

Spring 2017

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Pons, Philip E.; Burnett, Dana; Williams, Mitchell R.; and Paredes, Tisha M., "Why Do They Do It? A Case Study of Factors Influencing Part-Time Faculty to Seek Employment at a Community College" (2017). *Educational Foundations & Leadership Faculty Publications*. 35.

https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/efl_fac_pubs/35

Original Publication Citation

Pons, P. E., Burnett, D. D., Williams, M. R., & Paredes, T. M. (2017). Why do they do it? A case study of factors influencing part-time faculty to seek employment at a community college. *Community College Enterprise*, 23(1), 43-59.

Why Do They Do It? A Case Study of Factors Influencing Part-time Faculty to Seek Employment at a Community College

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover the motivational factors influencing part-time faculty employment within the community college from the perspective of the part-time faculty. The study examined these reported motivational factors for differences influenced by age, gender, and employment status. A survey was distributed to a random sample of part-time faculty members at a large metropolitan community college in the Southeastern United States. Participants were asked to respond to categorical demographic questions and survey questions to determine workplace satisfaction. Three open-ended questions were presented to obtain in-depth information about the motivational factors leading adjunct faculty to seek employment at the community college. Findings reveal that motivation is a result of interest in working within a discipline, working with students, and achieving personal satisfaction. Keywords: part-time faculty, part-time employment, motivational factors, recognition, working with students.

According to a report from the Center for Community College Student Engagement (2014), adjunct faculty comprise approximately 77% of community college faculty and teach about 58% of all community college classes. The goal of this study was to provide community college administrators with additional information about the reported motivation of part-time faculty to seek employment. Those responsible for part-time instructors may find that the findings of our study will provide them with information that they can use in hiring, supporting, and retaining this valuable institutional resource.

For the past five decades, the professional literature has increasingly examined the role of part-time faculty in higher education, but few studies have focused on the seemingly contradictory relationship between part-time faculty and the community college. While adjunct instructors teach a high percentage of courses, the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCSSE, 2014) describes adjuncts as “marginalized within the faculty” (p.3). Clearly more empirical research is needed on what motivates people to become adjunct instructors at the community college. Adjunct faculty are typically compensated poorly, provided with inadequate office space, offered little or no clerical support, and afforded few opportunities for professional development (Caruth & Caruth, 2013; CCCSE, 2014; Purcell, 2007; Wallin, 2005, 2007). The support for adjunct faculty is not likely to improve as colleges struggle with finances, often balancing budgets by reducing full-time instructional staff and covering classes with adjuncts (Katsinas, Tollefson, & Reamey, 2008). This support deficit is exacerbated when other factors such as institutional culture and issues of inclusion lead part-time faculty to feel powerless and alienated in a two-tier system of haves and have-nots (CCCSE, 2014; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Wallin, 2004). Perhaps the more significant reason contributing to the inadequate and often negative treatment of part-time faculty is the perception of the part-time faculty as temporary and disposable (Phillips & Campbell, 2005; Yoshioka, 2007). Cohen and Brower (2008) liken part-time instructors to the migrant worker. The irony of these perceptions is that the temporary nature of the part-time faculty is at the same time one of the strengths of the national community college system. The use of part-time faculty allows the community college to adjust rapidly to dynamic enrollment shifts in both numbers of students needing instruction and courses that must be offered (Ochoa, 2012).

Most studies of part-time faculty are from the perspective of the institution and focus on issues of engagement, student success rates, and various views of part-time faculty contribution and value to the community colleges. While these are significant issues, they do not ultimately tell the story of the part-time faculty. The widespread use of part-time faculty suggests the need to understand better the factors that contribute to the motivation of part-time faculty to seek employment and continue to teach at the community college. With part-time faculty playing such a significant role on their campus, “college leaders who want to better serve their students should closely examine the expectations of and their support for their part-time faculty—and how both are shaped by the institution’s culture, policies, and practices” (CCCSE, 2014, p. 8).

Motivation

Research related to human motivation suggests that perceptions, attitudes, and feelings are contributing factors influencing perceptions of engagement and commitment as well as the quality of work performance (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). This study provides insight into those perceptions, attitudes, and feelings of part-time faculty and helps us understand their motivation to seek these positions. This study also illuminates the differences between the intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing the performance of those individuals employed as part-time community college faculty.

