

**ESTABLISHMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF A COMMITTEE TO STUDY
PART-TIME AND NONTENURE-TRACK FACULTY
AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS**

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: House Joint Resolution 19, approved by the 91st General Assembly, directs the Board of Higher Education and Illinois public colleges and universities to undertake a study of the policies and practices regarding the use and compensation of part-time and nontenure-track faculty.

This item establishes a Board Committee to work with Illinois public colleges and universities and faculty organizations to gather data and information, review policies and practices, and report to the legislature on the use and compensation of part-time and nontenure-track faculty.

Action Requested: That the Board of Higher Education establish a committee and appoint its members to complete a legislatively mandated review of the use and compensation of part-time and nontenure-track faculty.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**ESTABLISHMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF A COMMITTEE TO STUDY
PART-TIME AND NONTENURE-TRACK FACULTY
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In recent years, greater attention has been given to the use and compensation of part-time and nontenure-track faculty by colleges and universities. Increases in the number of such faculty have lead to questions about the implications of this staffing change upon teaching and learning. Also, questions have been raised about the compensation, benefits, and working conditions for part-time and nontenure-track faculty. In November 2000, the 91st General Assembly approved House Joint Resolution 19 requesting that the Board of Higher Education and Illinois public colleges and universities undertake a review of the policies and practices affecting the use and compensation of part-time and nontenure-track faculty. This item establishes a Board committee for this purpose.

The House of Representative resolution contained the following four points:

1. The Board of Higher Education is “to review the growing dependence on part-time and nontenure-track faculty in Illinois colleges and universities”.
2. Each public university and community college is to provide a report, with rationale, to the Board of Higher Education by November 15, 2001 regarding the use and compensation of part-time and nontenure-track faculty. The Board of Higher Education is to compile the reports and provide them to the General Assembly by December 15, 2001.
3. The Board of Higher Education in consultation with institutions and faculty organizations is to “consider policies designed to discourage over reliance on part-time and nontenure-track faculty for undergraduate instruction while protecting those instructors performing effectively in such positions”.
4. The Board of Higher Education is to make recommendations to the General Assembly concerning “the establishment of minimum salary and fringe benefits provisions indexed to tenured-track faculty compensation for part-time and nontenure-track faculty to ensure fair employment and consistent emphasis on quality instruction at all levels, from lower division through graduate instruction”.

Across the nation and in the state, the number of part-time and nontenure-track faculty have grown, as has the proportion that such faculty represent of all faculty positions. Both national and state data on this topic was provided in an August 2000 Board report, *Staffing Trends: Illinois Colleges and Universities*. This report showed that from Fall 1991 to Fall 1999 the number of part-time faculty at Illinois colleges and universities grew by 15.2 percent, while the number of full-time faculty grew by 5.2 percent. The report also showed significant differences among the three education sectors in faculty hiring trends over this period. For

example, at public universities full-time faculty increased by 1.0 percent and part-time faculty by 25.7 percent, and at private institutions full-time faculty increased by 16.9 percent and part-time faculty by 86.5 percent. However, at community colleges full-time faculty and part-time faculty each decreased by 7.9 percent from Fall 1991 to Fall 1999.

The information collected and reported on staffing in Illinois higher education comes from surveys conducted by the Board of Higher Education through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and by surveys conducted by the Illinois Community College Board. While these systems provide significant staffing data about Illinois colleges and universities, they do not provide adequate information to address the issues raised in the legislative resolution. Because of the importance of these issues and the need to collect and analyze additional information, it is proposed that the Board establish a committee to coordinate and oversee this process. The Committee will bring together representatives from Illinois colleges and universities and faculty organizations to discuss and identify the kinds of information that should be included in the institutional reports provided to the legislature. Also, the Committee will consult with these representatives in developing higher education policies on the use and compensation of part-time and nontenure-track faculty, and making recommendations to the General Assembly on methods for compensating these faculty.

Attached to this Board item is a paper prepared by the Faculty Advisory Committee on the topic of part-time faculty. The issues addressed and the recommendations made in this faculty paper will be considered by the Committee as it undertakes this review. The Faculty Advisory Committee will continue to be consulted throughout this process.

Recommendation

The staff recommends adoption of the following resolution:

The Illinois Board of Higher Education hereby establishes the Committee to Study Part-time and Nontenure-track faculty. The Committee will coordinate and assist efforts of public colleges and universities to provide to the General Assembly a report on the use and compensation of part-time and nontenure-track faculty. The Committee will consult with Illinois colleges and universities and faculty organizations to develop higher education policies on the use and compensation of part-time and nontenure-track faculty and make recommendations to the Legislature on methods for compensating these faculty.

