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*Metropolitan colleges and universities draw on a rich pool of talented people to serve as part-time faculty. Our study shows that part-timers now teach major portions of undergraduate studies and that most institutions plan to use more in the future. We use data from our national study to describe who the part-timers are, how they contribute to their institutions, and the conditions in which they now work. We suggest how to use them in ways that strengthen academic programs and make a series of policy recommendations to that end.*

# The Part-Time Faculty Advantage

Metropolitan colleges and universities are fortunate to have a rich resource of talented and experienced people who seek opportunities to teach part-time. This article is based on research completed during 1990-91 and reported in our book, *The Invisible Faculty*. With support from TIAA-CREF and the Lilly Endowment, we visited 18 site institutions chosen to represent all types of institutions, all regions of the country, in both public and private control, and consisting of both unionized and nonunionized environments. Eleven of these institutions are in metropolitan locations. Over a seven-month period, we interviewed 240 part-time faculty members, 146 department chairs, 58 central administrators, and 23 faculty leaders. We will use examples from our site institutions and data from the National Center for Education Statistics to describe the "current realities" of part-time faculty employment, and the changes colleges and universities can make to strengthen part-time faculty performance.

## Part I. Current Realities

Part-time faculty now represent 35-38 percent of all faculty—some 270,000 people. The use of part-time and temporary faculty has become a way of life at many institutions, especially at metropolitan colleges and universities, despite the fact that the part-timers are often treated as a casual and contingent workforce. They have become, often by default, the "packhorses" of lower-division undergraduate teaching. Budgets are balanced and classes as-

signed on the assumption that 20, 30, or 50 percent of all undergraduate sections will be taught by faculty members who are hired for temporary assignments. The colleges and universities we visited reported that they planned to continue to use part-timers in large numbers in the future.

One sign that the situation is a permanent part of academic life is our finding that individual part-timers often become long-term members of the faculty. Almost half (48.5 percent) have taught at their institution four or more years, and 6.5 percent have taught at their institution 20 or more years (Gappa and Leslie, 1993). Several had been teaching at the same institution for over 30 years.

Despite their widespread use, they remain a largely unrecognized, under-rewarded, and invisible part of the academic profession. Instead of being accepted as colleagues, the part-timers confirm that they live on the margins of a professoriate that, as Bowen and Schuster have pointed out, has inexorably become bifurcated into two strata: the tenured "haves" and the temporary, part-time "have-nots." There was wide agreement that the "have-not" faculty sustain the tenured and tenure-track faculty: the low costs and heavy undergraduate teaching loads of the "have-nots" help make possible the security of tenure and the availability of time and money for full-time faculty to do research.

But there is more to the story. It is increasingly important that *all* faculty be real partners in the quest for quality; part-timers are simply too numerous to be ignored. Part-time faculty bring impressive assets to their teaching assignments, and they provide colleges and universities with a greater breadth of talent than could be found at any price in an increasingly problematic market. The question we want to raise is: "How can metropolitan institutions make the best use of part-time faculty?" To answer that question we begin by looking at who the part-timers are—their backgrounds, interests, and motivations. We then examine their value to their institutions and their current employment conditions. We conclude with a series of recommendations that we think will help strengthen academic programs.

## *Who are the Part-Time Faculty?*

Part-time faculty are diverse, talented, and highly qualified. At virtually every site institution we interviewed a wide variety of part-timers. Some had full-time jobs as professionals, specialists, or experts. They had advanced training in fields like medicine, allied health, biochemistry, mathematics and statistics, public administration, business, education, social work, law, and criminal justice. Some had teaching assignments in courses closely related to their specialization; others taught basic courses such as introductory college mathematics. According to the 1988 NCES survey data, over half of the part-time faculty (52.5 percent) have other *full*-time employment. Only 18 percent of part-timers' total income is derived from part-time teaching (NCES, 1990). Some were constrained by care-giving responsibilities or

were in transition to retirement. Others were artists with studio and performance responsibilities who did not want a full-time faculty position. For almost all, their teaching represented a professional commitment and a source of personal satisfaction. Income was an important, but not necessarily the primary, motivation to teach. On the contrary, many of those we interviewed simply wanted to make a contribution to the community or enjoyed the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience with others.

