

# TRENDS AND ISSUES

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## STRATEGIC UTILIZATION OF ADJUNCT AND OTHER CONTINGENT FACULTY

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The evolution of the faculty workforce model has far-reaching implications for colleges and universities, students and other stakeholders. Today, approximately 30% of faculty are tenure track. The remaining 70% who are nontenure track, also commonly referred to as contingent faculty, can be further divided into full-time (20%) and part-time (50%). Part-time nontenure-track faculty are also known as adjunct faculty.

A range of individuals fill adjunct and other contingent faculty positions. At one end of the spectrum are faculty who bring expertise from the nonacademic sector into the classroom, sometimes referred to as “professors of practice.” At the spectrum’s other end is the stereotypical adjunct, i.e., a professional academic employed part-time. Drivers for employing nontenure-track faculty include bringing professional experience into the curriculum, providing institutional flexibility, and cost savings.

Concerns have been raised regarding the student experience and learning outcomes in adjunct-taught courses. Any negative effects likely result from the environment of adjunct-taught classes rather than poor teaching by the faculty. In particular, mentoring and advising of students outside the classroom is typically missing. Adjuncts may be fine classroom teachers, but they don’t have the time to do other things that socialize students to college academics. What then constitutes best practices for ensuring good outcomes in courses taught by adjunct and other contingent faculty? This was the focus of a pair of sessions at the 2014 TIAA-CREF client forum and prior interviews with higher education administrators and researchers who study higher education.

First, the right adjuncts need to be in the right classes. Maintaining eligible pools of candidates eases the administrative burden of hiring good matches. The student experience should not be adversely affected when the individual hired has previously taught at the university. Adjuncts may not be the best match to teach first-year courses given that many of those students need extra assistance that adjuncts do not have the time to provide.



Financial Services

Orientation should be provided at the start of each semester and cover key policy, legal and institutional topics, as well as teaching and learning issues. A clear understanding between the department and adjunct for ensuring student outcomes is needed. The adjunct can be provided with a campus email account and telephone, and some form of office space.

Campus centers for teaching and learning typically provide new faculty training programs in which adjuncts should be encouraged to participate. There is value in connecting adjuncts with faculty who have previously taught a given course. Feedback should be provided to adjuncts, preferably during the semester; feedback would ideally be based on in-person observations of the class.

Most adjunct faculty very much want to be part of the community of scholars in their department and institution. This is a culture issue. It would require service on committee assignments, which may not be realistic for an adjunct. It would also represent a shift in the relative roles of tenure-track and nontenure-track faculty, and thus would involve buy-in from tenure-track faculty. An alternative strategy could be creating an adjunct shared governance council to advise university administration.

In practice, decisions about using contingent faculty are an administrative function of deans and chairs, rather than a response at the institutional level to strategic questions regarding the best use of faculty resources. In many cases higher education appears to have gotten away from the practice of adjuncts being supplemental. Their use has become largely reactive to external pressures. In general, colleges and universities need to think with more intentionality at the institutional level about their faculty model and the strategic deployment of various types of faculty. A key question this raises is: What is the configuration of faculty that is best suited to meet a given institution's mission and ensure positive student outcomes, while simultaneously meeting the operational and financial needs of the institution? The appropriate model will vary based on mission, budget, location, student needs and other variables. It may even vary across departments within a given institution for the same reasons.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The evolution of the faculty workforce model in higher education has far-reaching implications for colleges and universities, students, faculty themselves and other stakeholders. As such, that evolution should be the intentional outcome of strategic planning by colleges and universities. But such planning and decisionmaking does not occur in a vacuum, rather it is influenced by the environment in which higher education functions, particularly its financial climate.

While the tenure-track<sup>1</sup> professor focused on teaching, research and service is the stereotypical faculty position, less than one-third (29%) of faculty today are in tenure-track positions. The remaining 71% are nontenure track.<sup>2</sup> At its core, intentional planning of the faculty workforce involves decisions about the use of nontenure-track faculty:

What types of nontenure-track faculty to use?

- How much to use them?
- Where to use them?
- How to support them?

