Notes From the Literature:
Part-Time Faculty in Higher Education

BY THE NUMBERS

- From 2003 to 2009, the number of full-time faculty at community colleges grew by 2%, while that of part-time faculty grew by approximately 10% (Knapp, Kelley-Reid, & Gindler, 2010).
- During 2009, the United States' 987 public community colleges hired more than 400,000 faculty members; roughly 70% were part-time (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2010).
- As of 2008, part-time faculty taught approximately 58% of community college classes, in which they were instructing 53% of students (JBL Associates, 2008).
- Community colleges employ a far larger share of part-time faculty than four-year institutions; in the fall of 2005 67% of all two-year college faculty was employed part-time (JBL Associates, 2008).
- Part-time faculty members teach an average of two classes per semester at any given institution, which is less than half of the average course load of full-time faculty. However, it is not uncommon for part-time instructors to teach at multiple institutions in a single semester (JBL Associates, 2008).

INSTITUTIONAL FLEXIBILITY

- In order to remain economically accessible for disadvantaged students, many community colleges save money by increasing their share of part-time faculty members rather than passing the cost of budget cuts down to students in the form of tuition increases (Christensen, 2008).
- Part-time faculty hires provide flexibility around the schedule changes created by last-minute enrollment changes at community colleges (Christensen, 2008).
- Part-time faculty "are chosen less carefully… the institution is making no long-term commitment to them, [and] there is no need to spend a great deal of time and money in selection" (Cohen and Brawer, 2003, p. 87).
- While part-time faculty members provide institutions some financial flexibility (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006), their increased use has raised concerns about the quality of education provided, as measured by graduation and transfer rates, teaching practices, and student-faculty contact (Eagan & Jaeger, 2009).

ROLE AMBIGUITY AND TURNOVER

- Some part-time faculty members are reluctant to participate in institutional governance, even when invited by full-time faculty; uncertainty about future employment may prevent them from voting on major issues. (Adamowicz, 2007).
- Part-time faculty members are often excused from the committee, research, and community service responsibilities expected of full-time faculty; nonetheless, JBL Associates (2008) contend that, "it is not reasonable to suggest that contingent [or part-

time] faculty members deserve to be paid at the disproportionably low wages they currently earn for the valuable service they provide" (p. *ii*).

- Despite reporting that they are "somewhat satisfied" with their current position, part-time faculty members express concerns about pay, benefits, and job security (Kramer, Gloeckner, and Jacoby, 2014, p. 295).
- Wagoner (2007) notes that the literature is divided regarding part-time faculty job satisfaction. The author's findings suggest that part-time faculty members are less satisfied than their full-time colleagues, but that within the part-time faculty group, instructors in the vocational and training disciplines tend to be more satisfied than those in the academic disciplines.
- Nearly one out of every two (49%) part-time faculty members in Kramer, Gloeckner, and Jacoby's 2014 study aspires to a full-time position.
- Liu (2007) asserts that part-time faculty members have much in common with their full-time colleagues, but that the effectiveness of the former is greatly influenced by hiring colleges' efforts at inclusiveness and integration.

FOR THE SAKE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- According to Schuster (2003), "Contingent [or part-time] faculty members spend a greater proportion of their overall time teaching, but…are less accessible to students, bring less scholarly authority to their jobs, and are less integrated into the campus culture" (p. 15).
- In the many academic departments where part-time faculty are in the majority, decisions about learning objectives and methods of evaluation are made by the full-time minority. Communication with part-time faculty about these decisions and the rationale behind them is often incomplete (Adamowicz, 2007).
- Klentzin and Bucci (2012) call part-time faculty members "the workhorses of higher education instruction" (101), noting their importance as instructors of gatekeeper courses—those general classes completed by all students before continuing on to more advanced courses in their fields of study.
- Part-time faculty are the more likely than their full-time colleagues to teach remedial, introductory, and general education courses (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006).
- A disproportionate amount of part-time faculty at a community college leads to increasing demands on the non-classroom time of campus' few full-time faculty members (Adamowicz, 2007).
- "Institutional reliance on part-time faculty…decreases the ability of all faculty…to conduct research, apply research, determine the selections of texts and methods of teaching and testing in their own classrooms, and share in the governance of their institutions. It encourages full- and part-time faculty to remain divided" (Adamowicz, 2007, p. 27).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Despite outnumbering their full-time counterparts, part-time faculty are less likely to be invited to participate in teaching evaluations and professional development opportunities (Roueche, Roueche, & Milliron, 1995).
- Targeted professional development, modeling, and access to materials and best practices are all key to making part-time faculty feel "valued and recognized for their contributions to the college" (Wallin, 2005, p. 219).
- In a 2005 study of over 900 faculty members at 14 institutions, 61% of faculty reported using new teaching methodologies as a result of their participation in professional development. Of these, 89% stated that the training had improved their effectiveness as a teacher (Phillips & Campbell, 2005).

INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION

- Gadberry and Burnstad (2005) highlight the importance of the hiring and orientation processes for community colleges seeking an integrated, high-quality part-time faculty presence on their campus.
- "For colleges with large percentages of part-time faculty it becomes the task of a small group of full-time faculty to do the work of the department, advising, curriculum development, program development, and institutional governance" (Akroyd & Caison, 2005, pp.38-39).
- Kezar, Maxey, and Eaton (2014) note that, once hired, part-time faculty are rarely offered the same levels of resources, support, and institutional inclusion as their full-time counterparts. Roueche et al. (1995) had earlier made similar observations: "The support functions that are available to full-time faculty…are not as accessible to part-time faculty, and there are fewer opportunities to enjoy the collegiality and professional development that are available to full-timers" (p. 15).
- Jacoby (2006) states that part-time faculty "may even be prohibited from membership on planning and curriculum committees. While individual part-time instructors may choose to invest heavily in their students or in their institutions, the economics of their contracts suggests that at the margin they will be less engaged than their full-time peers" (pg. 1085-6).

STUDENT SUCCESS OUTCOMES

- Roueche et al. (1995) note that, "Successful colleges assess the value of their actions by one overarching evaluative criterion: Is it good for the student?" a question whose answer depends on the teachers at the helm of their education (p. 157).
- Research by Eagen & Jaeger (2009) finds "a significant and negative association between students' transfer likelihood and their exposure to part-time faculty instruction…for every 10% increase in students' exposure to part-time faculty instruction, students tended to become almost 2% less likely to transfer…students who had all of their credits taught by part-time faculty were nearly 20% less likely to transfer than their peers who had only full-time faculty instruction" (p. 180). The authors go on to postulate that "if administrators provide part-timers with the necessary incentives to encourage them to connect with students outside the classroom, the negative relationship between students' likelihood to transfer and exposure to part-time faculty might be mitigated" (p. 183).
- Multiple regression analysis based on NCES (National Center for Educational Statistics) surveys and IPEDS graduation rates and employee demographics, reveals that "increases in the ratio of part-time faculty at community colleges have a highly significant and negative impact upon graduation rates" (Jacoby, 2006, p. 1092).
- Calcagno, et al. (2008) find that "the percentages of part-time faculty…remained negatively associated with the probability of completing or transferring" and that "the proportions of part-time faculty…were negatively associated with…educational success" (p. 639)

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