

The Future of Adjunct Faculty in Higher Education

Leia Wood

Capella University

Address: 291 Teal Rd. N., Martinsburg WV, 25405

E-mail: [leia.wood@gmail.com](mailto:leia.wood@gmail.com)

Phone: 304-283-1326

Instructor: Eric Wellington

Quarter & Year: Summer 2011

Course: ED7818 - The Future of Teaching and Learning

### Abstract

Current research of the hiring practices of part-time faculty in higher education institutions show that adjunct professors will become more needed, influential and valued in the professional teaching career in the future. This statement is based on a literature review covering the past 30 years of how and why adjunct faculty is hired and used in the United States' higher educational system. Included in this paper are answers to questions: "What are the advantages and disadvantages of adjunct faculty?", "Why are adjunct faculty seen in such poor light?", "What is being done about adjunct faculty?", "How valuable will adjunct faculty be to institutions in the future?", "How will technology affect adjunct faculty in the future?", and "What leadership can I offer to adjunct faculty?".

### “The Future of Adjunct Faculty in Higher Education”

There has been a dramatic rise in the use of adjunct faculty throughout the United States college campuses. In 1995 “adjuncts teach between 30%-50% of all credit courses and between 95%-100% of noncredit courses” and “at community colleges, adjuncts composed 60% of all faculty as of 1991, up from 56% in 1984 and 42% in 1960” (Thompson & Princeton, 1995, Abstract). In 2010 the higher education system employed more than 580,000 part-time adjunct faculty members, making up more than 80 percent of the faculty on some community college campuses; however, adjunct professors are paid far lower wages, rarely given health or retirement benefits and treated as second-class teachers (Eisenberg, 2010). In Gappa and Leslie's (1993) "The Invisible Faculty", the American adjunct professor's plight of at that time is described. They state that adjunct faculty have little or no office space, making meeting with students difficult; little or no opportunity to participate in departmental activities, in particular textbook selection and curriculum change; insufficient or no funds available for professional development such as conference and seminar attendance or enrollment in advanced course work; little or no opportunity for advancement, salary increases, or benefits, regardless of the length of service or excellence of teaching; and no chance for tenure or job security.

An adjunct faculty member is a part-time instructor “teaching courses whose compensation in salary and/or fringe benefits is not equal to the compensation received by full-time contractual faculty” according to Wallin (2004). For this reason, they are not as valued as full time faculty members across American higher education campuses and have become an expendable workforce. However, at one time, they were seen in the highest regard, as revered specialists with extensive knowledge in their field (Wallin, 2004). It seems that the higher educational institutions, themselves, have lead to the adjunct professor's fall from grace and are

now struggling to readjust policies for adjunct faculty and views of the students, full time faculty and administrators about adjunct faculty.

### **Literature Review**

#### **What are the Benefits and Disadvantages of Adjunct Faculty?**

The most common reasons listed in the literature to use adjunct faculty are the economic benefits to the institution. Adjuncts allow a school to offer affordable expertise in a specialized area (Wallin, 2004, Warasila, Cheatwood & Costa, 1998; Stenerson, Blanchard, Gassiotto, Hernandez & Muth, 2010; Wallin, 2004; Fagan-Wilen, Springer, Ambrosino & White, 2006). Adjuncts teach night and weekend classes that many full-time, tenured teachers will not or cannot teach (Warasilia et al., 1998). This allows the institution to tailor their offerings to non-traditional students (Warasila et al., 1998; Wallin, 2004, Pearch & Marutz, 2005). Remedial classes have also been on the rise with late in life learners and more high school students choosing to enter college (Pearch & Marutz, 2005; Swogger, 2000). Other institutional benefits of using adjunct professors include providing a direct link to the outside community and businesses (Stenerson, et al., 2010). Using faculty personal that have flexibility in schedules and the freedom to travel to other campuses is another advantage, both for the institution and, in some cases, for the teacher (Wilson, 1998).

Depending on the type of higher educational institutions, they may have different reasons for using adjuncts, according to the literature. For instance, many community college campuses may employ adjuncts do so because they do not have teaching assistants available as some four-year institutions (Warasila, et al., 1998). Also, according to Charlier & Williams (2011) and Milliken & Jurgens (2008), even with adjunct faculty, specific disciplines cannot meet demand

due to the lack of qualified applicants and the inability of institutions to attract teachers in rural schools.