A range of faculty positions falls under the broad category of nontenure-track faculty. Nontenure-track faculty positions can be full-time or part-time; 73% are part-time and 27% are full-time.<sup>3</sup> So, approximately 30% of faculty are tenure track, 50% are part-time nontenure track and 20% are full-time nontenure track.

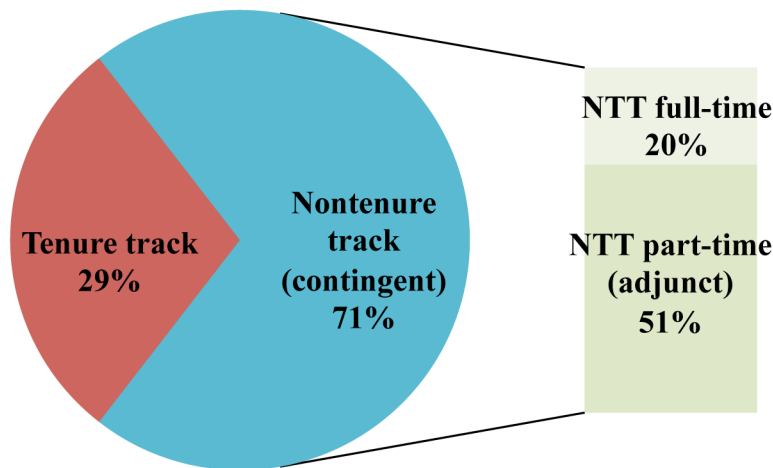
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1 Tenure track includes faculty who have received tenure as well as those whose position offers the possibility of becoming tenured.

2 Source: American Federation of Teachers tabulations of Fall 2012 data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. ([http://higherdata.aft.org/instit/national/instr\\_staff.cfm](http://higherdata.aft.org/instit/national/instr_staff.cfm)). Data presented and discussed in this report excludes graduate assistants.

3 Ibid.

**FIGURE 1**  
**TENURE TRACK VS. NONTENURE TRACK FACULTY**



Source: American Federation of Teachers tabulations of 2012 IPEDS data.

In addition, faculty can be classified as contingent or not and adjunct or not. As commonly used, the term contingent is synonymous with nontenure-track faculty, both part-time and full-time. In this sense, contingent means that the length of the employment agreement is limited. This may be for a relatively short time period (say, one semester or one year), but in other cases the contingent faculty member may have a multiyear contract (generally for 3-5 years) as is sometimes the case with full-time nontenure-track faculty. But in all cases, the employment relationship is limited to a specified length of time.

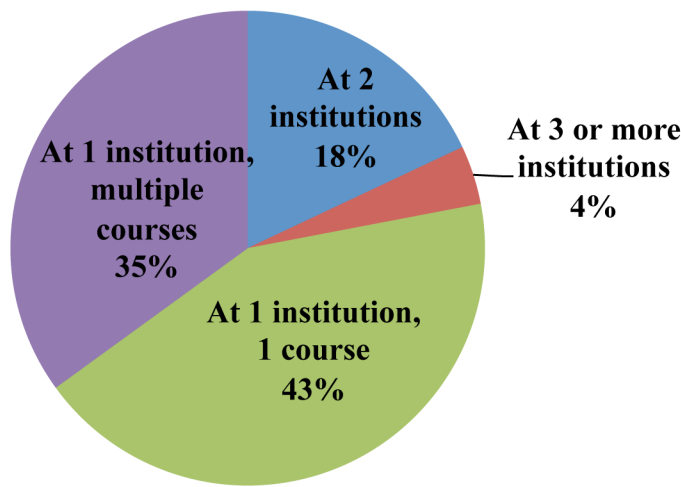
The term adjunct, as commonly used, is synonymous with part-time nontenure-track faculty. Adjuncts are a subset of contingent faculty. The faculty workforce is thus essentially evenly divided between adjunct and non-adjunct faculty.

