

REPORT OF THE FISCAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
ON THE ISSUE OF PART-TIME FACULTY  
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Purpose of the Analysis:

A recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* (1997) report referred to part-time faculty as "migrants," invisible faculty who function on the extreme margins of campus life and disappear when their classroom duties are over. Nationally, nearly 50 percent of all faculty at four-year institutions and over two-thirds of all faculty at two-year colleges are part-timers (Staples 1997). They earn on average \$1,500 per course, with no benefits, job security, or real incentive to become part of the university "family." Recent articles on this subject suggest that colleges dominated by part-time faculty should be avoided at all costs! For example, on February 26, 1995, the news magazine show *60 Minutes* reported on the abuse of part-time faculty and focused on how few full-time professors actually teach lower-division courses. A few years earlier, *Academe* (1992) ran a cover story on the same issue. Moreover, the AAUP, the National Education Association, and the American Federation of Teachers all have policies stating that the fair treatment of part-time faculty protects and improves the whole profession! A more recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Schneider 1997) highlighted the abuse of part-time faculty in English Departments. According to a damning report issued by the M.L.A.'s Committee on Professional Employment, 96 percent of first-year writing classes in Ph.D.-granting English departments are taught by non-tenure track, part-time, or graduate student teachers, compared to 64 percent in Master's-granting institutions, and 50 percent in departments that grant only a bachelor's degree. Departments who rely so heavily on part-time faculty are systematically exploiting this segment of the university workforce.

Western Kentucky University has a long tradition of poor treatment of part-time faculty, ranging from embarrassingly low salaries to lack of access to basic instructional and support materials and infrastructure. The typical Western part-timer earns about \$1,100 for a 3-credit course, has no direct access to a computer or telephone, has to occupy inadequate office space, often must purchase their own instructional supplies, receives few social welfare benefits, and is rarely considered part of the university "family" by others. Indeed, in the report summarizing the very detailed institutional review conducted by the Fisher team last year (1997), there is no mention of part-time faculty. Of the 57 recommendations offered by the Fisher review, NOT ONE addressed the conditions or contributions of part-time faculty. This major omission just reinforces the position of part-time faculty at Western as "invisible."

To shed light on these and associated problems, two major reviews of part-time faculty conditions have been conducted during the decade. A 1992 internal WKU taskforce chaired by John Petersen recommended ten improvements in part-time faculty conditions. Few of these recommendations have been adopted. An update to this report was prepared in February 1995 by the Fiscal Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate. Again, ten actions were recommended by this report, but few were implemented. In particular, part-time salaries for Grades III and IV have not been adjusted since 1993, and salaries for Grades I and II have not been adjusted in over a decade. The current report is the third to focus the spotlight on part-time faculty conditions.

Citations:

*Academe* (1992) "Recognizing Mutual Interests" by Karen Thompson. Vol 78 (6):22-26, November/December.  
Schneider, A. (1997) Bad blood in the English department: The rift between composition and literature. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* Vol. XLIV (23), Feb. 13, pp. 14-15.  
Staples, B. (1997) Colleges Turn to 'Migrant Labor.' *New York Times News Service*, August 24.

## The Role of Part-Time Faculty at Western:

Part-time faculty make a vital contribution to the academic mission of Western Kentucky University. Many of the University's core General Education courses are taught by part-time faculty. In the 1998 Spring Bulletin of classes, for example, 68 of 123 sections of English 100, 200, and 300 (all core General Education courses) were designated as "staff" courses. This typically means part-time faculty or graduate students, although some courses designated "staff" are scheduled for new tenure-track faculty and others (optional retirees/overloads, etc.). This equals approximately 55 percent of the offerings of these core classes that are taught by part-time faculty. There is little debate that the Department of English could not function without part-time faculty.

Most part-time faculty have terminal degrees in their specialty (typically a Master's), and several have earned the Ph.D. Part-time faculty generally are required to have at least 18 credit hours in their specialty to be eligible to teach a course. In Fall 1994, 124 part-time faculty were employed by the University, with a further 68 part-time faculty utilized by the Community College. These faculty taught 316 classes out of the 2,691 classes offered on campus (about 12 percent). In Fall 1997, 189 part-time faculty on campus (excluding the 62 part-time faculty that taught in the Community College), taught the equivalent of 291 three-credit hour courses. The trend over the past five years has been an increase in the number of part-time faculty utilized on campus. This is in direct conflict with recommendations made by the 1994 SACS report.