The Board of Higher Education approves the following appointments to the Committee to Study Part-time and Nontenure-track Faculty: Edward Duffy and Thomas Lamont (co-chairs), Samuel Gove, Steven Lesnik, and Jane Williamson.

REPORT OF THE FACULTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

THE PART-TIME FACULTY ISSUE*

American higher education is undergoing a transformation that will inevitably and significantly alter its character, weaken the education of its students, and have a profound impact on the professoriate. Subject to escalating costs and limited funding, all but the most heavily endowed institutions are increasingly concerned with marketing and the "bottom line," and less with truth, learning, and academic standards. Change is often desirable and beneficial, but not in this case. For those who think that higher education and society are best served by the values and practices associated with a principled quest for knowledge, the present trend can only be greeted with alarm.

This transformation has many facets. This report focuses on one, **the widespread and growing practice of displacing full-time tenure track faculty with non-tenure, part-time faculty** hired at exploitative wages. This trend is well documented and accelerating in recent years.

In public universities in Illinois full-time faculty increased by 0.2% between 1991 and 1995 and 1.0% between 1991 and 1999. In contrast, part-time faculty increased 9.1% from 1991 to 1995, and 25.7% from 1991 to 1999. In community colleges faculty members actually declined during this period: the **decline** was 7.9% for full-time and part-time faculty from 1991 to 1999. In private institutions where the trend has been slower to develop, full-time faculty increased by 16.9% from 1991 to 1999 but part-time faculty increased by 85% for the period versus only 13% from 1991 to 1995.[1]

A National Center for Education Statistics report shows that in 1997 over 41% of all post secondary faculty (excluding instruction/research assistants) nationally were part-time,[2] a proportion that has certainly risen since then. The growth in full-time faculty was .3% from fall 1993 to fall 1997; the growth in part-time faculty was 5.2%. In community colleges the number of part-time faculty was almost double that of full-time faculty.

Utilization of part-time faculty varies with the discipline. A survey conducted by Roper Starch found that composition programs have the highest proportion of courses taught by part-timers, 31.4% and the lowest proportion taught by tenure-track instructors, 14.6%. In eight of ten social science and humanities disciplines surveyed, tenure-track professors taught fewer than half of the introductory undergraduate courses.[3, p. A12] The study shows "that elite, Ph.D. granting institutions are just as likely as community colleges to use nontenure or part-time professors in English and foreign language courses." [3, p. A13].

It must be recognized that some categories of non-tenured part-time faculty make a very positive contribution to higher education. This is most evident in practical and professional fields where it is often desirable to have practitioners in the field providing instruction. Here the use of adjunct faculty is not simply a way of saving money; it fulfills an important educational function. (But even in these fields, part-time faculty must maintain a close and enduring relationship with the institution if programs are to have coherence and fulfill their institutional roles.) Another category of part-time faculty, graduate assistants, provides much needed "apprenticeship" opportunities. This apprenticeship is a necessary element in the preparation of

future college faculty; however, this apprenticeship must be closely monitored by the permanent faculty. Even beyond these two categories, a **limited** use of part-timers provides a useful degree of flexibility in staffing when enrollments are higher than anticipated and additional course sections must be added at the last minute to meet academic needs. **It has only been in recent years, with the introduction of an extensive displacement of full-time faculty by part-time faculty, that their use has become a matter of growing concern.**

Bearing these exceptions in mind, **we believe that the present trend toward increasing use of part-time faculty goes well beyond that which is appropriate and academically sound. This recent trend poses serious problems and dangers for American higher education.**

1. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING IS LIKELY TO DETERIORATE

The quality of teaching--and the learning that results--is related to keeping abreast of learning in the field, even contributing something to it. That is increasingly difficult with the rapid expansion of knowledge and educational technology. Inevitably, many part-timers seek to teach as many classes as possible in the fastest way possible in order to achieve an adequate income. This means fewer papers assigned, a more cursory examination of what is assigned, and little, if any, availability for consultation with students, for some of whom such help determines whether they will survive.

Many part-time faculty "don't have access to e-mail, their own offices or a telephone on campus . . . are not in the phone directories, they're not in the catalogues." [3 p. A12] It must be remembered that the conditions under which part-timers work become the learning conditions of the students.

But beyond the quality of the education provided by part-time instructors, there is a negative effect on the teaching of full-time faculty as well. As the burden of other essential tasks falls on a diminishing number of full-time faculty, there is less time left for the classroom, for creativity, for course revision, and for careful evaluation of student work.