A range of individuals fill adjunct and other contingent faculty positions. At one end of the spectrum are faculty who bring expertise from the nonacademic sector into the classroom, sometimes referred to as “professors of practice.” Such faculty would be common in fields such as business, engineering and the performing arts, for example. They may teach upper-level or lower-level courses. The typical arrangement would be a part-time appointment to teach one course while continuing to work full-time outside academe. But sometimes an individual may take a leave of absence from nonacademic employment to teach full-time for a period of time.

At the spectrum’s other end is the stereotypical adjunct, i.e., a professional academic employed part-time. Adjunct faculty are often used for introductory and lower-level courses. The position may be responsible for teaching a single course or multiple courses. An adjunct may hold similar positions at multiple institutions. Seventy-eight percent of adjunct faculty teach at one college or university, with 43% teaching one course and 35% teaching multiple courses. Twenty-two percent teach at multiple institutions; 18% at two institutions and 4% at three or more.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Source: Coalition on the Academic Workforce. “A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members,” June 2012.

**FIGURE 2**  
**DISTRIBUTION OF ADJUNCT FACULTY**



Source: Coalition on the Academic Workforce. "A Portrait of Part-Time Faculty Members," June 2012.

**UTILIZATION OF ADJUNCT AND OTHER CONTINGENT FACULTY**

To gain deeper insights into the use of adjuncts and other contingent faculty today and to foster a dialogue on the intentional structuring of tomorrow’s faculty workforce, the TIAA-CREF Institute organized a session at TIAA-CREF’s 2014 client forum to examine strategically integrating contingent faculty into the faculty workforce model. The session’s panel featured senior administrative leaders from both human resources and academic affairs:

- Jeffery Frumkin, Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs and Director of Academic Human Resources, University of Michigan
- Gregg Kvistad, Provost, University of Denver
- Curtis Lloyd, Vice Chancellor for Human Resources, The State University of New York
- Rosario van Daalen, Human Resources Officer, University System of Maryland

In addition, the Institute conducted a series of structured, in-depth interviews with academic and human resource administrators in colleges and universities and researchers who study various aspects of higher education. The interviews were designed to gain insight into what motivates academic institutions to employ adjuncts and other contingent faculty, what would improve the student experience in adjunct-taught classes, and, on a macro level, how to best adapt the faculty workforce model to most effectively use adjunct and other contingent faculty going forward.<sup>5</sup>

The preforum interviews and conference session dialogue revealed several core reasons for the use of adjuncts and other contingent faculty.

- **Cost control** is certainly a reason at many institutions; this appears particularly true for community colleges. It was noted, however, that savings can be diminished on net if there is a need to constantly recruit and replace faculty.
- **Bringing professional experience and expertise into the curriculum** is a common motivation, as mentioned above. There may also be highly specialized courses in a major for which tenure-track faculty are not the best qualified teachers.<sup>6</sup>

5 Interviews were conducted by Greenwald & Associates with 12 administrators from higher education and 6 researchers. The interview guides were developed by Greenwald & Associates and the TIAA-CREF Institute. The interviews typically lasted 30-45 minutes.

6 One example cited was lens grinding in an optometry major.

- ***Institutional flexibility*** in efficiently filling short-term labor gaps is provided by adjunct faculty. Such gaps can emerge for various reasons, such as course enrollment surges, course buy-outs by tenure-track faculty, sabbaticals and other leave taken by tenure-track faculty, or the phased retirement of tenure-track faculty. There may also be periods where long-term budget uncertainty prevents filling open tenure-track positions for a period of time.
- ***Demand for a more diverse set of roles*** has increased within higher education. Distance learning, continuing education, job training and interest in MOOCs are becoming more prevalent and have led to a greater need for people who can provide such functions within limited budgets.

Gregg Kvistad explained that the degree to which adjuncts are used and the reasons why will vary across institutions, and even across departments and programs within a given institution. He stressed that the issue of contingency, and the workforce more broadly, are extraordinarily complicated and cannot be the prerogative of an academic administrator or of an HR department, but rather must be the prerogative of the entire university including faculty members.

The University of Denver is a private, nonprofit institution that essentially consists of a liberal arts college with an enrollment of 5,000 undergraduate students and graduate programs that enroll about 6,000 students. Most of the graduate students are in professional programs such as law, business, education, social work, professional psychology and international studies. This drives the use of certain types of faculty in certain areas.

