

A Model for Successful Mission Integration to Meet the Needs of Adjunct Faculty at a Four-Year Institution

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Increasing reliance on adjunct faculty at post-secondary institutions makes successful mission integration important. This case study surveys seventy adjunct instructors at a four-year small private Catholic institution to determine how to improve adjunct faculty mission integration on campus to meet the unique needs of this faculty group. Gappa and Austin's "Essential Elements of Faculty Work" framework (2010) was used to determine a priori codes, identify faculty integration issues, as well as potential solutions. The researcher found issues regarding resource allocation, as well as voice and recognition. To address these issues, participants recommended more frequent and accessible campus meetings and a more comprehensive mentoring program. In addition, literature provides several models at community colleges that have already incorporated many suggestions, which four-year institutions could use to design their adjunct instructor programs to improve integration.

Keywords: adjunct faculty, integration, mentoring

INTRODUCTION

Due to decreasing resources and fluctuating enrollments, higher education institutions have been forced to rely more heavily on adjunct or part-time faculty to both meet demands and the bottom line (Johnson & Stevens, 2008; Mangan, 2009). More attention needs to be paid to this growing minority, and majority of faculty members at some institutions. Much of the literature focuses on the state of adjunct faculty at the community college level, as they have constituted the majority of all faculty members at these institutions for many years. However, adjuncts are becoming increasingly ubiquitous at four-year institutions as well. Orienting adjuncts appropriately is important to integrating them into the institution. Without proper integration, adjuncts may not understand and thus will not embody the mission of their respective institution. The faculty are crucial to carrying out the mission of any institution of higher education, for they have arguably the most meaningful contact with students out of all the institution's personnel. As the number of adjuncts continue to grow, they may create mission drift within the institutions in which they work. This qualitative study surveys a sample of 70 adjunct faculty at a small private Catholic four-year institution to see how adjunct faculty are currently being oriented and supported within this institution. The findings are analyzed and compared with existing models found in literature to make recommendations of how adjunct faculty can be better integrated within higher education institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The use of adjunct instructors in higher education over the past forty years is on the rise, and there is no sign that their use will not continue to increase in the future. Between 1976 and 1995, the number of part-time faculty increased by 91% (Smith, 2007). In 1998, 75% of new faculty hired were part-time, and considering the unprecedented financial strains of the following decades, no doubt this number has risen (Wiley, 1998). The increase had been fairly steady for approximately thirty years, from 1970-2000 (see Beem, 2002; Cooper, 2009; Glenn, 2008; Johnson & Stevens, 2008; Louis, 2009; Tittle, 2009), until the last two decades when the percentage began increasing much more quickly due to growing financial constraints as well as fluctuating enrollments. IPEDS data shows that as of Fall 2021, 68% of U.S. faculty are contingent appointments, while 48% are part-time (Colby, 2022). Younger scholars now fear that as tenured Baby Boomers retire, their positions will be subdivided into even more adjunct positions, dawning the slow death of the true full-time tenured professor (Cooper, 2009). Whether this occurs or not we cannot say for sure, but what seems certain is that institutions of higher education are using adjunct faculty at an increasing rate, and most faculty today, about two-thirds, are now adjunct or part-time faculty.

There are many advantages for institutions to hire adjunct faculty. They are paid significantly less than full-time faculty, they are often ineligible for benefits, and they may not require the resources that full-time faculty members do, such as office space or clerical support. In addition, they provide the institution with flexibility, as they can use adjuncts to fill needs with no commitment beyond the semester (Bangan, 2009; Been, 2002; Normore, 2019; Santovec, 2004; Tittle, 2009; Wallin, 2007; Wes, Brown, Fynn, & Gadzekpo, 2020). Therefore, adjunct faculty help institutions meet the escalating demands of students and other external factors with fewer resources (Wyles, 1998).