Only a minority of our interviewees were aspiring academics who were fully credentialed for and sought full-time tenure-bearing positions. Some aspiring academics had put together several part-time assignments at one institution; more commonly, aspiring academics, known as "freeway fliers" at metropolitan institutions, travel from one campus to another.

### *Part-Timers Add Value*

In metropolitan colleges and universities, the rich array of human resources in the community makes it possible to do things that other institutions cannot afford to do. Part-time faculty are often the critical people in developing and sustaining new and innovative programs. Virtually every metropolitan institution we visited provided examples of how they were able to broaden and deepen their academic programs with part-time faculty.

The level of experience part-time faculty have can be impressive. Retired executives from Fortune 500 companies; judges; directors of federal and state agencies; members of the foreign service; doctors and lawyers; school superintendents; entrepreneurs and small business owners; poets and authors; architects; artists and symphony players; and research scientists in government, business, and industry were among those identified at institutions we visited.

These experts are mature, experienced, insightful, and sophisticated in the practice of their art or profession, and they are able to relate theory to practice in unusually credible fashion. Adult students, in particular, consistently express appreciation for the ability of part-time faculty to bring concrete examples and vignettes from their own experience to class.

Metropolitan institutions, especially, deal with a highly diverse student body—older students, people changing from one profession to another, minorities and women in greater numbers and with more diverse motives and life circumstances. Substantial numbers of part-timers have specifically elected to teach part-time because they take considerable interest in the challenges of teaching a diverse group of students, particularly those who may enter college with more experience and with more focused professional interests. Part-timers, who seem to be more student-centered than subject matter or theory-centered in their approach to teaching, often prove highly effective in classes that are heavily populated with adults returning to college,

underprepared high school graduates, those from culturally different backgrounds, and students with learning problems.

Part-timers add value in other ways, too. Part-time faculty with full-time jobs and/or professional ties in the "real" world are valuable to programs that need sites where students can get clinical experience. They are also valuable to programs that need access to state-of-the-art equipment or front-of-the-curve ideas and practices.

In certain fields, institutions simply cannot keep up with changes in either professional practice or in the technology involved in practice. Many institutions noted that their capital budgets were so inadequate that their laboratories and workshops had fallen years behind. Part-time faculty with the right connections, however, had been able to provide students with access to the latest generation of computer technology, to new concepts in the arts and design fields, and to clinical internships in professional settings in which the state of practice is moving ahead more rapidly than the standard texts and traditionally trained faculty.

A dean of engineering at one of our metropolitan universities had built partnerships with local engineering firms. Part-time faculty from these firms come to the campus to teach a course as a regular part of their primary job in the local engineering industries. He commented:

> A major strength is part-time faculty. They add quality. They are much stronger teachers/experts than those [found in] institutions that use foreign-national graduate students to teach engineering and science. These part-time temporary faculty are experienced. We have a world center in engineering in our community.... We have a rich, rich pool. People who would never take a teaching job are teaching for us—presidents of companies, all kinds of expertise. [They have] outstanding peer and student evaluations. Many are teaching at upper-division and graduate levels. They are better than the tenured faculty in some cases.

Part-timers also serve, in a sense, as "risk capital" at some of the institutions we visited. By hedging on long-term commitments to a permanent faculty, institutions can explore markets for new programs, expand the market for existing programs, refine the program to include new specialties, experiment in the development of courses, limit costs, and generally control risk. Where demand is not clear or not easily established, institutions can start with small investments and tentative commitments by employing part-time faculty. Some of the programs we observed were starting at a very high level of quality and were staffed with fast-track people who were leaders of their professions in the community.

