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# Instructional Needs of Part-Time Faculty: Implications for Faculty Development

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*In this article the authors discuss the current literature related to the use of part-time faculty. They begin with a definition and identify isolation and need for instructional/faculty development as two important issues related to this group of faculty. They conclude by discussing ways that institutions and instructional/faculty developers can address these issues.*

Without question, the utilization of part-time faculty in higher education is an issue that has grown in importance and will be with us over the next decade (Bartow, 1990). According to some figures, one in every three faculty is employed part-time—more than 250,000 individuals (NCES, 1980). Various estimates suggest that part-time faculty provide somewhere between 15 and 20 percent of the instruction across all institutions of higher education (Gappa, 1984; McGaughey, 1985). This proportion is even higher in community colleges, the primary employers of part-time faculty (McGaughey, 1985). In addition, Gappa (1984) has suggested that the role of part-time faculty may well expand in the future.

As the use of part-time faculty increases, issues raised locally and nationally related to this group become increasingly complex, and the ways

institutions choose to respond will affect instructional, faculty and institutional development. As Gappa (1984) has argued, "The issue of part-time faculty is controversial, partly because all arguments are compelling and partly because faculty and administrators acknowledge that there are both benefits and threats to the institution and educational missions" (Gappa, 1984, p. xiii). This paper identifies some of the major issues related to faculty/instructional development for part-time faculty and suggests specific ways of addressing these concerns. Those issues are best understood if we first clarify what is meant by part-time faculty.

## Definition of Part-Time Faculty

For a number of reasons, there is no standard definition for the use of *part-time* in reference to faculty. One reason defining the group is not simple or straightforward is that each college develops its own part-time criteria and policies (Hauff and Berdie, 1989). As a result, institutions vary widely in the way they count part-time faculty. Surveys conducted by many universities refer to this group by the number of positions (full-time equivalents, or FTEs), and not the number of persons filling those positions. Because part-timers are often referred to as FTE positions, the ratio between part-timers and full-timers is unclear. Other complications involve differentiating between part-time, temporary, and probationary faculty (Spangler, 1990). Consequently, there is uncertainty about who is being counted in this pool. Furthermore, efforts to define part-time faculty are hindered by institutions' unwillingness to release information about numbers of part-time faculty to outsiders.

Although there is not a standard definition for the use of *part-time* in reference to faculty, there is general agreement that the term refers to less than a full-time commitment in any institution (McGaughey, 1985). It usually refers to any faculty appointment that encompasses less than a normal range of assigned duties with terms of employment that acknowledge the fractional involvement of the faculty member (Leslie, Kellams, & Gunne, 1982). By these definitions, part-time faculty devote only part of their lives to teaching at any one institution.

In fact, some part-timers put together a living by teaching at a number of institutions, thereby stretching themselves to work such long and difficult hours that they are, indeed, only at each institution for short periods of time. In such instances part-time faculty members do not participate in curriculum discussions, engage in student advising, or find time to pursue the broad and general philosophical questions intrinsic to intellectual environments. Many

typically come to campus in order to meet very specific obligations. They do their jobs well and then leave (Hartleb and Vilter, 1986).

For the most part, however, part-timers are characterized by great diversity in their assignments and in their reasons for assuming roles as part-time faculty. Whereas some generalizations can be made about full-time faculty as an occupational group, few generalizations can be applied to part-timers because of their marked heterogeneity (Warne & Lundy, 1988). They include those who have full-time employment outside the university (employment that forms the basis of their social status), individuals who choose to teach part-time for personal reasons, and those who yearn for a full academic mandate (Tobias & Rumberger, 1974; Tuckman & Tuckman, 1981).

Despite the fact that it is difficult to characterize part-time faculty as a group, one area in which some generalizations about the group can be made is related to gender. As the number of part-time faculty continues to grow and their use becomes entrenched, a literature dealing with gender-related issues has evolved. Relative to the proportion of full-time faculty, women are over-represented among part-timers. Lunde and Warne (1990) argue that because of a combination of factors, including values to which they have been socialized, domestic responsibilities, and "institutional reward structures based on the male life cycle," female academics "are more likely than men to become, and to remain, part-time academics" (p. 207). Accordingly, the problems of part-time female academics have been addressed in a number of studies (Abel, 1985; Lundy & Warne, 1990).

