PART-TIME FACULTY FULL-TIME COMMITMENT: ENHANCING INCLUSION AND SUPPORT

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the importance of colleges changing its relationship with its part-time faculty through enhancing professional development through engagement, inclusion and support.

Kezar A., Maxey D., Eaton J. indicate that college leaders can ask themselves whether their expectations for part-time faculty are aligned with student needs; they can expect part-time faculty to participate in professional development, meaningful interaction with students, and incorporate high-impact practices in their teaching. Colleges can reallocate existing dollars to make sure part-time faculty have the support they need to help students succeed.

Administrators who want to better serve their students should re-examine their expectations of and support for their part-time faculty’s professional development and how both are shaped by the institution’s culture, policies, and practices.

KEYWORDS: Part-time faculty; Professional development; Higher education; Student engagement

INTRODUCTION

Kezar A., Maxey D., Eaton J. (2013), suggest that part-time faculty have long been a part of higher education, where they grew in numbers beginning in the 1970s. Research indicates that they were not commonly represented in large numbers across four-year institutions until the last decade or so. Part-time faculty have experienced the most significant rate of growth over the last 30 to 40 years. The population increased by 422.1 percent between 1970 and 2003, compared to an increase of only 70.7 percent among all full-time faculty, both tenure track and non-tenure track (Schuster and Finkelstein, 2006). The nature of the American academic workforce has fundamentally shifted over the past several decades. Whereas full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty were once the norm, the professoriate is now comprised of mostly non-tenure-track faculty. In 1969, tenured and tenure-track positions made up approximately 78.3 percent of the faculty and non-tenure-track positions comprised about 21.7 percent (Schuster, Finkelstein, 2006). Forty years later, in 2009, these proportions had nearly flipped: tenured and tenure-track faculty had declined to 33.5 percent and 66.5 percent of faculty were ineligible for tenure (Kezar A., Maxey D., 2013). Of the non-tenuretrack positions, 18.8 percent were full-time and 47.7 percent were part-time, which is quite significant. Therefore, sending a clear message that administrators have high opinions of part-time non-tenure-track faculty and that they are valued for a commitment to teaching, their contributions through enhancing classroom education with relevant professional experiences, and the flexibility afforded the university to schedule
appropriate numbers of courses. University administrators should also see the value of allowing part-time and full-time faculty more opportunities to pursue research which will illustrate the faculty’s value for a commitment to teaching and professionalism (C. Hollenshead, J. Waltman, L. August, J. Miller, G. Smith, A. Bell, 2007). Part-time faculty are a diverse group of professionals who bring a broad range of skills and expertise to colleges and universities. Kezar A., Maxey D., Eaton J. (2013), provides a typology of Part-time Faculty which are listed below:

- Faculty hoping to use part-time teaching as a springboard to a full-time appointment
- Faculty who piece together a full- or overfull-workload by teaching classes at multiple institutions or on multiple campuses of the same institution (often called freeway fliers)
- Faculty who choose to work part time while balancing other life demands
- Career professionals who teach about the fields in which they are working, either offering practical expertise or filling a need for a specific specialty (e.g., teaching a foreign language) or for a new class in an emerging field (e.g., green technology)
- Online faculty who work for one or more colleges
- Graduate students
- Retirees
- Administrators and staff

**Engaging and Including Part-time Faculty**

Universities know they cannot effectively enhance greater student success without making sure that part-time faculty have the support they need to serve their students effectively. According to (Gappa J. M., Leslie D. W., 1993) part-time faculty have the perception that they are not acknowledged by colleagues. Gappa and Leslie described a system wherein part-time faculty are not compensated equitably for their workloads and have no job security. Colleges determined to make good on their commitments to students understand that they must rethink their relationship with contingent or part-time faculty. Kezar A., Maxey D., Eaton J. (2013), indicated for example, to serve their students effectively, colleges will need to consider whether their expectations of part-time faculty are consistent with what is known about effective educational practice; whether the institutions provide and require the kinds of orientation, professional development, and other supports needed to promote student learning and academic progress. The roles and concerns of part-time faculty differ from college to college, and in fact, considerable differences often emerge across divisions and departments within the same college. But what really should and often does matter most to part-time faculty is the same: professional development opportunities, effective instruction and support for students. It is the institution’s job to create the conditions that encourage and enable that work. Jaeger A. J., Eagan, M. K. (2010), in a study of six public, four-year institutions in a state public higher
education system, discovered that the use of part-time faculty at doctoral intensive institutions generated positive effects with regard to student retention. Jaeger and Eagan uncovered a system of support and development for contingent faculty, which included part-time faculty participation in new faculty orientations and targeted attention to address common challenges that part-time faculty face, such as large class sizes and a lack of knowledge of campus academic support services and resources for students. The authors findings suggest that more purposeful integration of contingent or part-time faculty into the life and operations of the institution promises to contribute to improving student success.