With this dramatic shift in the faculty make-up in higher education, much literature is devoted to how these changes are affecting institutions and students. Although many, including the institutions themselves, may consider the hiring of adjunct faculty as unavoidable during challenging times, the literature highlights the benefits of hiring such faculty beyond just fiscal benefits. Adjunct faculty are hired for the sole purpose of teaching, which they often enjoy; indeed, some are quite passionate about it. Adjunct faculty often come from, and may work full-time in, the professional, occupational, or technical fields in which they teach, so they bring with them real-world experiences and specialized knowledge from these fields that they can share with students. This helps students see them as credible, as they are active members of the field in which they are currently being trained. In this same vein, their roles in particular fields can help the institutions to maintain close business and industrial ties. Lastly, adjuncts can add diversity to the faculty of their respective institution (Normore, 2019; Smith, 2007; Tittle, 2009; Wallin, 2007; Wyles, 1998).

Unfortunately, the bulk of the literature is devoted to how the increased use of adjunct faculty is negatively affecting students and the institutions themselves. First of all, as mentioned previously, adjunct faculty are often poorly integrated into their institutions, and as a result they do not possess critical knowledge of services or program curriculum that may be used to help them or their students have success. In addition, adjunct faculty may be less invested in their institutions because they are not often given a voice within governance (Normore, 2019; Smith, 2007; Wilson, 2006; Wyles, 1998). Being less connected to the institution, adjunct faculty also may lack student access, for they may not have office hours or a telephone number, which can lead to student frustration (Glenn, 2008; Normore, 2019; Wyles, 1998). Adjunct faculty are referred to as “freeway fliers” (Mangan, 2009) or “gypsy academics” (Wes et al., 2020), because many have positions at multiple institutions, which means that they spend time each day commuting instead of supporting students. Since adjunct faculty are typically not required to conduct research, they may have a lack of knowledge breadth in field, which can limit what they can teach their students (Beem, 2002). From the many concerns voiced within the literature, several major issues emerge, and each is highlighted here.

Adjunct Faculty as Second-Class

Frequently in the literature, adjunct faculty report feeling vulnerable, isolated, invisible, angry, frustrated, neglected, and alienated at their institutions (Beem, 2002; Johnson & Stevens, 2008; Louis, 2009;

Mangan, 2009; Normore, 2019; Santovec, 2004; Smith, 2007; Wyles, 1998). They report that poor working conditions, low pay, and long hours are a reality of the profession (Mangan, 2009; Normore, 2019; Smith, 2007). If institutions expect to increasingly rely on adjunct faculty to provide quality higher education, these conditions are unacceptable and will be ultimately detrimental to the institution itself. Not surprisingly, unions such as the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the United Auto Workers (UAW) have taken notice of this increasingly marginalized group. Once unionized, adjunct faculty can become eligible for benefits, promotion, and possibly even tenure. This can benefit the profession and the institutions, because it creates a more secure and accepted auxiliary faculty (Fogg, 2002; Smallwood, 2002). However, unionization of adjuncts does not occur without controversy. A unionized adjunct faculty makes them more expensive, which cuts into the institution's bottom line. However, some of the greatest resistance to unionization has come from the remaining tenured, full-time faculty at unionized institutions. Unionizing adjunct faculty gives this group benefits, such as earning tenure, without the accepted expectations within the profession, such as performing research and publishing articles. Faculty who were tenured the traditional way have reported this new track to tenure as unfair, threatening to the profession, and devaluing the tenure process. Tenured professors have referred to the new unionized adjunct faculty as "cheap teachers" (Fogg, 2002). This contempt only drives a wedge between full-time and adjunct faculty, which can further marginalize the latter group in the eyes of the former.