Motivation describes forces within an individual that account for direction, intensity, and persistence of voluntary behavior (Bateman, Snell, & Konopaske, 2016; Lawler, 1969; Nickels, McHugh, & McHugh, 2016). Motivation explains why people behave in a particular manner (Lawler, 1969). Cognitive theorists describe motivation in two categories. Intrinsic motivation is a result of performing an activity for its sake whereas extrinsic motivation is a result of performing an activity to obtain an external reward. Intrinsic motivation comes from the enjoyment or the challenge of the task (Passer & Smith, 2004).

Vroom (1995) connects motivation to expectancy that Vroom defines as an effort-reward probability. This effort-reward probability consists of two requirements: if one performs a task, the performance will result in a reward; and the reward is of value to the individual (DuBrin, 2013; Vroom, 1995). An often overlooked aspect of the latter requirement is the value of the reward is determined by the perception of the individual receiving the reward and not by the person providing it (Bateman et al., 2016; Behling & Starke, 1973; DuBrin, 2013; Lawler, 1969; Nickels et al., 2016; Schermerhorn, 2013). Vroom (1995) and other theorists emphasize that the objective utilities associated with outcomes of performing at a certain level are not as important as the individual's perception of the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of performing at a certain level (Behling & Starke, 1973). The rewards may be either intrinsic (stemming directly from the performance and internally mediated) or extrinsic (bestowed by others). Intrinsic rewards satisfy higher order needs such as self-esteem and self-actualization that stem from within the individual while extrinsic rewards are thought of as applying to lower order needs such as survival (food, shelter).

One measure of motivational strength is the ability of motivational factors to overcome those elements of employment which may dissatisfy or demotivate. Job satisfaction usually refers to the affective orientation an

individual holds toward their roles at work (Herzberg et al., 2010; Vroom, 1995). However, the variable of job satisfaction is not a single factor but is more general in that a person may be satisfied with the job content but be dissatisfied with wages or some other factors. Vroom (1995) suggests that job satisfaction is considered as valences to which the individual assigns different levels of value. In any study of motivational factors, job satisfaction or dissatisfaction plays an important part. People can be satisfied with several aspects of their task and, therefore, motivated to perform well. At the same time, they may express dissatisfaction with some aspects of the job, but they are motivated to perform well because the factors that motivate them to override the dissatisfaction. This study will assist in understanding those areas which can lead to either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation to teach at a community college in a part-time status.

Purpose statement and research questions

The purpose of this study was to discover motivational factors influencing part-time faculty employment at the community college. We also examined our findings to see if there were motivational differences between part-time faculty members in the four categories described by Gappa and Leslie (1993). The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the motivational factors given by the part-time faculty for seeking employment at the community college?
2. Do these motivational factors differ by the background of part-time faculty as described in Gappa and Leslie's (1993) typology of part-time faculty?
3. Do these motivational factors of part-time faculty differ by gender, age, years of teaching experience, the reason for employment, or by full- or part-time employment?

Methodology

An online survey was distributed to a random sample of 103 part-time faculty members employed at a large, metropolitan community college located in the Southeastern U.S. The research was approved by an appropriate Institutional Review Board. The survey presented participants with an opportunity to provide, in their words, the reason for seeking employment as a part-time faculty at a community college. The coded and thematic analyses of the qualitative data gathered from the open-ended survey questions were analyzed using an a priori approach, in which the researcher uses existing categories and themes identified in the literature

to code and categorize the data. The themes and patterns were developed by “chunking” codes. This chunking of codes permitted us to develop the relationships among codes or patterns and structure (Hays & Singh, 2012). These themes and patterns led to the development of theoretical constructs explaining the motivational factors leading part-time faculty to seek employment at the community college (Hays & Singh, 2012; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010).

Participants. There was a 66% response rate (n=68) for the survey. The survey respondents were similar to the demographics (gender and age) of the overall population of the part-time faculty at the community college. As shown in Table 1. the majority of the participants in our study were female, and the majority were over the age of 50.