Adjunct faculty have their own reasons for doing their job. Adjuncts typically are shown to have positive job attitudes and work hard (Feldman & Turnley, 2001). Some are looking for full-time positions and work as adjuncts in hopes of being offered a full time position and career experience (Cohen, 1992; Wallin, 2004). A reported predication in both Swogger (2000) and Pearch & Marutz (2005) was that half of the full time professors in 1990 would retire by the year 2000 and that 80% would be retired by 2025, leaving a huge role for the adjunct faculty to fill. However, Wallin (2004) points out that the fact that many adjuncts do too good of a job, may prevent them from receiving offers of a full-time position.

Listed disadvantages of institutions using adjunct professors are found in the literature as well. Wallin (2004) states that good adjuncts are hard to come by. The overuse of adjuncts will ultimately short-change students in their education, according to Mellander, Mellander & George Mason Univeristy (1999). Lurie (2003) gives reasons that students may not receive the full benefit from a class being taught by adjunct faculty. Due to the fact that, institutions, in need of a teacher will put any adjunct they can get in a classroom, thus, forcing many adjuncts to teach out of their field of expertise. Grade inflation is also a consequence of this action (Lurie, 2003; Kirk & Spector, 2009).

### **Why Are Adjunct Faculty Seen in Such Poor Light?**

Much of the published literature discusses why adjuncts are not seen as good teachers. Adjunct faculty are only paid for teaching time and for not extra work. This means that most adjunct faculty do not work with students outside of class time or work on committees (Stenerson, et al., 2010; Warasila, et al., 1998; Kirk & Spector, 2009). This leads to the

perception that they are lazy among administrators and department heads (Lurie, 2003). The lack of communications between adjunct faculty and department professors contributes to this perception, as well, according to Johnson, MacGregor & Watson (2001). The lack of communication is also why adjuncts do not get involved with the school community (Warasila, et al. 1998) and that there is little consistency in program structures that rely heavily on adjunct faculty (Johnson, et al., 2001).

Another reason adjunct faculty are not seen as good teachers are poor student reviews (Fagan-Wilen, et al., 2006). Many times adjuncts are often industry experts, but have little or no teaching experience. This leaves them unprepared to be effective teachers (West, Borden, Bermudes, Hanson-Zalot, Amorim & Marmion, 2009; Thompson & Princeton university, 1995). Adjunct faculty typically are not even familiar with the textbooks they are teaching from (Wallin, 2004). Most adjuncts do not have an office space on campus, a department assistant they can call on, and they are not eligible for grants to improve their classroom experiences for students (Lurie, 2003).

### **What Solutions Are Being Offered For Adjunct Faculty?**

Infinite amounts of solutions to the problems of adjunct faculty are found when reading the literature. They range from stopping the reduction of full-time positions and reversing the current standards in order to start hiring on full time positions again (Lurie, 2003), to giving adjuncts all the benefits of full-time positions with the same responsibilities with appropriate pay for their time (Perach & Marutz, 2005). However, all of the reviewed literature stated that adjunct faculty needed to be compensated better and included offers of paying adjuncts for assuming other duties, like committee work (Moore, 1997; Thompson & Princeton University,

1995; Ballantyne, Berret & Harst, 2010; Swogger, 2000), or offers of health benefits (Perch & Marutz, 2005).

Ideas to help adjuncts become better teachers and part of the school included using other adjuncts to mentor them (Ziegler & Reiff, 2006; Thompson & Princeton University, 1995; Paprock, 1987). Other ideas discuss creating adjunct faculty handbooks or specific training materials and to hold adjunct faculty orientations each semester (Cohen, 1992; Thompson & Princeton University, 1995). Training workshops (Swogger, 2000; Milliken & Jurgens, 2008) and increased communication with department professors (Johnson, et al., 2001) are stated ways to strengthen program collaboration, as well.

Other solutions that were reviewed by the literature included ways to integrate adjunct faculty into the school. Cohen (2004) suggested rewarding adjuncts for their commitment to the institution by both, higher pay and listing their name and educational title in the college catalog, if they taught a class for more than three consecutive years. Paprock (1987) and Milliken & Jurgens (2008) also suggested rewarding longevity of adjuncts with increased pay. Another non-monetary reward that was suggested was honoring outstanding adjunct professors with an “Adjunct of the Year” award from the institution (Cohen, 1992).