It should also be obvious that some part-timers are in a position—by virtue of community and political connections—to broaden the institution's base of friends and supporters. More than a few times, administrators mentioned how valuable it had been to have "X" on the faculty because it made a difference in fund raising or

public relations, or in access to political decisions. While this obviously should not be the prime consideration in hiring part-timers, it is an ancillary value that most institutions recognize, even if only implicitly.

In all these ways, and because they are highly motivated, part-time faculty add value. Yet, colleges and universities continue to use employment practices that reflect their view of part-timers as temporary and transient. Part-timers are vividly aware of their second-class status, a point eloquently made by one part-timer: "We need to be treated as respected colleagues. The medieval caste system that is now in place needs to be fixed."

### *Controversies and Conundrums: Part-Time Faculty Employment Conditions*

Commentaries, policy reports, and polemics continue to hammer away at the part-time faculty "problem." Why, if part-timers so clearly add value, does the academic community continue to treat them with ambivalence and avoidance? Why is it assumed that part-time faculty somehow impair "quality?"

We traced the problem back to a relatively simple explanation. Some, but certainly not all, institutions have lost control over their use of part-timers. They employ them indiscriminately as a way of saving money or as a short-term solution to a long-term problem, and they do not provide employment conditions conducive to excellent performance. Although most institutions prefer full-time faculty, sometimes financial considerations, rather than educational ones, become the basis for hiring part-time faculty. When fiscal motives become too strong, institutions may create conditions that impair the ability of all faculty, full- and part-time alike, to do a responsible job of educating. While these conditions were the focus of comments by many of the part-timers we interviewed during our study, we believe they can be remedied with some thoughtful changes in policies and practices.

Part-timers often complained about feeling "invisible," and talked about how they are ignored by full-time faculty. Accomplished and involved professionals on the outside, they are nevertheless treated like junior apprentices at the institutions where they teach. Or worse! One part-timer said: "We are treated as second-class citizens....You are not asked to go to lunch....No one says hi....There is a sheer pomposity about it."

Part-timers are also not routinely included in discussions about curriculum. Large portions of the lower-division curriculum are now taught by nontenure-track instructors. Excluding them from the committees and meetings at which goals and philosophy are discussed can only lead to gaps in the coordination and coherence of students' learning experience. Part-timers will not know what they need to know in order to provide effective instruction.

Part-timers get little support for their work, have few or no performance incen-

tives, do not usually have opportunities to develop and improve their knowledge and skills, and do not know how or on what basis they will be evaluated. As public concern about quality teaching is cresting, part-time faculty could become an ace-in-the-hole for institutions that want to show their commitment to excellence in the classroom. Some enlightened institutions have seen the payoff in investing in good teaching, whether part- or full-time. They understand that it pays to develop and keep good people. To do so will take more than last-minute hiring, semester-to-semester insecurity, denial of office space and support services, and lack of access to professional development funds.

Conditions such as these do not motivate people to do their best or to continue to work long enough to gain experience and skill at their jobs. Hiring too many part-time faculty to meet enrollment demands or reduce costs can produce real stress on the rest of the institution too. For example, full-time faculty have to perform more administrative and governance functions. Libraries and other campus facilities become over-used and begin to deteriorate because the institution may admit more students than its infrastructure was designed to accommodate, but who can be absorbed if they are taught by part-timers. Where this is happening, however, students do not have access to advisors and mentors.

All of these issues relate to quality. The first reaction is to assume that part-timers themselves have a detrimental effect on quality. But a more careful look suggests that it is the institution's employment practices that are causing the damage. Indiscriminate and unfair employment practices put part-time faculty in an impossible position and damage academic quality.

## Part II. Recommendations

In our view, it is the institution, not the part-timer, that is the root of the problem. Institutions must stop blaming part-timers for their problems and instead look first at the educational impact of their own part-time faculty employment practices.

