculty member working at four different post-secondary institutions before the pandemic in the Vancouver<sup>1</sup> area in British Columbia, Canada. As a reflective scholarly paper, this paper will first provide a background, setting the stage and offer a review of the literature on office space in academia. Then, I will offer a collection of personal reflections on being allocated office space as a contract instructor at four institutions—the Teaching University, City College, the Private Online University, and the Institute<sup>2</sup>. Finally, this paper will conclude with a discussion on how my experience as a precarious academic aligns with the literature and existing research on being resourced and being given office space on

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<sup>1</sup> Vancouver, British Columbia is one of the most expensive cities to live in Canada.

<sup>2</sup> To protect the anonymity of the institutions, I have given them pseudonyms.

campus. Additionally, the discussion will offer questions for consideration as we move forward in a post-pandemic world.

## **Background: Office Space for Precarious Faculty**

Bauder (2005) explains that increasingly, higher education in North America is seeing an increase in the casualization of academic labour. Due to reductions in operating budgets, a quest for efficiency, and the increasing corporatization of academic institutions, there has emerged a strong need for 'flexible' and diverse labour practices. Contingent or precarious faculty positions are appealing to university departments because they "represent a cheaper and more flexible labour pool when universities are straining to adapt to changing needs under tight budgets" (MacDonald, 2013).

Kezar and Sam (2013) found that the organizational culture in most higher education institutions has not been very supportive of contingent faculty. In their research, they argue that there is a definitive hierarchy of faculty (tenured/tenure-track/contingent) on many campuses—and that evidence of these delineations can be both overt and subtle. Significantly, many precarious faculty members are socialized to accept the status quo of an organizational culture that does not support their work (Cross & Goldenberg, 2003; Kezar & Sam, 2013). Kezar and Sam (2013) argue that there is a desperate need to examine the institutional processes that enforce and reinforce the unsupportive organizational culture as normative for academia. Because of the very nature of the sessional faculty contract, precarious faculty are usually paid only to teach the courses they are assigned to—there is rarely any expectation around service (and research) involved in the appointment. This, in turn, creates a culture where precarious faculty simply come to campus to teach their respective courses and then return home. As most precarious faculty are not paid to attend departmental meetings or sit on committees, it's difficult for these faculty to engage with the wider department (Kezar, DePaola & Scott, 2019).

Socializing faculty in the department is critical to the faculty's success both as a colleague and as a teacher in higher education. Therefore, the physical space that faculty are allocated is important for their socialization in an institution and department. Webber (2008) discusses how physical space has impacted contingent faculty and their engagement within their department. In their study, Webber (2008) notes that precarious faculty are "frequently spatially separated from the program or department in which they are hired. They are often given office space/desk space outside of the department" (p. 44). In Webber's findings, these precarious faculty—separated spatially from their departments—claimed that they

felt the disconnection in their more limited ability to engage with the rest of the faculty, and with the department as a whole. While Webber (2008) analyzes this primarily from the perspective of the department, and the loss of connectivity that the department suffers from this kind of contingent faculty disengagement, there is a considerable impact on the individual precarious faculty here as well. Fleming, Goldman, Correll and Taylor (2016) explain that the physical office location matters, based on the results of their study: "Faculty whose offices were near other faculty in their department had a much easier time getting help from and interacting regularly with colleagues than those who were more physically isolated" (p. 567).

One's physical workspace can reinforce departmental cultures by physically putting employees in certain places. In some institutions, tenure and tenure-track faculty will sometimes occupy completely different buildings from their precarious colleagues in the same department. Webber (2008) notes that the disconnection from the larger department impacts how the precarious faculty members approach their teaching assignments—it affects their behaviour as faculty. Similar suggestions were made by Tucker (cited by MacDonald), who in 2013, offered to create office space in an area close to regular faculty as a solution to improving morale and collegiality amongst precarious faculty (MacDonald, 2013). Physical proximity to the department and all the faculty that compose that department is key to any new hire's success—especially when it comes to teaching and working with students. Kronberg (2004) confirms this:

If part-time instructors have no private meeting place, students will not drop by for mentoring, career advice, or sharing extracurricular interests. Likewise, the faculty member will not know the students as well and will show less interest in student activities outside of class.  
(p. 94)

So, not only is it in the department's best interest to keep all faculty close together and provide them with physical space to work (and meet with students) for the sake of the faculty member's success, but it matters for student success, as well. Students need to be able to meet with their instructors in suitable spaces.

