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# Focusing on Adjuncts: Enhancing Teacher Effectiveness and Academic Quality through Institutional Support

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Focusing on Adjuncts:  
Enhancing Teacher Effectiveness and Academic Quality through Institutional Support

By  
Marshelia Denise Harris

A Banded Dissertation in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Social Work

St. Catherine University | University of Saint Thomas  
School of Social Work

May 2017

### Abstract

The increased use of adjunct faculty in academic institutions presents both challenges and opportunities for students, faculty, and administrators (Clark, Moore, Johnston, & Openshaw, 2011). Most of the challenges center around the lack of preparation and knowledge required for the responsibilities of teaching in an academic setting. This banded dissertation explores educational opportunities and supportive programs to prepare adjunct faculty for success in academia.

The first product of this banded dissertation is a conceptual paper proposing three program options for offering ongoing institutional support to adjunct faculty. The conceptual framework guiding this scholarship agenda is Albert Bandura's social learning theory, examining strategies for increasing teacher effectiveness and sustaining academic quality. Providing ongoing institutional support has implications for administrators who have the responsibility in hiring and developing adjunct faculty.

In higher education, the perception of adjunct faculty as valued team members contradicts academia's lack of investment in supportive programs and educational opportunities for adjunct faculty. The second product of this banded dissertation is a quantitative study examining the attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and experiences of adjunct faculty across the United States. Practical implications include the opportunity for adjunct faculty to collaborate with full-time faculty to gain a better understanding of teaching strategies.

Investment in institutional support for adjunct faculty is vital to the growth of academic institutions in the future. The third product of this banded dissertation is an overview of the findings from the research study in product two, presented at the Baccalaureate Program

Directors (BPD) annual conference in March 2017. This presentation sought feedback from administrators about their efforts and strategies in supporting adjunct faculty.

The three products of the banded dissertation emphasize the adjunct faculty as a focal point in academia and the reliance on a group of professionals that enter the academy without the proper preparation. Integrative programs and educational opportunities will prepare adjunct faculty to build knowledge and skills to become effective teachers and sustain academic quality. This has implications for academic administrators interested in creating a more inclusive work environment and building a stronger faculty team.

*Keywords:* adjunct faculty, teacher effectiveness, institutional support

## Dedication/Acknowledgements

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## Focusing on Adjuncts: Enhancing Teacher Effectiveness and Academic Quality through Institutional Support

This banded dissertation explores how academic institutions provide ongoing support, guidance, and professional development opportunities for adjunct faculty to become effective teachers and increase academic success. The main goal of this dissertation is to explore the issues faced by adjunct faculty regarding their needs and concerns within academic institutions. The interest for this topic stems from the increased use of adjunct faculty in the field and the need for an inclusive work environment that strengthens this group. Most departments and schools rely heavily on adjunct faculty, but most adjunct faculty work in isolation, often disconnected from the academic milieu. There is a lack of familiarity with the university structure, departmental policies and procedures, and the teaching environment which can result in adjunct faculty having bad experiences, poor outcomes, and leaving academe (Jolley, Cross, & Bryant, 2014).

In higher education, the perception of adjunct faculty as valued team members contradicts academia's lack of investment in supportive programs and educational opportunities for adjunct faculty. The importance and increased reliance on adjunct faculty in educational institutions has been well documented over the years (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001 as cited in Gehrke & Kezar, 2015; Charlier & Williams, 2011; Diegel, 2013; Komos, 2013), and the data indicate that adjunct faculty outweighs the number of full-time tenured faculty. Between 1975 and 1995, the use of adjunct faculty increased by 103%, as compared to 93% for the full-time tenured faculty (Umbach, 2007; Charlier & Williams, 2011). In 1975, approximately 57% of all faculty members were tenured and adjunct faculty accounted for 30% of the workforce. In 2003, the tenured faculty decreased to 35%, and the adjunct faculty increased to 46% (Umbach, 2007).



According to a 2012 National Center for Education Statistics report (as cited in Jolley, Cross, & Bryant, 2014), part-time instructional staff in all institutions of higher education in the United States exceeded full-time faculty members for the first time, accounting for 50% of all instructional staff. The same report also indicated that part-time faculty in community colleges exceeded 70% of the instructional staff. The data and research acknowledge the growth in the increased use of adjunct faculty over the last 30 years (Umbach, 2007) and signify the value adjunct faculty adds to the academic community.

Adjunct faculty have a significant presence in higher education institutions, are the center point of contact with the majority of students, and are the least prepared to teach (Diegel, 2013). Most adjunct faculty began their career in higher education being unfamiliar with the protocol and processes present at the university. The focus is usually on the particulars of the course (i.e. class location, time, date of the class, title of course, and the books for the course) but not on teaching strategies, the curriculum content or on the nuances in the classroom. Full-time faculty members have the responsibility of writing or modifying curriculum, participating on committees, advising students, and creating departmental policies. In most cases, adjunct faculty are not exposed to the same responsibilities of full-time faculty but are expected to be effective in the classroom and to sustain academic quality. Adjunct faculty may experience challenges related to teaching policies, instruction, classroom management, and the physical environment. This lack of familiarity with the university structure, departmental policies and procedures, and the teaching environment can result in adjunct faculty having adverse experiences and poor academic outcomes (Jolley, Cross, & Bryant, 2014). This demonstrates a dichotomy of expectation among educational institutions. How can one be effective in the classroom and sustain academic quality when not properly prepared for the role of adjunct faculty?

The literature defines adjunct faculty as anyone teaching one or more classes at an institution of higher education without a full time contract, sometimes referred to as part-time faculty, non-tenure-track faculty, or contingent faculty (Dolan, Hall, Karlsson, & Martinak, 2013). For this banded dissertation, the term adjunct faculty will include temporary teaching staff, part-time instructional staff, part-time faculty, non-tenure-track faculty, and contingent staff, employed by a two- or four-year university that is a traditional brick and mortar building or an online environment.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical framework for this conceptual paper is Albert Bandura's social learning theory which focuses on the way people learn new things and how new behaviors are developed by observing other people (Bandura, 1969). The major assumptions of the social learning theory are based on three concepts: 1) the idea that people can learn through observing others habits and actions, 2) internal mental states are an essential part of the process, and 3) learning something new does not always result in a change in behavior (Bandura, 1977). Investment in institutional support for adjunct faculty is vital to the growth of academic institutions. Quality teaching links to professional development, a sense of belonging, and understanding the academic culture. Offering programs focused on adjunct faculty learning teaching strategies is beneficial for the academic institution because it produces a stronger work force and instructors who are better prepared to teach.

Academic institutions providing ongoing support, guidance, and professional development opportunities for adjunct faculty offer a path for them to become effective teachers and to increase academic success. Adjunct faculty have the opportunity to observe others in the field, have trial and error methods, and participate in the modeling process to learn how to

navigate the academic landscape. Exploration of the importance of integration, mentoring, cohesiveness, and professional development as a form of support for adjunct faculty may address the needs and concerns expressed by adjunct faculty. Gathering information about the adjunct faculty thoughts about acclimation to higher education, mentoring, integration, and cohesiveness in academic institutions will provide more insight into the needs of this group. Surveying this group will provide them with a voice and highlight their challenges and opportunities.

### **Summary of Banded Dissertation Products**

This banded dissertation examined the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of adjunct faculty in higher learning and their experience with supportive programs and educational opportunities that integrate adjunct faculty into higher learning. Offering programs and services focusing on the needs and concerns of adjunct faculty may increase teacher effectiveness and sustain academic quality.

A conceptual paper using Albert Bandura's social learning theory as the theoretical foundation, a quantitative research study about the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of adjunct faculty, and an oral presentation on the results of the quantitative study at the Baccalaureate Program Directors annual conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, comprises the three banded dissertation documents discussed in this dissertation.

The quantitative research study examined the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of the adjunct faculty in higher learning and their experiences with supportive programs and educational opportunities for integration into higher learning. The aim of the study was to identify areas of need from the perspective of adjunct faculty to assist with increasing teaching effectiveness and academic quality. The purpose of the study was to gather information that

would assist academic institutions in providing support that would integrate adjunct faculty into a higher learning setting. Adjunct faculty participated anonymously and voluntarily via Qualtrics, a cloud-based survey tool that provided a direct link to the survey.

A conference presentation at the Baccalaureate Program Director's annual conference on March 2, 2017, shared the results of the research study to an audience of social work educators and administrators. The information shared during the presentation sparked good thoughtful conversation among colleagues with similar interests. Feedback about their experiences and challenges with supporting adjunct faculty led to ideas and strategies for providing opportunities at the respective institutions. The desire to learn new information and incorporate it into current practices was evident throughout the conversation and provided ideas for expanding the current research into additional articles and future presentations.