The Effectiveness of Adjunct Faculty in the Classroom

There is disagreement within the literature as to whether adjunct faculty are more or less effective within the classroom as full-time faculty. Studies show adjunct faculty are as effective as full-time faculty at meeting student learning and performance outcomes (Smith, 2007; Wyles, 1998). However, other studies show that adjunct faculty negatively affect graduation rates; as the proportion of part-time faculty decline at community colleges, graduation rates increase (Jager & Eagan, 2010; Wilson, 2006). As mentioned previously, the lower graduation rates are attributed to the fact that adjunct faculty are not as well integrated into the institution, thus they cannot support their students as well as full-time faculty. Further, first-year college students are significantly more likely to drop out if their high-stakes "gatekeeper courses" are taught by part-time instructors (Glenn, 2008), and this is attributed to students' inability to contact or interact with adjunct faculty as often or easily as full-time faculty. Again, the lack of integration of adjunct faculty is shown to be detrimental to students. Other studies contradict these findings and show that students are as likely to be retained when they are taught by part-time faculty as full-time faculty (Smith, 2007). The contradictory nature of the studies seems to raise more questions than answers about the effectiveness and impact of adjunct faculty in the classroom and on student success.

The Diversity of Adjunct Faculty

At the onset the increased diversity of adjunct faculty may seem positive, as research has shown that minority students perform better when taught by a minority faculty member (Fairlie, Hoffmann, & Oreopoulos, 2011). However, concern arises from the fact that the number of minority scholars is increasing within the adjunct faculty ranks faster than white scholars. Researchers are concerned that minorities are being funneled into adjunct positions and being overlooked for full-time positions. Data supports this statement, as approximately 73% of minority faculty hold contingent faculty positions (American Federation of Teachers, 2010). Adjunct positions offer limited opportunities within academia, and may serve to stifle young scholars of color, preventing them from progressing within the profession (Cooper, 2009).

Adjunct Faculty and Grade Inflation

Grade inflation is a hot topic in higher education today and is considered rampant at higher education institutions. In fact, GPAs have increased by about 0.34 in the last 30 years (NCES, n.d.). Studies have linked grade inflation to adjunct or part-time faculty, and there are several reasons given as to why this may be so. Adjunct faculty may be reluctant to give lower grades, as student complaints may fail to be rehired. Also, a lack of teaching experience may result in an inability to distinguish between grades, thus higher

grades result (Kezim, Pariseau, & Quinn, 2005; Sonner, 2000). In a time when students are given what some may feel is a significant amount of power over their teachers and instructors, it seems plausible that adjunct faculty, who have little job security, are being put in a position where they feel forced to give higher grades than their full-time counterparts to avoid causing any ripples or controversy.

Adjunct Faculty and Mission Drift

Since contingent faculty are now a majority across all types of institutions of higher education (Colby, 2022), all institutions should be concerned about the proper integration of adjunct faculty within their institutions, or this sizable group may not embody the missions of the institutions with which they work (Normore, 2019; Tittle, 2009). Providing proper services to orient, support, and include adjunct faculty in the institutions would need to be a top priority. Yet, most efforts at such programs within the literature are focused within community colleges. This seems insufficient considering how numerous adjunct faculty are at four-year institutions. More research needs to be done to ascertain exactly how four-year institutions orient and support adjunct faculty, and recommendations based on community colleges' efforts can then be made to help four-year institutions avoid mission drift as their adjunct faculty ranks continue to swell.

Successful Integration of Adjunct Faculty

The literature highlights several institutions, most of whom are community colleges, which have developed successful programs for integrating adjunct faculty. Research cites low turnover and adjunct faculty satisfaction with the institution as two indicators for measuring the success of integration programs. Several of these programs are described below.

Rio Salado Community College

Rio Salado was originally designed to be an adjunct-only institution, A large community college with over 60,000 enrolled students, 28 full-time faculty chairs, and over 1.057 adjunct faculty members. However, over time a few full-time faculty chairs have been hired to mentor and support the adjunct faculty in several ways. The faculty chairs oversee the adjunct faculty, and develop content and e-layouts for courses, thus standardizing the curriculum so that it is easier for multiple adjunct faculty members to deliver the same curriculum over several class sections. The institution boasts less than a 5% adjunct turnover rate per year as proof that the institutional programs for its adjunct faculty are effective. Rio Salado has standardized hiring practices, which include adjunct orientation sessions and a virtual library orientation. Instructional and technical help desks are available to adjunct faculty whenever needed, as well as library services. Rio Salado also provides personal and career counseling for adjunct faculty throughout their employment with the institution (Smith, 2007).

