

# New Faculty Majority: Does Our Dependence on Adjunct Faculty Harm Educational Quality?

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### THE FACTS

- **College Enrollment**

According to Digest of Education Statistics 2008, College enrollment was a projected 18.2 million in fall 2008, higher than in any previous year except 2007. College enrollment is expected to continue setting new records throughout the fall 2009 through fall 2017 period. Between fall 2007 and fall 2017, enrollment is expected to increase by 10 percent. Despite decreases in the traditional college-age population during the late 1980s and early 1990s, total enrollment increased during this period. The traditional college-age population (18 to 24 years old) rose 16 percent between 1997 and 2007, which was reflected by an increase of 26 percent in college enrollment.

- **Faculty**

In fall 2007, degree-granting institutions—defined as postsecondary institutions that grant an associate's or higher degree— employed 1.4 million faculty members, including 0.7 million full-time and 0.7 million part-time faculty ([table 245](#)). In addition, degree-granting institutions employed 0.3 million graduate assistants. (from Digest of Education Statistics 2008 <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d08/>.)

In Fall 2003, 2-Year Public Colleges nationwide employed 112,870 full-time faculty (or 31% of total faculty) as compared to 246,055 part-time faculty. This comprehensive study by the U.S. Dept. of Education is done every five years and these statistics are the latest available.

However the percentage of full-time faculty has fallen since 1987:

#### **Faculty Employment Status (Percent)\***

<b>Year</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time/Adjunct</b>
1987	66.9	33.1
1992	58.4	41.6
1998	57.4	42.6
2007	51.3	49.7

\*from *The Digest of Educational Statistics*

Here in California the Community College System-Office statistics show that in Fall 2008 there were:

Tenured / Tenure Track 18,200 bodies 20,825.0 FTE

Academic Temporary 45,265 bodies 17,165.7 FTE

## **GOOD REASONS FOR USING PART-TIME FACULTY**

- Bringing in particular expertise or professional experience to certain program areas. Cutting edge, and evolving fields present special needs that may require the latest technical knowledge. (e.g. computers or graphic media)
- Contributing expertise in a small and particular discipline area of a program for which none of the full-time faculty are qualified. (e.g. foreign languages)
- Filling in for the temporary loss of a full-time faculty member. (sabbatical)
- Providing for sudden and short-term growth in particular program areas. (e.g. criminal justice/police academy, green technology)

## **WHY NOT TO USE PART-TIME FACULTY**

- Part-time contingent faculty are:
  - often hired at the last minute or switched around from one course to another,
  - not allowed to prepare adequately or choose their textbook
  - not given institutional support or feedback
  - lack staff development offerings because of odd teaching hours
  - not provided with office hours or offices where they can meet with students
  - not often available to contribute to curriculum or program development
  - unable to control their career path into full-time status and therefore they spread themselves out among several colleges hoping to make a living and gain an entrée into permanent status.
  - fearful of participating in shared governance where disagreements could lead to dismissal
  - afraid to be too tough on students because their class' "fill rate" is based on student word-of-mouth

## **HOW CONTINGENT LABOR AFFECTS LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- Adjunct faculty average only seven years as teaching faculty in an institution
- Students are not able to get on-going academic support and continuity (e.g. letters of recommendation) from a rotating staff of teachers.
- Grant funding that could be useful to a program is not applied for because contingent faculty have no assurance that they will receive it.
- Grade inflation and the lowering of standards occurs because adjunct faculty are at the mercy of students who have forums such as Ratemyprofessors.com or Pick-A-Prof.
- Departmental norming or assessment becomes skewed when part-time faculty are unable to be involved in the creation of course standards and the student learning outcome assessment process due to other commitments (or lack of pay).
- Department success goals cannot be shared or created with faculty who are not around for such meetings.
- Students who wish to continue studying a higher level with certain adjunct faculty members may not be able to because of load restrictions placed on temporary teachers (e.g. California).

## **WHAT COLLEGES CAN DO TO IMPROVE THE ADJUNCT FACULTY SITUATION**

- Part-time/adjunct faculty should be hired initially with the same care and subjected to the same interview process as any other applicant to the department.
- A probationary period of time should be set for evaluation of part-time/adjunct faculty members after which they will achieve a form of job security.
- Create a seniority system that delivers a clear and fair process for reduction in force for these contingent employees.
- Encouraging adjunct faculty to pursue continuing education credits or higher degree attainment by rewarding these goals with higher pay.
- Requiring all employers (including colleges ) to provide health coverage for all employees will make hiring part-time faculty less financially attractive or necessary.
- Part-time/adjunct faculty should be permitted to order their own texts and design their own courses unless these are departmental decisions, in which case part-time faculty should be invited to participate in the deliberations.
- Qualified part-time/adjunct faculty how have successfully completed a probationary period should be given preference in consideration for full-time positions in accordance with the requirements of the position, the needs of the department and the college.
- Upon initial appointment, part-time/adjunct faculty members should be given an orientation to the institution and the department, to the curriculum and support services, to the institutions governance structure and the department's expectations regarding the successful performance of their duties.
- Teaching assignments should be given early enough for employees to plan their work hours with reasonable assurance of employment, scheduled day and time as well as course subject matter and textbook selection.
- Part-time/Adjunct faculty should be provided with suitable office space and should have paid office hours to meet with their students.
- Those who have achieved seniority and the job security that goes with it should be invited to participate in departmental meetings and committee with voting privileges and should be compensated for doing so.
- Part-time/adjunct faculty should be provided with the same resources that full-time faculty have available to them such as technical support, supplies, duplicating services, financial support for conferences, workshops, tuition reimbursement and other staff development opportunities.

### **Citations**

1. The National Center for Education Statistics <http://nces.ed.gov>
2. The Digest of Education <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d08/>
3. Standards of Good Practice in the Employment of Part-time/Adjunct Faculty, AFT Higher Education Program & Policy Council 2002
4. California Community Colleges Chancellors Office, Oct. 8/09 [http://employee.data.cccco.edu/statewide\\_summary\\_08.pdf](http://employee.data.cccco.edu/statewide_summary_08.pdf)