A number of the institutions we visited had excellent examples of how to utilize part-time faculty talent. Our recommendations draw on what we learned from them. These recommendations cover three major areas: planning the use of part-time faculty, fair employment practices, and investing in human resources. Department chairs and senior faculty are critical for the successful implementation of these recommendations and to the full integration of part-timers into the academic life of their departments.

### *Planned Use*

Most institutions know that they must rely on part-timers for a substantial part of their instruction. Use of part-timers is not just a way to meet a temporary staffing emergency; it is a way of life. An institution that is honest about its reliance on part-

timers asks what kinds of people should fill these positions; how they should be hired, retained, compensated, rewarded, and promoted; and what kinds of contributions they should be expected to make.

The first step in planning is to understand the institution's educational mission. The kind of faculty a university or college uses is a direct reflection of the institution's mission. With a clear sense of mission, an institution can define the kind of faculty it needs and select those faculty, regardless of full- or part-time status, who have the qualifications for a particular teaching assignment. This faculty staffing plan is a road map for accomplishing the educational mission. As one dean at a metropolitan university said:

> You must know why you are hiring them and be honest and set expectations based on this. Every teaching unit needs a philosophy of part-time faculty utilization. You have to be clear about why they are here and reach agree ment with the faculty within the school. Then the adjuncts have more than a job. They have distinction and integration, they diversify our curriculum, and we remain current in the practice we teach about.

A mathematics department at another university had very carefully worked out its staffing plan for use of part-timers. It took 12 graduate students into a special program where they taught highly structured, remedial math courses and were very carefully supervised. The department then hired part-timers with master's degrees and high school or community college teaching experience to teach basic undergraduate math courses at the lower division level. Finally, it hired Ph.D.s who taught upper-level and graduate courses in their areas of specialization. This department was dependent on part-timers and selected them carefully for specific assignments.

### *Fair Employment*

Fair employment means meeting the justified expectations of part-timers that they will receive decent and consistent treatment and will not be exploited. Currently, part-time faculty employment is often based on nothing more than a collection of practices adopted by individual departments. The result, even within a single institution, can be a patchwork of inconsistent practices. We found, for example, that part-timers became angry during group interviews when they discovered how much their pay varied. We also found that department chairs paid varying amounts of attention to evaluation of part-timers. Capricious treatment of part-timers can lead to disenchantment among them, and it can also make the institution vulnerable to legal challenges that contest inequities in pay, benefits, and working conditions.

Our concept of fairness requires that the institution think in terms of the whole faculty. All faculty members, regardless of their status, make substantial contributions to academic quality and to the achievement of the institution's goals. If some

faculty members happen to work part-time, that does not mean that they are less important to the institution or that the institution should treat them with less care and respect. Policies covering the employment of faculty, whatever their time commitment or status, should cover all the same elements or topics, because the terms on which all faculty are employed make a statement about the institution as employer. If, for example, full-time faculty are on a salary schedule, then there should be a salary schedule for part-time faculty. It may be a very different salary schedule, but it would embody the same compensation philosophy (for example, provisions for merit pay) that the institution uses for all employees.

Compensation, particularly benefits coverage, is a very sensitive topic for many part-timers who, for the most part, are quick to condemn an arbitrary and capricious system:

> I am in a class 12 hours a week for two courses and one studio class. I get $3,200 per course and no benefits. On paper my teaching load is .67. I also direct a play, but this is paid from the department's endowment. I don't get work load credit for this, but a full-time person would. So I am .03 beneath the benefit line. I don't get benefits. The chair said, 'don't push me on this or I'll be told to hire another person and reduce your time base.'

