

Anne Langendorfer: Address to the Board of Trustees, November 2, 2018

Have you ever heard a story that changed your life? I have heard thousands. My name is Anne Langendorfer, and I have dedicated my life to helping people better understand how stories work and which stories can help us create the world in which we want to live. Every day I teach students how to tell better stories and build stronger arguments from those stories.

Here is one story about my students: Most of my students are first- and second-year students, and many of them are first-generation, minority, or veteran students, transfers from other universities or community colleges. They are of nearly every race, gender, sexuality, and creed. They speak English, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, ASL. They are parents, siblings, children, adults. Some are 18; some are 50. They require a lot of individual attention and teaching expertise because for them *becoming* educated is a difficult process of transforming their stories. When in the future you hire my students, you need them to have the education I'm providing: strong communication and critical thinking skills are some of the top needs employers report seeking in new employees.

Here's part of my story: I have worked as a non-tenure-track faculty member at UTK since fall semester 2013. I earned my PhD in English at The Ohio State University. I teach a 4-4 load, which on paper means I am responsible for teaching four writing-intensive classes each semester. But the time I spend in front of the classroom hides a long invisible list of other jobs: I coach, mentor, and foster the writing and reading skills of 100 students each semester. I prepare lectures and in-class activities, reread texts, write lesson plans, and research new knowledge and new teaching methods. I also write letters of recommendation; advise a student organization; help my students get disability accommodations; determine out which students need to be connected to the Student Success Center, the Dean's Office, the Counseling Center, the Black Cultural Center, or the Pride Center; participate in committee, department, and Faculty Senate meetings; meet with fellow faculty to discuss work; plan next semester's classes; attend academic lectures that enrich my teaching; present my research and interact with other scholars at conferences; and listen to my students report their sexual assaults and confide their coming-out stories and their everyday heartbreaks. I work more than 60 hours a week.

But like NTT faculty across the UT system (including UTC and UT Martin), I work for very little. Last year I earned less than a new public school teacher here in Knox County, someone who has only a bachelor's degree, and they made so little, it's laughable: \$37,180. My fellow NTT-faculty and I are paid half of the average salary of TT faculty, even though we have the same educational backgrounds and significantly more teaching experience. In order to do their research, TT faculty need to teach less. I am paid to teach a lot more—double the classes, more than double the students, and the most vulnerable students. Without tenure, I am afraid. I am afraid to stand here in front of you. I'm afraid every day that I won't have a job next year. But most of all, I'm afraid that I can't provide UTK students with the education they deserve. They need someone who has time to think and plan more carefully, address individual student needs more thoroughly. At universities where students graduate at far higher rates, the class sizes are lower, the teaching load is less, and the pay is higher, allowing faculty to devote time and energy to building skills and innovating new teaching methods, and conducting research.

Please join me in writing a new story: helping create a better university for our students, who need to pursue their education in the care of fairly-compensated tenure and non-tenure-track faculty, administrative staff, and facilities workers. We all want to help our students thrive in the 21st century, but we can't do that without your attention to our working conditions and a

university that is founded on free and open academic inquiry, protected by tenure. We need your recognition of the dignity of our work.

If you'd like to know more, I invite you to come shadow me for a day to witness my story firsthand. I leave here to teach my 9:05 AM class. I work for the State of Tennessee; my work is for you and all the people in Tennessee who will be better served by knowledgeable students, who will make all our lives better by being able to tell the stories that change our lives. I need your help, but I also know you can't run this university without me. Please understand that faculty and students know how this university operates best. So, please, ask my students and me for help in understanding what we need to create and share knowledge. We can tell the stories that will help you do that.