Table 1. Gender & Age of Participants

Variable		Number	%
Gender	Male	27	40%
	Female	41	60%
Age	Under 30	3	4%
	31-40	14	21%
	41-50	10	15%
	Over 50	41	40%

Table 2 shows that there was nearly an equal number who worked full-time elsewhere as compared with those who did not have other employment.

Table 2. Employment Status of Participants

	Number	%
Yes: Full-time (> 30 hrs. per wk)	27	40%
Yes: Part-time (< 30 hrs. per wk)	14	21%
No, not employed	26	38%
Prefer not to answer	1	1%

Attitudes and self-reported opinions are a product of diverse individuals' circumstances that do not fit into a single grouping (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Outcalt, 2002; Wittmer & Martin, 2010). Gappa and Leslie (1993) refer to four categories for part-time faculty, each with differing motives for serving as part-time faculty: (a) career-enders (coming from established careers), (b) professionals (have full-time employment elsewhere), (c) aspiring academics (seeking full-time), and (d) freelancers (complementing part-time work with other jobs, home care, extra money). Understanding this diverse group and the factors that motivate individuals to seek part-

time employment at the college level should be helpful for those seeking to attract qualified part-time faculty talent and for those responsible designing the employment environment for the faculty.

Those surveyed were asked to place themselves in one of Gappa and Leslie's (1993) four groups: career-enders, specialists/professionals, aspiring academics, or freelancers. The greatest number of respondents (38%) indicated they were *specialists/professionals* with full-time employment elsewhere, followed by *career-enders* (31%) who retired from established careers. Table 3 provides the breakdown of part-time faculty into four groups.

Table 3. Categories of Respondents

*The literature defines part-time into four groups.
In which group do you most closely fit?*

Category	Number	%
Career-ender (retired and coming from established careers)	21	31%
Specialists, experts, and professionals (have full-time employment elsewhere)	26	38%
Aspiring academics (generally seeking full-time status)	14	21%
Freelancers (complementing part-time teaching with other jobs or involved at home and work for extra money)	7	10%

Findings and Implications

Respondents were given a list of eight areas of importance to them as reasons for seeking employment at the community college. They were asked to choose the three most important areas impacting their decision to seek employment as a part-time faculty member. Two responses stand out as significant motivational factors for the participants in our study. The opportunity to work with students (68%, $n = 46$) and personal satisfaction (54%, $n = 37$) were selected as two of the top three important areas for seeking employment. The most frequently selected reason for seeking employment was "working within my discipline" (78%, $n = 53$). It is further of significance that the top three choices are independent of extrinsic rewards in that they are not dependent on institutional rewards.

A small number (22%, $n = 15$) selected professional development as one of the top three reasons for seeking a position at the community college. An even smaller number (9%, $n = 6$) consider being part of the community college community of importance. That few consider it im-

portant to be part of the college community is supported by the finding that when asked if they feel part of the campus community, 54% chose not much or not at all. These two responses related to being part of the campus community are consistent with the findings of other studies that report that many part-time faculty feel as though they are not “connected” to or “integrated” into campus life (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Outcalt, 2002). Table 4 indicates the responses of the faculty participating in the survey.

Table 4 Choose the Three Most Important Areas to You As an Adjunct

	Number	%
Teaching in my discipline/profession/career field	53	78%
Opportunity to work with students	46	68%
Personal satisfaction	37	54%
Supplement my salary	28	41%
Work toward becoming a full-time faculty member	19	28%
Professional development	15	22%
Being part of this college community	6	9%
Other	1	1%

Note. Total exceeds 100% as participants were asked to choose three areas.

While it is significant that a majority of all participants in each of the categories indicated the opportunity to work with students was an important reason to teach at the community college, it is of greater significance that more than four-fifths of those in the categories of career-enders and freelancers indicated this was of high importance to them. It is also noteworthy that many career-enders and professionals indicated personal satisfaction was a very important motivational factor (Table 5).

