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| **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**September 29, 2020**CONTACT**Amy Excellaexcell@ift-aft.org, (630) 200-2077 |

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| **Columbia College part-time faculty to teach in Grant Park on Tuesday at 1:30 pm****Instructors refuse to teach in unsafe classrooms to protect students** |

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| Chicago – Today, September 29, part-time faculty members of the Columbia Faculty Association (CFAC Local 6602) will hold classes outdoors after being threatened by the college that they may lose their jobs if they don’t provide in-person instruction this week. Currently about 75 percent of part-time faculty are teaching remotely; the rest are being forced to teach in-person before the union and college have reached an agreement on safety as required under national labor law.**Several union members will be holding classes at 11th and Michigan Avenue around 1:30 PM.**The CFAC’s 600 members are demanding that the college implement the greatest level of safety precautions available in campus buildings, including portable HEPA filters in classrooms that do not have radiation devices in place to eliminate the virus in HVAC units. The faculty are also demanding a comprehensive testing program for students to help identify cases and stop potential spread. The decision to teach outside comes after more than 15 bargaining sessions since July have not resulted in a safety agreement. “Our members understand that no matter how badly we want to return to teaching on campus, safety must be the college’s top priority,” said Diana Vallera, CFAC president. “That means safety in all classrooms for all students and faculty, not just some of them. Our union will stand strong on this demand until the college takes all protective measures available to keep everyone safe.”Over the weekend, heads of several departments sent emails to some faculty indicating that if they do not return to in-person instruction, the college may assign their courses to other instructors. “I am willing to teach a hybrid class in order to give our students hands on experience,” said David Moravec, a film instructor who was notified that he may be terminated. “The bare minimum I required for my return was for the administration to work with the union to ensure as safe an environment as possible. I was shocked by how hostile the administration became, and then to receive a letter that I would be replaced if I choose to teach remote classes during a global pandemic is insulting.” By holding classes in Grant Park, the faculty will fulfill their directive to teach in person while increasing safety for themselves and their students. The union hopes their action will encourage the college to bargain seriously with part-time faculty over their safety concerns so that further action won’t be necessary.Students are backing their professors in this fight. Acting student Shoana T. Hunt wrote to President Kim:"The health and safety of the faculty, staff, and students of Columbia College Chicago are more important than a requirement to be present on campus. My instructors should be able to make an informed choice before putting their lives and their students' lives at risk."“Health and safety must be our focus right now,” said Vallera. “The college claims some classrooms have been mitigated but that others do not require the same measures. They’ve shown us no proof. The science says otherwise, so their position is simply unacceptable.”Holding classes outdoors was a safety practice recommended by Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute for Allergies and Infectious Diseases, over the summer.   “We’re only asking for safety protections that are well within the college’s ability to provide," added Vallera, "and we’ve made many compromises already. They should bargain with us fairly and do the same to protect Columbia’s students and faculty. It’s their obligation and we call on them to fulfill it.” |

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| [*Columbia Faculty Association*](https://www.cfacresources.com/)*(CFAC, Local 6602) represents 600 part-time faculty at Columbia College - Chicago. CFAC is affiliated with the 103,000-member*[*Illinois Federation of Teachers*](http://www.ift-aft.org/)*and the 1.7 million-member*[*American Federation of Teachers*](http://www.aft.org/)*.* |

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