

## **Part-Time Faculty Affairs Committee**

### **2021-2022 Year-End Report and Memo on Future of Faculty Work Project**

From a bird's-eye view, the constituency of the Part-Time Faculty Affairs Committee have vastly divergent needs and goals. One segment consists of adjunct faculty teaching one or two classes every academic year. Another teaches at the part-time level and strives to get a full-time RTPC or TT position. And a third regularly teaches multiple courses per semester and wants to maintain that while remaining part-time.

The needs of each part-time<sup>1</sup> constituency are, at times, contradictory. It is therefore difficult to summarize in one page the issues affecting everyone in our purview. We will nevertheless attempt to do so.

Part-time faculty bring particular benefits to the university and the students in our classrooms. They often bring a wealth of real-world experience as well as current experiences in the field. The university, however, tends to see their biggest value almost exclusively as a cost-saving measure, with part-time labor generally being cheaper than that of full-time RTPC and TT faculty. With the new "exempt status" salary tiers instituted for part-time faculty by AB 736, there are concerns that schools and departments will phase out part-time faculty, whether in favor of full-time hires or increasing the number of non-exempt adjuncts (who do not fall under the new salary guidelines and can be paid less).

If the result is a shift to have as many courses as possible to be taught by full-time faculty, this could be a benefit to part-time faculty striving for those positions while also being a threat to those who want to maintain a balance between their outside professional work and part-time (i.e., non-adjunct) teaching loads. However, when the value of part-time faculty is cost-savings, and they are viewed as fungible resources compared to full-time faculty, then even very senior, high-ranking part-time faculty are not seriously considered for full-time positions. At the core, this valuation is what needs to change – prioritizing cost-saving above all else has a negative effect on students and all faculty regardless of status, rank, or track.

Another issue is that there are no clear set policies across the university for how part-time and adjunct contracts are handled, and the precarity of part-time faculty fuels many problems, in terms of stress, anxiety, and uncompensated labor. At some schools, part-time faculty get year-long contracts and are told well in advance of their schedules for upcoming semesters. At others, faculty do not know what they will be teaching, if they will qualify for benefits, or indeed if they have a job at all until a semester begins – sometimes those answers are not known until after the add/drop period ends. Despite now having a central Human Resources department, faculty have reported difficulty having their concerns addressed there and issues related to contracts and benefits are still being managed at the school level.

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<sup>1</sup> Here the term is being used inclusively of both adjunct and part-time faculty, as defined by USC's HR policies.

While not exhaustive, these are some ideas the committee believes would help address core concerns facing our various constituencies:

1. Creating a security of employment policy establishing a guaranteed process based on rank and years teaching at USC that would give vetted, long-standing part-time faculty the right to teach courses they have previously taught before lower ranking or new part-time faculty could be offered those sections. The policy should also create a process by which a part-time faculty member will be offered a suitable replacement course when they lose a class because a full-time faculty member is in need of a course. Such a policy would prevent the easy replacement of more senior faculty (who are also more expensive as a result of merit-based and promotion-linked raises) with less expensive new hires.
2. A commitment from the university to pay non-exempt adjunct faculty at minimum a rate equal to that of exempt part-time faculty.
3. Establishing a path from part-time to full-time employment.
4. Clear, standardized, and enforced policies across the university establishing pre-semester deadlines for when part-time faculty contracts will be issued.
5. Clear, standardized, and enforced policies across the university regarding benefits for part-time faculty, the periods which are covered by the benefits, and defining the “50% threshold” for reaching them or providing benefits on a percentage basis based on the load carried each term.
6. The establishment of a cutoff date when part-time faculty will know whether they will receive benefits for an upcoming semester / academic year.
7. A dramatic improvement to the representation of part-time faculty at school-level faculty governance models. Of 22 schools with full-time faculty governance structures surveyed by the PTFAC, only seven were confirmed to have a part-time faculty committee, council, or single representative. While not a balm that will solve all problems, having more localized representation may allow for more issues and concerns to be identified and addressed.
8. A special working group dedicated to exploring the particular needs of part-time research, clinical, and practitioner faculty as their issues are unique from the majority of part-time faculty in teaching positions. Given their smaller number and special concerns, our committee has struggled to incorporate them into our work.
9. Including part-time faculty in the Faculty Handbook in a meaningful way that includes policies that recognize their existence and service to the university.

### **Additional Issues**

- At the end of the 2020-2021 academic year, the Office of the Provost committed to meeting with the PTFAC to share updates on the implementation of the new AB 736 guidelines as well as the results of a survey of the schools about part-time faculty policies. Despite repeated attempts from both the committee and the Senate Executive Board, no information was shared and no meeting requests were acknowledged by the Provost’s office. The most recent update we heard from our Executive Board liaison was

that it was unlikely the survey ever happened. The issues involved are fundamental to our work and to the status of almost all members of the PTFAC constituency – without information from the Provost’s office, the work of monitoring part-time issues across schools is greatly impaired. Increased engagement and transparency from the administration will be crucial going forward.

- The Committee attempted to gather information about compensation issues during the COVID pandemic, specifically related to whether faculty received payment for the labor involved in switching on-the-fly to online instruction in the spring of 2020 or the transition to fully online classes for the 2020-2021 academic year. In attempting to move beyond the anecdotal evidence of Committee membership, we endeavored to engage with part-time representation at the school-level faculty councils. However, as noted above, the representation at that level is woefully lacking, so we were not able to get a complete picture of the situation. From the answers we did receive, three schools (the School of Architecture, Viterbi School of Engineering, and Chan Division of Occupational Science & Occupational Therapy) provided no compensation for the additional work. Another school, the School of Cinematic Arts, stopped giving any compensation for additional labor for online instruction after spring 2020. Multiple additional respondents (some being full-time faculty or school administrators) were not certain about any part-time compensation. We were stymied in our attempt to obtain good data about this issue both as a result of lacking and/or ineffective part-time representation at the school-level and by the lack of communication from the Provost’s office.

### **Recommendations for 2022-2023 Charge**

- Continue progressing on the Future of Faculty Work project with the RTPC Faculty Affairs Committee and the T/TT Faculty Affairs Committee
- Draft and put forward a Senate resolution on security of employment for part-time faculty.

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