Some institutions have gone beyond establishing consistent policies for employment to experiment with a range of employment options for part-timers. These options allow for flexibility so that academic careers can be balanced against personal commitments and provide career progression and rewards for demonstrated performance. For example, one of our metropolitan universities has a separate, but parallel, promotion system for its part-timers with a committee of part-timers that makes recommendations directly to the academic vice president. While each institution must decide for itself what an appropriate range of options would be, flexibility in the academic career can include the possibility of part-time tenure, long-term appointments, multiple-year appointments, opportunities for some sorts of job security, and due process rights. Everyone wins when both the personal needs of part-timers and institutional needs for their expertise are accommodated.

Institutions that are fair employers will give part-timers the tools they need to do the job. These tools include advance notification of teaching assignments to prepare properly, and sufficient knowledge about the institution, department, curriculum, and courses in order to teach well. They also need honest, objective feedback about how well they are doing, and the same opportunities to develop their teaching skills and the same support services provided for tenure-track faculty in order to achieve comparable results.

Part-time faculty know when they are being treated fairly and when they are not. They are important ambassadors to the community, and they can spread their perceptions widely. We think it is in the institution's self-interest as a community citi-

zen and employer to treat all of its faculty well.

### *Invest in Human Resources*

Our last set of recommendations is about investing in people. Most institutions invest in their full-time faculty by providing a variety of opportunities for conducting research, developing new courses or instructional methods, attending conferences, and taking paid and unpaid leaves. Finding good teachers, putting them in the classroom, helping them extend and improve their knowledge and skill, and sustaining their commitment to their work should be the main thrusts of faculty development programs for part-timers. Investing in part-timers helps institutions get control over the curriculum and the quality of education, and to gain back a sense of community.

*Valuing People*. Part-time faculty need to know they are important to the institution. Leaders from the president to department chairs and tenured faculty should be careful about making statements that even implicitly denigrate part-timers—for example, by associating quality with the percentage of full-timers on the faculty. Part-timers should be included on occasions when faculty are recognized for their accomplishments and achievements. Students, faculty colleagues, and the community benefit from these accomplishments, and recognizing people, whether part- or full-time, is an important acknowledgment of worth. Failure to acknowledge the contributions of part-timers contributes significantly to their feelings of second-class citizenship, of being left out of a mainstream role in the department, and of being "invisible." One part-timer told us,

> In [my department] they have a reception for ... new teachers. I'm teaching for the first time and I was invited. But [as a part-timer], I was not mentioned. No one thought of introducing me as a new person. I'm a nonperson. I'm teaching the course better than it's ever been taught, but I'm a nonperson.

Part-timers should, when possible, be participants in both the formal and informal aspects of institutional life. They can be appointed to committees and governance bodies, be asked to speak about their specialties, and be invited to social events. Their presence and their visibility are needed to establish that they have roles to play and that they are valued people.

*Encouraging Good Teaching*. All faculty need help and support to teach well. Part-timers may need extra support, especially during their initial assignment. We found some excellent programs already in place at several metropolitan institutions, which usually began with the selection process. Part-timers were screened and selected very purposefully. One off-campus degree program at a particular college

had a sophisticated selection process that involved requiring potential faculty to teach a class in their specialty while being observed. Any practice that selects part-timers carefully and prepares them well before they step into the classroom will be an improvement over the all too frequent last-minute hiring that abuses both part-timers and students.

Orientation programs provide part-time faculty with a philosophical frame of reference about the institution's programs and mission, useful information about the campus and the department, and perspectives on good teaching. These programs usually begin with some kind of welcoming ceremony. A formal setting in which a meal is shared with other part-timers and selected full-time faculty, department chairs, and central administrators elevates the symbolic importance of the event. A welcoming speech by the president or chief academic officer helps establish the idea that part-timers are valued by the institution's leaders.

Orientation programs are also an opportunity to present useful information about how the institution operates: where to turn with questions, what to do in emergencies, how to get supplies, how the library works, where to park, and so on. Handbooks for part-time faculty are useful references for most of this information. One of our site institutions had prepared a videotape presenting just such routine information, and the tape was available for viewing throughout the early weeks of each term.