### **Discussion**

The overall findings of the banded dissertation indicate adjunct faculty share their knowledge and skills with students in an academic setting as a way of giving back to the community. It is important to note many practicing professionals seek adjunct faculty positions as a way to guide the new generation about evidenced-based practices and to create a competent workforce. Adjunct faculty bring value to academic institutions by sharing their practice experience and expertise with students in the classroom. Students gain experiential learning by participating in projects and activities connecting the curriculum to practice.

The research findings point to a desire for adjunct faculty to collaborate with full-time faculty, learn more about the curriculum and the relationship to the courses, teaching strategies, and gain more knowledge about the university protocol and practices. Adjunct faculty bring a

unique perspective to the academic community and their practice knowledge can assist full-time faculty with securing grants, conducting research projects, and community service activities.

Adjunct faculty regularly interact with community partners and organizations and are aware of the needs of surrounding communities. Collaboration with full-time faculty builds community engagement by creating relationships with community organizations and the university

(Blanchard, Hanssmann, Strauss, Belliard, Krichbaum, Waters, & Seifer, 2011). The expertise of the adjunct faculty about the needs of the community provides greater insight for research projects, conference planning, and grant writing, when collaborating with full-time faculty (Blanchard, et al., 2011).

Professional development opportunities to support adjunct faculty will address their interest in learning more about the curriculum and the relationship between the courses taught. In many cases, adjunct faculty are not familiar with the sequencing of courses, the contents of the courses, or pedagogy. An overview of the curriculum introduces the adjunct faculty to the structure of the syllabus and directions for presenting the content to the students. In addition, information about classroom preparation, classroom management, student expectations, and teaching strategies offers more insight to the requirements for serving in a teaching capacity (Anderson, 2007). Professional development programs offer adjunct faculty a place to learn, share resources, develop skills to assist with teacher effectiveness and academic quality, and the importance of collaboration with other faculty. Professional development creates a supportive, collegial atmosphere within the department and builds team spirit. In addition, gaining new skills and knowledge builds confidence and competence for adjunct faculty in the classroom and in the department.

In the research study, adjunct faculty also expressed an interest in attending orientation programs offered through the human resources department either face-to-face or online. Orientation will assist adjunct faculty in gaining more knowledge about the university protocols and practices. University staff will share important information to assist adjunct faculty to maneuver through the campus protocols, such as instructions on how to access library services, requesting a faculty identification card, parking services, and emergency weather procedures. There are several benefits for offering orientation programs and professional development opportunities to adjunct faculty. The first benefit is providing enough information to create an inclusive environment of support where adjunct faculty feel part of the academic community instead of an outsider. The second benefit is the increase in morale amongst all faculty where there is a feeling of teamwork instead of an “us against them” mentality in the department and in the university. The third benefit is an improvement in retention and the ability for administrators to build a stronger pool of qualified adjunct faculty.

### **Implications for Social Work Education**

Findings from the three products of the banded dissertation are important because they provide insight into the needs of adjunct faculty in higher learning and have implications for social work education. The first implication is the importance of collaborating opportunities with other adjunct faculty and/or full-time faculty. Based on past or current experiences of adjunct faculty, collaboration with other adjunct faculty and/or full-time faculty ranked as the number one need from the administration to be effective in the classroom. Collaboration with other adjunct faculty and full-time faculty may help to build confidence and relationships with students, staff, and faculty, and provide adjunct faculty with a better understanding of the

teaching strategies and curriculum content. This is an important consideration for institutions regardless of the focus of the discipline.

The second consideration is the value of the level of experience and skills that adjunct faculty bring into the classroom (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001 as cited in Gehrke & Kezar, 2015; Charlier & Williams, 2011). The majority of the respondents believed their professional experience provided them with the ability to teach students. Many of the professionals bring several years of experience into the classroom and provide a solid underpinning for sharing information, parting knowledge, and teaching students. Adjunct faculty share their practice experience and introduce students to real world hands-on experience that is invaluable and can occur without adjunct faculty receiving support or being familiar with the protocols of the university or department.

The third implication is an interest in learning more about teaching strategies and understanding the course relationship to the curriculum. This shows an interest by adjunct faculty to gain a better understanding of best practices as it relates to teaching and understanding the connection between the courses taught and the curriculum offered by the department. Morton (2012) discusses the relationship of quality teaching to professional development, a sense of belonging, and understanding the academic culture. Exposure to teaching strategies may increase teaching effectiveness and academic quality while creating an environment of inclusion for adjunct faculty.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Adjunct faculty brings value to academia through their knowledge and skills gained in a practice setting and merged with the curriculum provided by the academic institution. A larger

sample of the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of adjunct faculty would provide additional research in the field. The need for training and support is evident from this study and the literature. There are some credible examples of institutions providing this support but there is a need for more institutions to offer supportive programs and opportunities to adjunct faculty in order to maintain a qualified pool of adjunct faculty. Future research may focus on how adjunct faculty are acclimated into the academic institution, the type of support provided upon hire and during their employment, and educational opportunities for moving into full-time positions. It is evident through the literature and academic institutions that adjunct faculty are an important part of the workforce and are here to stay. It is imperative for administrators to create a more inclusive environment for adjunct faculty by developing programs with a focus on building teacher effectiveness and academic quality.

## **Conclusion**

The continued use of adjunct faculty in academic institutions reflects the needs of the educational community to fill vacant positions and maintain quality educational standards. The research study identified four areas of interest for adjunct faculty: 1) collaborating with full-time faculty, 2) learning more about the curriculum, 3) training in teaching strategies and pedagogy, and 4) gaining knowledge about university policies and protocols. To address these interests, administrators will need to review the effectiveness of their current policies and practices as it relates to adjunct faculty. To maintain academic quality, it is imperative for administrators to invest in enhancing current programs or developing supportive programs and educational opportunities specifically geared towards training adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty that are well trained in departmental procedures, curriculum development, classroom management, and



university protocols increase the retention of practice professionals and bring quality to the classroom and university.

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Providing Ongoing Institutional Support for Adjunct Faculty

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### Abstract

The increased use of adjunct faculty in academic institutions presents both challenges and opportunities for students, faculty, and administrators (Clark, Moore, Johnston, & Openshaw, 2011). Adjunct faculty have challenges related to teaching policies, instruction, supervision, and the physical environment. This lack of familiarity with the university structure, departmental policies and procedures, and the teaching environment can result in adjunct faculty having adverse experiences, poor academic outcomes, and a negative perspective of academe (Jolley, Cross, & Bryant, 2014). This conceptual paper will propose three program options to provide ongoing institutional support to adjunct faculty to increase teacher effectiveness and sustain academic quality. Providing ongoing institutional support has implications for program directors, deans, and administrators who have the responsibility in hiring and developing adjunct faculty.

*Keywords:* adjunct faculty, institutional support, teacher effectiveness, program model

### Providing Ongoing Institutional Support for Adjunct Faculty

The purpose of this conceptual article is to explore the need for ongoing institutional support for adjunct faculty to increase teacher effectiveness and sustain academic quality. In the review of the literature, more common are articles examining the importance and increase reliance of adjunct faculty in educational institutions (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Diegel, 2013; Komos, 2013). Adjunct faculty outweigh the number of full-time tenured faculty and the most recent data indicates the number of adjunct faculty increased by 103% between 1975 and 1995, as compared to 93% for the full-time tenured faculty (Umbach, 2007; Charlier & Williams, 2011). In 1975, approximately 57% of all faculty members were tenured and adjunct faculty accounted for 30% of the workforce. In 2003, the tenured faculty decreased to 35%, and the adjunct faculty increased to 46% (Umbach, 2007). This growth attributes to the fixed-term contracts that reduce costs and allow colleges and universities staffing flexibility to fill in the gaps (Umbach, 2007). This growth over the last 30 years signifies the value adjunct faculty adds to the academic community.