2. THE NATURE OF EDUCATION WILL SHIFT TOWARD TRAINING RATHER THAN CRITICAL THINKING

If marketing and finances increasingly become the dominant concerns of academic administration and if there is not reliable protection of academic freedom, the future direction of higher education should be evident. It will be increasingly difficult to protect academic freedom when an increasing proportion of college and university faculty is not protected by tenure and does not even have the prospect of achieving it. Without the academic freedom of faculty, higher education will increasingly be transformed into a kind of "training" in which important but controversial "cutting edge" questions will not be addressed. The academy's traditional role of intellectual leadership and social critique will disappear. With that role gone, the university's critical function in society gives way to non-reflective job preparation. Ironically, almost nothing else could do more to diminish the nature and quality of work in our society.

3. FACULTY PARTICIPATION IN INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE IS DIMINISHED

Aside from the impact on individuals, faculty and students--there are several ways in which the increasing trend toward the use of non-tenured part-time faculty does **not** serve the interests of higher education. Part-time faculty generally perform no tasks other than teaching specific classes. This places an increasing burden on the reduced core of regular full-time faculty, particularly in such areas as keeping office hours, advising, reviewing the curriculum and revising courses that consume much faculty time. One result is that faculty are often forced to surrender a portion of their former responsibility for the governance of their institutions, a responsibility that part-time faculty do not share. Full-time faculty are crucial in maintaining coherence in academic programs. They have a vested interest in the present and future well being of their programs and institutions; part-time faculty, understandably, do not.

4. CURRENT PRACTICES EXPLOIT PART-TIMERS

It is difficult to make an adequate living by piecing together part-time positions at one or more institutions. The pay is pathetically low and benefits are often non-existent.[3] Many talented, enthusiastic and fully qualified persons who, were it not for the trend noted above, would be serving in full-time tenure track positions are forced to live on this income.[4] These "conditions of labor" should be vigorously opposed on pedagogical as well as moral grounds and brought to an end. It is ironic that institutions that for centuries have upheld a very lofty goal--the quest for truth--are now hiring faculty at the minimum wage, a practice that places them only slightly above the "sweat shop."

5. THE PRESENT TREND CAN "WORK" ONLY IN THE SHORT RUN

If the financial bottom line is the primary consideration, the increasing resort to part-time faculty makes sense in the short run. In the current situation, part-time faculty are cheap and can easily be hired and easily let go as enrollment patterns change.

This practice appears to be based on an assumption that hiring part-time faculty can work in perpetuity, making higher education a highly cost-efficient industry. But can this practice, in fact, endure? Learning usually takes place in learning communities. Hiring a disproportionate number of part-time faculty necessarily detracts from forming a learning community with students since most part-time faculty teach and leave. It also detracts from the learning community which the full-time faculty shape. As the number of part-time faculty increases, so does the amount of full-time faculty administrative work. Finally, the practice of replacing full-time faculty with part-time faculty discourages a new generation of the professoriate from pursuing advanced degrees. When that happens, how can a state or a nation continue to compete in a world in which education may be the most important competitive factor? While the need to control escalating costs of higher education is evident, weakening, possibly destroying, what has been at the heart of that education is not an acceptable means of going about it. The contributions made by higher education are at risk, placing the future of our society at risk.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We make two recommendations:

- We should return to the traditional assumption that teaching staffs of colleges and universities will be composed of full-time tenure track faculty. **The use of non-tenure track part-time faculty should require specific justification. While the traditional uses of part-time faculty noted above would pass each test, the recent major expansion would not; hence that expansion should be reversed.**
- Insofar as some part-time faculty will continue to be a necessary and an appropriate part of higher education, they should be treated fairly. They should be employed on the basis of appropriate qualifications, given the resources needed for effective instruction, provided mentoring and evaluated. They should have appropriate stipends commensurate with their responsibilities and performance and have appropriate access to health benefits, retirement programs and other benefits.
- This report updates a previous report of June 1997. In conjunction with the legislature's mandated study of part-time and full-time non-tenure track faculty, a more comprehensive report will be developed at a later date.

* Adopted February 2, 2001

REFERENCES

1. Illinois Board of Higher Education, "Staffing Trends in Illinois Higher Education," July 2, 1996; Illinois Board of Higher Education, "Staffing Trends: Illinois Colleges and Universities," August 22, 2000.
2. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics cited in IBHE, *op. Cit.*, August 22, 2000.
3. Ana Marie Cox, "Study Shows Colleges' Dependence on Their Part-time Instructors: Report documents the low pay and lack of benefits for those off the tenure track," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Dec. 1, 2000, p. A12-14.
4. See Judith M. Gappa and David W. Leslie, *The Invisible Faculty*, (Jossey-Bass Publishers) for a good discussion of the use and attitudes of part-time faculty.