Adjunct Work Environment and Development at SLU

The following information comes from the results of a survey to Part-Time/Adjunct faculty members, conducted in April of 2015, on their work environment and professional development. (Note: The survey was not sent to full-time University staff who also occasionally teach courses as part-time/adjunct instructors.)

Adjunct Roles and Duties

• The survey was completed by 212 of the 862 (25%) part-time/adjunct faculty to whom it was sent. The largest number of respondents (73, or 37%) came from the College of Arts & Sciences.

• About half of the part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they support themselves by means other than their part-time teaching position, while about 30% indicated they do support themselves on their part-time teaching position.

• Over 40% of the part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they have taught at SLU for 1-3 years, and a quarter said they have taught at SLU for 4-6 years. About 30% indicated they have been teaching at SLU for 7 years or longer.

• Although over half of the part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they taught in undergraduate classrooms on campus, the respondents are clearly involved in all types of teaching (classroom, clinical, online) at all levels (undergraduate, graduate, professional).

• About half of the part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they teach one course per semester on average, while approximately a third said they teach two course per semester. Most indicated they do not get to teach multiple sections of the same course.

• Approximately half of the part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they hold regular office hours, attend meetings, and consult regularly with other faculty in their program. Over two-thirds said they write recommendation letters for students. Less than a third said they receive any specialized training. Almost no part-time/adjunct faculty members are compensated for any of their effort outside of the classroom.

Adjunct Work Environment

• Over half of the part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they receive regular communications from the Chair or Dean, and have access to a networked computer and printer. Approximately one-third said they are invited to faculty meetings, and about a quarter indicated they regularly attend the meetings and have input into
curriculum development. Less than 10% said they vote on curriculum changes or vote at faculty meetings.

• The following is a representation of the involvement the part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they would like to have, but currently lack.
  – Input into summer compensation. Be compensated for activities outside teaching (mentoring students, committee service, office hours). Ability to organize as a labor unit. Access to retirement savings like full-time faculty. Free or discounted parking.
  – Increased interactions/communication with other faculty in their department.
  – Attend faculty meetings, and have input into curriculum development.
  – Peer review of teaching.
  – Possibility for promotion in rank.
  – More support for online teaching (computer, related supplies).
  – More professional development opportunities (i.e., for online tools like Blackboard), orientation.
  – Office space, be listed on the Department web page, phone line (so don’t have to give out cell phone number to students).
  – Ability to take classes at SLU at no cost (for both employee and family).
  – Receive same email communications as full-time faculty (from Chair and Dean).
  – Representation on Faculty Senate.
  – Formal evaluation by Chair.

• Half of part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they would be interested in teaching full-time at SLU. The other half said they would not or it would depend (approximately a quarter gave each response).

• One third of part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they teach at another institution in the St. Louis region while teaching at SLU. Of these, over two-thirds taught at one other institution.

• Almost all part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they use their SLU email address, and almost all said their teaching is regularly evaluated by students at the end of each course. 80% of part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they do not feel pressure to teach/grade in a particular way to keep their teaching evaluations high.

• Almost 60% of part-time/adjunct faculty said they do not have adequate office space on campus appropriate for meeting with students.

• Over 75% of part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they either occasionally or quite frequently (each year/semester) take on a new class preparation at SLU. 90% of these respondents said they were not compensated for new class preparation efforts.
• Approximately 20% of part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they helped train new part-time/adjunct faculty and/or teaching assistants as part of their role. Almost 90% of these individuals said they were not compensated for these efforts.

• About one-third of part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they are given less than two months notice before teaching a class at SLU. 40% said they are given 2-4 months, and about a quarter said they are given more than four months.

• Over 70% of part-time/adjunct faculty said they receive their contract less than two months before teaching a class at SLU. 12% said they normally receive their contract after the semester begins, and 40% said this has happened at least once. Over 80% said their contract is always correct.

• About 70% of part-time/adjunct faculty indicated their students know they are adjuncts, and about a quarter weren’t sure.

• The following is a representation of the reported impact, positive or negative, the part-time/adjunct faculty said stemmed from students’ knowing they were a part-time/adjunct faculty member.
  - Positive due to a more informal classroom atmosphere, which can aid discussions.
  - Those who are content experts from clinical/industry/etc. say students know this, and the result is mostly positive.
  - Many comments related to students appreciating part-time/adjunct faculty bringing real-world experience to the classroom.
  - Students don’t know what it means to be an adjunct faculty.
  - Negative due to students thinking part-time faculty are not as prepared as full-time faculty (less credit and respectability), knowing they don’t have job security, and knowing they don’t have the time to fully commit to the course and/or to meeting with students (due to working at other institutions), or an office to meet them when students need help.