Northern Virginia Community College

An institution of over 63,000 students, Northern Virginia is urban and diverse, with five campuses. At the beginning of the year, Northern Virginia holds an orientation session purposefully scheduled in the evening, organized by division, for all faculty. In addition, a Saturday orientation for adjunct faculty is also organized to provide general information, an opportunity to meet other faculty within their division, a keynote speaker, a question and answer session, and an open discussion opportunity. Both orientation sessions are respectful of the working schedules of adjunct instructors, and allow them opportunities to ask questions in multiple formats. In addition, an Adjunct Faculty Handbook is handed out, and a representative of the adjunct faculty sits on the campus council, thus allowing them a voice within the governance of the institution. Lastly, end of the year recognition includes an awards ceremony for adjunct faculty, nominated and selected by their peers (Wyles, 1998). Not only are adjunct faculty supported through orientation, but they are given a voice and positive recognition for their contributions, thus setting up a positive environment at the institution.

Black Hawk College

A mid-sized institution located in an agricultural and industrial area, Black Hawk provides a comprehensive program for their adjunct faculty titled: “Adjunct Academy Connect with the Best...You Deserve It”. This program is an annual adjunct faculty professional development event where they lead panel discussions and roundtable sessions. The day also includes “birds of a feather” sessions, where issues are discussed within the individual disciplines. A keynote speaker is also featured, who speaks on a key issue within the profession (Smith, 2007).

