



NEWS RELEASE

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NEW REPORT FOCUSES ON WAYS TO ENGAGE PART-TIME FACULTY TO IMPROVE STUDENT SUCCESS

Community colleges depend on part-time faculty to teach more than half of all their credit students, yet college policies and practices typically do not invite part-time faculty into their institutions as full partners in promoting student success. This disconnect can have negative consequences for student engagement and success.

A special report released today by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE), *Contingent Commitments: Bringing Part-Time Faculty Into Focus*, aims to help college leaders more effectively engage part-time faculty so more students have access to the educational experiences and supports they need to succeed in college.

Among the findings highlighted in the report are data showing that part-time faculty are more likely to teach students who need the most help. More than three-quarters of faculty who teach developmental education are employed part time. Part-time faculty teaching developmental courses are also more likely to have fewer years of teaching experience and less likely to have advanced degrees and be on a tenure track.

While earlier research conducted by the Center (CCCSE, 2013) shows that the use of identified high-impact practices is low across the board, the report includes data revealing that, in most cases, part-time faculty use these practices even less frequently than full-time faculty.

Though many part-time faculty express their passion for teaching and commitment to student success, many also see themselves as outsiders in the colleges where they work. Many do not find out whether they will be teaching classes until just days before the term begins. Their access to orientation, professional development, college services, or office space to do their own work and meet with students is limited or simply unavailable. They rarely, if ever, are engaged in interaction with their peers or in campus discussions about the steps colleges need to take to improve student learning, persistence, and completion.

Reflecting on the findings presented in the report, CCCSE Director Kay McClenney says, “The practice of effectively engaging community college faculty has a lot in common with the practice of effectively engaging community college students. It is critical that college leaders clearly articulate high expectations and then provide the training and support all faculty need to attain those expectations.”

The report emphasizes that colleges committed to helping more students earn credentials must rethink their approaches to working with part-time faculty so that all faculty—both full-time and part-time—are expected and prepared to serve their students effectively. Through selected college examples and discussion tools, the report offers college leaders guidance on ways to strengthen the role of part-time faculty in their own institutions in specific areas, including hiring, setting expectations, and orientation; professional development and support; evaluation and incentives; integration of part-time faculty into student success initiatives; and, more broadly, creating an institutional culture that embraces the role of part-time faculty.

Drawing on the report’s findings, McClenney poses a question and offers both an answer and a challenge to community college leaders across the country: “What matters most? Students. Providing effective instruction and support for students needs to be at the heart of community college work.” As this report shows, it is community college leaders’ job to create the conditions that encourage and enable this work.

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Contingent Commitments: Bringing Part-Time Faculty Into Focus is available online: http://www.ccsse.org/docs/PTF_Special_Report.pdf

Contingent Commitments: Bringing Part-Time Faculty Into Focus provides data drawn from more than 70,000 faculty responses to the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE) between 2009 and 2013. In 2011, the Center added survey items focusing on high-impact practices for community college student success, and the number of faculty respondents during that period was 47,699. Through more than 30 focus groups, the Center also listened systematically to part-time faculty, full-time faculty, administrators, and staff at community colleges across the country. Findings from those discussions are also highlighted in this report.

Contingent Commitments: Bringing Part-Time Faculty Into Focus is part of a Center initiative, *Keys to Student Success: Strengthening the Role of Part-Time Faculty in Community Colleges*, funded by MetLife Foundation. The Center is a research and service initiative of the Program in Higher Education Leadership in the College of Education at The University of Texas at Austin.