Kvistad noted that approximately 85% of Denver's adjuncts are clustered in two types of programs:

1. Extension programs for nontraditional adult learners, both at the graduate level and undergraduate level. These offerings are market oriented and the nature of the courses, programs and degrees changes quickly. From the beginning, about 95% of the credits in those two units have been taught by adjuncts by intentional design. This currently accounts for approximately 30% of the adjunct faculty population.
2. The majority of adjuncts are located in professional graduate programs that are applied in nature, such as law, business, social work, education, and professional psychology. These programs make heavy use of "professor of practice" adjuncts who teach specialized courses for advanced students.

Kvistad further explained that about a third of Denver's appointed faculty are the nontenure track. These individuals have contracts and receive benefits as part of their compensation; most are employed on multiyear renewable arrangements with only about 20 per year hired for only one year. The primary driver in employing these faculty is to provide teaching, particularly as enrollments change over time in various parts of the institution.

The University of Michigan (Ann Arbor campus) has 3,000 tenured and tenure-track faculty; 2,000 are research-track faculty and 1,000 clinical-track faculty, the majority of whom are in the medical school. In addition, there are 1,000 nontenure-track lecturers who are a mix of professionals and academics.

Sixty percent of the lecturers on the Ann Arbor campus are in the College of Literature, Science and the Arts (LS&A). Frumkin explained that the largest cohort of LS&A lecturers are in the writing program, foreign language programs, and the math department, teaching primarily first- and second-year courses. A key driver with regards to languages and composition is that tenure-track faculty in those departments are scholars and researchers, not individuals who have a comparative advantage in teaching Spanish I or a writing composition course. In addition, there are lecturers across all other academic units either teaching niche or specialty courses or teaching as replacements for tenured track faculty who are on sabbatical or some other form of leave.

The University System of Maryland (USM) has approximately 114,000 students at 11 institutions. College Park is the largest campus, but 45% of Maryland's students are enrolled in the University of Maryland University College whose focus is adult education with 85% of classes offered online. Adjuncts are an integral part of USM according to van Daalen, but particularly for the University College. Out of 7,400 adjunct faculty employed, 4,500 are with the University College; approximately two-thirds of these fit the "professor of practice" model. In the system's other universities, adjunct faculty

are used to fill courses where there is an enrollment overload and also to teach specialty courses. The use of adjunct faculty will continue unabated in USM for all the reasons previously cited according to van Daalen.

The State University of New York (SUNY) is the largest comprehensive university system in the U.S., consisting of 64 institutions that include research universities, academic medical centers, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, agricultural and technical institutes and an online learning network. There are 30 community colleges, 5 statutory colleges at Cornell University, and 29 state-operated campuses. Over 460,000 students are enrolled in SUNY and the system employs approximately 90,000 individuals, including approximately 35,000 faculty members in over 7,000 academic programs. Adjuncts are integrated into every program of SUNY.

Forty-five percent of SUNY faculty are adjuncts. This figure varies across institutions, particularly by institutional type—approximately 70% of community college faculty are adjuncts, compared with about 40% at the four-year institutions. While there are many reasons for the use of adjunct and other contingent faculty across the SUNY system, Lloyd explained that the most significant driver has been reductions in state funding over recent years totaling approximately \$1 billion. Utilizing nontenure-track faculty allows institutions to manage continued increases in aggregate enrollments in an environment of funding uncertainty. Even though a campus may have approved faculty lines that could be backfilled with full-time faculty, budgetary uncertainty leads to the hiring of part-time faculty instead.

Lloyd maintained that the use of contingent faculty can be critically necessary for other reasons as well, for example, when offering niche-type programs that are not an ongoing part of the curriculum or when specific knowledge or experience is lacking within a department. In such cases, bringing in an outside expert makes sense. The reluctance of older tenured faculty to retire has played a role in the employment of adjuncts as well; older faculty tend not to teach as many courses which in turn necessitates additional hires.