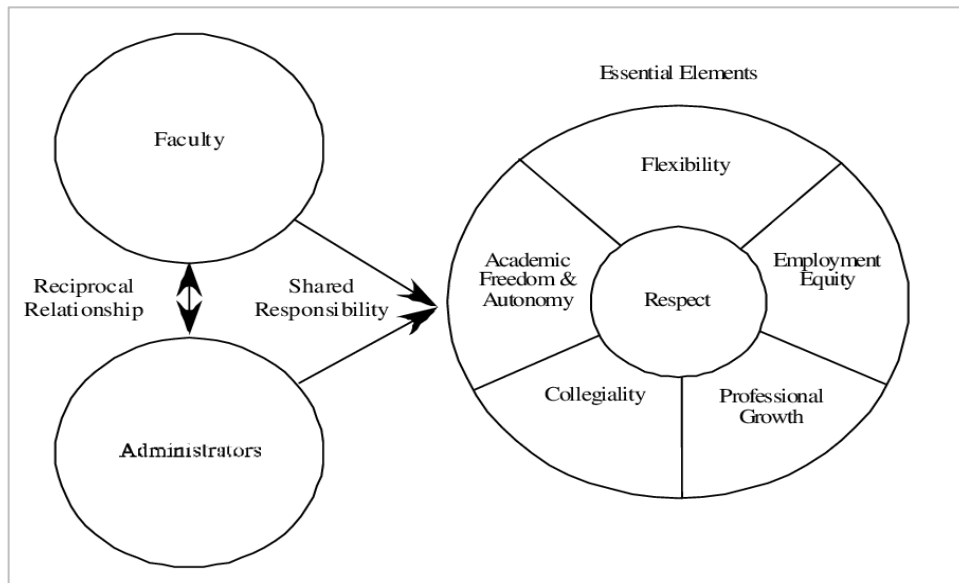
Northeast Texas Community College

A rural small college, Northeast Texas provides an extensive on-line “Academy for Part-Time Teachers”. It serves to orient faculty to the teaching environment and develop skills in-line with college mission. The Academy includes four instruction modules over four weeks with required assignments, dialogues with peers, assigned reading material, discussion questions, and a self-reflection paper. In addition, adjunct faculty are observed in the classroom, and are assisted with teaching techniques and classroom management (Smith, 2007). Such a comprehensive program serves to orient and prepare adjunct faculty for teaching at the institution.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The “Essential Elements of Faculty Work” framework is used to guide the research in this study (Gappa & Austin, 2010). In this framework, respect lies at the center, with the following elements radiating out like spokes of a wheel: flexibility, employment equity, professional growth, collegiality, and academic freedom and autonomy (see Figure 1). Respect is the foundation for all other elements due to its central location, and the elements are important for all faculty members. The authors argue that due to the increasing diversity of faculty at higher education institutions, new priorities must be addressed through employment policies at higher education institutions. Their framework summarizes the new priorities of faculty today (Gappa & Austin, 2010). This study codes each of these elements from the adjunct faculty point of view, based on their responses to survey questions.

FIGURE 1
THE “ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF FACULTY WORK”



Gappa and Austin (2010)

In Figure 1, the two circles on the left represent the spheres encompassed by the faculty and the college administrators. The faculty includes the diversity of faculty today, including demographic characteristics and varying types of appointments. The college administrator sphere includes the institution's unique mission, governance structure, culture, and leadership. The double-sided arrow between the two spheres represents the fact that both benefit from a mutual relationship within the institution. The arrows that point from each sphere to the essential elements show that both are responsible for ensuring that all are present in the work environment. Faculty have a duty to speak up and act if one of the elements is not being fulfilled as much as administrators must act and change policy when an essential element is lacking (Gappa & Austin, 2010).

The authors provide definitions and support as to why these particular elements are so central to faculty today. Respect is defined as “valuing each faculty member as a human being,” which is crucial in any work environment and must be established before any other elements fall into place (Gappa & Austin, 2010, p. 10). Flexibility is becoming increasingly important, particularly because two-worker households are much more common than in the past, thus people are seeking to balance their home life and their work life. In addition, equity is also paramount, as all faculty members, regardless of appointment type, need access to tools and resources to adequately fulfill their professional obligations. Academic freedom has always been central to the work of faculty, and “the right to freedom of intellectual expression and inquiry” is still very important for generating new knowledge (p. 15). Likewise, faculty require professional development opportunities “to expand their knowledge and skills, and to experience new challenges and experiences as they progress in their careers” (p. 16). Lastly, an environment of collegiality is becoming increasingly important in academia, and the authors argue for two very different reasons: areas of study are becoming increasingly interdisciplinary and specialized simultaneously. Interdisciplinary study is necessary to understand complex problems and patterns in society today, which requires cooperation between sometimes very disparate disciplines. Likewise, the increasing specialization of certain disciplines makes communication within disciplines even more important, so individual researchers do not lose touch with related discipline knowledge. The authors argue that all elements must be present for all faculty members to create a working environment where they can reach their full potential (Gappa & Austin, 2010).

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study is a qualitative case study at one institution that asks the following primary question: in what specific ways can a mission-driven institution of higher education improve its orientation and support of adjunct faculty? Secondly, this study will ask: how can orientation and support be improved based on feedback from current adjunct faculty at this institution and best practices highlighted by the literature? The hope is that four-year institutions will begin to listen to the voices of their own adjunct faculty, as well as look more closely at community college models of adjunct faculty integration to improve integration of adjunct faculty into their own institutions.

The mission at the institution included in this study has several components that will be discussed and aligned to findings to make recommendations for the improvement of adjunct faculty mission integration, as needed. These components include: a commitment to “values-centered education” that “advances academic excellence” by integrating “liberal arts and professional studies”. This mission was obtained from the institution's webpage.