Ultimately, the literature explored in this background section supports the notion that all faculty within a department, regardless of the classification of their appointment, should work in proximity to one another. And, for precarious faculty who are new to an institution, providing them with office space that's near the rest of the faculty in the department sets the precarious faculty member up for success in their career at the institution.

The following section will offer my personal reflections on my own experience as a precarious faculty member, detailing how I was supported and given resources while working precariously across four higher education institutions in the Vancouver area.

## **Being Given Resources: Stories from a Precariat in Higher Education**

None of the institutions that I worked at as a precarious faculty member between 2016 and 2018—the Private Online University, the Teaching University, City College, or the Institute—were consistent with the others. At every institution, I had to learn what I was entitled to and the norms around resources for a precarious faculty member, like me. Additionally, as a precarious faculty member, there is no standard when it comes to office space. At every institution in which I worked, my physical imprint on the campus looked different.

### **The Teaching University**

As a self-proclaimed “commuter instructor” at the Teaching University, I wasn’t offered much in the way of resources. In fact, I found that driving to campus at night or on the weekends, my car quickly became my office. I ate dinner in my car, stored my files in my car, and even had a basket of stationery in a bin in the trunk. The following sections detail the resources and office space that I was provided with at the Teaching University.

Physical resources at the Teaching University were slim-to-none. There were faculty and staff parking lots, but when I asked about getting access to them, I was told that those parking lots were only for regular staff and permanent faculty—not sessionals. I was required to use the student parking lots and pay the \$1 for 2 hours rate<sup>3</sup>. The cost of the parking wasn’t an issue (and was, in fact, quite cheap as university parking lots go in the Vancouver area). The issue was finding a parking space. The parking lots were quite small at the Teaching University and finding a spot was sometimes impossible. This meant that I often had to arrive hours before my classes were scheduled to begin in order to find a parking space.

I was given access to the departmental resource room for my office space. Shared with four other sessional instructors, the departmental resource room seemed to function as a meeting space and other flex space for faculty. Figure 1 below pictures the departmental resource room at the Teaching University:

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the Teaching University was not accessible by public transit from my home. Even if I wanted to take transit to campus to avoid the parking situation, I didn’t have the option of doing so.



**Figure 1: Office space at the Teaching University**

As Figure 1 illustrates above, the office space that I was provided with at the Teaching University was a multi-functional, shared space. During the summer of 2018, in particular, the space functioned as a storage space for permanent faculty who were changing offices. During that summer, there were moving boxes piled and toppling over against every wall in this cramped little room. It was particularly embarrassing when students would come and visit me during office hours because it looked like I worked out of a storage unit.

### **The Private Online University**

The Private Online University gave me a private office space at their campus in downtown Vancouver. Figure 2 below pictures my office at the Private Online University.



**Figure 2: Office space at the Private Online University**

As Figure 2 illustrates, I had floor-to-ceiling windows in my private office, a spacious desk (with a desktop and laptop computer provided by the Private Online University), and an incredible view of downtown Vancouver. Of all the office space that I was given (or not given) as a contract faculty member, this office at the Private Online University was the nicest. Having these resources made me feel like I was important to the institution; it made me feel like I was valued. In my mind, I was important enough to have been given a private and professional space in which to work.

That said, *getting* to the downtown campus was another story. The downtown campus was accessible by transit, which is how I commuted to the campus most of the time. But there were times when I taught until 9:30 at night. On these days, I preferred to drive because I felt safer getting home and it was also faster to drive later at night. Unfortunately, the cheapest parking I could find near the downtown campus (since there was no faculty, staff or student parking) was \$25/day.