## **Issues Related to Use of Part-Time Faculty**

The use of part-time faculty is one of the most volatile issues, especially in community colleges. As Gappa (1984) has pointed out, issues related to the use of part-time faculty really have two sides to them. The advantages of part-time faculty are that they provide administrative flexibility and, as some argue, they have "specific skills, experiences or insight—gained through their primary occupations—that full-timers do not have" (Gappa, 1984, p. xiii). Proponents on this side might argue that part-time faculty, via their knowledge and experience, complement the full-time faculty. In essence they are actually practicing what they preach. Part-time faculty fit into the life of the university by bringing to the classroom expertise in a given discipline, practical application outside the university structure, and academic training. They are as qualified at the same level as full-time faculty, but have decided to spend most of their time outside the classroom. Most perceive teaching as an enjoyable avocation and do not necessarily pursue part-time teaching for

the monetary inducement it offers (Thompson, 1984). On the other hand, as Gappa has suggested, "part-time faculty are often poorly prepared and not available to properly counsel and advise students, lack loyalty to the institution, and do not contribute to the other two missions of the institution—teaching and research" (p. xiii).

Regardless of the perspective one takes on these issues, there is no doubt that the part-time positions have a variety of inherent difficulties that present challenges not only for the instructors themselves but also for the institutions they serve and instructional/faculty developers who attempt to assist them. A survey of related literature indicates a variety of problems faced by part-time faculty at many institutions that have implications for faculty and instructional development. For example, part-time faculty are often asked to assume responsibility to teach, while at the same time are often encumbered by inadequate orientation, support systems, understanding of the college, perceptions of the students, syllabi, and knowledge of the alternatives available to them (Davidson, 1984). In too many instances they are underpaid, segregated, and generally unrewarded for the efforts they make on behalf of the college (Maguire, 1984). The literature further indicates that part-time faculty use less instructional media, are less aware of campus events, have less choice in the selection of course materials, and are less likely to have access to instructional support services. Two of the issues that arise from these kinds of problems—isolation and need for professional/instructional development—are especially relevant to instructional/faculty developers who are charged with assisting part-time faculty.

### *Isolation*

A major issue of concern is that part-time faculty often feel alienated from their colleagues and institutions (Flynn, Flynn, Grimm, & Lockhart 1986). Many part-time faculty receive no orientation to their department or college. Sometimes they are not required to attend departmental or college social events. These practices increase part-timers' sense of isolation and decrease their commitment to the college (Hauff & Berdie, 1989). Despite being a part of the academic community, part-time faculty are often alienated by their full-time colleagues and in many instances are not welcomed in departmental decision-making processes. In addition, Gappa (1984) has pointed out that:

Because of the lack of office space and opportunity to meet informally with peers, part-timers may feel devoid of status in the academic community. ... Little casual sharing of information is possible about teaching methods, materials, and student problems. Being denied access to valuable informa-

tion, being kept in a state of uncertainty about future appointment, and being seen as in a different status by full-time faculty can create genuine fear in the part-timer. (p. 69)

This awareness of second-class status and of the limited opportunities for moving to full academic membership creates a sense of isolation and low morale and may ultimately contaminate the university at large (Warne & Lundy, 1988).

### ***Professional and Instructional Development***

The need for professional/ instructional development for part-time faculty has been argued from a variety of perspectives in the last two decades. Black (1981) conducted a study from which it was concluded that part-time community college faculty are in need of assistance in various areas related to instruction. This idea was reinforced by Conrad and Hammond (1982) who suggested that because many part-timers have no background in pedagogy and little understanding of the needs of students, it is imperative to include such faculty in staff development efforts, particularly as the numbers of part-time faculty continue to grow. During the late 1970's and mid-1980's some individuals were presenting models of staff development programs that indicated that the training of part-time faculty was a top priority (Moe, 1977; Pedras, 1985). By 1987 others had suggested that a prevalent trend was the analysis of the needs of part-time faculty for orientation and staff development (Miller, 1987). Some experts involved in working with part-timers might argue that for part-time faculty, who are frequently hired based on their skill demonstrated in their occupational area, there is usually no question about the instructor's knowledge in his or her field. Shrawder—as recently as 1990—however, has indicated that the problem is that they often lack skill in teaching.