In order to implement these changes on how adjuncts are perceived and used in the United States higher educational system different organizations have been created and research studies are being completed. Eisenberg (2010) discusses The New Faculty Majority organization that was established to promote more ethical labor practices among institutions that use adjunct faculty. The American Federation of Teachers’ (2002) also discusses the responsibilities of institutions to adjuncts and abdicates for the rights of the adjunct professor. Many articles discuss how colleges are changing policies about adjunct professors rights, hiring processes, and

compensation (Feldan & Turnley, 2001; Rogers, McIntyre & Jazzar, 2010; Gideon, 2007; Doe, Barnes, Bowen, Gilkey, Smoak, Ryan, . . . , 2011). Other articles go into details about these types of programs that have been already developed and implemented in specific schools, for instance, Regis College (Paprock, 1987), The University of Connecticut (Gideon, 2007) and Rio Salado Community College (Rio Salado Community College, 1990).

### **Visions for the Future of Adjunct Faculty**

#### **How Valuable Will Adjunct Faculty Be to Institutions In the Future?**

American higher educational institutions are fighting to stay in the educational game by changing policies and trying to attract students from around the globe. One way to do this is to have a large number of experts available to students. The only way for most institutions to provide this benefit and stay financially sound is to hire adjunct faculty. However, good adjunct faculty can be hard to come by and should be rewarded with appropriate pay and benefits.

The future of adjunct faculty will be directly impacted by higher educational institutions encouraging adjunct faculty's longevity and commitment to the institution. The trend to treat adjuncts better will continue in the future. This will be done by paying appropriate salaries based on years of service and expertise; offering optional benefits; possible stipends for additional services in the institution (i.e. committee work); and opportunities for grants and/or other opportunities to advance their expertise. These changes are occurring currently, as seen in the previous literature review, and the trend will continue in the future because there are some serious consequences if they do not.

Those institutions that fail to make these changes in policies regarding adjunct faculty will cease to exist. Some, "319 degree-granting private institutions have failed the Education Department's financial-responsibility test at some point in the past three years..." (Blumenstyk,

O’Leary & Richards, 2010). Many institutions are in a budget crisis and using adjunct faculty with expertise could bring more students to their doors if marketed properly, saving the institution from closing its doors.

### **How Will Technology Affect Adjunct Faculty in the Future?**

Technology will affect everyone and everything in the future. Adjunct faculty are no different. One of the major complaints adjunct professors assert is about their institutions is lack of communication. As mobile devices and electronic messaging are more popular than ever, institutions will develop easier ways to communicate with all students and faculty alike, making communication a non-issue for adjunct faculty.

Developing advanced technology in communication via the web is also making a new career choice for adjunct faculty a possibility. Bedford (2009) discusses the “third category of faculty”. As institutions advance their online offerings, tenured faculty are not able, or willing, to take on the extra workload of online classes. Online classes are taught by many adjunct instructors. Adjunct faculty are now finding themselves making a part-time job, full-time, by teaching multiple classes for different institutions, from the convenience of their home. “They capitalize on the need for organizations to hire competent, part-time professors who have significant expertise in their discipline as well as the demonstrated skills necessary to successfully mentor online learners” (Perry, 2010, Heading: A Third of Faculty).

Open-format online classes, where students are able to enroll, learn and finish the class at their own pace, is a newer practice found in some colleges. Perry (2010) reports that one student at Jefferson Community & Technical College desperate to graduate completed an undergraduate course in 46 sleepless hours. This type of class require little to no instructor time. This type of

learning style, if it becomes more popular, may impact the numbers of adjunct faculty teaching online.

### **What Leadership Can I Offer to Adjunct Faculty?**

Leadership from current professional adjunct faculty is needed now to encourage, and in some cases demand, that institutional policies change. They can do this by leading by example from wherever they are in the institution's hierarchy, as discussed in "Leadership in Place" (2007) by several contributing authors. Ellen Beatty and Robert Page write that "unprecedented pressure on administration and faculty to redefine the way postsecondary education is organized and delivered" because of "challenges on a variety of fronts" is occurring (Wergin, 2007, p. 192).

