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According to U.S. Department of Education data, 1.3 million of the 1.8 million faculty providing instruction in two and four-year institutions are non-tenure track part-time or adjunct faculty. That is equivalent to over 72% of the higher education faculty members in U.S. higher education institutions. The use of adjunct faculty is not new. When Harvard University first opened, they used adjunct faculty—local clergy members—to instruct their students in divinity studies. What is new is the growing dependence on adjunct faculty to provide the bulk of instruction at many of our colleges and universities. The New Jersey Commission on Higher Education, in a 2002 “Part-time Instructional Staff Survey and Analysis,” found that there were 9,090 part- time and adjunct instructional staff in Spring 2002. Although a follow-up study has not been performed, we estimate that there are approximately 11,000 adjuncts presently working in New Jersey. This is a trend that will continue to grow because of the burgeoning enrollment of students and the expense of providing these students with a quality education.

AFT sponsored focus groups show that most students are unaware of whether their professors are full-time or adjunct. (Lake Research Partners, *Exploring Student Attitudes, Aspirations & Barriers to Success*, March 2001) Many adjuncts hold full-time jobs in the field in which they teach and bring a real-life perspective to their classrooms. Most adjuncts hold advanced degrees. For those who have been adjuncting for several years, these instructors also bring the expertise in pedagogy that only comes with experience. It is a misconception to think of adjuncts as temporary employees. The jobs may be temporary, but the adjuncts are not. Many adjuncts have been doing this work for fifteen years or more. They teach because it is what they love to do; for many it is a calling. They are as committed to the success of their students as are the full-time faculty.

There are several problems inherent in a system that relies on adjunct faculty. These problems keep adjunct faculty from maximizing their teaching potential.

* Administrative support is not always available for adjuncts. Adjuncts teach seven days a week and not always during the hours when a departmental secretary is available or in a building where the departmental secretary is housed. Colleges have different systems for the duplicating of classroom material. Some campuses have walk-up copiers and some insist that the department secretary or the college print shop has the responsibility for duplicating classroom materials. Even on campuses with walk-up copiers, if

Bobrove/2

the machine jams there is not always someone available to fix it. The lack of available administrative and technical staff also limits the effective use of technology particularly on nights and weekends.

* Very few institutions have space for individual adjunct offices equipped with a computer and telephone. At best, adjuncts have areas where they can work between classes; these areas may have a shareable computer and telephone access. These are not usually areas where adjuncts can consult privately with their students. This makes it difficult for adjuncts to find a private space where students can be tutored, advised, or given a make-up examination. Adjuncts try to answer questions in the 10-15 minutes between classes, but this is not optimal. Some community colleges have tried to deal with some of these problems by offering tutoring and/or testing centers. This means that although tutoring and make-up testing is available, the adjunct is often not the person who performs these services.
* Adjuncts are often assigned classes shortly before the beginning of the semester. This means that, in these cases, they have to meet a class without adequate time for thorough preparation. Even when enough time for preparation is given, class assignments are conditional depending on enrollment or the necessity for full time faculty to make load. We understand that there is no guarantee of re-hireability, but adjuncts would add more to helping a student achieve success if there was some way of giving them time to prepare.
* There are no “career ladders” and no financial incentives for additional degrees, so adjuncts have little motivation to improve their skills or earn more advanced degrees.
* There are very few opportunities to build skills on-site, and when these are offered the adjunct is often either teaching or working elsewhere.
* The AFT focus groups referenced at the beginning of this found that among student complaints were the facts that students felt they lacked sufficient advisement, and wanted more face time with their instructors. Adjuncts, because they are not an integral part of the college, really do not know how to advise students appropriately unless they have received additional training in this area. Furthermore, although adjuncts try to be available as much as possible, they are hired as instructional faculty. They often have other obligations that keep them from being available for long periods of time after they finish teaching; one must remember that they rarely have offices or paid office hours and so are not at the College all day. Despite this, most adjunct faculty members are readily available through email. In fact,

Bobrove/3

they make a point of checking their email often and responding to students in a timely manner.

* Perhaps the biggest problem from the reliance on adjunct faculty is the one that was alluded to in the last point. Adjuncts are rarely part of the governance system of the college. They do not attend department meetings, are not members of the Faculty Senate, rarely serve on committees for book selection or test preparation or vote on department or college policy. They are not fully aware of the initiatives the college is pursuing. All of this limits their investment in the college. This is a loss not only to the adjunct, but to the college as well. Adjuncts are rarely asked to share their knowledge either of subject matter or of classroom behavior. This lack of two-way communication hampers efforts toward student success.

Initiatives for student success and retention should be developed locally. They need to be tailored to the needs and circumstances of the specific institution. To be really effective, these initiatives must include input from members of the staff and faculty including the adjunct faculty.

The State can, however, publish position reports, such as those published by AFT, setting minimal standards that should be followed to optimize the input and fair treatment of adjuncts. Such standards would go a long way to furthering student success. In setting such standards, the State should solicit comment and involvement from members of the various groups with whom students interact including adjunct faculty.