In 2011, according to a National Center for Education Statistics report, part-time instructional staff in all higher education institutions exceeded full-time faculty members for the first time, accounting for 50% of all instructional staff (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012). The same report indicates, part-time faculty in community colleges exceeds 70% of instructional staff. Perhaps most alarming are the numbers of adjunct faculty without long-term employment commitments (Jolley, Cross, & Bryant, 2014). Chalier & Williams' (2011), cross-sectional study examines the impact of institutional type (rural, suburban, and urban) on the extent to which community colleges nationwide rely on adjunct faculty members and the unmet demand for adjuncts overall and across teaching disciplines. The study asked three

research questions that covered three categories, teaching discipline, credit hours taught, and employment status. The fiscal benefits of employing adjunct faculty members was of most interest to the community colleges and have become a critical part of the plan to meet enrollment demands in a climate of ever-tightening budgets (Charlier & Williams, 2011). These indicators result in most adjunct faculty being underpaid and existing in a world of uncertainty due to not having a permanent or stable position.

The literature defines adjunct faculty as anyone teaching one or more classes at an institution of higher education without a full time contract, sometimes referred to as part-time faculty, non-tenure-track faculty, or contingent faculty (Dolan, Hall, Karlsson, & Martinak, 2013; Gappa & Leslie, 1993). For the purpose of this article the term adjunct faculty will include temporary teaching staff, part-time instructional staff, part-time faculty, non-tenure-track faculty, and contingent staff, employed by a two- or four-year university that is a traditional brick and mortar building or an online environment. Offering enhanced opportunities and support for adjunct faculty is beneficial to administrators, faculty, and students. The benefits include a stronger work force, an increase in morale, and higher retention rates for adjunct faculty. The purpose of this conceptual article is to explore the need for programs to provide ongoing institutional support for adjunct faculty to increase teacher effectiveness and sustain academic quality in educational institutions. Ongoing institutional support will enrich the learning environment and the overall academic experience.

For the purpose of this article, case examples of lived experiences will support the framework. This author began her career in higher learning being unfamiliar with the protocol and processes present at the university. The initial meeting with the program director resulted in this author receiving an overview of the course, syllabus, books, location of the course, and a

code to the copier. Classes met in the evening when faculty or staff were not available to answer questions or immediate responses. This author learned how to navigate the academic system through trial and error and by using the management skills acquired as a program director in child welfare. Fortunately, there are many correlations between working in social services and teaching in a classroom. Those skills and knowledge were useful in managing the classroom environment and following the requirements of the curriculum.

Personal experience and promotion to a full-time faculty position has resulted in viewing the role of adjunct faculty from a macro perspective. Acclimation into higher learning should be a collaborative effort between the university and the department. Adjunct faculty members enter into higher learning with the expectation of sharing knowledge through teaching students. Learning new techniques, strategies, and best practices enhances the knowledge and skill base for adjunct faculty. However, this learning is not possible if the adjunct faculty is not equipped with the proper knowledge or tools needed to navigate the academic environment. Lack of oversight of adjunct faculty can result in frustrations and isolation as documented in the literature (Wallen, 2004). How can higher learning decrease the frustrations and feelings of isolation? One proposal is to use an existing program or create a program design to provide ongoing institutional support specifically targeting adjunct faculty. The program would create the foundation for new and existing adjunct faculty to receive the necessary training and direction (Messina, 2011).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this conceptual paper is Albert Bandura's social learning theory. The major assumptions are based on three concepts: 1) the idea that people can learn through observing others habits and actions, 2) internal mental states are an essential part of the

process, and 3) learning something new does not always result in a change in behavior (Bandura, 1977). Observational learning views learning through the lens of people watching the behavior of the individuals around them and imitating their behavior. The modeling process provides an understanding that not all observed behaviors are effectively learned, and learning does not necessarily lead to behavioral changes or actions. The technique of modeling behavior is widely used in training programs and serves as the foundation for how individuals learn (Bandura, 1977).

The social learning theory aligns well with this conceptual article because providing an ongoing institutional support model for adjunct faculty connects to human behavior and reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral and environmental influences. Research indicates that connection to the institution can provide adjunct faculty better outcomes, increased morale, and higher retention rates. Investment in institutional support for adjunct faculty is vital to the growth of academic institutions. Quality teaching links to professional development, a sense of belonging, and understanding the academic culture. Ongoing institutional support is beneficial for the academic institution and adjunct faculty because it produces a stronger work force and instructors who are better prepared.

## **Literature Review**

### **Effective Teaching**

The literature under review has three themes: (a) effective teaching, (b) academic quality, and (c) institutional support. The literature defines effective teaching in several different ways without a consensus of an actual definition. Komos (2013) cites four definitions for review:

- The process of selecting the materials, resources, teaching strategies, and assignments that have the greatest potential to contribute to student learning (Lowman, 1996, p. 38);
- The faculty member characteristics of enthusiasm and expressiveness, clarity of expression, and rapport/interaction (Murray, 1997);
- A complex, multi-dimensional, dynamic process affected by the individuals involved in the process as well as by the circumstances in the classroom (Theall, 1999, p. 30) and;
- Characteristics that include personality, skills, subject knowledge, and reflective practice (Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2004).

According to Weimer (1997), “effective teaching is much more than the assemblage of an impressive collection of techniques. It is in the management of that repertoire that true excellence emerges – the ability in the ambiguous, fluid environment of a classroom to make choices about techniques and weave them into the fabric as the pattern for that day emerges. (p58).

### **Effective Teaching and Academic Quality**

The literature review indicates a relationship between effective teaching and academic quality. The Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education (Chickering, Gamson, and Barsi, 1987) identify seven guiding principles that create teacher effectiveness: (1) encourages student-faculty contact, (2) encourages cooperation among students, (3) encourages active learning, (4) gives prompt feedback, (5) emphasizes time on task, (6) communicates high expectations, and (7) respects diverse talents and ways of learning. In many educational

institutions, adjunct faculty are following these principles and are viewed as highly qualified for the position and capable of providing educational direction for the students.

There are negative and positive aspects in viewing academic quality. The negative aspect relates to the lack of understanding of the curriculum, resulting in the inability to understand the basic requirements of being a member of the faculty team. These areas include but are not limited to: (a) class structure; (b) policies and procedures of the university that can be misleading; (c) syllabus preparation; (d) grading assignments; (e) managing the classroom environment; (f) working with difficult students; (g) poor program continuity, and (h) not perceived as competent for the role of adjunct (Strom-Gottfried & Dunlap, 2004; Murray, 2007). This often results in confusion and the inability to navigate the institutional landscape. To counter the negative argument, findings from several studies indicate adjunct faculty are recognized and acknowledged across all disciplines as an important part of the institutional landscape (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2004). They bring several years of practice into the classroom and department, are specialists in the field, and enrich the college culture through their relationships in the community (Umbach, 2007; Murray, 2007; Klein, 1996; Clark, Moore, Johnston, & Openshaw, 2011).

The ongoing institutional support programs provided by academic institutions enhances the connection between teacher effectiveness and academic quality. According to Diegel (2013), adjunct faculty have a significant presence in higher education institutions and need available opportunities to feel like an important part of academic culture and are prepared to teach. Providing adjunct faculty with a formal orientation and continual training will prepare them for classroom management, university policies, available university resources, grading requirements, and frequent contact with faculty. Adjunct faculty members report the need to have professional

development opportunities like those offered to full-time faculty, clearly written course objectives, an ability to view the textbook before starting class, and recognized as valued members of the academy (Diegel, 2013). In addition, adjunct faculty would like an orientation to the school and department, to understand the services provided and available at the college, and to have a designated place (desk, key to the office, and an email address) in the department instead of operating in isolation or apart from the department. Most importantly, perception as an educator rather than staff, earning a fair wage, and other rewards that full-time faculty receive are the requests of adjunct faculty (Dolan, Hall, Karlsson, Martinak, 2013). Ongoing institutional support is beneficial for the academic institution and adjunct faculty because it produces a stronger work force and instructors that are better prepared. Educational institutions can address adjunct faculty concerns by providing professional development, mentoring, and training to enhance ongoing institutional support to increase teacher's effectiveness and academic quality in the classroom.

### **A Systems Approach to Institutional Support**

The Rio Salado College provides an example of how adjunct faculty receive ongoing institutional support. The institution uses the systems approach to accommodate the adjunct faculty by building an organizational infrastructure and support systems to meet the physiological and safety needs of adjunct faculty (Smith, 2007). The system, which comprises faculty chairs, adjunct faculty services, institutional advancement, library services, technology and instructional help desks, institutional research, course production and support, and instructional design services, supports and assists the adjunct faculty. Rio Salado has intentionally designed a culture, strategies, and processes that address the specific needs of its adjunct faculty based on Maslow's hierarchy (Smith, 2007).