As a future adjunct faculty professor I plan to develop good communication with the institution and full time faculty. Communicating effectively will require the use of my interpersonal skills and understanding emotional intelligence, along with technology. I will do this by using the knowledge I have gained through this study of adjunct faculty and my other classes from Capella University to lead from my position, whatever that position may be.

Interpersonal skills are sometimes referred to as people skills and communication is a key factor for them (Communicate Now!, 2009). As an adjunct professor, I will be expected to work within many groups of people and by having a positive attitude, being informed about my community and school and being an active listener, I can communicate effectively with my department and school administration.

Emotional intelligence is "the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (George,

2000, p. 1033). Therefore, effective leaders are people who can accurately assess how others feel and respond to their feelings in productive ways. By understanding emotional intelligence and using the skill myself, I will be more likely to be able to effectively overcome resistance to change and alter institutional policies when needed. An organizational culture, like a higher education's campus, has shared beliefs, norms, and values. As an adjunct faculty member, I can lead to the development and expression of organizational culture, this culture can have appropriate views of the professional adjunct faculty.

### **Conclusion**

Statements like “In other words, it would cost about three times as much to employ a full-time faculty member as it would to employ one or more adjunct-faculty members to teach the same classes as a full-time faculty member would teach”(p. 18), found in Schneider (2004) are all too common place in the American higher educational system. The use of adjunct faculty is rising yearly and the perceptions of adjunct faculty by full-time faculty, administration, students and the public are low. These views are changing slowly as institutional policies are reviewed and updated. The world is flattening by the use of new technology, allowing students to communicate and learn anywhere they wish. In order for the U. S. to continue to be a major player in global higher education, this movement toward more adjunct faculty needs solutions, standards, and programs implemented immediately in all higher education institutions.

## References

- American Federation, o. T. (2002). *Fairness & equity: Standards of good practice in the employment of part-Time/Adjunct faculty. item number 36-0698*. American Federation of Teachers. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.capella.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED497907&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Ballantyne, S., Berret, B., & Harst, W. (2010). Fulltime faculty perceptions of leadership in adjunct faculty to maintain franciscan identity. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 9, 1-1-9.
- Bedford, L. A. (2009). The professional adjunct: An emerging trend in online instruction. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 12(3). Retrieved from <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/fall123/bedford123.html>
- Behm, N. (2008). A brief comparison of teaching assistantship and adjunct faculty positions. *College Composition and Communication*, 60(1), A5-A5-A9.
- Blumenstyk, G., O'Leary, B., & Richards, A. (2010). Hundreds of colleges fail to make the grade on financial responsibility. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/150-Nonprofit-Colleges-Fail/123878/>
- Charlier, H. D., & Williams, M. R. (2011). The reliance on and demand for adjunct faculty members in america's rural, suburban, and urban community colleges. *Community College Review*, 39(2), 160-160-180.
- Cohen, M. C. (1992). *Benefits on a budget: Addressing adjunct needs*. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.capella.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED355578&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Communicate Now! (2009). Retrieved on September 1, 2011 from <http://www.communication-skills.info/interpersonal-communication-skills.shtml>
- Dedman, D., & Pearch, W. J. (2004). Perspectives on adjunct and other non-tenure faculty. *The Community College Enterprise*, 10(1), 23-23-33.
- Eisenberg, P. (2010). Plight of adjunct faculty needs more attention from foundations. *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, 22(12), 4-4. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.capella.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=50247877&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