A detailed survey conducted in 1994/95 by the Fiscal Affairs Committee of the XVIII Faculty Senate of part-time faculty conditions found that the overwhelming majority were dedicated to Western and to providing the best possible level of education for their students. Topping the list of complaints, however, were poor salaries, inadequate support facilities, lack of official recognition, and job insecurity. Part-time faculty are particularly concerned about their "invisible" status in the Western family of faculty and staff. Particular problems stressed by many part-time faculty relate to Department attitudes toward them. In some Departments, part-time faculty are forced to purchase their own computer disks, paper, pencils, chalk, paper clips, and grade books because the Department Secretary or other administrative personnel refuse to provide them with the needed material.

From the perspective of the University's primary consumer--the student--several key questions need to be raised about the status of part-time faculty. Students presume that when they register, pay for, and attend a particular class, they are receiving equal treatment and the best education available. They do not expect, nor should they, that a course taught by a part-time faculty member will be any less of a quality educational experience than a course taught by a full-time faculty member. Part of this quality experience, of course, relates to access to the instructor and the provision of adequate materials to succeed in the course. Unfortunately, at Western this has not been the case. Students in classes taught by part-time faculty members frequently have trouble getting in touch with their instructor because the part-time faculty member has no direct phone number, no personal computer available for email messages, and is not encouraged to spend much time on campus. Why, then, should the student (the consumer of our product) have to tolerate such inequalities in access to the educational process?

Another problem with the way the University has treated part-time faculty is that these valuable members of the campus "family" have generally been ignored. How can the University speak seriously of building the Western family when it consistently devalues the contribution of a sizeable portion of that so-called "family." By investing such a pitifully low amount of money in part-time faculty salaries, the University is essentially exploiting these people's skills and talents in a way that is morally reprehensible and ethically wrong. One of the most common terms in the survey of part-time faculty used to explain their relationship with Western was "slave labor." The University could make a powerful statement about the value of Western's "family" by recognizing part-time faculty as key members of the campus community and rewarding them accordingly. As the following section illustrates, part-time faculty remuneration at Western is substantially below the salary levels set by our benchmark institutions.

### Benchmark Comparisons:

Western Kentucky University remunerates part-time faculty per 3-credit course according to the following scale:

Grade I - \$ 990

Grade II - \$ 1,080

Grade III - \$ 1,270

Grade IV - \$ 1,360

WKU Average is \$ 1,175

By way of comparison, a selection of benchmark institution pay scales is set out below.

**Appalachian State (NC)** pays on average \$2,100 per 3-credit course, about \$1,000 above the WKU average. The pay range extends from \$1,800 to \$3,000 per 3-credit course depending on the qualifications of the instructor.

**Ball State (IN)** pays \$2,500 per 3-credit course, about \$1,300 above the WKU average. Moreover, Ball State instructors are considered "half time" if they teach 2 courses per term, with pay starting at \$14,000 per annum. If someone teaches 8 courses over the year (4 + 4), they are paid at the instructor level starting at \$28,000 per annum. Overloads (9+6 for half time and 15+12 for full time) pay \$2,500 per 3-credit course.

**Austin Peay (TN)** pays \$1,185 per 3-credit course for the instructor level; \$1,365 per 3-credit course at the assistant professor equivalent level; \$1,605 per 3-credit course at the associate professor equivalent level; and \$1,785 per 3-credit course at the full professor equivalent level. This is about a \$1,485 average compared to the \$1,174 average for WKU.

**Central State (OH)** pays \$975 per 3-credit course, below the average for Western.

**East Carolina State (NC)** pays \$2,750 per 3-credit course and up to \$22,000 per annum for teaching 8 3-credit courses (4 + 4) per annum. EC State is about \$1,500 above the WKU average.

**Eastern Kentucky** pays \$1,400 per 3-credit course at the BA degree level, \$1,725 per 3-credit course at the Master's level, and \$2,050 per 3-credit course at the Doctorate level. ECU is also substantially above the WKU average.