Therefore, even though I had a beautiful office at the Private Online University, getting to and from the campus was incredibly expensive.

## City College

As an “emergency hire” at City College, one can already guess the kinds of resources I was provided with at the institution based on my title alone.

When I met with the Chair of the department for my “orientation” at City College, she looked at me and asked me, “Do you need an office?” Trying to be low maintenance and make a good first impression, I told her that I was OK to not have an office. As soon as I said that, the Chair breathed a sigh of relief and said, “That’s good because we’re really short on office space here.”

Based on the size of her office, and the awkward hallway that her office was in, I believed her. So, I wasn’t given any physical footprint on campus. In contrast with the Private Online University, faculty and staff parking was available. However, since everyone seemed to take transit to the campus, no one I asked knew how much parking cost. This turned out not to matter anyway; with an online class and no office space on campus, I didn’t set foot on campus after my orientation with the Chair of the department on the last day of August 2017.

I took up hardly any space in the department at City College. Perhaps this is why I wasn’t rehired the following term. No one knew who I was. I was only a name on the email list at City College.

## The Institute

Joining the Institute in the summer of 2017 felt the most like I was joining a *workplace*. Unlike the other institutions at which I was working, the culture at the Institute felt the most “9 to 5ish”—it felt like a workplace that I recognized.

For the first time, I was given access to a series of office supplies: pens, whiteboard markers, paper clips, etc. This was the first institution that gave me access to a cupboard full of all the stationery that I needed to do my job as an instructor. I even had access to coloured paper.

I was also given a desk in a modest office. Because I was hired at 0.6 FTE (not full-time), I was required to share an office space with two other instructors. This was outside the norm since most full-time instructors in the department shared an office space with only one other instructor. Additionally, as illustrated in Figure 3, my desk, in comparison to other instructors’ desks, was comically small.



**Figure 3: Original office space at the Institute**

As Figure 3 illustrates above, my desk (on the left-hand side of the photo in the corner of the room), was about 1/3 the size of everyone else's desks. This made it awkward when students would come to visit me during office hours. On more than one occasion a student asked me why my desk was so small. I would jokingly answer that if they gave me a bigger desk, then they would expect me to do more work.

After working at the Institute for a full year, I was hired on as a full-time Instructor (1.0 FTE) the following year in 2018. At this point, I was given a new office space complete with a full-sized desk in an office with one other full-time Instructor. Figure 4 below illustrates the office I was upgraded to after working at the Institute for a year.



**Figure 4: Office space at the Institute after my first year**

As Figure 4 illustrates above, not only was I given a new office space to work out of in my second year at the Institute, but I was also given a full-sized desk right next to the window in the shared office space (with just one colleague). Granted, the view out the window was of a rooftop and the windows on the other side of the building, but at least I was taking up space in a regular way, for the first time. This office, like the office I had been given at the Online Private University, was a reflection of my space at the institution. I may not have been a full-time *regular* employee yet, but they sure were making me feel like one by giving me all the resources that “regular” employees at the Institute received.

Even though I was given appropriate office space, one issue that came up was that everyone that came into my office made comments about how little “personal stuff” I had in my office. Everyone else’s offices were appropriately decorated—with photos of their children on their desks, pictures of their favourite artists on the walls, accolades from awards received, etc. To me, all these things were a representation of being secure in your job. Of course, you would put pieces of your favourite things in your life in your office and surround yourself with them—if you know you’re not going anywhere. This wasn’t the case for me. Heading into my second year at the Institute, I was given a contract for nine months (September

2018 to May 2019). According to my contract/appointment letter, the Institute only employed me until the end of the winter term. How could I bring in my favourite things? How could I litter my office with personal items when I knew that there was a chance I wouldn't be returning after the academic year? So, it was always awkward when people would look around my bare office and make comments like, "You need to get some stuff on the walls" or, "You need to get some stuff in here." Eventually, as students and colleagues would give me "thank you" cards after the term was over, I started tacking them onto the bulletin board on the wall. This seemed to keep the constant comments of filling my office up with personal stuff at bay.

