

Case #3: Adjunct Faculty

In the 1970's, economic and political factors gave rise to the current, business-style model of the university. As with any business, output and bottom line were the focus of management, in this case, university administration officials. Regular faculty are expected not only to teach and publish, but also to write proposals and manage grant programs, serve on committees, and direct students' research. Their classroom teaching loads typically include only two to four courses a year, at least half of these consisting of seminars where advanced students present their work.

Due to the many roles played by full-time faculty and the drastic increases in enrollment over the past decades, adjunct professors or instructors have become much more common. Typically they are well-qualified, with Master's degrees or doctorates in the field they teach. Because of adjuncts, instruction can be offered to students at a discount, and tenure-track faculty can pursue their grants and publications. Administrators tend to believe that hiring adjuncts is their panacea; without these hires, they claim, tuition and fees would skyrocket and research would come to a standstill, with the return of professors to lecture halls.

Adjuncts tend to be paid low on a university's scale; from around \$1,000 per class per semester to a livable salary in some cases. Because adjuncts often are employed to teach introductory courses that are required and cover broad topics, their class size is generally large, which may mean greater burden on the adjunct in evaluating student performance. They may teach one course per term, or several courses, up to just-below the limit for full-time employment. Since they are employed on a class-by-class basis (and may therefore be viewed as more "temporary"), they are monitored more closely than regular faculty. Often, adjuncts teach at two or more colleges at a time. Adjuncts are usually required to hold minimal office hours, and may be inaccessible to students unless they choose to volunteer time for consultation.

Even with the lack of benefits, some adjuncts feel they make a decent living while doing the work they love. Teaching adjunct can provide flexibility. Most adjuncts would prefer to have tenure-track posts, but some like to be free from the bureaucratic restraints of full-time academic employment. Some believe the teach-and-go routine serves their family life better. Others may work full-time at another type of job. Often, a full-time professor may teach adjunct at a nearby college, either to help that school with its staffing shortages, or to supplement his income.

The flexibility and transient nature of adjunct faculty are viewed by some as tantamount to acting as a "scab" on a picket line. If all potential adjuncts refused to teach individual courses, universities might be forced to hire more full-time faculty and provide benefits to those who fill the positions. However, the adjunct positions are often filled by doctoral students attempting to gain additional classroom experience before searching for a full-time position post-graduation, and thus, they are only interested in a small course load.