Finally, Lloyd explained that the use of adjunct and other contingent faculty has allowed SUNY to advance faculty diversity more quickly than would otherwise be possible. SUNY has hired 1,400 diverse faculty members since 2008, with 1,100 being nontenure-track faculty appointments.

### **ENSURING STUDENT LEARNING**

The increased use of nontenure-track faculty, in particular, adjunct faculty, has led to questions of whether there are costs or tradeoffs in doing so. At the course level, concerns are often raised about the student experience and learning outcomes in adjunct-taught courses. Research indicates subpar student learning outcomes in these classes relative to those taught by tenure-track faculty which in turn links to student retention issues.<sup>7</sup> This begs the question of what constitutes best practice (or “do not do’s”) for ensuring good outcomes. If outcomes are in some sense suboptimal in the adjunct-taught class, what is the root cause and what can be done to address it?

In discussing this issue, Kvistad cautioned against an assumption that tenure-track faculty are inherently better teachers than adjunct faculty. He noted that PhDs are not trained in graduate school to teach, but rather learn to do so on the job. Some are good teachers, some are not. So there’s no a priori reason to expect suboptimal teaching in the adjunct-taught class. This sentiment was also reflected in preforum interviews. Administrators do not generally perceive negative student outcomes resulting from poorer-quality teaching or preparation by adjunct faculty as compared with tenure-track faculty. A number stressed that they hire people because they are good teachers.

But other factors related to the adjunct-taught class are associated with learning outcomes. In particular, the mentoring and advising of students outside the classroom is typically missing. Tenure-track faculty have the campus presence and time to do this effectively. As stated by Kvistad, adjuncts may be fine teachers in the classroom but they don’t have the time to do the other things that are part of the socialization of students.

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<sup>7</sup> See Ehrenberg, Ronald G. “American Higher Education in Transition,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (Volume 26, Number 1), Winter 2012; Kezar, Adrianna. “Changing Faculty Workforce Models,” TIAA-CREF Institute, November 2013.

This sentiment was also reflected in preforum interviews. Most administrators worry that adjunct faculty cannot provide the optimal student experience because they tend to spend limited time on campus and they are not typically integrated into the college or university. Simply put, they teach their course(s) and leave; their contracts and pay, in general, do not support contributing to other aspects of the educational experience. Consequently, interaction with students outside the classroom is a challenge, as is professional development and cultivating a sense of community. Aside from time constraints, adjunct faculty may not feel qualified to write letters of recommendation, provide academic advice, and the like.

Researchers generally expressed more concern than administrators about negative effects on student outcomes such as retention and graduation. However, some researchers cautioned that studies linking the use of adjunct faculty to negative student outcomes need to be interpreted carefully. They noted that much of this research is aggregated, which masks potential positive outcomes for specific institutions, disciplines and settings. Still, there is concern among researchers that a high proportion of contingent faculty has potentially negative impacts on various aspects of the student experience. Given this, there was a call for improved information systems and more institutional research focused on better understanding the determinants of student learning outcomes; this would involve tracking students in semesters subsequent to taking an adjunct-taught course.

### ***Cultivating Relationships***

Lloyd explained that institutions need to cultivate adjunct faculty relationships in order to ensure positive learning outcomes. He further argued that this should be part of the strategic workforce plan given the role of adjunct faculty in the academic workforce model. He noted several things that institutions can do to promote connectivity between adjuncts and their students outside the classroom:

- Have a clear understanding with the adjunct for ensuring student outcomes, including student office time outside of the classroom, even if that means paying for that extra time.
- To the extent possible, provide office space, even shared office space or evening office space.
- Provide adjuncts with social media tools that allow them to connect with students outside of class.

Historically, each institution within USM had its own script for the employment of adjunct faculty. But as explained by van Daalen, effort was focused in recent years to develop a uniform system-wide policy regarding the use and treatment of adjuncts. Adjuncts must now be given an offer letter. Adjuncts must be provided access to a campus email account, campus telephone, office space (maybe shared office space), training, and administrative assistance, if necessary for creating a syllabus.