Kezar A., Maxey D., Eaton J. (2013) indicated that efforts to improve can begin with better understanding of the strengths, challenges, teaching practices, concerns, and aspirations of college faculty who work part time. Then, focusing persistently on what matters most for improving student success, colleges can determine what changes to their interactions with contingent or part-time faculty will most powerfully promote that improvement. The American Association of University Professors (2003), suggest that colleges can take a number of steps to better engage part-time faculty by creating effective solutions relating to all dimensions of the college’s interactions with these teaching professionals. Redefine jobs and repurpose time so all faculty are interacting with students and furthering efforts to engage them.

American Association of University Professors (2003), also indicated that colleges can express high expectations and provide high support as well as conducting campus conversations about policy and practice related to part-time faculty and ways the college can more effectively support their work. Campus administrators must ensure that part-time faculty are broadly involved in these conversations by creating an integrated pathway for part-time faculty. The pathway should include the hiring process, orientation, professional development, evaluation, incentives, and integration into the college community and the student success agenda. According to Phillips K. D., Campbell D. F. (2005), colleges should design discernable avenues to full-time employment to part-time staff but at the same time, recognize that not all part-time faculty want to be full-time faculty. Keeping student success and effective educational practice as primary considerations, use the strengths and talents of each part-time faculty member by matching each to the professional tasks that bring the greatest benefit to students.

Bettinger E., Long B. T. (2010), indicated that colleges should recognize part-time faculty in monetary ways, when possible, and in non-monetary ways as well. For example, acknowledge teaching excellence in the adjunct faculty, invite part-time faculty to demonstrate effective teaching strategies to faculty peers, and mitigate second-class status by giving adjuncts titles that reflect accomplishment (e.g., associate faculty) and name badges that identify them as “faculty”.

The Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success (2012), suggest that colleges include part-time faculty in professional development and campus-wide events and must consider these questions: How should we engage all of our faculty to serve students well? How will we include all faculty in discussions about policies and practices that lead to improved student success? How are we going to support everyone whose primary responsibility is to promote student learning? The Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success (2012), indicated that answering these questions is not just about part-time faculty. It’s about quality of teaching and learning college-wide. It’s about making sure more students have
access to high-impact experiences and faculty who are prepared to engage them in those practices. It is, in the end, about the critical steps that colleges must take to achieve their goals for improving student learning, academic progress, and college completion.

**Part-time Faculty Professional Development**

Phillips K. D., Campbell D. F. (2005), suggest that as college leaders consider how to strengthen the role of part-time faculty, a key element is the importance of faculty members’ interactions with one another, not just with students. Decades of research demonstrate the value of professional development. According to Phillips and Campbell, “In a study done at 14 institutions involving over 900 Faculty, 61% stated that they had introduced a new technique or approach in their teaching as a result of being involved in [a] faculty development program. Of these, 89% stated that it had improved their teaching effectiveness in some way” (2005, p. 59).

Focus groups with part-time faculty reveal a desire for more professional learning and an appreciation for the mentoring and training they receive from their colleagues. Part-time faculty need the opportunity to form collegial relationships, discuss data and the questions they raise, and benefit from peer feedback on their teaching (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2014). In many cases, particularly for faculty who teach only in the evening, on weekends, or online, part-time faculty don’t even have the opportunity to pass their colleagues in the hall (Phillips, Campbell, 2005).

Phillips K. D., Campbell D. F. also indicated that for many part-time faculty, contingent employment goes hand-in-hand with being marginalized within the faculty. It is not uncommon for part-time faculty to learn which, if any, classes they are teaching just weeks or days before a semester begins. Their access to orientation, professional development, administrative and technology support, office space, and accommodations for meeting with students typically is limited, unclear, or inconsistent. McQuiggan C. A. suggests that within an adult education framework, one needs to consider the characteristics of faculty as adult learners and be aware of their pressing problems, concerns, and issues in their professional lives.