Finally, one of the best physical resources I was given at the Institute was access to faculty and staff parking. My jaw hit the floor when I was told that, not only did I have access to the faculty and staff parking lot even as a temporary employee, but also that parking was only \$2/month! This was the cheapest parking that I had ever encountered; all faculty and staff at the Institute only paid \$2/month to park their cars (with no limits) in the faculty and staff parking lots. Additionally, the faculty and staff parking lot is next to the building in which my office was located. And, as if that wasn't enough, if I wanted, I could also park my car in any student parking lot for free with my faculty and staff parking pass. So, on days when I had an afternoon class and had to come into campus later when the faculty and staff parking lot was full, I was able to park my car in any student parking lot. This was also helpful when I had classes in a building across campus; I could jump in my car and drive across campus to the building.

Later, after I had worked as a precarious faculty member for a few more years and was presented with a few more regular and permanent positions from multiple institutions, the faculty and staff parking perk at the Institute was one of the biggest "pros" that I had while weighing options.

## **Aligning the Literature with Experience**

The literature on the office space that precarious faculty need to be successfully onboarded into the department when they start at a new institution is clear: give them an office space within the department, or at least close to the department. Having been a manager of administration at a large research university in my previous career, I know that space is tight these days in higher education. The problem is that departments were given floors of buildings, or even full buildings to house their faculty and staff, but many departments have outgrown their original space footprint on campus. I know, firsthand, that it's next to impossible to negotiate for more space for a growing department. Additionally, many faculty

associations have bargained office space into their respective collective agreements; post-secondary institutions must follow the collective agreement and allocate office space to tenured employees accordingly. So, it's no mystery why faculty office space is a challenge for university departments. Most of the time, administrators are working with what they have. And naturally, it makes sense that those faculty who are with the institution "for life"—with tenure—should have an office space within the department. But that's not a good enough excuse to put all your precarious faculty into portables, or across the campus, or pile them all into one old classroom or resource room. Physical office space and access to resources, as the research and my reflections illustrate, is one way that the institution tells its employees that they are valued members of the university community—valued members of the organization. Perhaps what's most surprising is that the research on this is clear, and my reflections verify the literature: precarious faculty need to be housed centrally within the department; they need to be part of the physical department on campus. We know this is critical to successfully onboarding and socializing new precarious faculty. Yet, it's rarely done. There's a lack of effort to ensure that all faculty—part-time and full-time—are housed in the same place on campus.

The major theme that emerged through reviewing the literature—and my experiences reflect it—is that, whether the department intends to do it or not, giving precarious faculty office space and access to resources in the department is an expression of power. Taylor and Spicer (2007) draw on the work of Foucault (1991) when they conclude that spatial arrangements in organizations that may appear innocuous are "a materialization of deeper structures of power and domination, with a 'hidden logic of control' which underlies it" (p. 9). The personal reflections that I have presented in this paper all illustrate this in different ways. Additionally, "power" as I am referring to it here, is deeply connected to an employee's inclusion and belonging.

Firstly, at the Teaching University, space as power was obvious right from my first day on campus. As a faculty "member" at the institution, I wasn't given access to the faculty and staff parking lot. As my reflection about physical resources at the Teaching University earlier in this paper states: "There were faculty and staff parking lots, but when I asked about getting access to them, I was told that those parking lots were only for regular staff and permanent faculty—not sessionals." The parking situation meant that I wasn't categorized as "faculty." According to their categorization, a sessional does not fall within the "faculty and staff" category. So, by campus parking lot standards, I wasn't "faculty" as a sessional faculty member of the community. As my reflection indicates, this was the first instance where, not

only did I feel like an “other” at the institution, but I felt like I was “less than” faculty and staff. I couldn’t even park in the faculty and staff parking lot on campus.