### **Professional Development as Institutional Support**

The Maryland Consortium for Adjunct Faculty Professional Development (MCAFPD) is another example of ongoing institutional support. As part of the organizational strategic activity, mentoring and professional development are designed to meet the organization's mission, enculturate employees, and to meet the goals of acclimating the adjunct faculty into academia. MCAFPD has established goals to provide professional development and share best practices and resources for adjunct faculty and administrators in collaborative efforts with two-and four-year Maryland institutes of higher education. (Dolan, Hall, Karlsson, & Martinak, 2013).

The College of Dupage in Illinois created the Office of Adjunct Faculty Support (OAFS) to provide administrative services to adjunct faculty (Overstreet, 2014). The goal of the OAFS is to assist in the pedagogical development and training of adjunct faculty to become effective teachers and to increase academic quality. Providing adjunct faculty with an orientation to the operational structure of the university and the department provides an avenue for effectiveness. The orientation consists of contact information, explanation of specific departments, and how to access the universities policies and procedures. OAFS has a designated space for adjunct faculty to grade assignments, meet with students, check mail, and access campus services. The assistant deans' manage several units that assist adjunct faculty within the university. These units are: a) recruitment, b) orientation, c) evaluation and development, d) colleges and divisions, and e) the teaching and learning center (Overstreet, 2014). Rio Salado College, MCAFPD, and the College of Dupage are a few examples of how investing in institutional support for adjunct faculty is vital to the growth of academic institutions. Ongoing institutional support is beneficial for the academic institution and adjunct faculty because it produces a stronger work force and instructors that are better prepared.

This is just a small example of how academic institutions provide ongoing institutional support programs but there is a need to increase those numbers. To fill in the gaps, proposing new programs or modifying existing programs are possible options for academic institutions. Offering adjunct faculty the opportunity to participate in faculty development programs is an example of a program that will provide direction and assistance. The continued increase in adjunct faculty will require academic institutions to provide more learning opportunities to increase teacher effectiveness and academic quality

**Professional development programs.** Professional development is one aspect of ongoing institutional support. Hurley (2006) defines professional development as any activity provided to employees to increase their professional skill level. The primary purpose is to enhance the employee's performance and knowledge base. King and Lawler (2003) propose building on the adult learning model as a key component in creating and planning professional development programs for faculty. The base for the adult learning model is the adult learning theory that assumes adult learners can identify their learning needs, and are interested in learning information to help them do their jobs well. King and Lawler (2003) propose including teachers as adult learners in each stage of a four stage planning process: (a) pre-planning, (b) planning, (c) delivery, and (d) follow-up. In addition to using an adult learning model, Norris and Poulton (2008) emphasize the need to use an integrative, nonlinear approach with a question and answer design to guide the process and to seek information from adjunct faculty. Research suggests that successful learning for teachers requires a continuum of coordinated efforts, lifelong learning, and development as a professional. Requiring extensive learning opportunities for adjunct faculty increases teacher effectiveness and academic quality in any educational setting.

**Job satisfaction and morale.** The review of the literature presents a relationship between a stronger work force, increase morale, and retention rates for adjunct faculty. Gordon's (2002) research involving the integration of adjunct faculty into the academic institution indicates higher levels of job satisfaction and effectiveness. Antony & Valadez (2002) used a multi-dimensional approach to examine the differences between part-time and full-time job satisfaction levels for faculty using data from the 1992-1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty. The sample consisted of 974 institutions and 20,300 full-time and part-time faculty members, with part-time faculty representing 37% of the sample (Couch, 2012). The study concluded that it was possible to be satisfied and dissatisfied with different parts of the job. Antony & Valadez (2002) concluded that part-time faculty members enjoy teaching, despite concerns with other aspects of the job, and are generally satisfied with their teaching position.

Wagoner (2007) conducted a qualitative study to determine job satisfaction of full and part-time faculty members teaching at community colleges. This study used secondary data from the 1999 National Studies of Postsecondary Faculty to examine faculty satisfaction using five variables: (a) overall job satisfaction, (b) job security, (c) advancement opportunities, (d) salary, and (e) benefits. The findings indicated full-time faculty was more satisfied with job security, advancement opportunities, salary, and benefits than part-time faculty. Full-time faculty were slightly more satisfied with their job overall (Wagoner, 2007). It is important for administrators to understand the connection between job satisfaction and morale for adjunct faculty when creating and implementing ongoing institutional support programs. Quality teaching links to professional development, a sense of belonging, and understanding the academic culture.

### Institutional Support

Gappa & Leslie (1993) identified three areas that help ensure quality service delivery in the classroom: (1) achieving educational objectives and better use of adjunct faculty, (2) fair employment practices, and (3) better integration of adjunct faculty into the educational institution. Integration, faculty development, engagement, and teaching strategies are the four components that interconnect to provide ongoing institutional support to adjunct faculty. Integration of adjunct faculty will increase teacher effectiveness and sustain academic quality in educational institutions (see figure 1).

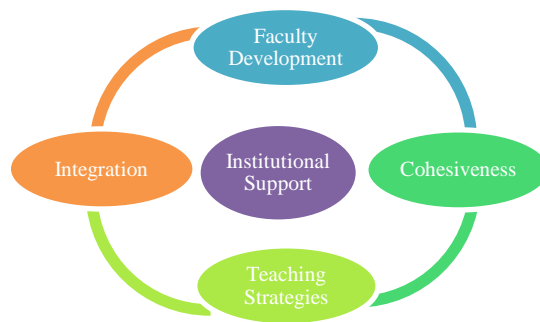


Figure 1: Illustrates the interconnection of the four components

Integration will help adjuncts to merge their practice skills with the teaching environment by enhancing their knowledge and skills. Based on personal experiences, the best way to gather information about how to integrate adjunct faculty into the educational institution is by gathering the information directly. The adjunct faculty has the best insight about the assistance needed to enhance their knowledge base and skills. Integration includes an awareness of academic policies, academic governance, faculty involvement and interaction, and student interaction (West, 2010).

Faculty development is an essential component for the advancement of adjunct faculty. Faculty development consists of orientation, mentoring, and professional development. The

purpose of the orientation is to introduce adjunct faculty to: 1) the universities policies and procedures, 2) the faculty team, 3) available services, 4) role expectations, and 5) departmental operations (West, 2010).

Mentoring is a strategy used to increase retention and offer guidance and navigation of the academic landscape. Adjunct faculty paired with a senior adjunct or a full-time faculty can discuss student concerns, curriculum issues, and course management. The mentor will be available to answer questions, provide general oversight, and supervision as needed.

Professional development offer training opportunities to support the adjunct with administrative tasks, building teaching skills, and gaining knowledge. A combination of face-to-face and online workshops every quarter will assist the adjunct faculty in building skills.

Engagement is important because it helps adjunct faculty to understand how to operate in an academic setting. Engagement is crucial for building relationships with the students, faculty, department, and university. Gaining knowledge about teaching strategies is an ongoing activity that will provide adjunct faculty best practices about teaching in higher education. Adjunct faculty will learn methods for working with students that have different learning styles and skill sets, and with a diverse background.

### **Discussions**

The purpose of this conceptual article is to explore the need for programs to provide ongoing institutional support for adjunct faculty to increase teacher effectiveness and sustain academic quality. An extensive body of literature (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Charlier & Williams, 2011; Clark, Moore, Johnston, & Openshaw, 2011; Komos, 2013; Hurley, 2006; Jolley, Cross, & Bryant, 2014) clearly identifies the importance and relevance of adjunct faculty in higher education. However, the literature is limited about program models specifically

focusing on adjunct faculty (Smith, 2007; Dolan, Hall, Karlsson, & Martinak, 2013; Overstreet, 2014). Program models offering ongoing institutional support can increase teacher effectiveness and academic quality.

Designing programs explicitly targeting adjunct faculty will enhance opportunities, enrich the learning environment, and the overall academic experience. Three types of programs to provide ongoing institutional support include mentoring, co-teaching, and faculty development. The first one is a mentoring program to increase retention and offer guidance and navigation of the academic landscape. Adjunct faculty paired with a senior adjunct or a full-time faculty can discuss student concerns, curriculum issues, and course management. The mentor will be available to answer questions, provide general oversight, and supervision as needed.

The second program option is a co-teaching model where a new adjunct faculty co-teaches with a full-time faculty in the classroom for four to six weeks depending on the requirements of the class and the timeframe for the semester. Full-time faculty can share teaching strategies, discuss the curriculum, and provide general information. Adjunct faculty can observe the actions of the full-time faculty in the classroom, ask questions, and get immediate feedback.