Faculty members bring with them a diversity of life experiences, educational experiences, personalities, learning preferences, and uniqueness. McQuiggan C. A. also indicate that this shapes their perspectives on their teaching practices, influences how they will teach in the future, and even influences their motivation to participate in professional development activities. Layne J., Froyd J., Simpson N., Caso R., and Merton P. (2004), stated that professional development and support, should include learning about effective teaching, having an assigned mentor, other intentional connections with colleagues, awareness of and access to college resources that support faculty work, and familiarity with resources that support students.

Furthermore, developing evaluation and incentives, which should include performance review and feedback, compensation, and recognition of professional contributions and excellence. Whitelaw C., Sears M., and Campbell K. (2004), suggest that most faculty are not experts in the theoretical underpinnings of pedagogy in general and the pedagogy of online environments in particular, and institutions are not in a position to support them in large-scale. Bates (2000),
indicated that one solution to this problem of resources and reorientation involves the creation of support units through which instructional developers work directly with faculty to develop online professional learning environments and through that process involve faculty in a process of personal and professional development. Research reveals that faculty working along with instructional developers on educational development projects is a potential opportunity for transformation with implications for faculty as learners and the quality of student learning experiences. Furthermore, research-intensive universities around the world are increasingly drawing upon leading practitioners in professional fields as adjunct faculty to deliver high quality student learning experiences in diverse undergraduate and graduate program contexts (Arai et al., 2007; Ehrenberg, 2012; Marshall, Orell, Cameron, Bosanquet, Thomas, 2011).

Due to complex contractual teaching workloads and/or limited time available (outside of assigned teaching duties) to engage in university professional development initiatives, adjunct teaching faculty are often unaware of institutional and discipline-specific structures (e.g. academic cultures, specific graduate attributes and accreditation standards, program renewal developments) that shape program-level teaching and learning practices (Peters, Boylston, 2006; Webb A. S., Wong T. J., Hubball H. T., 2013). For the most part, contracted adjunct teaching faculty around the world are assigned specific course based teaching duties and work in relative isolation to the academic milieu of the university (Hendricson et al., 2007; Steinert et al., 2006; Webb A. S., Wong T. J., Hubball H. T., 2013). Despite an abundance of available literature on best educational practices and professional development initiatives that are typically offered by university teaching and learning centers, there is little opportunity (structured or informal) for adjunct teaching faculty to share experiences, investigate, and embrace contemporary approaches to curriculum and pedagogy with other colleagues in the immediacy of their own discipline and program settings in which they teach (Lydon, King, 2009; Vaughan, 2004; Webb A. S., Wong T. J., Hubball H. T., 2013).

According to (Webb A. S., Wong T. J., Hubball H. T., 2013), many challenges and areas for improvement still remain, however, there are encouraging trends of change such as:

1. Indications of high level engagement in adjunct teaching faculty professional development initiatives
2. Enhanced quality of teaching (through demonstrable professional development portfolio outcomes)
3. Student learning experiences (e.g., learning-centered course design and assessment practices)
4. Increased leadership and contributions toward program-level discussions
5. Increased enrollments in further graduate level study for the scholarship of teaching

Recognizing that preservice training is no longer sufficient for an effective teaching career, the research encouraged countries and institutions to support faculty members in updating their digital skills and in developing inclusive teaching strategies for students. Such training could increase teachers’ preparedness and improve student learning outcomes (Meixner, C., Kruck, S. E., & Madden, L. T., 2010). It is evident that developing faculty to teach is a complex challenge. Furthermore, faculty development activities are not singular or sequential, but involve an ongoing commitment of time and money. The goal is quality education of students, and this does not
happen without well-prepared faculty. The process of creating a faculty development program for instruction includes both educational and technological issues. To ensure quality and student learning, sound educational theory and principles must be used for professional development and delivery.

**PART-TIME FACULTY’S ROLE IN STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

The link between faculty professional development and student learning outcomes has been investigated by scholarly and professional literature (Gulamhussein, 2013; Meixner C., Kruck S. E., Madden L. T., 2010). However, this relationship is not automatic. Guskey and Yoon (2009), suggested improving the quality of research investigating the link between professional development and student learning despite the difficulty of measuring causal relationships in educational settings is paramount to the success of universities. However, there is a consensus based on the premise that professional development can increase student learning outcomes under certain circumstances (DeMonte, 2013; Gulamhussein, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Archibald S., Cogshall J., Croft A., Goe L., 2011). Students can actually benefit from faculty professional development if their teachers effectively change their practices and/or attitudes (Desimone, 2011; Archibald S., Cogshall J., Croft A., Goe L., 2011). Professional development programs should include opportunities for experiential learning, reflections, and follow-up discussions among the faculty to sustain instructional changes (DeMonte, 2013; Archibald S., Cogshall J., Croft A., Goe L., 2011).