In some instances, the part-time faculty themselves have indicated interest in greater professional and instructional development. For example, a study conducted at New York City Technical College on mainstreaming part-time faculty in the department of biological sciences revealed that among areas of greatest need was professional development (Selvadurai, 1985). When asked in a survey about the factors that contributed to their decision to teach at Prince George's Community College, "personal satisfaction" ranked highest, followed by "acquiring teaching experience for career purposes." When asked what institutional services they felt were important to part-time faculty and how effective the institution is at providing them, almost half the respondents ranked "more effective orientation program for

new teachers" highest, followed by "teaching workshops." A final set of questions probed ways and means of improving the contributions of the part-time faculty. The first of these asked in what ways, other than salary increases, might the college encourage part-time teaching excellence. Seventy-three percent of the respondents said that they would probably or definitely attend workshops on teaching/learning issues. Topics of particular interest included student needs and learning styles, dealing with student diversity, and research developments in their academic discipline (Bartow, 1990). In this survey, most newcomers expressed the need for an effective part-time faculty orientation program with substantive content and departmental involvement. The veterans focused on four major themes: their enthusiasm and love of teaching, their need for more information, their wish to be included to a greater extent in departmental affairs, and their need for continued professional development. Many of these ideas are reinforced by others who have argued that part-time faculty want to participate in workshops that will impact teaching performance and seem to be very receptive to an evaluative process that will aid in the improvement of teaching (Thompson, 1984).

Thus, the perspectives of a variety of researchers and experts and the needs identified by part-time faculty themselves suggest that training could be useful for part-timers. Unfortunately, the departments that employ faculty may not have the time, resources, or commitment to make faculty development a priority, especially for part-time faculty. For some reason, although institutions are increasingly making faculty development programs or activities available to and planned for full-time faculty, research conducted by National Center for Research in Vocational Education (1990) found that over 59% of the institutions rarely have part-time faculty participate in professional development activities, and 48% rarely make professional development activities available to part-time faculty. Almost three quarters of the responding administrators from the same research reported that there was little institution-wide planning, and many (39.5%) indicated that the professional development effort was "unsystematic" at their institution. When planning was conducted, the emphasis was heavily on full-time faculty input in planning specific professional development activities (National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1990). Few activities, however, were identified for part-time faculty. When part-time faculty were involved, it was most often the passive process of allowing access to the activities planned for groups of full-time faculty.

Furthermore, when institutions or instructional/professional development programs do have intentions for being more inclusive with part-time

faculty, often such efforts are not successfully communicated. As a result, a significant obstacle to the development of part-time faculty is the knowledge of the resources on campus available to support them in their teaching. Analysis of a faculty survey reported in the proceedings from a national conference on professional development of part-time occupational/technical faculty revealed that, for all items in the sections of the questionnaire related to the professional development programs, the incidence of "Don't Know" responses or omissions was high—especially for the part-time faculty. The "Don't Know" response was used by 6% to 43% of full-time faculty. Such responses by part-time faculty ranged from 25% to 63%. Clearly, there needs to be improved communication about professional development to all faculty, but the problem is greatest among part-time faculty (National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1990).

Although these arguments might lead one to conclude that much of the difficulty with developing professional or instructional development programs for part-time faculty is the result of institutional passiveness or lack of communication, actually the nature of the part-time positions adds additional complexities that affect efforts to include part-time faculty in such programs. Among these are lack of staff, financial constraints, lack of interest by part-time faculty and difficulties in finding convenient times (Moe, 1977). Frequently the part-time faculty member is involved in a variety of activities unrelated to responsibilities at a specific institution. Consequently, time constraints are a problem in trying to involve part-time faculty. Often, as the literature indicates, they have other commitments that limit not only their freedom to participate but also the institution's access to them.

## **Implications for Faculty/Instructional Development**

As the number of part-time faculty in today's institutions continues to grow, it is imperative to include such faculty in staff development efforts (Conrad and Hammond, 1982). As such, opportunities should be provided for part-time faculty to enhance their contributions to the institutions they serve. And, as Gappa (1984) has suggested, "The challenge is not to provide parity with full-time faculty. Instead it is to establish clearly articulated, well-understood, humane, and equitable policies and practices that accommodate the variety among part-timers themselves" (p. 97). Therefore, addressing in a more effective manner the needs of part-time faculty is a positive measure in increasing their morale and professional development. In order to do so, instructional/faculty developers might focus on resources provided



through orientations, through ongoing development activities, and through efforts to encourage collaboration.