- Fagan-Wilen, R., Springer, D., Ambrosino, B., & White, B. (2006). The support of adjunct faculty: An academic imperative. *Social Work Education, 25*(1), 39-51. doi:10.1080/02615470500477870
- Feldman, D. C., & Turnley, W. H. (2001). A field study of adjunct faculty: The impact of career stage on reactions to non-tenure-track jobs. *Journal of Career Development, 28*(1), 1-1.
- Gappa, J. M., & Leslie, D. W. (1993). *The invisible faculty: Improving the status of part-timers in higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- George, J. M. (2000). Emotions and Leadership: The Role of Emotional Intelligence *Human Relations*. August 2000 53: 1027-1055, doi:10.1177/0018726700538001
- Gideon, A. C. (2007). Best practices for supporting adjunct faculty. *International Journal of Educational Advancement, 7*(4), 346-346-348. doi:10.1057/palgrave.ijea.2150076
- Hall, J. (2010). The creative community college: Leading change through innovation. *Community College Review, 37*(3), 285-285-287.
- Johnson, J. A., MacGregor, C. J., & Watson, R. (2001). *Out of sight--out of mind: The importance of integrating adjunct faculty into an educational administration department*. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.capella.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED471806&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Kirk, F., & Spector, C. A. (2009). A comparison of the achievement of students taught by full-time versus adjunct faculty in business courses. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal, 13*(2), 73-73-81.
- Klausman, J. (2010). Not just a matter of fairness: Adjunct faculty and writing programs in two-year colleges. *Teaching English in the Two Year College, 37*(4), 363-363-371.
- Lurie, M. N. (2003). Major problems result from the growing use of part-time and adjunct faculty. *OAH Newsletter, 31*(1), 9-9.
- McLaughlin, F. (2005). Adjunct faculty at the community college: Second-class professoriate? *Teaching English in the Two Year College, 33*(2), 185-185-193.
- Mellander, G. A., Mellander, N., & George Mason Univ, Fairfax, VA National Center for, Community Coll. (1999). *Critical issues--and therefore opportunities--for community colleges. presentation to congressman major R. owens, congresswoman carrie P. meek, and to the congressional progressive caucus and the progressive challenge (washington,*

- DC, July 27, 1999). Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.capella.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED432343&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Milliken, T. F., & Jurgens, J. C. (2008). Assessing the needs of human services adjunct faculty: Uncovering strategies for retaining quality instructors. *Human Service Education*, 28(1), 29-43. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.capella.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=sih&AN=36375399&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Moore, L. B. (1997). *Citizen responsibility by and for part-time faculty* Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.capella.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED415521&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Paprock, K. E. (1987). A model for differentiation of adjunct faculty techniques. *Lifelong Learning*, 10(8), 28-29. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.capella.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED283036&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Pearch, W. J., & Marutz, L. (2005). Retention of adjunct faculty in community colleges. *The Community College Enterprise*, 11(1), 29-29-44.
- Perry, M. (2010). Will technology kill the academic calendar?. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/Will-Technology-Kill-the/124857/>
- Rio Salado, C. C. (1990). *Rio salado community college adjunct faculty staffing and development program, July 1989-August 1990*. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.capella.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED322952&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Rogers, C. B. H., McIntyre, M., & Jazsar, M. (2010). Mentoring adjunct faculty using the cornerstones of effective communication and practice. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 18(1), 53-59. doi:10.1080/13611260903448375
- Schneider, J. M. (2004). Employing adjunct faculty from an HR perspective. *Phi Kappa Phi Forum*, 84(4), 18-18-19.
- Schuetz, P. (2008). Adjunct faculty in community colleges: An academic administrator's guide to recruiting, supporting, and retaining great teachers. *Community College Review*, 36(2), 160-160-162.

- Stenerson, J., Blanchard, L., Fassiotto, M., Hernandez, M., & Muth, A. (2010). The role of adjuncts in the professoriate. *Peer Review*, 12(3), 23-26. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.capella.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=54710247&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Swogger, L. (2000). Voting with their feet: Students, faculty and the future of higher education. *On the Horizon*, 8(5), 11-11-13.
- Thompson, D. M., & Princeton Univ, NJ Mid-Career,Fellowship Program. (1995). *Alternative approaches to adjunct faculty development*. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.capella.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED384392&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Wallin, D. L. (2004). Valuing professional colleagues: Adjunct faculty in community and technical colleges. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, 28(4), 373-391. doi:10.1080/10668920490424087
- Warasila, R. L., Cheatwood, D. D., & Costa, F. T. (1998). Adjunct faculty. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 28(3), 166-166-173.
- Wergin, J. F. (Ed.). (2007). *Leadership in place*. San Francisco, CA: Anker Publishing Company.
- West, Margaret Mary, PhD, CNE, RN, Borden, C., Bermudez, M., Hanson-Zalot, M., Amorim, F., & Marmion, R. (2009). Enhancing the clinical adjunct role to benefit students. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 40(7), 305-305-10.
- Wilson, R. (1998). For some adjunct faculty members, the tenure track holds little appeal. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 44(46), A8-A8-A10.
- Ziegler, C. A., & Reiff, M. (2006). Adjunct mentoring, a vital responsibility in a changing educational climate: The lesley university adjunct mentoring program. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 14(2), 247-269. doi:10.1080/13611260500493667