Barker A. (2003), indicated that educators value intellectual and empathetic connections with students and this does not have to change in an online environment. However, this is another area of faculty development that needs to be addressed. Kuh (2001), suggest that student engagement is defined as student involvement in educationally purposeful activities. Research has shown that student engagement is the strongest predictor of students’ learning and personal development (Pascarella, Terenzini, 2005; Dumford A. D., Cogswell C.A., Miller A. L., 2016). Understanding how the relationship between faculty and students affects engagement should inform the implementation of university programs and faculty development. There are many elements that contribute to student engagement and faculty development, both inside and outside of the classroom (Kuh, 2001). Adjunct status can impact many aspects of students’ experiences (Umbach, 2007; Dumford A. D., Cogswell C.A., Miller A. L., 2016). In addition to time constraints, adjunct faculty may also be constrained by pre-established syllabi and course assignments, from which they must not stray. This may be negatively impacting engagement in faculty led courses, suggesting that the importance of effective teaching practices extends beyond just learning and development to engagement as well (Kuh, Hu, 2001).

Professional literature has highlighted the importance of faculty professional learning to remain abreast of instructional and technological changes in order to effectively support student learning (Gadio, Carlson, 2002; Jeannin, 2016). Prior to providing professional development opportunities, the university administration should be expected to better understand faculty members’ needs to ensure that programs could enhance teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom.
Research has uncovered teachers’ needs and preferences for professional development in the context of the university. Through qualitative studies, the research has identified teachers’ perceived needs and preferences for professional development to design appropriate and timely programs supporting their pedagogical effectiveness. Research also identifies teachers’ perceived needs through teachers’ buy-in, which is crucial for the effectiveness of professional development programs (Archibald S., Coggshall J., Croft A., Goe L., 2011). Having their perceived needs heard is expected to increase teachers’ engagement in professional growth. The research indicates that the development of positive changes in teachers’ pedagogical practices through the implementation of professional development programs and the subsequent enhancement of student learning outcomes is necessary for professional growth among faculty (DeMonte, 2013; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, Shapley, 2007).

**PART-TIME FACULTY HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES (HIPs)**

Roney K., Ulerick, Sarah L. (2013), indicated that what we know about why students succeed and the significance of their engaging with faculty demands that we create spaces and situations where such opportunities can occur. An institutional roadmap toward improving conditions for two-thirds of our faculties will help higher education improve student outcomes and, more importantly, help students to reach their educational goals. Roney K., Ulerick, Sarah L. (2013), also indicated that well-intentioned colleges can improve the working conditions of the growing part-time faculty and student engagement by suggesting the following based on literature and practical experiences as academic administrators and former faculty members, both full-time and part-time:

1. Examine existing professional development structures, including those supported by committees, divisions, or disciplines to see how opportunities can be expanded to include part-time faculty. Can a relatively small investment of funding broaden your inclusivity?
2. Examine “power and privilege” differences in the “geospatial” aspects of faculty work. Can you replace worn out computers, desks, and chairs to make faculty life for all members more equitable?
3. Evaluate the orientation, mentoring, and recognition opportunities for part-time faculty. Does the orientation position part-time faculty to be integrated into the life of the institution? Are engaged pedagogies discussed? Is the mentoring program formal or casual? Do your recognition systems value all faculty? Can contract structures be altered for long-time part-time faculty members to cover multiple years or multiple terms?

Kuh G. D. (2008), prompted dialogue across the country on the use of certain educational practices that research demonstrates have an impact on student learning outcomes and progress toward graduation. These practices - now commonly known as “high-impact practices” or (HIPs) - include such things as first-year seminars, service-learning, writing-intensive courses, learning communities, undergraduate research, and capstone experiences. Increased attention to these
practices also has sparked new interest in faculty and staff professional development to prepare faculty to implement the practices. Kuh G. D. (2008), points to the value and utility of HIPs in providing an improved learning experience for all students. In fact, HIPs can provide students exactly the kinds of active and engaged learning experiences that help them develop the skills and knowledge essential for success in work, life, and citizenship.

