

A COMMITMENT TO TEACHING: EXPLORING THE VALUE OF PART-TIME PROFESSORS IN MARKETING DEPARTMENTS

Olga DiFranco, Michael Germano, Shirley Stretch and Rika Houston, California State University, Los Angeles

As higher education continues to deal with the disruptive change brought on by a protracted recession, both the frequency and degree to which academic departments rely upon adjunct or part-time faculty is increasing. Interestingly, in some departments, including marketing ones, the majority of courses are taught by a cohort of part-time faculty members whose flexibility and willingness to take what is offered, represent the only viable alternative to hiring more tenure track faculty members when enrollment patterns dictate the need for additional instructors. Currently, part time employment has reached 58% in 4-year colleges and universities and 83% in 2-year public colleges (Thedwall, Kate 2008). The reality is that part-time faculty members are the norm and not the exception. As a result, it seems worthwhile to examine the role of tenure track faculty in selecting, reviewing and mentoring adjunct faculty members as well as the requirement to engage and develop part-time instructors in order to maximize the value they provide to the marketing departments that rely upon them.

When asked about the role tenure-track professors play in an adjunct faculty member's professional life, one opined:

"Throughout academe, the tenured professors are the ones who hire and fire the contingent professors – in other words they are our bosses. Moreover, adjunct professors and tenured professors are often in competition with each other over which classes to teach, which classes are cancelled, who gets raises, and who doesn't. The full-time faculty members may even directly benefit from having large numbers of adjuncts on their campuses, as that ensures that tenured faculty members are highly unlikely to be laid off, even in an emergency - adjunct faculty members will be let go instead. Adjuncts provide in effect, a buffer to the loss of tenured jobs." (Holler, Keith, 2006, pB11-B12)

What is most interesting about the above part-time professor's description of his interaction with tenured and tenured track faculty, is not only the idea of subservience but the recognition of the benefit of part-time faculty to their full-time colleagues, particularly in today's trying economic times. The special sessions presenters will take this idea further and explore the symbiotic relationship between part-time and full-time faculty in an effort to arrive at best practices for ensuring that

marketing departments are providing the environment most conducive to successful teaching and student learning through more meaningful adjunct faculty engagement. More specifically, the purpose of this session is to connect with the need maximize the return on investment in part-time instructors in light of current higher education staffing trends produced by the current economic environment and discuss participants' experiences at their institutions.

There are many different reasons for those who teach marketing part-time as opposed to full-time. Many are professionals who like to share their expertise in the classroom and feel a sense of fulfillment by sharing what they have learned over a successful and lucrative career. Some are retired and would like to remain professionally connect to the academy as they share their knowledge and continue to earn income. Others may be former tenure track faculty who, for personal or family reasons, choose to go part-time. And yet others may desire full-time, tenure-track work but the opportunities were limited and the competition fierce. The reasons for choosing part time work are infinite. While the question of 'why' academics choose to be part-time is interesting, the real question is how to best utilize this growing majority of part-time professors. As one department chair considered: "The question facing institutions of higher learning should center around how to acknowledge the benefits these appointments provide, as well as a commit to working through the challenges that face this growing segment of our academy" (Thedwall, Kate 2008). This session will share ideas and suggestions for tenure track faculty members who wish to support and mentor those serving part-time as well as ideas for ways in which to engage part time faculty members in scholarly activity, advising and departmental service. The goal is to share a new vision of part-time faculty that is more than a reactionary one dictated by higher-education's current circumstance of increased enrollment coupled by decreased funding, to a vision of adjuncts as partners who are fully engaged and vested in teaching, scholarship and service.