DATA SOURCES

For this qualitative case study, seventy adjunct instructors were surveyed at one private, Catholic four-year institution of higher education in the Midwest. Adjunct faculty at this institution are hired on a semester-by-semester basis and can be employed to teach up to two classes per semester. Adjunct faculty were asked to complete several broad questions using Survey Monkey as a platform, and responses were delivered anonymously to the researcher. The questions asked were:

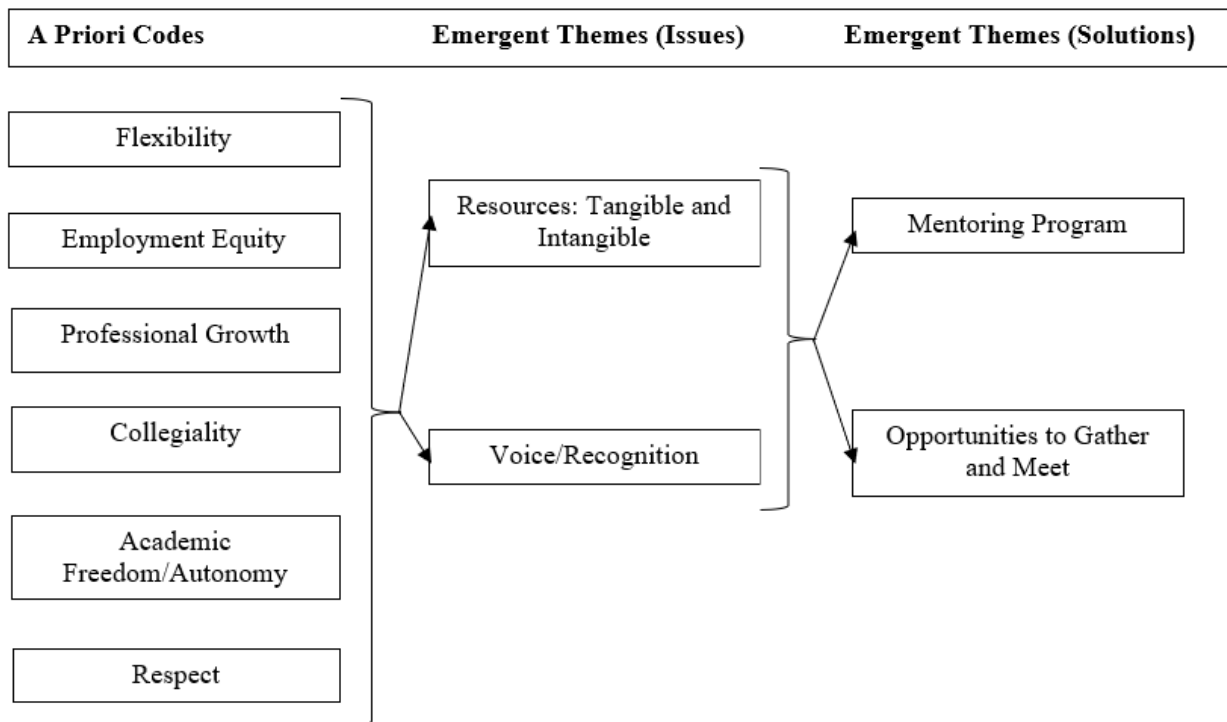
- 1) What would you say are the most rewarding reasons why you serve as an adjunct faculty member at your institution? Please describe here.
- 2) Please describe the type of support (if any) you receive from your institution as an adjunct faculty member. Is there any type of support that you would recommend? If so, please describe here.
- 3) Please describe any challenges you have encountered as an adjunct faculty member at your institution.
- 4) If there have been any challenges, how can your institution address these challenges? Please be as specific with your recommendations as possible.

The questions were purposefully broad to allow varied responses to emerge from the data, and to not lead respondents toward any particular themes or topics.

METHODS

A priori coding was used to categorize responses as either positive or negative according to Gappa and Austin’s essential elements of faculty work: flexibility, employment equity, professional growth, collegiality, academic freedom and autonomy, and respect. Open coding, the process of scanning quotes within each category for meaningful themes (Merriam, 2009), was then conducted. Categories were then collapsed into the issues that emerged based on the adjunct faculty responses, as well as the proposed solutions that faculty identified to address the identified issues. See Figure 2 for a summary of emergent themes. Emergent themes were then compared with best practices found in the literature and recommendations provided by respondents to provide specific strategies to improve integration of adjunct faculty.