Suggestions given during preforum interviews for improving interactions with students included using course management systems to provide opportunities for online interactions, and experimenting with flipped classrooms where the lecture is provided online and classroom time is reserved for small group and one-on-one interaction.

### ***Professional Development***

Campus centers for teaching and learning exist at most institutions and typically provide training programs for new hires. Preforum interviews stressed the value of promoting awareness and usage of available teaching resources, including the campus teaching and learning center, among adjunct and other contingent faculty. Program availability needs to coordinate with the schedules of adjuncts, however. It was further suggested that institutions incentivize formal professional development. Such incentives need not be monetary; rather, they could include incentives like priority scheduling of class times and even priority status for rehire.

Kvistad argued that the nature of the college student has changed over the last 30 years and students today have very different learning abilities and motivations; this requires that higher education take teaching more seriously in terms of

faculty preparation and training. He noted that about 70% of new faculty at the University of Denver, tenure line or other, participate in such training. In Denver's case, there is a program designed specifically for adjuncts that is more flexible and completely online.

Preforum interviews also suggested value in providing feedback to adjuncts. Preferably, this would occur over the course of the semester as opposed to after. Feedback would ideally be based on in-person observation of the adjunct-taught class. It was also suggested that a department member serve as a sort of adjunct advocate who would communicate regularly with them and mentor as needed and appropriate. There would also be value in connecting adjuncts with faculty who have previously taught a given course. Departments could also provide course materials such as a sample syllabus and lecture notes.

In addition, it was suggested that orientations be provided for adjuncts at the beginning of each semester. Orientations should cover key policy, legal and institutional topics, in addition to teaching and learning issues. Self-paced modules covering relevant topics could be created and posted online in lieu of an in-person meeting that might be difficult for some adjuncts to attend. Participation in some form of orientation could be made a condition of employment. An onboarding handbook or orientation manual for contingent faculty could be provided for future reference as well.

### ***Course Matching***

Kvistad maintained that colleges and universities should avoid using adjuncts to teach first-year courses, if possible, given that many students in those courses need extra attention and assistance that adjuncts simply do not have the time to provide. He explained that these are students who are learning what it means to be part of an intellectual community, learning what it means to be responsible for one's self, both of which are first-year priorities for long term academic success. The appointed faculty member, either tenure track or full-time multiple-year lecturer, is the better choice for teaching these students. Kvistad's preferred strategy is using adjunct and other contingent faculty in upper division or graduate courses, and in niche programs. This is clearly the case when employing individuals for their professional experience and expertise; this supersedes teaching ability. While all students need excellent teachers, first-year students need them more than advanced graduate students.

Preforum interviews suggested maintaining eligible pools of adjunct faculty from which to hire. This eases the administrative burden of finding good candidates, especially in cases where the timeframe to fill a position is short. Furthermore, as noted by van Daalen, the quality of the classroom experience should not be adversely affected when the individual hired has previously taught at the university, maybe even taught the same course.

### ***Integrating Adjunct Faculty***

Frumkin observed that a key want among most adjuncts is respect, meaning that they want to be part of the community of scholars in their department and at the institution. This is not something that administrators can provide, however. Frumkin reflected on conversations with tenure-track faculty regarding the integration of lecturers into the academic life of a department. He noted that being part of the academic life entails the heavy lifting of committee assignments (such as admissions, curriculum and educational policy) and the other kinds of service expected of tenure-track faculty. This is unrealistic with someone who is teaching one course on a part-time basis. It is more realistic for someone on a multiple-year contract. While Frumkin views such integration as possible, he noted that it represents a paradigm shift in the relative roles of tenure-track faculty and lecturers. This in turn would require fundamental buy-in from tenure-track faculty—to what degree do you allow nontenure-track faculty to make decisions that affect the academic quality of the department? He sees this as a source of tension with tenure-track faculty who don't want to share that part of governance. Such a change would also necessitate increasing adjunct compensation in return for the increased workload.