### ***Orientations for Part-Time Faculty***

One way for institutions and faculty/instructional development staff to address issues related to part-time faculty is to develop more comprehensive orientation programs for part-time faculty new to the university. These activities should be held at the beginning of the term at a time, day, and location that is convenient for the majority of the part-time faculty members. Although part of the focus should be on faculty members and how they develop as teachers, the orientation should also serve to help new and inexperienced part-time faculty learn about routine processes and procedures within the university that are well known to full-time faculty (Boyar & MacKenzie, 1987). They should be made to feel part of the institution, if for no other reason than to learn to deal with some of the internal procedures and policies (Thompson, 1984). Although there are always challenges in trying to institute such programs, faculty/instructional developers should be prepared to address those constraints and to look to other successful programs for models and strategies to make the programs work.

### ***Ongoing Development Activities for Part-Time Faculty***

Individuals responsible for faculty, instructional, and institutional development must also do a better job of making resources available to part-time faculty. Clearly, our challenge is to give part-time faculty access to the teaching resources that we give to the full-time faculty (Bartow, 1990). This challenge can be met in such a way that the department not only supports teaching development, but encourages it so that it will become a priority of the faculty in the department. Centers, for their part, should try to accommodate part-time faculty by occasionally offering their traditional services (consulting, classroom visits, videotaping, etc.) at times such as weekends or evenings when part-time faculty can use them. Continued research on and surveys of part-time faculty could also provide useful insights about how best to meet the needs of this group of faculty.

Granted, devising and implementing methods of faculty development for part-time faculty to enhance and strengthen teaching skills is not easy. The establishment of a professional development committee that includes part-time faculty to explore mutual concerns could be helpful, however. A resource center with materials designed in the form of videotapes or classroom instruction manuals of policies and procedures pertaining to the institution and the department for use by part-timers is also recommended

(Maguire, 1984). These videos could be used by new instructors at later times to help reinforce skills they are in the process of developing. Also, less experienced instructors may actually learn a lot from viewing such tapes. Departments should make these resources known to the part-time instructor. Department chairs should make the names and addresses of new part-time faculty known to centers on campus providing this support so that these faculty can be contacted by the center. Part-time faculty should also be routinely invited to all departmental and campus-wide workshops, events, and functions.

An important issue for all involved to consider is how best to assist females. With literature suggesting that women part-timers may have different goals, different ways of thinking about academic issues, and limited options for career change, it is important for faculty/instructional developers not to overlook the particular needs of women part-timers. The challenge is to assist all part-time faculty with their teaching and to make available to them the appropriate resources to meet their needs. Several institutions have developed successful ongoing programs to assist part-time faculty in the development of their teaching and professional skills. Again, analyzing the elements of success in such programs can be helpful in the development of approaches and strategies (for or a discussion of specific successful programs, see Gappa, 1984).

### ***Collaboration for Part-Time Faculty***

Wohlberg (1991) identifies collaboration in faculty development as a particular element that is successful with part-timers. Using collaboration and participation produces a collegial atmosphere so often denied part-timers. With their enthusiasm and fresh perspectives, part-timers have become dynamic forces in assessing curriculum and collaborating on its development. Hence, across orientations and ongoing activities it would be useful if faculty developers could promote more interaction between faculty in terms of faculty development activities (Boyar & MacKenzie, 1987). On a practical level, part-time faculty should be given mailboxes, listed in faculty directories, and included on mailing lists to facilitate communication of services. Such an effort would send messages about the importance of faculty development from the perspective of the chair as well as from the perspective of the center and also encourage collaboration among various groups.

McGuire (1989) has suggested getting faculty more involved in professional activities of the institutions. McGuire, Dean of Instruction at the Community College of Aurora (Colorado) where faculty are 95 percent part-timers, has hired part-time faculty to serve on search committees and

shared governance assembly. The overall message for faculty developers is that taking these concerns into consideration invites these individuals to be an integral part of the academic community. It is important, once again, however, to consider scheduling meetings when part-time faculty are usually free to attend, such as during the evenings or on a Saturday mornings.

## Conclusion

Administrators may continue to use large numbers of part-time faculty because of the cost, flexibility, and enrichment of educational offerings; however, they should assess the situation, needs, and problems of these instructors carefully (Black, 1981). Research on related indicators shows that part-timers differ from full-timers in age, years of teaching experience, compensation, qualification, unionization, and working conditions (Friedlander, 1980). Such research indicates that continued use of part-time faculty in the current educational process without providing an adequate support program may have serious deleterious effects on the college community. On the other hand, as Wohlberg (1991) has suggested, "If a fraction of the time and energy spent fretting over the inadequacies of part-time faculty were put into supporting and guiding them, we'd probably save a lot on the fretting end. In fact we might even discover a resource to be celebrated" (p. 1).

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