**FIGURE 2
SUMMARY OF EMERGENT THEMES**



FINDINGS

Emergent Themes: Issues

Three final themes emerged that highlighted the issues adjunct faculty identified: Resources (tangible), Resources (intangible), and Voice/Recognition.

Voice

Although adjunct faculty may not spend as much time on campus as their full-time counterparts, participants in this study communicated a desire for greater voice in both university and departmental issues. Three participants mentioned that adjunct faculty are not included in the university's shared governance, as they have no constituent on the Faculty Senate. Five participants also mentioned the need for a formal way within their departments to make curricular suggestions or respond to curricular changes. Despite the generalization of adjunct faculty as “freeway fliers” (Mangan, 2009), adjunct instructors in this study do seem to want a voice in the changes and progress of their institution.

Recognition

A sub-theme that emerged within voice was Recognition, as a voice allows adjunct faculty to be heard, influential, and as a result, respected on campus. Recognition was a challenge for some of our participants, as seven mentioned feeling isolated, and nine adjunct faculty communicated feeling disrespected on campus. Specifically, one participant described him/herself as a “second citizen”, another stated he/she was “only an adjunct”, while a third commented on getting “funny looks on campus”. These comments support literature provided earlier that show adjunct faculty can feel like second-class faculty on their campuses (Beem, 2002; Johnson & Stevens, 2008; Louis, 2009; Mangan, 2009; Normore, 2019; Santovec, 2004; Smith, 2007; Wyles, 1998), and also highlights the importance of capturing the voice of this marginalized group, for the purposes of improving campus climate.

Resources (Tangible)

Three tangible resources emerged from the survey responses, the first being the desire for dedicated office spaces or working areas. Twelve participants specifically mentioned wanting space to work on campus, five stating that it would facilitate private meetings with students, and seven commented that an office space would provide them access to other basic resources, such as a computer and printers. The second tangible resource desired by participants was increased wages. Thirteen participants requested more pay for their work, with six specifically commenting that the current wage is “unjust”, and two also stating that no pay is given for extra responsibilities, such as attending meetings. Finally, two participants mentioned that a lack of benefits was a struggle for them, with health benefits specifically stated.

Resources (Intangible)

Intangible resources were a bit more challenging to define, but thematically two emerged: the desire for more information, and the desire for community support. To support the first intangible resource of information, participants communicated that the formats that current information was presented, which was primarily in print (mentioned by three participants) or in person (mentioned by nineteen participants), presented barriers to adjunct faculty who might not be able to access information in these ways. Further, five participants requested more information in general, three mentioned the need for more information regarding the courses they were assigned to teach, and two requested more information regarding beginning of the year processes and expectations.

The desire for more community support was communicated by ten participants, with five specifically stating that they felt they received little to no support from the institution. Individual comments related to community support provide a more nuanced picture of what adjunct faculty desire, such as “more contact with higher administration” and “more contact with other adjuncts”, as well as a desire for contact with others to “answer questions”. Two adjunct faculty members stated that they were unsure of who to go to with issues. Overall, participants communicated a desire to not only be more informed about institutional-

level and course-level information in accessible formats, but also be more connected to the institutional community, including peers and administrators.

Emergent Themes: Solutions

Two solutions emerged from the data: a “Mentoring Program” and “More Time to Gather and Meet”.

More Time to Gather and Meet

It may seem counterintuitive that adjunct faculty are asking to spend more of their time outside of teaching on campus, as this seems to contradict the desire for flexibility according to Gappa and Austin’s (2010) framework, but this was exactly what many communicated in this study. However, participants asked for the institution to be more flexible with meeting times, so they could attend them more frequently. Seven participants requested that meetings be held in the evening, and five participants requested a more comprehensive orientation meeting, with more information about courses and the university. Instead of the once-a-year informational meeting, three participants requested that it be held twice a year. More frequent meetings could provide updates about the department and/or the university and a refresher of important information for the instructor.