Secondly, at the Teaching University, I was given the departmental “resource room” as my office in which to meet with students on campus and hold “office hours.” First of all, it should be mentioned that I didn’t even know where everyone else who worked in the department was physically located on campus. The resource room wasn’t across the hall from all the faculty and staff offices—the departmental resource room, otherwise known as my office, was located in a different building from where all of the permanent faculty and staff had offices on campus. My “office” was located off a major hallway where most of the computer labs on campus were located. There was no physical connection to any permanent members of the department. In fact, throughout my two years of working at the Teaching University, aside from working with the head of the department, I didn’t know any permanent faculty within the department where I worked. Imagine working at an organization and never meeting most of your colleagues. However, while I didn’t know any of the permanent faculty, working out of the departmental resource room with all the other sessionals, I was able to form relationships with many of my sessional faculty colleagues at the Teaching University. This was fruitful because connecting with other sessionals in the department allowed us to compare notes and best practices particularly as it relates to being a sessional at the Teaching University. One term in particular, I showed up to my first scheduled office hours only to meet one of my sessional colleagues (for the first time). We started talking every week since we both had scheduled office hours at the same time. I came to learn many strategic sessional practices from talking with my colleagues at the Teaching University.

Finally, at the Teaching University, the resource room that I was given to hold my office hours turned into a storage room one summer when I was teaching. Boxes were piled all along the sides of the room; it was embarrassing to work out of what was essentially a storage room on campus. This elicits strong images of power at work. What do people put in storage? People put stuff in storage that they don’t want to see anymore—they put stuff in storage that doesn’t fit within their home. That’s exactly how I felt all summer working out of that storage space. I felt like the department didn’t want to see me; the department didn’t see me as fitting in with the larger department. It felt as though I was never part of the departmental culture at the Teaching University.

Whether intentional or not, the power embedded within the way that the Teaching University assigned space to their precarious faculty had a strong impact

on the way that I was socialized into the department. As I mentioned, right from the beginning, I wasn't given access to the "faculty and staff" parking lot, then I was given access to the departmental resource room (which also functioned as a storage space) to do the work required as an Instructor at the Teaching University. Tierney (1997) explains that it is these ordinary occurrences at work (being given a space to work and access to a parking lot) that help us become socialized in our new workplace. Not only did I not *feel* like a faculty member at the institution, but I was also disconnected from the larger department. I was not socialized into the department, nor was I set up to be successful in my job as an instructor.

At the Institute, I had similar challenges, at first, with office space. The office desk I was given was laughably small—and students who came to see me during office hours did laugh at my small desk (in comparison to the other two desks that were in that office). However, at least I was given a desk within the department! Having an office space within the larger department close to all my colleagues (both permanent and non-permanent) meant that I was able to form relationships with my colleagues. I was able to ask them about different strategies that they used in their teaching and run different teaching ideas by them. I *felt* included in the department. Being in the centre of the department and constantly being surrounded by colleagues meant that I was socialized fully into the department. Colleagues would swing by my office and ask me if I wanted to go for coffee or eat lunch together. Over coffee or lunch, we would talk and I would learn more about them and the department. I quickly came to have mentors in the department by simply having coffee and lunches with my colleagues. Being physically located within the larger department allowed me to organically find mentors within the department. As Filstad (2004) explains, the key to socializing any new faculty member into a department is to connect them with mentors. By building relationships with existing faculty members in the department, I was able to be successfully socialized into the department myself.

Additionally, when my contract at the Institute was renewed, I was given a new office space, still in the heart of the department, but with a regular-sized desk<sup>4</sup>. As my reflection explains, when I moved to this new office space, "at least I was taking up space in a regular way." Even though I was still a "temporary" employee, I still felt like a faculty member (unlike how I felt at the Teaching University). What's more, I felt like I belonged to the department—like I was part of the community. In other words, I was a regular faculty member in all but name. I was part of the departmental culture at the Institute.

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<sup>4</sup> By "regular" here, I mean the same sized desk as everyone else in the department.

At City College, I would argue that I was never socialized into the department. Since I only taught one course online with City College, I never stepped foot on campus after the one day I went in for my orientation with the Department Chair. The Department Chair was the only person that I ever met at City College. Aside from reading the names on some emails that came to my personal email address, I had no idea who any of my colleagues in the department were. I met no one. As the literature suggests, the socialization of new department faculty members depends on them being housed within the department. Information, another pillar of Tierney's (1988) framework for organizational culture, is illuminated here. Tierney describes information as written or oral and notes that both formal and informal channels have an impact on organizational culture. Not having an office space on campus or access to any resources meant that I never came to campus. This, in turn, meant that I was never socialized into the department.

