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UA35/2/3 Part-Time Faculty at WKU: Recommendations for Recognition & Status Improvements

WKU Council of Academic Deans

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Introduction & Purpose

The purpose of this Committee was to secure information and ideas for recognition of part-time faculty. In addition, recommendations are provided for quality improvements which attract and retain specialized and talented instructional faculty.

An array of challenges face new and adjunct faculty today. A changing student clientele reflects the shift from the 60's when the average college student was about 21 years of age; recent studies reveal this to be 28 years when observed on a national basis. Different needs, life experiences, motivations, technology, and pedagogies impact each faculty member and student enrolling in courses and degree programs. Further, an increasing percentage of university classroom instruction is delivered by part-time and adjunct faculty members. This growing cadre of university faculty suggests a need for orientation, interactions with full-time faculty members and training about support systems to enhance student learning and achievement. It is important that the university recognize and reward individuals who provide these instructional services in a professional manner.

Process, Issues and Opportunities

To secure input and ideas from part-time WKU faculty, several actions were pursued. Selected focus groups were convened at extended campus locations as well as on the Bowling Green campuses. Community College faculty were ask for their input with survey questions. Individuals participating were encouraged to provide their ideas and recommendations for improving the teaching/learning environment and role of part-time faculty. These comments were grouped into the following categories:
* Attractive Elements of Part-time WKU Teaching
* Concerns/Issues About Your Role as Part-time Faculty Member.
* Recommendations for Improving Part-time WKU Teaching.
* Feelings'/Perceptions about Compensation or Benefits for Part-time Faculty.
* Other Comments

Summaries of these meetings and surveys are included in the Appendices. A proposal for an Annual Outstanding Part-Time Faculty Award is also included in the Appendices.

Policy and Operating Recommendations Concerning Part-time Faculty

I. Establish an annual "Outstanding Part-Time Faculty Award" to be given by each college and extended campus location to recognize quality of performance and service by part-time faculty.

II. Increase part-time faculty compensation during the next 3-5 years to attain competitive benchmark part-time salaries.

III. The salary and compensation plan for successful, experienced and high-performing adjunct/part-time faculty should provide for periodic raises or bonuses to retain and reward competency, quality and loyalty.

IV. Many part-time faculty do not feel they have a voice or represented in the University bureaucracy. Opportunities for input, two-way communication and recognition should be developed or enhanced to improve effectiveness and involvement of part-time faculty with academic programs in which they are teaching. It is suggested that a subcommittee of
the University Senate Faculty Welfare Committee address and review issues of salaries, part-time faculty support and professional or technology development needs for part-time and adjunct faculty.

V. Abolish the present "schedule" of salaries for part-time faculty. It is not effective or market competitive, operates on a one-size fits all mentality and does not address issues of location, subject matter field differences, experience, special needs such as travel and other matters best handled by academic departments, colleges or extended campus offices. Employment of part-time faculty is initiated in department and unit offices with approvals from Dean's and the Provost Office. A minimum salary level or range of salaries within which individuals can be employed is recommended in order to simplify employment and to provide greater flexibility in hiring the best possible prospects for these important positions.

With a growing percentage of instruction provided by 88 part-time faculty, budget dollars for part-time faculty should be allocated to colleges/departments/units to facilitate staffing plans and needs.

VI. Establish a simple process for review and evaluation of part-time faculty to assure that students are receiving the best possible classroom instruction and learning. Most part-time faculty expect some type of assessment or evaluation on an annual basis.

VII. Continue the current procedure providing reimbursement for expenses for part-time faculty who travel to teach classes.

VIII. Review benefits available and used by part-time faculty. Most current part-time faculty do not feel they receive meaningful fringe benefits. Many individuals suggested improvements related to tuition plans, parking, discounted tickets for campus events, and access to life or health insurance plans.

IX. Provide e-mail accounts to all part-time faculty members with year round service for continuing part-time faculty. These are currently available to part-time faculty but efforts to orient or train them in using this technology are needed.
X. Provide parking (or low-cost parking) for part-time faculty members. This issue is primarily a main campus and south campus issues.

XI. Provide orientation, training and professional development opportunities to insure competency with instructional technology and university policies and procedures.

XII. Update and modernize annually the part-time faculty handbook.

XIII. To monitor efforts for continual improvement of part-time faculty, it is recommended that a standing committee be established. Membership of this group would include (1) An extended campus director; (2) A BGCC Chair; (3) 3-5 part-time faculty; (4) A Department or Unit Head/Chair from the main campus; and (5) A Provost Office designee or representative. This committee would be scheduled to meet 1-2 times per year to consider current issues, needs and concerns.

Appendices

- Proposal for Annual Outstanding Part-Time Faculty Award
- (Main Campus) Summary of Focus Group Comments
- (BGCC) Part-time Faculty Survey
- (Elizabethtown) Part-time Faculty Focus Group Summary
- (Owensboro) Part-time Faculty Focus Group Summary
- (Glasgow) Part-time Faculty Focus Group Summary