Orientation programs should also help part-timers understand the relationship between the courses they will be teaching and the institution's goals for student outcomes. At one university, for example, roundtable discussions about teaching were held. Then part-time faculty were paired off with full-time faculty mentors who taught the same, or a closely related, course. The mentor remained in contact with the part-timer throughout the first semester of teaching, advising, and sharing views about what works with students.

Mentoring programs are sometimes supplemented with workshops, seminars, and social events. The basic goal is to give the part-timer a ready source of help and practical wisdom—to avoid the most basic trial and error mistakes a new teacher may make.

In our view, the most successful faculty development programs follow up these early steps with more comprehensive development opportunities for part-time faculty. The initial "induction" sessions are valuable, but only when the expectations established there are followed up and reinforced by more substantial steps in ensuing weeks and months. Part-time faculty often continue to teach at the same institution for long periods of time, and it makes good sense to invest in maintaining and enhancing their knowledge, skill, and commitment throughout their careers.

***Incentives and Recognition***. Rewarding performance has become an axiom of sound management. Yet most institutions seem to let their part-time faculty work in

a situation that offers virtually no incentives that might motivate them to invest more energy and time in their work. It is simply unreasonable to expect part-timers (or any faculty) to continue a high level of performance without at least some prospect of rewards.

Eligibility for teaching awards, small grants, travel funds, or other appropriate incentives can be established, even if the rewards for part-timers are not as generous as those for full-timers. One metropolitan university had just instituted eligibility for full-time professional leaves for its long-term part-timers at the time of our site visit. Several others had annual reviews for merit salary increases for part-timers. Knowing that they are eligible for professional development opportunities and enjoying the recognition and satisfaction of receiving an award or a merit salary increase can go a long way toward increasing the effort and the commitment that part-timers put into their assignments.

### *Department Chairs and Senior Faculty*

Department chairs are the principal contact persons for part-timers, but the skill and commitment of department chairs in dealing with part-time faculty varies. Some work hard to select part-timers with great care and to assure that they feel supported and valued.

If excellence is to be achieved through better integration and supervision of part-time faculty, then it will have to be accomplished through department chairs' efforts. Accordingly, they need clearly articulated policies for employing part-timers, and they need to be recognized and rewarded for their work on behalf of part-time faculty. Although many institutions hold workshops and retreats for department heads, the subject of part-time faculty is rarely mentioned. We think it should be elevated periodically to the focal point of the agenda, particularly in metropolitan colleges and universities where many part-timers are employed.

It is very much in the interest of senior faculty, too, to assure that part-time faculty teach well, grow and develop as scholarly colleagues, and are included in decisions about curriculum and program development. Without the financial savings generated by using part-timers, senior faculty would have heavier teaching loads and less time for research. Senior faculty in performing and studio arts departments tend to integrate part-time faculty very smoothly. They bond within their subdisciplines, and tenure status seems not to be an impediment to good relations among all the faculty. At one metropolitan college, for example, the chair reported:

> The arts faculty treat ... adjuncts as full members of the departmental family. They do shows together, eat together, and so forth. Their schedules are arranged to bring them together more frequently....We try to do a lot together and have a department party every semester.

### *What is at Stake?*

The quality and future of academic programs lie in the hands of the faculty. A substantial number of faculty in American colleges and universities are now part-time. This will not change in the foreseeable future. So the issue is how to recognize and develop some of the best potential teaching talent now available among the "invisible faculty." Metropolitan institutions, more than any others, stand to benefit from the extraordinary human resources in their communities—well-qualified and highly motivated professionals who can add value to academic programs. Our study helped to identify ways in which colleges and universities can enhance the quality of part-timers' contributions. Because metropolitan institutions depend so heavily on part-timers, it seems only rational to use them wisely, employ them fairly, and invest in them as faculty members. Academic excellence can only be assured when the best faculty members, both full- and part-time, are working closely together.

### *Suggested Readings*

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