The findings of the current study provide an interesting contrast to previous surveys done on a national scale. For example, a survey conducted on behalf of the American Federation of Teachers indicated that most part-time/adjunct faculty members are motivated to work primarily by their desire to teach (AFT Higher Education, 2010). A majority of those in the AFT survey said they are in their jobs primarily because they like teaching, not for the money, reflecting a commitment and passion for the profession. Of particular note in the AFT survey is that part-time/adjunct faculty members are split evenly between two groups, those who prefer part-time teaching (50%) and those who would like to have full-time teaching jobs (47%). Among those under age 50, the percentage preferring full-time teaching work increased to 60% (AFT Higher Education, 2010).

Table 5. Choose the Three Most Important Areas to You As an Adjunct

	Career- enders	Professionals	Aspiring academics	Freelancers	Total
Teaching in my discipline	17	21	10	5	53 (78%)
Opportunity to work with students	18	15	7	6	46 (68%)
Personal satisfaction	20	12	3	2	37 (54%)

Note: Totals exceed 68 as participants were asked to choose three areas.

Participants over the age of 50 were more likely than those younger than 50 to report they were motivated to teach in their profession (78%), work with students (76%), and to achieve personal satisfaction (68%). Table 6 provides a breakdown of the reasons for seeking an adjunct position by age.

Table 6. Age and Reason for Seeking an Adjunct Position

	< 30	30-40	41-50	> 50
Teaching in my discipline	3	12	6	32
Opportunity to work with students	1	7	7	31
Personal satisfaction	0	4	5	28
Supplement my income	2	7	4	15
Becoming a full-time member	1	7	3	8
Professional development	2	4	4	5

Note. Totals exceed 68 as participants were asked to choose three areas.

Those survey questions designed to capture feelings of satisfaction revealed that females indicated a higher level of job satisfaction than did males. Age made little difference in satisfaction levels except for those participants over 50 years of age. Those in the that age group were either very dissatisfied (41.66%) or very satisfied (70.32%). This could be explained by the fact that many in this group are career-enders and are not likely to be ambivalent about their future or concerned with relationships with department chairs or deans or the politics of the institution.

Table 7. Levels of Satisfaction By Gender

To what extent are you satisfied with...	Gender	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
How well the college addresses the concerns of part-time faculty?	Male	11%	4%	30%	44%	11%
	Female	2%	15%	29%	46%	7%
Your relationship with your department chair?	Male	0%	11%	11%	41%	37%
	Female	0%	2%	27%	29%	41%
Your relationship with other members of your department?	Male	4%	15%	30%	26%	26%
	Female	2%	5%	22%	44%	27%
The level of recognition for your contribution to the college?	Male	15%	18%	26%	29%	11%
	Female	10%	17%	34%	27%	12%

There were no significant differences in the levels of satisfaction correlated with years of teaching experience. It does appear that those part-time faculty in our study who have been teaching more than six years express satisfaction or, at least, neutrality on most issues. Forty percent ($n = 27$) of the respondents indicated full-time employment elsewhere, and another 21% ($n = 14$) had part-time employment elsewhere. These numbers are reflective of a workforce having a background in or currently working in a professional field outside of the community college. This finding is consistent with findings in numerous studies that stress the community colleges rely on a professional workforce as a source of part-time faculty teaching on a part-time basis.

Overall, those categorizing themselves as career-enders or specialists are satisfied or neutral with the workplace environment at the college. These findings may be a result of the fact that both the career-enders and the specialists are from a population that is teaching for personal satisfaction and is somewhat indifferent to the institutional practices. Moreover, they expressed a high degree of neutrality on "relationship with department chair" and "relationship with others in your department." The expressed neutrality might be explained by the fact that many of the professionals and specialists teach evening classes and frequently have no contact with full-time faculty or administrators.

Discussion of open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were designed to address research question one, "What are the motivational

factors given by the part-time faculty for seeking employment at the community college”? These questions were intended to give the respondents the opportunity to freely state their reasons without limitations. Responses to the open-ended questions were grouped into themes and compared with motivational factors described in the literature (Hackman & Oldham, 1974; Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2012). The themes describing groupings of motivational factors are:

- *Skill variety* different job activities requiring several skills as well as the opportunity for skill growth and achievement. An example would be developing and delivering courses designed to engage students.
- *Task identity* the completion of a whole, identifiable piece of work. The opportunity to identify with a specific class and group of students.
- *Task significance* is the value of the task to self and society and whether it has a positive impact on the lives of others.
- *Autonomy* independence and discretion in making decisions.
- *Feedback* information about the job performance from others including students.

