FLORIDA COLLEGES IN CRISIS
Introduction:

Public colleges in Florida overwhelmingly rely on adjunct professors (instructors employed semester-to-semester, course-by-course), but they pay these instructors shockingly low wages. And the pay is getting worse.

Many of these precarious professors cobble together more than enough courses for a full-time workload, but are still paid at part-time rates. As a result, they often rely on food stamps, Medicaid and other government programs to get by. Meanwhile, students and families struggle to pay for the education they need to succeed in today's job market.

Majority of Professors’ Pay is Low & Falling

Adjunct professors now make up more than 70 percent of Florida College System faculty. The typical adjunct professor working in a Florida public college earns just over $1,900 per course. Pay varies by college and ranges from just $1,488 to $2,460 per course across the state college system. When controlled for inflation, median adjunct pay per course is down 5% since 2010.

Professors in Poverty

Despite offering few permanent positions, some colleges limit the number of courses adjunct professors can teach. Their annual pay is almost impossible to live on. This often forces them to teach at multiple colleges or work outside education entirely. Just to make ends meet, adjuncts have to teach an excessive number of courses. And it's virtually impossible to earn as much as their peers or support a family teaching. Traditionally employed professors typically teach ten courses a year.

In Florida, the typical adjunct earns just $17,000 a year. That is $8,300 less than the over $25,000 it takes for a single adult to pay their basic bills in Florida.
Why Is This Happening:

As Florida has cut funding for higher education, colleges and universities have looked to fill the gap by raising tuition and relying on lower-paid adjunct faculty. This has squeezed students and professors alike. Investment in higher education is down 13 percent over the last decade on a per-student basis. Meanwhile average tuition is up 59 percent, and student debt in Florida has grown faster than in any other state over the past three years. In fact, three of the six metro areas with the biggest student debt increase in the country are in Florida: Orlando, Tampa, and Miami. We know it’s possible to invest in adjunct instructors; in Connecticut, where community college adjunct faculty formed their union in 1984, pay for adjunct faculty is up 11% percent after adjusting for inflation since the recession.

How to Fix It:

This moment calls for a bold reinvestment in our educators and our next generation of leaders. In addition to supporting adjunct professors as they form their unions across the state, we must pass legislation that fully funds our colleges and universities for all to attend, addresses student debt and ensures that all educators make a minimum of $4,000 per course – the equivalent of $15/hour for full-time work.

Meet Ximena Barrientos

Ximena has been an adjunct professor for 10 years and currently teaches at Miami Dade College. Over that period, she has never seen a raise that matches the constantly increasing cost of living. She is passionate about her work educating young people as a Earth Sciences professor. Yet, despite teaching a full-time course load or more for the past six years and having a PhD from Harvard, she makes less than $20,000 a year. She worries about her health, because on her wages she can’t afford health insurance. Worst of all, she struggles to give students the attention they need, while facing her own financial issues.
Methodology:

Florida College System adjunct pay calculations are based on official adjunct faculty salary schedules provided by all 28 Florida College System schools in response to SEIU/Faculty Forward information requests. The analysis assumes that the typical adjunct holds a master’s degree and teaches standard 3-credit hour, semester-long course(s). The 2010 pay figures have been adjusted for inflation using Consumer Price Index data provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The endnotes identify the sources for other information contained in this report.