

Integrating Adjuncts into the Community Through Professional Development, Support

“Integrating Adjuncts into the Community Through Professional Development, Support.” *Academic Leader* 21(7) (July 2005): 1, 6. Reprinted with permission from [Magna Publications, Inc.](#)

When Johnson County Community College (JCCC) Assistant Dean of Sciences Joseph Gadberry is hiring a part-time instructor, he seeks candidates with similar qualifications to his full-time instructors because hiring an adjunct is not necessarily a short-term staffing solution. The goal is to integrate adjuncts into the college community by having them serve on major committees, attend department meetings, and participate in the same professional development activities as full-time faculty members.

JCCC’s innovative approach to managing adjunct faculty began 12 years ago with the commitment from the college’s dean of instruction, who lobbied at the state level for better adjunct support. Around the same time, Gadberry and his colleague Helen Burnstad, JCCC director emeritus of staff and professional development, took sabbaticals to visit a wide variety of institutions throughout the country to learn how they managed adjuncts. Based on these visits, they came up with a systematic approach to managing adjuncts that includes an orientation, eligibility for special grants, in-service activities, and an adjunct certification training program.

Burnstad views these measures as retention strategies. “In terms of the budget, I think that it’s to our advantage any time we don’t have to spend time and money to recruit and hire new faculty. We also have a pretty strong track record of hiring our adjunct faculty into full-time positions as they become available.”

JCCC has 650 adjuncts in its database, although only about 450 (or about half) of the instructors teaching at the college teach in a given semester. Adjunct faculty offices are embedded in the departments in which they teach rather than in an “adjunct bullpen” like at some institutions. “We put adjuncts within the departments so they have opportunities to interact with full-time faculty on a daily basis,” Burnstad says.

In addition to office space, adjuncts at JCCC have access to all the electronic resources that full-time faculty do: e-mail, voice mail, computers, and Listservs. They also serve on major committees like the planning council, attend department meetings and social committees, and receive recognition for their years of contribution.

Development opportunities for adjuncts are not much different from those available to full-time faculty. Adjuncts are invited to participate in any of the professional development offered by the institution

except for sabbaticals. Like full-time faculty members, they also have access to financial support to attend conferences and are eligible for tuition reimbursement.

“We try to be seamless. Most students don’t know if they are adjuncts or full-time faculty,” Burnstad says.

Adjuncts also have the opportunity to serve on the vice president’s adjunct advisory council, helping bring the adjuncts’ perspectives to the administration. One adjunct professional development idea that came from the council was the idea for a refresher course for longtime adjuncts.

Adjuncts who have taught seven semesters or more at JCCC are offered this professional development opportunity to experience new classroom techniques that they can incorporate into their classrooms. Full-time faculty members serve as facilitators for this course. Last year, participants had the opportunity to choose two of the following three modules: assessment, teaching techniques, and teaching a three-hour class. This fall, an educational consultant will facilitate a two-hour session on active learning in the classroom.

To further facilitate adjunct faculty integration into the department and the college, each department has an adjunct liaison. The liaison is given reassigned time to help the assistant dean with hiring and orientation. “That position is one of our links between full-time faculty and adjuncts. One or two of the liaisons are long-term adjuncts who have no interest in being full time. That’s one of the things we try to do to create this one-faculty concept,” Burnstad says.

JCCC offers adjuncts the opportunity to participate in the Adjunct Certificate Training (ACT) program. The goals of this program are to make adjunct faculty members “cognizant of the college’s mission; aware of policies and procedures of the academic branch; comfortable in the college’s learning community; and equipped with more resources to enhance student learning in the classroom.”

ACT is open to all JCCC adjuncts, but there is a limit of 30 participants per semester. The program is designed to be completed within a two-semester sequence but can be extended for one additional year. Upon completion, participants receive an \$800 stipend. The following modules are required:

- Orientation: Reflective Practices—introduces participants to the required and elective modules they will take to receive adjunct certification, to goal setting, and to writing a reflective journal
- Designing an Effective Syllabus
- Legal Issues
- Technology in the Classroom

- Employment Policies and Procedures
- Teaching the Whole Student
- Microteaching and Classroom Videotaping (Each participant is videotaped to illustrate his or her teaching techniques. The facilitator and peers then provide feedback.)
- Instructional Design

Participants must complete at least one of the following elective modules:

- Basic Principles for Collaborative Workplace
- Teaching Techniques
- Learning Styles
- Assessment and Test Construction
- Understanding Self and Others
- Effective Communication and Listening Skills
- Portfolio Preparation.

“Having completed ACT, they’re more comfortable in their role as adjunct faculty. It helps the retention rate, makes them competent in the classroom, and helps them get hired as full-time faculty,” Gadberry says.

To date, 260 adjuncts have become certified through ACT. Of those, 11 have become full-time faculty members. One factor that limits the number of participants the program can accommodate is the Microteaching and Classroom Videotaping module because of the time it takes to videotape and analyze each instructor. “We’re so committed to how strong that experience is for adjuncts that we’re willing to abide by the limitations we have,” Burnstad says.

Every three years the college surveys its adjunct faculty to find ways to learn about their concerns and to find ways to improve support.

Burnstad offers the following advice for academic leaders looking to improve their support of adjuncts:

“You can’t do more for adjuncts than you do for full-time faculty. That’s a caution I throw out to schools just starting out. It’s easy to develop programs for adjunct faculty, and they will be very appreciative. But if you don’t have similar kinds of things for your full-time faculty, you can get into a lot of trouble.

“You need to include full-time faculty in helping design the culture that supports adjunct faculty, and your full-time faculty, especially those full-timers who have come from the adjunct ranks, are the ones that really need to take leadership roles. You have to listen to the voices of adjuncts. Our surveys certainly give them a voice. Our adjunct advisory council does, and their participation on our strategic planning council does.”

For more information about ACT, visit www.jccc.net/home/depts/001251/site/faculty-staff/welcometoact.

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