Many respondents referred to areas in which they were able to experience the motivator *skill variety*. Statements such as “an opportunity to challenge myself” and “. . . the topics and subject matter I teach are constantly evolving and teaching gives me a platform to keep abreast of the latest technology” are examples of participants placing value on the opportunity to use skills in a challenging environment. This study produced several examples of part-time faculty members exhibiting *task identity* and *task significance*. The following comments of participants are examples:

- “. . . interaction with a greater diversity of students, and be more helpful to a wider community . . .”
- “Making a difference in the lives of others who otherwise may not have had the opportunity to further their education.”
- “I love working with adults in the community college setting.”
- “. . . because I can make a difference with our community’s future workforce.”
- “I do like serving this population and really enjoy my students here.”

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- “I love teaching and . . . I feel I can make the most difference in my students’ lives.”
 - “I want to make an impact on the community of students in my local area.”
 - “. . . believe that it is important to give back to the community . . . particularly the young people who would have no other choice.”

Performance feedback is essential to motivation. It is important to note that feedback is not limited to verbally expressed feedback; it also entails the individual’s ability to sense a regard for one’s contribution. The following comments give examples of members sensing recognition and commenting on the positive influence of the feedback:

- “People at this school are nice to me and, at least, say that they appreciate my efforts.”
- “. . . students and their recommendations of me to their friends.”
- “. . . respect for my experience and credentials . . .”
- “I get positive feedback from my students, and that makes me feel good. . . . I only get it from the students, but that is enough for me.”

Analyses of the qualitative data gathered from the open-ended responses revealed several themes. The first theme centered on salary. Specifically, the majority of comments referencing salary expressed dissatisfaction with salary. Respondents commented on the inequity and unfairness of salary as compared with full-time faculty for teaching the same courses (Greenberg, 2014). One respondent mentioned teaching at more than one community college within the same system and geographic area and being salaried at different levels for the same course. She teaches the same courses at one community college at the instructor level and the other community college at the assistant professor level with a proportionate increase in wages.

Wage levels may have less of an impact on the professional worker who teaches as a part-time instructor. A study by Ryan and Deci (2000) supports this argument. Their study suggests intrinsic motivators are often sufficiently important to the individual and serve as a compensating factor for lower wages. In a study by Bozeman and Gaughan (2011), the university professor is an example of one willing to work for less than what may seem like equitable wages. The intrinsic motivating factors are the prestige connected with the position, the feeling of autonomy, job satisfaction, recognition, and time for leisure and family life. Bozeman

and Gaughan (2011) stress the importance of these intrinsic motivational factors as compensating for the lower salaries of educational institutions. As was expected in this study, few respondents give wages as one of the three top choices for seeking employment. Overall dissatisfaction with wages was not a significant issue. This could be a consequence of low expectations. Part-time faculty, knowing in advance the salary levels, have no expectations for being paid more (CCCSE, 2014). Nevertheless, research suggests wage levels are of significance in that persons often equate their salaries to the value the organization places on their service. If a faculty member compares himself or herself with another instructor who is earning more but is similar in standing on dimensions related to pay (e.g., education, seniority, teaching skills), the comparison could lead to dissatisfaction (Vroom, 1995).

Further analyses of the data revealed participants were dissatisfied with recognition for performance. Nearly one-half of participants expressed dissatisfaction with the level of recognition for their contribution to the college. Recognition is not only a motivational factor but it also one with lasting value (Herzberg, 1987; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 2010). Vroom (1995) cites numerous studies supporting his findings on the subject of recognition. He refers to recognition as positive supervisor behavior which he labels *consideration*. Vroom's findings indicate that those exhibiting this consideration tend to have work groups with favorable attitudes toward a task. Recognition is an important motivational factor for all employees that requires little or no funding.