Finally, at the Private Online University, I was given the most impressive office space that I've ever had (in my life). As I mentioned in my reflection, the office space I was given at the Private Online University made me feel as though I was an important employee at the institution. I *felt* valued. I literally had a view of a major downtown Vancouver street in one of the most expensive areas of Vancouver<sup>5</sup>. My office space was located right next to my colleagues; I was in the centre of the department. Again, this allowed me to develop relationships with my colleagues even though they weren't on campus as much (since most of the courses offered by the Online Private University were online). I was able to develop a strong bond with the Dean (whose office was right next door to my own). The Dean was my mentor at the Private Online University. She offered me career advice and connected me with other parts of the university by recommending that I join different committees and working groups that she knew I would be passionate about and contribute to. The Dean quickly became my gateway to more opportunities at the institution. Because of her, I was able to meet more people and therefore develop a larger working network of people who supported me and them, in return. I felt connected and valued. I had access to all the resources I needed to teach (and then some). In many ways, by giving me office space and resources, the Private Online University recognized me and gave me agency within the organization. Additionally, not only was I able to feel connected to the department in which I worked but my colleagues, the Dean, and the Department were able to get the best out of me, as well. Being visible at the Institute allowed me to put my best foot forward and

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<sup>5</sup> One of my colleagues at the Private Online University told me that a restaurant right next to the building we occupied paid \$1 million/month to rent out the space!

contribute to the best of my abilities—thereby benefiting the Institute (and the students) directly.

As this section has explained, at all four of the post-secondary institutions that I worked at between 2016 and 2018—the Teaching University, the Institute, City College, and the Private Online University—the assignment of office space played a major role in my socialization, or lack of socialization, within the departments that I worked as a precarious faculty member. It also played a major role in my ability to find mentors within the department. My office space, in this sense, controlled my socialization process at all four institutions as a new precarious faculty member.

## Conclusion

Pasma and Shaker's (2018) report on Canadian university contract faculty appointments revealed that precarious faculty make up 38 to 62 per cent<sup>6</sup> of the faculty at publicly funded Canadian institutions. Because precarious faculty constitute such a large part of the fabric of the post-secondary system, it's important to recognize how precarious faculty are socialized into their positions on campus. Office space is an important component of a faculty member's socialization into the organizational culture of the institution, pandemic or no pandemic.

The literature on office space and resources for precarious faculty in higher education is clear and consistent: give all faculty (including precarious faculty) office space close to the departments in which they work. This is particularly important for early-career faculty who are eager to participate in departmental activities, foster relationships with colleagues, and want to grow with the department. In the pre-pandemic world, my reflections from my own experience as a precarious faculty member are consistent with the literature. My reflections illuminate how power is ingrained in office space and resource allocation for precarious faculty.

In a pre-pandemic world, office space and resource allocation for precarious faculty in higher education were unpredictable, unreliable and unprofessional. After 17 months of Zooming with students from my home office (which is predictable, reliable and professional), post-secondary institutions prepared to return to campus. In the big return to campus—the return to *normal*—one wonders if the pre-existing issue of office space for precarious faculty has been addressed? Will precarious faculty be returning to comically small desks or resource rooms that function also as storage space? Will we be allowed to park in the designated

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<sup>6</sup> Depending on the province.

“faculty and staff” parking lots on campus? Can we count on having a safe and clean place to meet with our students?

As we continue to figure out what this “new normal” in a post-pandemic world looks like, the allocation of dedicated space on campus appears less settled than ever. In addition to “hot desk” implementation, “hoteling offices,” and ongoing debates about online versus on campus meetings, we must not forget about precarious faculty. As precarious faculty return to campus, we hope that returning to *normal* means that we will have appropriate and reliable physical space on campus to meet with students and complete our work.

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