This desire for more frequent opportunities to gather and meet with other faculty and administrators supports the issue of voice described earlier, as meetings can provide a means of communication and input for adjunct faculty. It also fulfills participants’ desire for more information at both the institutional-level and the course-level. Finally, accessible meetings would also allow adjunct faculty to ask questions, and connect with their peers and administrators, thus fulfilling the desire to be a part of the institutional community. Therefore, more opportunities to meet, although they would require more time on the part of the adjunct faculty member, would also benefit them by providing an outlet to ask questions, provide input, receive valuable information, and be a part of the community in which they work.

Mentoring Program

Seven participants specifically recommended that the institution add some sort of mentoring program designed for adjunct faculty. A mentoring program could address many of the challenges that participants, such as the desire for voice and recognition, and the desire for intangible resources such as information and community support expressed. Fortunately, the literature provides ample examples of such mentoring programs that could serve as models for creating one at the institution included in this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Returning to our earlier models of successful adjunct faculty integration, we can see several aspects of these programs for adjunct faculty that would also meet the needs of the study participants.

Rio Salado Community College provides structures to support adjunct faculty, such as standardized content and delivery models, as well as instructional/technical help desks. Further, a variety of resources are offered to provide needed information, such as orientation sessions and library services. Resources for personal development are also provided, enriching the experiences of adjunct faculty, and fulfilling the desire for community support that participants in this study requested.

At Northern Virginia Community College, adjunct instructors receive opportunities for orientation in the evenings and on the weekends, thus minimizing conflicts with work or other obligations during the workday. A specific adjunct orientation fulfills the study participants’ desire for information. Adjunct faculty also have representation on a campus council, and such representation was desired by several participants in this study. Representation also may fulfill the desire to be a part of the campus community. Both participation in orientation sessions and the campus council sends a message to adjunct faculty that their presence and voice on campus is valued. Lastly, the awards ceremony held by the institution provides an opportunity to celebrate adjunct faculty’s accomplishments, again another opportunity to show adjunct faculty respect and accolades for what they do.

The professional development event provided at Black Hawk College is both designed for and delivered by adjunct faculty. The resources and opportunities to share and interact with other adjunct faculty members addresses many of the issues mentioned by the participants in this study, including voice, an avenue for recognition, as well as many of the intangible resources that were requested, such as support, information, and above all, community.

Similarly, the comprehensive orientation event at Northeast Texas Community College provides information through module sessions, support through ongoing observations and feedback, and community interaction through dialogue with peers.

Given the models provided at community colleges as well as the recommendations provided by the participants in this study, mission integration at the institution could be improved through more accessible meetings as well as a comprehensive mentoring/orientation program. Through these opportunities to connect with the wider campus community, a message can be sent that clearly communicates a commitment to “values-centered education” that “advances academic excellence” by integrating “liberal arts and professional studies”. Increasing the touchpoints that adjunct faculty have with a wider campus community and each other can be an ideal vehicle to communicate and highlight the core values of the institutional mission.

It must be acknowledged that the models and strategies presented in this study do not address the issues of tangible resources mentioned by participants, namely low pay and lack of office space. It could be argued that through governance representation, increased voice, and better integration into the community adjunct faculty may have a better opportunity to advocate for such resources. Still, literature also points to unionization as another potential solution for this issue (Wes et al., 2020). The efforts of unionization models and their impact on adjunct faculty resources is another area worthy of study.

CONCLUSION

The current state of higher education would make a decrease in the number of adjunct faculty unlikely in the future. An increase is likely, which would follow the current trend at post-secondary institutions. Therefore, integration of adjunct faculty will continue to be a pressing issue in higher education. Capturing the voices of this group would seem to be an effective way to learn more about how to improve the environment at four-year institutions for adjunct faculty. The voices of such faculty, coupled with the successful integration models for adjunct faculty that we already have documented in the literature, have the potential to be a powerful set of tools to use to improve and create programs for four-year colleges and universities. This case study attempts to use these tools to provide practical suggestions for an institution of higher education. Such a study could be replicated and used by many institutions to gather data and improve existing or create new programs for adjunct faculty to improve mission integration.

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