Adjunct Professional Development Needs

• About half of the part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they have attended a Department or College orientation.
  - From the comments these are in SPS, SON, SOM, some unnamed Departments, English Department, Math Department, Writing Program, a few people who were one-year full-time faculty and attended the University orientation, and clinical training.
  - Almost all of the comments about faculty orientation were very positive. It was generally described as being valuable.
  - One person mentioned getting paid for this, and other professional development, at other places where they are part-time/adjunct faculty.
Of the part-time/adjunct faculty who indicated they attended a faculty orientation event, slightly less than half said they were provided with free parking.

- 60% of part-time/adjunct faculty said they would find value in a University orientation.

- 69% of part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they actively seek out professional development in the area of teaching. This occurs at SLU, at other Universities, and elsewhere.

- The following is a representation of the types of professional development the part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they seek in the area of teaching (course development, online tools, etc).
  - Reinert Center (CTTL) events (CUTS program, workshops).
  - Teaching centers at other Universities.
  - Conferences, workshops (in discipline, professional organizations).
  - Books, articles, webinars.
  - Various opportunities (workshops, tutorials, webinars) to learn about online resources.
  - Peer mentoring.
  - It is noted in a few places that it would be nice if SLU paid for development opportunities off campus (i.e., conferences).
  - It was noted that some opportunities are only available to full-time faculty.
  - Continuing Education Units (CEUs) needed for accreditation.

- Almost no part-time/adjunct faculty said they are paid by SLU for the time spent engaged in professional development opportunities. Almost no part-time/adjunct faculty said SLU pays for them to attend professional development opportunities (travel, registration). If SLU did offer this compensation/funding, the part-time/adjunct faculty would be more likely to partake in professional development.

- The following is a representation of the changes in practice/policy SLU could pursue that part-time/adjunct faculty indicated would make their professional development more predictable or easier to manage.
  - Be able to take courses at a discount at the Center for Workforce and Organizational Development.
  - Pay for or discount parking (for adjunct faculty and for invited speakers).
  - Improved compensation, compensation for attending professional development opportunities, grant opportunity for adjuncts to attend conferences, pay for travel.
  - Feedback (evaluation) on teaching (beyond student evaluations).
  - Knowledge of what will be taught with more than two weeks notice.
  - Allow adjuncts to teach upper-level courses.
- Professional development offered outside the normal work-day, more convenient times, offered online.
- Register offerings with professional organizations so count towards licensing.
- Assist with expenses to attend professional development opportunities.
- Clear communication on expectations, opportunities, and incentives.
- Have continuing status as an adjunct (multi-year contracts).
- Full-time faculty mentors.
- Make sure adjuncts have the same professional development opportunities as full-time faculty.
- An orientation for the IT tools used in teaching (blackboard, google docs). Also, Department and/or College level orientations.
- Ways to make remote faculty feel included/integrated.
- If an adjunct preps a course for the first time, make sure they can teach it again.
- Inclusion in Department meetings/events.
- Professional development opportunities planned/advertised well in advance, and better advertised to adjunct faculty, a newsletter.
- Inform adjuncts when full-time positions come open.

Adjunct Compensation Policies

- 22% of part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they have had a class cancelled due to under-enrollment at SLU.
  - From the comments, for those who have had a class cancelled the amount of time given as notice varies greatly. It could be at the very last minute, or it could be a couple months’ notice.

Final Thoughts

- The following is a representation of the final thoughts part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they would like to share about their experience at SLU.
  - Many comments stating they have enjoyed the experience.
  - Should be eligible for retirement contributions and healthcare benefits.
  - Reiteration that all part-time adjunct faculty should have an orientation. Need basic information like what needs to go in a syllabus, grading policies, where to store records.
  - Adjuncts who carry an entire department/concentration on their own because there are no dedicated majors face a particular set of challenges.
  - There are too many adjuncts.
  - Some courses are not conducive to being taught online.
  - Need better compensation. Provide parking (parking for a semester is 10% of compensation). Should have raises. Compensation for new class
- Compensation for work outside the class (class assessment, mentoring students, mentoring new adjuncts).
  - Need office space to meet with students. Also need access to a computer and printer.
  - Need name badge.
  - Individual was forced to give content for a newly developed course to Department so it could be used by a full-time faculty member. This felt exploitive.
  - Enjoyed the Reinert Center CUTS program.
  - Different Departments/Colleges treat adjuncts very differently, and this is not fair.
  - Multi-year contracts would be nice. Lack of security can weigh heavy.
  - Adjunct treatment goes against core component of Jesuit Mission.
  - More communication from Chair/Dean.
  - Many adjuncts conduct research and receive no support/recognition for it.