To truly take advantage of the promise of HIPs, however, we must invest in developing all faculty members' capacity to implement HIPs in effective ways and for more students. Kuh G. D. (2008), research sought to work with faculty in a variety of institutions and disciplines to bring HIPs more broadly and intentionally into the undergraduate experience. Kuh G. D. (2008), has documented widespread positive impact of HIPs, he reminds practitioners that, to engage students at high levels, these practices must be done well. Further, for greatest impact, students must also experience these practices more than once. Many institutions are working to enable students to experience HIPs and HIP-like practices frequently throughout the curriculum. While calling for high-impact learning experiences for all students, Kuh also emphasizes the heightened benefits received from these practices by students from underserved populations. Research continues to recommend multiple high-impact learning experiences for all students and to stress the importance of equitable access. Kuh G. D. (2008), suggested that our society can no longer afford to reserve islands of innovation for a select group of students while others, often students traditionally underserved, receive an education more suited to the industrial age.

Roney K. Ulerick, Sarah L. (2013), suggested that in order for HIPs to spread, faculty members need development and encouragement to innovate in the classroom. They need the right tools and a conducive environment to develop high-quality high-impact practices. Where the majority of faculty are teaching part-time or on contingent contracts, there are particular challenges for institutions to foster innovation and adoption of HIPs by more faculty. However research has shown that there are faculty innovators at work across all institutional types, including broad-access public institutions.

The Center for Community College Student Engagement, (2014); Roney K., Ulerick, Sarah L., (2013), highlighted the following practices that support innovation and productive faculty development:

1. Professional development opportunities for all faculty (full-time and part-time) to introduce them to high-impact practices, assessment, and course design
2. Individual faculty mentoring for collaborative teaching
3. Faculty reward structures that support innovation in the classroom, including the use of technology to facilitate collaboration
4. Partnerships between staff and faculty across disciplines to promote curricular and cocurricular learning throughout a student’s educational experience

A crucial element beyond these recommendations is each faculty member’s personal motivation to provide an educational experience for all students that will inspire creativity, stimulate problem
solving, and foster a level of engagement that transcends the classroom and fosters lifelong learning. Roney, K., Ulerick, Sarah L. (2013), indicated that the development and delivery of high-quality high-impact practices depends on both institutional support and faculty dedication. The Center for Community College Student Engagement (2013), indicated that college faculty should focus on specific components of the practices, such as study skills, time management, and learning about college services and resources. By focusing on components, college faculty can construct the practices to meet explicit goals for learning, skill building, and student support. The Center for Community College Student Engagement, (2013), suggest that as colleges examine and redesign students’ educational experiences, they will benefit from thoughtful discussions that include a range of stakeholders. These discussions should be informed whenever possible by data, so participants can evaluate the effectiveness of the college’s current practices as well as those under consideration.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion research on professional development of part-time faculty clearly articulate high expectations and then provide the training and support needed to meet those expectations. The Center for Community College Student Engagement, (2014), indicated that faculty development work begins with the institutional process of defining and communicating what matters to the college - clearly articulating institutional values, goals, and related expectations for employees. Schuster J. H. (2003), indicated that throughout the work of listening to part-time faculty, most part-time faculty had high and clearer expectations on the matter of professional development. Roney K., Ulerick, Sarah L. (2013), suggested that part-time faculty are responsible for the majority of instructional time, and they typically receive the least support. This research grows out of one stark reality that part-time faculty are essentially working with one hand tied behind their backs. Rhoades G. (2013), stated that colleges need to do a better job of working with part-time faculty because engaging all Faculty is a vital step toward meeting college completion goals. The Center for Community College Student Engagement (2014), indicated that contingent or part-time faculty have become a fundamental feature of the economic model that sustains college education. Institutions’ interactions with part-time faculty result in a profound incongruity. Colleges depend on part-time faculty to educate more than half of their students, yet they do not fully embrace these faculty members. Because of this disconnect, contingency can have consequences that negatively affect student engagement and learning.

The Center for Community College Student Engagement (2014), also suggested that engagement matters - for students as well as for the faculty and staff who are responsible for helping students learn and achieve their goals. It is essential that colleges find ways to engage part-time faculty because they are responsible for such a significant part of most students’ college experience. Data that accurately depict Faculty experiences at the college should be the starting point for campus conversations. Faculty engagement survey data, data from focus groups, and data from other sources must routinely be disaggregated to reveal significant disparities in the experiences of part-time versus full-time faculty (The Center for Community College Student Engagement,
Data will often lead to more questions than answers, so a process of inquiry will require a commitment of effort over time. Enhancing knowledge and understanding will help colleges create new systems that better support part-time faculty. These actions will, in turn, produce conditions more consistently conducive to faculty and student success.

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