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Academic Chairpersons Conference
Proceedings

35th Academic Chairpersons Conference,
Orlando, FL

The New Normal, Adjuncts and Part-Time Instructors

Jeff Knox

Carson-Newman College


Julie Rabun

Carson-Newman College

Kim Hawkins

Carson-Newman College

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Recommended Citation

Knox, Jeff, Rabun, Julie, and Hawkins, Kim (2018). "The New Normal, Adjuncts and Part-Time Instructors," Academic Chairpersons Conference Proceedings.

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The New Normal

Adjuncts and Part-Time Instructors

The Impact of Part-Time Instructors:

- 1) How does hiring part-time instructors instead of hiring full-time faculty impact academics, departmental, and university goals?

Consistency in communication is critical for teaching a quality curriculum and for assessment data.

Adjuncts have a higher turnover rate compared to full-time faculty, causing increased time in training and observing. Employing lesser-experienced adjuncts can lead to inconsistent academic rigor and a wide variety of expectations for student performance.

A lack of interpersonal engagement is found with adjuncts, as students have less face-to-face access, and the adjuncts are often less invested in the university.

- 2) What is the impact on remaining full-time faculty who must pick up some of the load from the vacated tenure-track position?

The impact on full-time faculty involves an increase in course load, number of academic advisees, and less time for research. Additionally, it often leads to extra curriculum work, where full-time faculty oversee course shells that are shared with adjuncts.

- 3) How does hiring a part-time instructor for a position once held by a full-time faculty member affect institutional and/or departmental accreditation?

Accrediting bodies often recognize adjuncts as supporting faculty, not participating faculty, which can cause accreditation issues.

- 4) How do students react to the use of part-time instructors, particularly in departments where part-time instructors are more numerous?

In some cases, students are ambivalent with regard to faculty rank. In other cases, they are very concerned that they are not being taught by a full-time person. They feel that adjuncts are less invested in the university. In the case of an outstanding adjunct, students often wonder why that person is only part time.

- 5) What support does the university provide to assist in the hiring and training of part-time instructors? What support do you need?

Some institutions compensate adjuncts who help design a course by providing supplemental pay as co-course creators. This allows the university to have rights to copy the class and use it for multiple sections and for the adjunct faculty to use their course design at other universities.

Hiring Part-Time Instructors:

- 1) How does the field of study and location of the university impact the availability of part-time instructor applicants?

There are considerations for varied pay as well as the time of day that course is taught.

Varied pay depends on the discipline specific fields. Technology, economics, and law require increased pay compared to other fields due to the special skill sets and availability for the adjunct to make additional money elsewhere.

Some universities have policies that after a designated amount of time, the adjunct must be hired as full-time faculty or no longer be able to teach as an adjunct.

Distance teaching – allowing instructors to sign in from a distance to classes that are physically present on campus. This provides the opportunity to do a nationwide search for adjuncts. For example, the adjunct in engineering is traveling all over the world and teaches the class from a different location each week. Live streaming provides the opportunity for an adjunct to teach from anywhere in the world and still have live access to the classroom of students in the physical classroom. In addition, this can provide a true picture of the field of study in the world, as the adjunct can talk about what is going on in the country where s/he is currently located.

Recruiting individuals who are currently working in the field can provide access to excellent instructors as well as provide contacts for students who will be seeking future job placement and career opportunities. It can give students access to real world skills and access and talk to someone who is actually doing what is presented in the classroom.

- 2) What is the best method to ensure hires are quality teachers, have the appropriate credentials, and are willing to work in cooperation with both the departmental and university-wide mission and vision?

Full-time faculty are paid as an expert coordinator to assist and guide the adjunct for each semester taught.

- 3) Qualified part-time instructors can be hard to find and are often seeking a position that can lead to a full-time appointment. What are the motivations and long-term goals of the part-time instructor?

Retired faculty want to stay involved at a less stressful level and at a level that requires less of a time commitment.

Younger adjuncts want to build their resume to help acquire full-time faculty positions later.

Experienced professionals desire to help future workers to ensure quality within the field.

- 4) What is the contingency plan in the event that a quality part-time instructor cannot be secured?

Full-time faculty would need to teach in an overload capacity. Hopefully, they would be well compensated for this, but if the supplemental pay is not available, they would still need to take on the extra workload.

- 5) Is there a back-up plan in the event that a part-time instructor abruptly quits or must be relieved mid-semester or mid-academic year?

Have adjuncts team teach and share the pay. This can help in case one worker cannot complete the semester. Additionally, this can capitalize on individual strengths.

Recruiting Part-Time Instructors:

- 1) What are some strategies to maintain academic rigor and a relatively seamless transition when moving a position from a full-time, tenure-track faculty position to a part-time instructor?

Hire adjuncts who are graduates of the program who therefore understand the intricacies the program.

Provide additional pay for developing new courses. With proper oversight, this will ensure appropriate academic rigor and consistency with departmental goals and objectives.

2) What are effective methods to recruit and retain qualified part-time faculty?

Hire retired faculty and use multi-year contracts can help retain adjunct faculty.

Provide a ladder structure in pay for adjuncts depending on their degree status, job experience, years as an adjunct, and qualifications.

Professionals in the working community are looking for qualified candidates for the workplace. Professionals working as an adjunct can recruit from their classes upon graduation. This can also help improve the internship partnerships and availability.

3) How do you recruit and train part-time instructors for online classes when those individuals often live a considerable distance from the university?

Provide online orientation for processes that are institutional-specific, for example routines, learning management systems and assessment policies and procedures.

4) What are strategies to evaluate and provide feedback for part-time instructors?

Full-time faculty take roles as course managers for courses with multiple sections. This provides consistency for the varied courses and guidance for the various instructors. The full-time faculty writes the course while consulting with all instructors and copies the course as needed.

5) What are the trends you have noted pertaining to the use of part-time instructors at your university?

Discussion groups ranged from a 5:1 full-time to adjunct ratio to 1:2 (meaning there were two adjuncts for every full-time faculty).

Full-time faculty are increasingly being replaced with adjuncts.

Responsibilities and policies and autonomy of the adjuncts varied throughout the groups with unions and accrediting bodies being important factors.

Dr. Kim Hawkins
Chair of Education &
Counseling khawkins@cn.edu

Prof. Julie Rabun, Chair of
Art jrabun@cn.edu

Dr. Jeff Knox
Chair of Physical Education
& Exercise Science
jknox@cn.edu



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