**Old Dominion (VA)** pays \$1,695 per 3-credit course for an adjunct instructor; \$1,785 per 3-credit course at the Assistant Professor equivalent level; \$1,869 per 3-credit course at the Associate Professor equivalent level; and \$1,956 per 3-credit course at the Ph.D. equivalent level. OD is also substantially above Wku's average.

**University of Louisville (KY)** pays \$2,130 per 3-credit course for Master's degree instructors and \$2,235 for instructors with a doctorate.

**McKendree College (KY)** pays \$1,400 per 3-credit course for Master's degree instructors.

**Summary:** Overall, Western's benchmark institutions seem to pay on average \$2,000 for a 3-credit course. This is substantially below the highest level of \$1,360 paid at WKU (see accompanying Graphic for comparison).

#### **Recommendations:**

Part-time faculty are crucial to the long-term success of Western and are key members of the "family" of faculty and staff at this institution. The contribution of part-time faculty to Western's academic mission should be acknowledged and rewarded. The Fiscal Affairs Committee of the XXI Faculty Senate recommends the adoption of the following resolution:

#### **Resolution**

Whereas two top priorities of Western Kentucky University in recent years have been: (1) to increase funding for academic instruction and (2) to improve faculty/staff salaries; and

Whereas part-time faculty are an indispensable instructional resource at Western Kentucky University; and

Whereas the 1994 SACS Report recommended that Western lessen its reliance upon part-time faculty; and

Whereas the compensation for part-time faculty has not increased since 1993 for Grades III and IV and for over a decade for Grades I and II, while full-time faculty have over the past decade shared in percentage increases ranging from 2% to 6.6% (depending on rank and merit);

Be it resolved that the XXI Senate of Western Kentucky University recommend that the following actions be taken by the University to improve conditions for part-time faculty:

#### FINANCIAL:

1. Commit to providing an acceptable level of remuneration for part-time faculty that matches or exceeds benchmark averages.
2. Raise the minimum pay per 3-credit semester course effective Fall 1998 as follows: Grade I - \$1,500; Grade II - \$1,650; Grade 3 - \$1,850; Grade IV - \$2,100, with future increases in harmony with adjustments made to full-time faculty salaries.
3. Provide limited health insurance benefits and allow part-time faculty to opt into the KTRS or similar retirement system.
4. Change the payroll delivery system so that part-time faculty receive their FIRST payroll check each semester NO LATER than the fourth week of the semester.
5. Encourage the Board of Regents to include explicitly part-time faculty in long-term policies to bring Western faculty salaries and benefits up to benchmark levels.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE:

1. Establish two categories of part-time faculty (excluding overloads, retirees, and graduate students):
  - a. "Continuing;" those faculty that have a long-term commitment to the University demonstrated by length of employment (three or more years of continuous service), ties to the University, or Departmental needs;
  - b. "Occasional;" those faculty who are needed on a term-by-term basis (graduate students, for example) and have no long-term ties to the University.
2. Establish a limited number of permanent instructor positions (Terminal graduate degree, teaching a 15-hour semester load) in key departments that draw heavily on part-time faculty (Biology, English, Communication and Broadcasting).
3. Institute a comprehensive part-time faculty evaluation process that includes an annual meeting (at least) with the Department Head to review previous performance, student evaluations, and to discuss instructional issues and problems.
4. Encourage Department Heads to include part-time faculty in all Department meetings and functions.
5. Provide adequate private office space, instructional materials (including office supplies), a telephone, and computer access to each "continuing" (as outlined in 1. above) and, where feasible, occasional part-time faculty member.
6. Encourage an attitude of respect and appreciation for part-time faculty.
7. Establish a University-wide awards system to recognize excellence in teaching, research, and public service by part-time faculty.
8. Require Department Heads to notify, whenever possible, part-time faculty of their employment situation at least one month prior to the beginning of the semester.
9. Encourage Deans and Department Heads to reduce their reliance on part-time faculty.
10. List all "continuing" part-time faculty members in the University phone book.

# Average Salaries of Part-Time Faculty per 3-Credit Course at Selected Institutions, Spring 1998.



Benchmark University

Source: Chronicle of Higher Education, AAUP, Individual University Data