In sum, the findings from this study confirm much of what is known from the literature. An exception is the finding that the participants reported they were motivated by the opportunity to work with students to a greater degree than expected. A second unexpected and contradictory finding is that while part-time faculty expressed dissatisfaction with the feeling of not being part of the community, most did not select it as demotivating. This finding would warrant further research. Lastly, personal satisfaction as a motivational factor appears to outweigh many of the extrinsic factors such as salary, lack of support, feeling part of the campus community, and relationships with those in supervisory positions. This finding corresponds to the literature concerning motivation. It supports the notion that motivating factors can and often do outweigh the demotivating factors sometimes referred to as hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1987; Herzberg et al., 2010). The hygiene factors may cause dissatisfaction, but they do not outweigh the motivational factors leading part-time to seek employment at the community college.

This study's findings support the proposition that much can be done to attract high-quality part-time faculty by instituting changes not dependent upon funding. Too often, suggestions offered to improve part-time faculty conditions are disregarded as being impossible due to budgetary conditions. However, the responses of participants to the open-ended questions offer some ideas that can be implemented with no additional funding. These recommendations require mostly time and effort from community college leaders to implement changes:

1. Improve recognition programs such as recognizing years of service, similar to the program for full-time faculty. Publicize part-time faculty achievements.
2. Implement programs that foster inclusion of part-time faculty by including them in faculty meetings, extending invitations to college functions, offering the opportunity to serve on faculty and college governance committees, and including them in departmental communications.
3. Provide opportunities to work with students in the capacity of mentor and academic advisor.
4. Take every opportunity to get to know adjunct faculty members in both formal academic and informal social settings by scheduling some events convenient to those engaged in outside employment.
5. Include adjunct faculty in college programs designed to support student success (e.g., as mentors, internship site supervisors), and provide whatever incentives given to full-time faculty serving in these roles.
6. Explore policies that encourage full-time faculty to visit adjunct classrooms and provide collegial feedback, and that encourage adjunct faculty to visit their full-time faculty colleagues' classrooms and provide them with feedback.
7. In a recent book edited by Adrianna Kezar and Daniel Maxey (2016), a consortium model for employing adjunct faculty is suggested. Members of the consortium, which might include two- and four-year institutions, would collaborate to hire a qualified faculty member to fill teaching needs existing on each campus, thus providing the person employed by the consortium with a full-time job. The full-time position could come with an extended contract and benefits.

Recommendations for Future Study

This study serves as a case study and was conducted from a random sample of a single community college part-time faculty consisting of 312 members. There are two suggestions for future research. First, this study warrants replication. This study is a preliminary study. The follow-up to this study could improve the quality of the data thus far obtained by the following:

1. Obtain a larger population. As an example, selecting five institutions representing different community demographics could be selected. The institutions should be of differing sizes thereby allowing for comparisons across size and socio-economic influences.
2. Ensure a stratified random sample is selected from each institution that is large enough to provide not only meaningful within college data but also between college data. This will allow for determining if responses may be generalized or if they are influenced by individual college practices.
3. Ensure samples are large enough to allow for quantitative as well as qualitative (mixed methods) research.
4. Ideally, surveys should be supplemented by focus groups and follow-up interviews to survey data. This might be rejected by participating colleges due to the difficulty of gathering part-time faculty who must participate on a voluntary, unremunerated basis.
5. The second recommendation for future research is to include both full- and part-time faculty members in a single study. The goal of this research is not only to determine motivational factors for employment but to determine if these factors differ between those employed full-time and those employed part-time. It would also examine difference between full- and part-time faculty in areas of importance for being on the faculty and levels of satisfaction.

Conclusion

Community colleges are playing a significant role within the higher education community in the United States. Part-time faculty will continue to play a vital role in the success of community colleges by providing a valuable, dedicated, and motivated workforce. Community college leaders need to find ways to motivate, compensate, develop, and properly utilize this key human resource. The issue becomes one of not only pro-

viding for the current environment that attracts high-quality part-time faculty but also improving the current environment to reduce feelings of dissatisfaction.

Nearly two-thirds of the part-time faculty reported they were motivated to teach by a desire to work with students, to work in their fields of expertise, and for personal satisfaction. Fortunately, these motivational factors are currently strong enough to overshadow the dissatisfaction of low wages, poor support, and lack of recognition. By managing this important resource, campus leaders can sustain and strengthen the motivation of part-time faculty to continue to contribute to a college's achievement of its mission.

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