

Adjunct professors enhance several University programs

Adjunct faculty members bring real-world experience to University classrooms on a part-time basis

By Chuck Slothower
News Reporter

Adjunct faculty teach a variety of courses at the University, lending real-world experience to their classes that tenure-track faculty might not have.

The University Faculty Handbook defines an adjunct faculty member as a person who has "another position, usually outside the university, e.g. physician, architect, social worker, etc., and who is employed to teach on an occasional basis or to provide some other academic service within the University."

"They teach all kinds of courses," said Brad Foley, dean of the School of Music. "Some of these adjuncts are teaching in areas where we have no one else."

Foley added that employing adjunct faculty allows the School of Music to offer classes in organ and guitar that would otherwise be too expensive.

"As a dean, of course I would like more tenured positions," Foley said. "It's not an ideal situation, I would say, but given the economy it's the best we can do."

Nationwide, adjunct faculty are generally paid a fee for each course they teach, which ranges from \$1,000 to \$3,000, far less than tenure-track professors earn. Also, 63 percent of part-time faculty nationwide receive no benefits whatsoever, such as health insurance or pensions, according to the American Federation of Teachers.

Foley said his hiring terms vary. "I hire people to teach several courses over the course of a year," he said. "If they're only teaching one course per term, then yes, I hire them on a (fee-per-course basis)."

At the University, adjunct professors can only receive benefits if they earn at least half the pay of the full-time equivalent, according to a report by the University Senate Committee on the Status on Nontenure-Track Instructional Faculty.

The University depends on adjunct faculty and the quality educa-

tion they can provide on reduced salaries, said Michal Young, head of the Computer and Information Science department.

"There is no question that adjunct faculty make it possible for us to offer some courses that we would otherwise not be able to cover," Young said.

However, the savings involved with employing adjunct instead of tenure-track faculty is not the primary factor for hiring them, Young said.

"Sometimes (adjunct faculty) bring industrial experience or research experience that is relevant to a course," Young said. "Sometimes they also bring a different perspective than regular faculty can offer."

At the University, adjunct faculty constitute 44.5 percent of the instructional faculty, according to the Senate Committee report. The American Association of University Professors recommends that universities limit the use of adjunct faculty to "no more than 15 percent of the total instruction within the institution."

Nationwide, about 29 percent of faculty at four-year institutions are considered "part-time," according to the AAUP.

Adjunct faculty have little opportunity for advancement. Moving from a non-tenure-related position to a tenure-related position is currently "not an option" at the University, according to the senate committee report.

This is due, in part, to University hiring policies which stipulate that faculty may earn tenure only if they are hired as a result of a national or regional search. Many adjuncts and long-term adjuncts, which the University calls "instructors," are hired just before a term begins, making a national search difficult. Also, such hires are sometimes used to meet enrollment fluctuations, the committee report says.

Women tend to hold a greater proportion of part-time faculty positions than full-time positions. Nationally, women occupy 33 percent of full-time positions, but 47 percent of part-time positions.

Foley said that "isn't the case" in the School of Music.

"In fact, I'd say it's about fifty-fifty," he said.

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