The third program option is a faculty development model, an essential component for the advancement of adjunct faculty. Faculty development can consist of an orientation component and professional development. The orientation can be held prior to the start of each semester for all new adjunct faculty and include departmental faculty and staff (West, 2010). Adjunct faculty will receive information about the university and the department, have questions answered, and tour the campus.

Professional development will consist of workshops, trainings, and monthly meetings with the faculty to discuss the latest technology, new information, student concerns and best practices. Adjunct faculty will be required to attend and complete one workshop or training every quarter as part of their annual review. Adjunct faculty will meet with a senior adjunct faculty once a month to discuss student concerns and for supervision.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Faculty in educational institutions are responsible for creating and modifying curriculum content, establishing student performance standards, and learning teaching strategies. Adjunct faculty should share in these responsibilities and have the opportunity to build knowledge and skills to enhance effectiveness. Additional research examining the attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and experiences of current and former adjunct faculty will provide insight into the thoughts and needs of this group. A quantitative and qualitative study with adjunct faculty and administrators will provide more information about available programs and methods for providing institutional support.

The consistent increase in hiring adjunct faculty to replace or supplement full-time faculty will require academic institutions to revisit current practices with adjunct faculty. Consideration for those teaching in online environments as well as those in face-to-face classroom settings will require administrators to review or revamp current policies to maintain a pool of quality adjunct faculty. Ongoing institutional support will provide educational opportunities and possibly increase teacher effectiveness and academic quality for adjunct faculty.

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Focusing on Adjuncts: Identifying the Needs of Adjunct Faculty in Higher Learning

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### Abstract

In higher education, the perception of adjunct faculty as valued team members contradicts academia's lack of investment in supportive programs and educational opportunities for adjunct faculty. The increased use of adjunct faculty over the last 30 years in academic institutions indicates a significant presence and need in academia. There is substantial research on the importance and increased reliance on adjunct faculty in educational institutions but there is a gap in the literature about the method for providing support to adjunct faculty in these settings. This quantitative study examined the attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and experiences of current and former adjunct faculty affiliated with several universities in the United States. The results of the survey identify a strong relationship between receiving institutional support and an increase in teacher effectiveness. One notable practical implication is the opportunity for adjunct faculty to collaborate with full-time faculty to gain a better understanding of teaching strategies, curriculum content, and approaches for building relationships with students and faculty.

**Key words:** adjunct faculty, institutional support, teaching effectiveness, teaching strategies

## Introduction

In higher education, the perception of adjunct faculty as valued team members contradicts academia's lack of investment in supportive programs and educational opportunities for adjunct faculty. The importance and increased reliance on adjunct faculty in educational institutions has been well documented over the years (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001 as cited in Gehrke & Kezar, 2015; Charlier & Williams, 2011; Diegel, 2013; Komos, 2013), and the data indicate that adjunct faculty outweigh the number of full-time tenured faculty. Between 1975 and 1995, the use of adjunct faculty increased by 103%, as compared to 93% for the full-time tenured faculty (Umbach, 2007; Charlier & Williams, 2011). In 1975, approximately 57% of all faculty members were tenured and adjunct faculty accounted for 30% of the workforce. In 2003, the tenured faculty decreased to 35%, and the adjunct faculty increased to 46% (Umbach, 2007). According to a 2012 National Center for Education Statistics report (as cited in Jolley, Cross, & Bryant, 2014), part-time instructional staff in all institutions of higher education in the United States exceeded full-time faculty members for the first time, accounting for 50% of all instructional staff. This report also indicated that part-time faculty in community colleges exceeded 70% of instructional staff. The data and research acknowledge the growth in the increased use of adjunct faculty over the last 30 years (Umbach, 2007) and signify the value adjunct faculty adds to the academic community.

Adjunct faculty has a significant presence in higher education institutions, are the center point of contact with the majority of students, and are the least prepared to teach (Diegel, 2013). Most adjunct faculty began their career in higher learning being unfamiliar with the protocol and processes present at the university. The focus is usually on the particulars of the course (i.e. class location, time, date of the class, title of course, and the books for the course) but not on teaching

strategies, the curriculum content or on the nuances in the classroom. Full-time faculty members have the responsibility of writing or modifying curriculum, participating on committees, advising students, and creating departmental policies. In most cases, adjunct faculty are not exposed to the same responsibilities of full-time faculty but are expected to be effective in the classroom and to sustain academic quality. Adjunct faculty may experience challenges related to teaching policies, instruction, classroom management, and the physical environment. This lack of familiarity with the university structure, departmental policies and procedures, and the teaching environment can result in adjunct faculty having adverse experiences and poor academic outcomes (Jolley, Cross, & Bryant, 2014). This demonstrates a dichotomy of expectation among educational institutions. How can one be effective in the classroom and sustain academic quality when not properly prepared for the role of adjunct faculty?

The literature defines adjunct faculty as anyone teaching one or more courses at an institution of higher education without a full-time contract, sometimes referred to as part-time faculty, non-tenure-track faculty, or contingent faculty (Dolan, Hall, Karlsson, & Martinak, 2013; Gappa & Leslie, 1993). For the purpose of this article, the term adjunct faculty will include temporary teaching staff, part-time instructional staff, part-time faculty, non-tenure-track faculty, and contingent staff, employed by a two- or four-year college or university that is a traditional brick and mortar building or an online environment.

The importance and increased reliance on adjunct faculty in educational institutions over the years is evident but there is a gap in the literature about the method for providing support to adjunct faculty in these settings. This research sought to examine the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of adjunct faculty in higher learning and their experience with supportive programs



and educational opportunities that integrate adjunct faculty into higher learning. The research questions are:

1. What is the motivation for becoming adjunct faculty in academia?
2. How do adjunct faculty define supportive opportunities within higher learning?
3. What level of confidence do adjunct faculty have in teaching in higher education?
4. What activities did adjunct faculty participate in or topics discussed prior to teaching the first class?
5. How do adjunct faculty perceive their professional experience as preparation for being effective in the classroom?
6. What do adjunct faculty need from the administration and faculty to be effective in the classroom?

A sample of respondents were surveyed across various campuses to get a better understanding of the type of support needed for adjunct faculty with the goal of understanding and supporting these individuals who are so instrumental to the success of higher educational settings.

## **Literature Review**

### **Effective Teaching**

Investment in institutional support for adjunct faculty is vital to the growth of academic institutions. Quality teaching links to professional development, a sense of belonging, and understanding the academic culture (Morton, 2012). The review of the literature identified three themes related to the contributions and needs of adjunct faculty in higher learning: (a) effective teaching, (b) academic quality, and (c) institutional support. Effective teaching is an important factor because there is a perception that adjunct faculty lower the teaching standards and are not

effective in the classroom (Diegel, 2013). *The Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* (Chickering, Gamson, & Barsi, 1987) identify seven guiding principles that create teacher effectiveness. The seven principles are: (1) encourages student-faculty contact, (2) encourages cooperation among students, (3) encourages active learning, (4) gives prompt feedback, (5) emphasizes time on task, (6) communicates high expectations, and (7) respects diverse talents and ways of learning. In many educational institutions, adjunct faculty follow these principles and are viewed as highly qualified for the position and capable of providing educational direction for the students. According to Weimer (1997), “effective teaching is much more than the assemblage of an impressive collection of techniques. It is in the management of that repertoire that true excellence emerges – the ability in the ambiguous, fluid environment of a classroom to make choices about techniques and weave them into the fabric as the pattern for that day emerges” (p. 58).

In a study conducted by Komos (2013), there was consideration given to the views of adjunct faculty members with regard to the characteristics of effective teachers. Komos reported various definitions of effectiveness with emphasis on four in particular. The first one identifies the work of Lowman (1996), defining effective teaching as the process of selecting the materials, resources, teaching strategies, and assignments that have the greatest potential to contribute to student learning (p. 38). A second definition identifies the work of Murray (1997) who focused on the characteristics of enthusiasm and expressiveness, clarity of expression, and rapport and interaction. A third definition focused on a complex, multi-dimensional, dynamic process affected by the individuals involved in the process as well as by the circumstances in the classroom (Theall, 1999, p. 30), and the fourth definition is similar to Murray’s with a focus on specific characteristics, including personality, skills, subject knowledge, and reflective practice

(Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2004). Each of the definitions speaks to the need for adjunct faculty to have the ability to navigate the academic setting and the classroom, and to build relationships with the students, faculty, and university, in order to be effective in the academic environment.