Kvistad views integrating contingent faculty into a university as a culture issue. It's an issue that he sees most sharply played out at the departmental level in terms of shared governance. Like Frumkin, he sees viability in integrating nontenure-track faculty with year-long or longer employment agreements into discussions regarding committee service, hiring, promotion and tenure; but he does not see integrating the occasional adjunct into that culture. Kvistad also observed that some tenure-track faculty view the dynamics around adjunct and other contingent faculty as presenting somewhat of a zero-sum game. For example, if a title such as "teaching professor" as opposed to "lecturer" was given to someone, there are questions among tenure-track faculty as to what that means for their status. He noted that this is an issue in academia where status and respect among peers is a big deal.

Adjuncts at SUNY are covered by a professional and faculty union of 35,000 employees. Lloyd explained that the union has historically negotiated for the full-time professionals and full-time or tenure-track faculty members. But in the last round of contract negotiation, the union recognized that the faculty population had become heavily weighted towards adjuncts and made them the focus of those negotiations. He noted that this focus was not well received by tenure-track faculty, who viewed increased adjunct compensation as coming from funds that otherwise would have gone to them.

In the University System of Maryland, an adjunct shared governance council with representation from each university in the system has been created to advise university presidents, the system chancellor and the board of regents. This process, known as "meet and confer," was established with a focus on improving the experience of adjunct faculty. In addition, adjuncts now receive certain employment commitments. For example, if a class is cancelled less than 30 days before its start date, the faculty member receives payment equal to 10% of what he or she would have earned for teaching it. Another example is promotion to Adjunct II status with an automatic 10% salary increase, conditional on a performance evaluation, when an adjunct faculty member teaches a minimum of 12 credit hours in 3 years.

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL**

Kezar has written that "no faculty workforce model has been intentionally designed and deployed with long term institutional goals related to learning, research, or institutional service in mind, with perhaps the exception of the medical school model."<sup>8</sup> So how can a university or department or program within a university think in terms of a strategic model for structuring its faculty workforce?

In preforum interviews, both administrators and researchers discussed the need for colleges and universities to think with more intentionality about their faculty workforce, including the use of adjunct and other contingent faculty. Most administrators felt that the use of these faculty has been largely reactive as opposed to being part of an overall planning strategy. Most said that their institution's current mix of tenured, tenure track, contingent and adjunct faculty has evolved in response to budget constraints and the need for flexibility.

Given that specific staffing decisions are generally decentralized to the level of a dean or department chair, there has not been much in the way of strategic workforce planning at the institutional level. Administrators and researchers see a need for institutions to give serious thought to the strategic deployment of various types of faculty—what is the configuration of faculty that is best suited to meet a given school's mission, maximize the student experience, and provide positive outcomes for the institution and its faculty? The answer will vary across institutions.

Examples cited of more centralized involvement included:

- The provost of a public university now holds discussions with the deans about hiring strategy and provides them with data, such as student credit hours attributed to different faculty types, to inform hiring decisions.
- A public university has discussions at the institutional level regarding the conditions under which full-time and part-time contingent faculty will be hired, with a focus on keeping faculty on continuing contracts and not overreacting to temporary budget changes.

<sup>8</sup> Kezar, Adrianna. "Changing Faculty Workforce Models," TIAA-CREF Institute, November 2013.

- Department chairs and deans of a small private institution work with the provost's office to jointly make hiring decisions.
- The framework for hiring decisions is determined at the executive level of a community college, but implementation is decentralized to the various departments.

Looking ahead, most administrators foresee adjunct and other contingent faculty being used to the same extent as today, if not more so, due to continuing cost pressures, the need for flexibility, ongoing student demand and the growing digital delivery of education. At their own institution, about one-half of the administrators interviewed expect the share of adjunct and contingent faculty to remain the same and the other half anticipate a decrease. Those expecting a decrease attribute that to a conscious effort to bring the percentage down. Administrators expecting the share to remain constant cite persistence in the drivers that lead to their hiring.

Most researchers do not believe that the share of adjunct faculty will decline in general. But they see an increased awareness of the extent that institutions depend on adjuncts and see that awareness prompting institutions to think harder about hiring adjunct faculty. According to one researcher, a future scenario with greatly expanded digital delivery of education might entail having more adjunct faculty serving as a secondary labor force. Tenure-track faculty and experts would deliver core content digitally and adjuncts would be used for in-classroom student interactions, grading and advising. He cautions that this is a possible, though not necessarily probable, scenario.

