Adjunct Work Environment and Development at SLU
Part-Time Adjunct Faculty Perspectives

The following points come from a survey of Part-Time/Adjunct Faculty, 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.) Possible solutions/improved practices for discussion are given in italics.

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

- About 30% of the part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they financially support themselves through their part-time/adjunct teaching role (at SLU and elsewhere). This number increased to 50% for the part-time/adjunct faculty within the College of Arts & Sciences. The plurality of respondents said they had taught at SLU for 1-3 years, and 70% said they had taught at SLU for six years or less. 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, while approximately a third said they teach two courses per semester. Most indicated they do not get to teach multiple sections of the same course.
  - Given the broad range of activities in which our part-time/adjunct faculty are involved, we need to be flexible with how we address their needs.

- 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. Almost no part-time/adjunct faculty members are compensated for any of their effort outside of the classroom.
  - We should have a discussion about compensating part-time/adjunct faculty for outside-of-the-classroom activities. This could be part of a larger discussion of an annual evaluation process for part-time/adjunct faculty that is tied to raises and promotion in rank.

- 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. Almost 60% of part-time/adjunct faculty said they do not have adequate office space on campus appropriate for meeting with students. In comments part-time/adjunct faculty said they would like more communication with
the Chair, Dean, and other faculty. They indicated a desire to be invited to
department meetings, involved in curriculum changes/development, have
appropriate office space, be listed on the Department webpage, and have part-
time/adjunct faculty representation on Faculty Senate.

– The University, Colleges, and Departments should be sure part-time/adjunct
class receive regular communications from their Department Chair and
Dean. We should have a discussion about ways to make sure part-
time/adjunct faculty have access to a networked computer and printer,
have appropriate office space, and be listed on Department webpages.

– We should have a discussion about inviting part-time/adjunct faculty to
department meetings, and about their input and voting on issues such as
curriculum changes. We should also have a University discussion on part-
time/adjunct faculty having representation in Faculty governance
structures.

• In comments part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they would like improved
compensation, benefits (health care, retirement, ability to take courses at SLU, etc.),
and discounted or free parking. Furthermore, part-time/adjunct faculty noted a
desire for formal, annual evaluation by their Department Chair, and the ability for
annual raises and promotion in rank.

– The University should have a conversation about part-time/adjunct faculty
compensation and benefits, and promotion in rank.

• 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. Half of part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they would be
interested in teaching full-time at SLU.

– The University should have a discussion on whether student and
Department needs can be better addressed via the hiring of more full-time
faculty, rather than through using the current number of part-time/adjunct
faculty.

• 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. In addition, part-time/adjunct faculty noted they are not compensated for
training new part-time/adjunct faculty or teaching assistants.

– The University should have a discussion on compensating part-
time/adjunct faculty for activities performed outside of the classroom.

• Over 70% of part-time/adjunct faculty said they receive their contract less than
two months before teaching a course 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.

– We should discuss ways to ensure part-time/adjunct faculty receive their
contracts in a timely manner, before the course starts.
• About 70% of part-time/adjunct faculty indicated their students know they are adjuncts, and about a quarter weren’t sure. Many commented they thought this was a positive as students saw them as content experts with real-world experience. Negative repercussions included students not thinking full-time faculty are as prepared (less credit and respectability), knowing they don’t have job security, and knowing they don’t have the time to fully commit to course (due to working at other institutions), or an office to meet them when students need help.

  – We should discuss ways to make sure part-time/adjunct faculty have access to appropriate office space.

• About half of the part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they have attended a Department or College orientation, and 60% said they would find value in a University orientation. Almost all of the comments about faculty orientation were very positive. It was generally described as being valuable. 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.

  – The University should discuss ways to make sure all part-time/adjunct faculty have access to an orientation before teaching at SLU, and we should discuss providing for parking for such events.

• About 70% 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. Comments indicated professional development was sought out at the Reinert Center (the Cuts program, workshops), events at other University, conferences, books, journal articles, and peer mentoring. It was noted in a few places that it would be nice if SLU paid for development opportunities off campus (i.e., conferences). It was also stated that some development opportunities were only available to full-time faculty. Part-time/adjunct faculty commented on the desire to take courses at the Center for Workforce and Organizational Development, having professional development opportunities made available at more convenient times/online, having more development on the teaching technologies available at SLU, having development opportunities planned/advertised well in advance, and better advertised to adjunct faculty.

  – We should make sure all part-time/adjunct faculty are aware of the professional development opportunities available to them on campus. Events should be well publicized in advance, and we should have a discussion on how to make professional development opportunities available at times other than daytime working hours.

  – We should discuss development opportunities for part-time/adjunct faculty off campus, and at the Center for Workforce and Organizational Development.
• 22% of part-time/adjunct faculty indicated they have had a class cancelled due to under-enrollment at SLU. For those who have had a class cancelled the amount of time given as notice varies greatly.
  - The University should work to give consistent, reasonable notice when a class is cancelled. The University should have a discussion about compensating part-time/adjunct faculty members for time spent preparing for a course that gets cancelled.

• In comments, part-time/adjunct faculty indicated a need for better compensation, access to benefits, free parking, multi-year contracts, annual review by their Department Chair, and the ability for promotion in rank.
  - We should discuss developing a policy for the annual review of part-time/adjunct faculty performance, and discuss it being tied to a policy for part-time/adjunct faculty raises (and possibly promotion).
  - The University should discuss efforts to make parking affordable for part-time/adjunct faculty.