### **Academic Quality**

The academic quality adjunct faculty provide has negative and positive perspectives. Negative perceptions often relate to the lack of understanding of the curriculum resulting in the inability to understand important details about the adjunct role. These details include: (a) class structure; (b) policies and procedures of the university that can be misleading; (c) syllabus preparation; (d) grading assignments; (e) managing the classroom environment; (f) working with difficult students; (g) poor program continuity, and (h) not being perceived as competent for the role of adjunct (Strom-Gottfried & Dunlap, 2004; Murray, 2007). This often results in confusion and the inability to navigate the institutional landscape. To counter the negative argument, findings from several studies indicate adjunct faculty bring several years of practice into the classroom and department, are specialists in the field, and enrich the college culture through their relationships in the community (Umbach, 2007; Murray, 2007; Klein, 1996; Clark, Moore, Johnston, & Openshaw, 2011).

According to Diegel (2013), adjunct faculty have a significant presence in higher education institutions and need available opportunities to feel like an important part of academic culture. Providing adjunct faculty with a formal orientation and continual training will prepare them for classroom management, university policies, available university resources, grading requirements, and frequent contact with faculty. Adjunct faculty members report the need to have professional development opportunities like those offered to full-time faculty, clearly written course objectives, an ability to view the textbook before starting class, and recognition as

valued members of the academy (Diegel, 2013). Most importantly, adjunct faculty would like the faculty team to recognize them as educators rather than staff, earning a fair wage, and other rewards that full-time faculty receives (Dolan, Hall, Karlsson, Martinak, 2013). In addition, the literature describes how adjunct faculty would like an orientation to the school and department, to understand the services provided and available at the college, and to have a designated place (desk, key to the office, an email address, a mailbox) in the department instead of operating in isolation or apart from the department (Umbach, 2007).

### **Institutional Approaches**

**A Systems Approach to Institutional Support.** The Rio Salado College provides an example of how adjunct faculty receive institutional support from the college. The institution uses the systems approach to accommodate the adjunct faculty by building an organizational infrastructure and support systems to meet the functional needs of adjunct faculty (Smith, 2007). The system, which comprises faculty chairs, adjunct faculty services, institutional advancement, library services, technology and instructional help desks, institutional research, course production and support, and instructional design services, supports and assists the adjunct faculty. Rio Salado has intentionally designed a culture, strategies, and processes that address the specific needs of its adjunct faculty based on Maslow's hierarchy (Smith, 2007).

**Professional Development as Institutional Support.** The Maryland Consortium for Adjunct Faculty Professional Development (MCAFPD) is another example of institutional support. MCAFPD has established goals to provide professional development and share best practices and resources for adjunct faculty and administrators in collaborative efforts with two- and four-year Maryland institutions of higher education. (Dolan, Hall, Karlsson, & Martinak, 2013). As part of the organizational strategic activity, mentoring and professional development

meet the organization's mission, enculturate employees, and meet the goals of acclimating the adjunct faculty into academia.

Another example of institutional support for adjunct faculty is the Office of Adjunct Faculty Support (OAFS) at the College of Dupage in Dupage, Illinois. The goal of the OAFS is to assist in the pedagogical development and training of adjunct faculty to become effective teachers and to increase academic quality (Overstreet, 2014). Adjunct faculty receive an orientation to the operational structure of the university and the department. The importance of a strong and supportive orientation consists of contact information, explanation of specific departments, and how to access the universities policies and procedures. OAFS provides a designated space for adjunct faculty to grade assignments, meet with students, check email, and access campus services. Adjunct faculty receive assistance by being connected to different units within the university, such as recruitment, orientation, evaluation, and development, the structure of the colleges and divisions, and the teaching and learning center (Overstreet, 2014). Quality teaching for adjunct faculty links to professional development programs and job satisfaction and morale.

**Professional development programs.** Offering extensive learning opportunities for adjunct faculty increases teacher effectiveness and academic quality in any educational setting. Professional development programs and job satisfaction provide opportunities to increase the morale characteristics of institutional support. Hurley (2006) defines professional development as any activity provided to employees to increase their professional skill level. The primary purpose is to enhance the employee's performance and knowledge base. King and Lawler (2003) propose building on the adult learning model as a key component in creating and planning professional development programs for faculty. This model has the adult learning theory as the

foundation and believes adult learners can identify their learning needs, and are interested in learning information to help them do their jobs well. King and Lawler (2003) propose including teachers as adult learners in each stage of a four stage planning process: (a) pre-planning, (b) planning, (c) delivery, and (d) follow-up. In addition to using an adult learning model, Norris and Poulton (2008) emphasize the need to use an integrative, nonlinear approach with a question and answer design to guide the process and to seek information from adjunct faculty. Research suggests that successful learning for teachers requires a continuum of coordinated efforts, lifelong learning, and development as a professional (King and Lawler, 2003).

**Job satisfaction and morale.** The review of the literature presents a relationship between a stronger workforce, increased morale, and retention rates for adjunct faculty. Gordon's (2002) research involving the integration of adjunct faculty into the academic institution indicates higher levels of job satisfaction and effectiveness. Antony and Valadez (2002) used a multi-dimensional approach to examine the differences between part-time and full-time faculty, job satisfaction levels using data from the 1992-1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty. The sample consisted of 974 institutions and 20,300 full-time and part-time faculty members, with part-time faculty representing 37% of the sample (Couch, 2012). The study concluded that it was possible to be satisfied and dissatisfied with different parts of the job. Antony and Valadez (2002) concluded that part-time faculty members enjoy teaching, despite concerns with other aspects of the job, and are generally satisfied with their teaching position.

Wagoner (2007) conducted a qualitative study to determine job satisfaction of full and part-time faculty members teaching at community colleges. This study used secondary data from the 1999 National Studies of Postsecondary Faculty to examine faculty satisfaction using five variables: (a) overall job satisfaction, (b) job security, (c) advancement opportunities, (d) salary,

and (e) benefits. The findings indicated full-time faculty were slightly more satisfied with their job overall and more satisfied with job security, advancement opportunities, salary, and benefits than part-time faculty (Wagoner, 2007). Adjunct faculty were more concerned with feeling a sense of belonging and understanding the academic culture. These results indicate the importance of integrating and acclimating adjunct faculty into the academic environment to provide effective teaching, academic quality, and institutional support (Wagoner, 2007).

## **Methods**

### **Sample and Population**

The participants for this research study are current adjunct faculty teaching at an academic institution and former adjunct faculty. The snowball sample (N = 34) included adjunct faculty affiliated with several universities in the United States. Adjunct faculty participated anonymously and voluntarily via Qualtrics, a cloud-based survey tool that provides a direct link to the survey. The questionnaire gathered information from current and former adjunct faculty about their experiences and challenges of transitioning into an academic setting. The goal was to understand the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of adjunct faculty working in academic settings.

### **Data Collection**

To begin this process, a questionnaire with twenty-one questions was part of a pilot test administered to a small group of five individuals that were not part of the larger study. The twenty-one questions consisted of seven demographic questions, five multiple-choice questions, five open-ended questions, and four questions on a five-point Likert scale. The researcher recruited the participants based on current working relationships and knowledge of their history of being adjunct faculty. The pilot test determined if the language or structure of the survey questions were clear and easy to answer. Based on the results of the pilot, rewording two

questions to provide clarity for the reader and relocating the demographic questions to the end of the survey created a stronger survey.

Participants received the Qualtrics survey with a formal introduction of the research study in August 2016 via email. A link to the survey was included in the email and sent via the internet to the field director's listserv representing faculty from several universities across the United States and the Indiana University faculty senate listserv, representing the social work faculty across the seven regional campuses of the Indiana University School of Social Work. The questionnaire gathered information from current and former adjunct faculty about their experiences and challenges of transitioning into an academic setting. To maintain confidentiality, participants did not identify their location or the university where they worked. A sample of the questions included: "What motivated you to become adjunct faculty in academia? What expectations do you have as an adjunct in academia? How do you define supportive opportunities in academia? What percentage of time would you like to devote to training and professional development?" The demographic questions included age, gender, the number of years worked as an adjunct, type of institution, and current teaching status.

### **Data Analysis**

This author hypothesized that this group of respondents (adjunct faculty), as a group, would describe seeking support to increase their teaching effectiveness. Selective coding analyzed the data based on this author's hypothesis. The demographic data, separated into categories based on the information provided and the variables, identified significant differences or correlations within each demographic category. The remaining fourteen questions, separated into categories, based on the responses to the question and themes identified, helped to interpret the data. Descriptive statistical analysis, used to interpret and rank the remaining fourteen



questions and items, determined the level of importance. A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet with charts, visually demonstrated the tallied data and the outcomes of the survey.