Kvistad maintained that ongoing developments in higher education were greatly accelerated by the recession and that there has been a subsequent whipsaw effect. The financial strains created by the recession made it difficult to be strategic when confronted with the immediate need to continue educating students. Many institutions hired cheaply to deliver the product they had to deliver, but that is not a sustainable long-run model. He expressed confidence that higher education will solve this challenge.

He foresees the development of a very different model from that which emerged after World War II. Until that point, tenure and tenure-track faculty positions were not the norm in higher education, but their growth was pushed by several factors: federal funding for university-based research, a relative dearth of faculty members, and lower standards for earning tenure than exist today. Kvistad sees higher education moving to an array of faculty positions that are much more settled than exist today. The process will involve addressing questions such as—What sort of faculty members do we need to do what sort of work within the academy? The assumption today is that the tenure line faculty member does everything, and does it well for a period of decades. Kvistad views this as a poor assumption. He explained that the University of Denver is looking to disaggregate some traditional tenure-track functions in a way that respects the integrity of the people involved. He argued that intentional flexibility needs to be worked into the system, but the process of doing so has to involve the faculty.

Frumkin commented that each academic unit within a college or university can be its own universe, particularly at large institutions. So within a given institution, while some units use adjuncts based on tactical and strategic workforce planning, other units make poor use of them. In practice, decisions about the use of adjunct and other contingent faculty have become an administrative function on the part of deans and chairs to fill gaps, rather than a response to the strategic question regarding the best use of all faculty resources. Frumkin observed that in many cases, particularly at large research institutions, higher education has gotten away from the practice of adjunct faculty being supplemental. He maintained that solid academic programs cannot be built on individuals who are not fulfilling the three missions of teaching, research and service.

Frumkin believes that higher education has reached the point where colleges and universities need to be more forthcoming about how they plan to use adjunct faculty. This is the result, at least in part, of a renewed focus on having tenure-track faculty teach at the undergraduate level for various reasons—pedagogical, mentoring and accountability to students and parents. He sees this dynamic resulting in restrictions on the use of adjuncts.

In reiterating some key points, van Daalen noted that using adjuncts to teach course sections added in response to unexpectedly high enrollments is a strategic workforce practice; employing more tenure-track faculty just in case they are needed is not a viable strategy.

Lloyd maintained that the appropriate workforce model will vary across institutions based on mission, budget, location, student needs and other variables. It may even vary across departments within a given institution for the same reasons. Each institution must develop the best model to ensure positive student outcomes and learning experiences, while simultaneously meeting the operational and financial needs of the institution. Generally speaking, he sees adjunct and other contingent faculty remaining part of the model, but stressed the importance of balance between the utilization of tenure-track and nontenure-track faculty.

## **CONCLUSION**

The evolution of the faculty workforce model has far-reaching implications for colleges and universities, students and other stakeholders. Today, approximately 30% of faculty are tenure track, 50% are part-time nontenure track and 20% are full-time nontenure track. Nontenure-track faculty are often referred to as contingent; part-time faculty are often referred to as adjunct.

Concerns have been raised regarding the student experience and learning outcomes in adjunct-taught courses. What then constitutes best practices for ensuring good outcomes in courses taught by adjunct and other contingent faculty? This was discussed during a pair of sessions at the 2014 TIAA-CREF client forum and in interviews with higher education administrators and researchers who study higher education.

This report summarizes and synthesizes those discussions. In short, the way an institution treats adjunct and other contingent faculty, along with the rationale for employing them in the first place, are determinants of their success.

In general, colleges and universities need to think with more intentionality at the institutional level about their faculty model and the strategic deployment of various types of faculty—What is the configuration of faculty that is best suited to achieve a given institution's mission and ensure positive student outcomes, while simultaneously meeting the operational and financial needs of the institution? The appropriate model will vary based on mission, budget, location, student needs and other variables. It may even vary across departments within a given institution for the same reasons.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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