### **Protection of Human Participants**

The Human Subjects Office at Indiana University required the submission of the overview of the research study and questionnaire for IRB review and approval. The electronic submission of the IRB application was through the university's online system in July 2016 and exempt IRB approval granted in August 2016. The link to the survey, sent via the faculty senate listserv, occurred once the Dean of the Indiana University School of Social Work approved the process and gave permission to use the listserv.

Potential participants for the research were provided the purpose of the study, the process for the study, the benefit of participating in the study, exposure and risk for participating in the study, the length of the study, and how the information will be used once the data are collected. Participants had the right to refuse the research study if they deem it unsafe or were unsure about participating. To minimize any concerns, the researcher offered to answer questions and provide as much information as possible to assist the participant in understanding the purpose of the research study and the use of the outcomes. The instructions provided a clear explanation of the participant's responsibilities as a human subject matter, voluntary decision, and the ability to opt out of the study once it began.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

The strengths of this research include the ability to begin to fill a gap in the literature about how adjunct faculty receive institutional support. The research gathered information about the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of adjunct faculty and the importance of integrating them into the academic setting. The data give insight into those areas either overlooked or diminished

when hiring adjunct faculty to teach in higher learning. This research opens the door for additional research about this subject and possibly creating institutional supportive programs that offer adjunct faculty the opportunity to gain knowledge and an understanding of the protocols and processes in academia.

The small sample size of 34 is one of the limitations of this research. The original plan was to send the survey out to four different professional listservs in order to get a good snowball sample and reach the goal of 100 people. Unfortunately, the survey was only available on two listservs that make up about 200 people with 100 being members of Indiana University School of Social Work. Initially, the conception of the surveys included a plan to support them with qualitative interviews to get a better understanding of the issues from a personal perspective. Another limitation is the way the survey was constructed. For example, two of the questions had a selection of “other” for a response but the survey did not allow them to explain what “other” meant. The question required the participant to identify the topics discussed or activities that took place prior to teaching the first class and 35% selected other. This was a missed opportunity to identify if the “other” was something related or unrelated to teaching. Additionally, the survey link was only sent out once without any reminders to the participants. Reminders may have garnered more responses or prompted the referral of the survey to others not listed on the listserv.

## **Results**

### **Overview**

This author hypothesized that this group of respondents (adjunct faculty), as a group, would describe seeking institutional support as a need for increasing teaching effectiveness and maintaining academic quality. This quantitative study answered the questions originally asked in

the introduction of this paper and in the hypothesis. Unexpectedly, the research also raised additional questions and areas of concern creating an avenue for more research and data collection in this area.

### **Demographics**

The sample consisted of 34 respondents, predominantly female (76%, n=29) with the average age of the group being 49 years (SD=3.25) and the range was between 30 to 71 years old. There were 53% currently serving as an adjunct faculty and 47% being former adjunct faculty. Former adjunct faculty are now full-time faculty either on a tenure or non-tenure track. The average length of time working as an adjunct faculty was seven years with three of the respondents (2%) serving over 20 years. The majority (76%, n=29) of the respondents work at a public university, (17%) in private university, and (.03%) in a solely online environment, and (.03%) in a tribal school. There was an expectation that most of the individuals worked in a public university but the author did not give thought to tribal schools. All of the respondents (100%, n= 34) self-identified as social workers with (21%, n=6) teaching in BSW programs, in MSW programs (31%, n=9), and teaching in both BSW and MSW programs (48%, n=14). Adjunct faculty beliefs and attitudes across both programs seem to be consistent regardless of the academic setting or location.

About half of the survey responses supported the hypothesis that adjunct faculty sought institutional support to increase effectiveness. However, the data also indicated many of the adjunct faculty were unaware of training programs and workshops that were available to them to increase their knowledge base. For example, 39% of the participants selected reported being able to share practice experience and knowledge with students as the motivation for becoming an adjunct while 19% selected the ability to work in an academic environment. Although 19% is a

small number, it could suggest that some individuals find being an adjunct as an avenue for moving into an academic setting.

### Research Questions

The results of the study provided answers to the six research questions listed in the introduction.

Table 1  
*Motivation for Becoming Adjunct Faculty in Academia*

Participants Response	%
Being able to share practice experience and knowledge with students	75.00
Working in an academic environment	37.50
Connecting and collaborating with like-minded faculty	18.75
Flexibility of work hours	31.25
Gaining new knowledge	21.88
Other	9.38
Total	100

Being able to share practice experience and knowledge with students was rated highest, (75%, n=24) followed by being able to share followed by working in an academic environment 38% (n=12).

Table 2  
*Adjunct Faculty Defining Supportive Opportunities within Higher Learning*

Participants Response	%
Pedagogy	6.90
Teaching strategies	37.93
Classroom management	6.90
Curriculum development	10.34
Course relationship to curriculum	24.14
Departmental and university protocols	13.79
Total	100

Learning more about teaching strategies (38%, n=11) and understanding the course relationship to the curriculum (24%, n=7) were particularly important. This shows an interest by adjunct faculty to gain a better understanding of best practices as they relate to teaching and understanding the connection between the course taught and the curriculum offered by the department.

Table 3  
*The Level of Confidence Adjunct Faculty have in Teaching in Higher Education*

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Count
On a scale of 1 - 10, how confident did you feel about teaching once you received an offer/accepted the offer/or signed your contract?	1.00	10.00	5.74	2.59	6.71	31

On a Likert scale of 1 – 10 where 10 was very confident and one was not confident at all, the mean was 5.74 (n=31, sd =2.59). This rating provides some insight into how adjunct faculty

may approach the students and teach courses. Institutional support may increase the adjunct faculty’s ability to learn methods for engaging the students and connecting the curriculum content.

Table 4  
*Activities Adjunct Faculty Participated in and Topics Discussed Prior to Teaching*

Participants Response	%
Participation in a department or university orientation	32.00
Introduction to faculty members and staff within the department	35.00
Review of office protocol and/or receipt of faculty handbook	6.75
Understanding the role of an adjunct	31.25
Course management and methods for resolving student issues	2.88
Other	35.00
Total	100

Introduction to faculty members and staff in the department (35%, n=11) tied with the selection of “other” (35%, n=11), followed closely by participation in a department or university orientation (32%, n=10).

Table 5  
*Professional Experience Preparation for Teaching in Academia*

Participant Response	%
Yes	70.00
Maybe	20.00
No	10.00
Not sure	0.00
Total	100

Table 6

*Adjunct Faculty Needs from the Administration and Faculty to be Effective*

Participant Response	%
Information about changes within the department and university	6.90
Better understanding of the policies and procedures	10.34
Consistent and regular supervision	13.79
Collaboration with other adjuncts and/or faculty	55.17
Research or project opportunities with full-time faculty	6.90
Other	6.90
Total	100

Collaboration with other adjuncts and/or faculty (55%, n=16) ranked first followed by consistent and regular supervision (14%, n=4). This question also correlates with question #2 about what adjunct faculty needs from the administration.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, adjunct faculty expressed an interest in learning more about teaching strategies, a stronger understanding of the relationship between the courses taught and the curriculum, and departmental and university protocols. Increasing knowledge and skills in teaching strategies can lead to an increase in understanding how pedagogy provides the foundation for teaching. Having a better understanding of course relationships to the curriculum can create continuity between courses and help students to comprehend the relevance for each course. Gaining more knowledge about departmental and university protocols can offer adjunct faculty a macro view of academia and their role as an adjunct in an academic environment.

## Discussions

### Reflections on Findings

This quantitative study examined the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of adjunct faculty in higher learning and their experience with supportive programs and educational opportunities. The aim of the study was to identify areas of need from the perspective of adjunct faculty to assist with increasing teaching effectiveness and academic quality. The purpose of the study was to gather information that would assist academic institutions in providing support that would integrate adjunct faculty into a higher learning setting.

The results of the survey identify a strong relationship between receiving institutional support and an increase in teacher effectiveness. There is also a need to connect adjunct faculty with existing training programs and workshops that they may not be aware of in their current academic settings. Providing face-to-face workshops and/or webinars can fill the training gap and provide the required support that others are not receiving. In addition, it is important to connect adjunct faculty to full-time faculty to serve as mentors and to provide assistance in navigating the academic environment.

Adjunct faculty report feeling invested and confident to teach in higher learning and in increasing their knowledge and skills in the areas of teacher effectiveness and academic quality. Adjunct faculty identified being able to share practice experience and knowledge with students and working in an academic environment as the primary and secondary reasons respectively, as the motivation for becoming adjunct faculty. These responses support the information found in the literature (Diegel, 2013; Umbach, 2007; Murray, 2007) indicating the value professionals



bring to the classroom and their ability to share real world information to students in an academic environment.

Findings from this study are important because they provide insight into the needs of adjunct faculty in higher learning. Although all of the respondents in this survey taught in the discipline of social work, the results of the study have two major considerations for other disciplines and can offer general information to academic institutions. The first implication is the importance of collaborating opportunities with other adjunct faculty and/or full-time faculty. Based on past or current experiences of adjunct faculty, collaboration with other adjunct faculty and/or full-time faculty ranked as the number one need from the administration to be effective in the classroom. Collaboration with other adjunct faculty and full-time faculty may help to build confidence and relationships with students, staff, and faculty, and provide adjunct faculty with a better understanding of the teaching strategies and curriculum content. This is an important consideration for institutions regardless of the focus of the discipline.

The second consideration is the value of the level of experience and skills that adjunct faculty bring into the classroom (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001 as cited in Gehrke & Kezar, 2015; Charlier & Williams, 2011). The majority of the respondents believed their professional experience provided them with the ability to teach students. Many of the professionals bring several years of experience into the classroom and provide a solid underpinning for sharing information, parting knowledge, and teaching students. Adjunct faculty share their practice experience and introduce students to real world hands-on experience that is invaluable and can occur without adjunct faculty receiving support or being familiar with the protocols of the university or department.

Respondents expressed an interest in learning more about teaching strategies and understanding the course relationship to the curriculum. This shows an interest by adjunct faculty to gain a better understanding of best practices as it relates to teaching and understanding the connection between the course taught and the curriculum offered by the department. Morton (2012) discusses the relationship of quality teaching to professional development, a sense of belonging, and understanding the academic culture. Exposure to teaching strategies may increase teaching effectiveness and academic quality while creating an environment of inclusion for adjunct faculty.

### **Unexpected Results**

Respondents indicated an interest to participate in workshops as opposed to training programs, giving the impression that workshops may require less of their time (one day or less) versus participation in a training program that would require more time (more than one day). A sense of time commitments and availability may also explain why adjunct faculty were not interested in partaking in faculty meetings, university meetings, or student reviews. Adjunct faculty did not express interest in learning about pedagogy but this may connect to their lack of understanding of teaching strategies and the role pedagogy plays in teaching strategies.

### **Limitations**

Introduction to faculty members and staff in the department ranked as an important activity that occurred for adjunct faculty prior to teaching. However, this selection tied with the category of “other” but it is unclear of what “other” represents. This is a limitation of this study because the author did not consider the importance of capturing “other” in the design of the original survey. Including a section for respondents to explain this category or combining this

data with personal interviews would have been helpful in gathering more information that would have qualified the category of “other.”

Another limitation of the study was not considering online schools and tribal schools as a selection for a place of employment. The majority of the respondents identified a public university as their employment setting but there were a few that listed online schools and tribal schools as well. This is an important implication for future research due to the changing landscape of the administration of education. Online schools have expanded greatly over the years and play a major role in the educational landscape. Tribal schools should be recognized and counted as part of the educational system because they are still operating in many parts of the country.

Another limitation is the small sample of social workers that responded to the survey. Although the information gathered helped to create a baseline for this study, a larger sample would provide more results. The data that were gathered will help to serve as a point of comparison with a larger research study in the future. There is room to expand on the current data by reaching more participants and restructuring a few of the questions.

### **Strengths**

The increased reliance on adjunct faculty indicates the value adjunct faculty adds to the academic community. The findings of this research provide a voice for the overlooked and undervalued within this community of educators in higher education. Understanding their attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors can help administrators to create a supportive environment that will strengthen academia. It is also a great way to collaborate with seasoned adjunct faculty

to develop mentoring programs that will assist with acclimating new adjunct faculty into the department and the educational setting.

Another strength of this research is the desire of many practitioners to share their knowledge and skills with students in higher learning in spite of low pay or lack of support. This willingness indicates a need to give back to the profession and to help develop students in becoming professionals. This seems to be occurring with or without supportive programs or educational opportunities being available or offered to adjunct faculty. More opportunities may lead to an increase in teacher effectiveness and academic quality.

### **Implications for Training, Practice, and Research**

#### **Training**

There is an increased reliance on the use of adjunct faculty in higher learning and this group is the least prepared to teach in higher learning (Deigel, 2013). Most adjunct faculty began their career in higher learning being unfamiliar with the protocol and processes present at the university. A large number of the respondents reported not being aware of training programs or workshops at their respective institutions where they could participate. It is imperative for academic institutions to create awareness of relevant and appropriate training for current and future adjunct faculty. This may include virtual workshops, face-to-face workshops, collaboration with seasoned adjunct faculty or full-time faculty, newsletters, or quarterly faculty meetings. Training and supporting adjunct faculty will enhance their knowledge and build teaching skills that may result in student success and teacher effectiveness. Training should be ongoing and address those areas of need for the adjunct faculty and the departmental requirements for teaching. Professional development, mentoring, or skill building, are a few

examples of training and support that would be beneficial for adjunct faculty and help to build a more educated and experienced faculty.

### **Teaching as a Practice**

The increase of adjunct faculty in higher learning over the last 30 years, indicates the important role that adjunct faculty plays in academia. Teaching as a practice requires a well-trained and knowledgeable workforce in the future. Exposing adjunct faculty to teaching strategies and pedagogy will help to elevate their awareness of how to function within an academic environment and to gain insight into the curriculum content. This can lead to the promotion of adjunct faculty to full-time faculty positions and help to build a stronger department or unit within the university.

Other teaching methods may include adjunct faculty shadowing seasoned adjunct faculty or full-time faculty, peer review of courses, monthly or quarterly face-to-face or virtual meetings with faculty to learn new methods, and receiving regular written updates on course changes or student concerns. These activities and tasks can assist in creating a well-rounded adjunct faculty with connections to the department and the university. Offering adjunct faculty opportunities to participate on departmental or university committees may provide a better understanding of how systems operate within an academic setting and create a sense of inclusion. Creating a council specifically for adjunct faculty can serve as a way for quickly disseminating information and gaining more insight into the specific needs of this group.

### **Research**

Gaining a larger sample of the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of adjunct faculty will expand the current research. This group is important and of value to the academic community

and is projected to continue to increase in the future. More information about how to offer support to this group in a way that is cost effective and efficient will provide institutions with viable options to retain quality adjunct faculty. The need for training and support is evident from this study and the literature. There are examples where institutions are providing this support but those examples only represent a small number. More institutions will need to offer supportive programs and opportunities to adjunct faculty in order to maintain and increase the pool of adjunct faculty. It is important to continue this research because the data identified many of the needs of adjunct faculty in an academic setting. Future research may focus on how adjunct faculty can receive support to move into full-time positions, participate on university committees, collaborate on research projects, or gain an understanding of the importance of unionizing to gain better rights and access to higher learning.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of adjunct faculty in higher learning. The increased reliance on adjunct faculty will continue to grow in the future resulting in this group being an integral part of the academic environment for students, faculty, and administrators. Institutions are recognizing and acknowledging the contributions of adjunct faculty but are often failing to invest in supportive programs that provide opportunities for adjunct faculty to integrate and acclimate within an academic setting. Implementing new practice and perspectives to support and develop adjunct faculty should be a future consideration for academic institutions at all levels. Presenting a platform on teaching strategies to promote teacher effectiveness and academic quality can lead to stronger academic environments.

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Focusing on Adjunct Faculty: Investing in Supportive Programs and Educational Opportunities

Marshelia Harris

St. Catherine University – University of St. Thomas

### Abstract

Increasingly, adjunct faculty in academic institutions outnumber full-time faculty at an alarming rate. The research indicates this trend will continue as many institutions face budget crises, decrease in student enrollment, and increased tuition. Investment in institutional support for adjunct faculty is vital to the growth of academic institutions in the near future. A research study in August 2016, examined the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of adjunct faculty in higher learning. A presentation of the research findings at the Baccalaureate Program Directors (BPD) annual conference in March 2017 provided an avenue for gaining feedback from attendees about their experiences and situations with supporting adjunct faculty. Attendees shared ideas and strategies for providing more educational and professional opportunities for adjunct faculty within an academic setting. One notable practical implication is the opportunity for academic institutions to recognize the importance of supporting adjunct faculty to become effective faculty team members. This paper will provide an overview of the presentation at the BPD annual conference in March 2017.

*Keywords: adjunct faculty, institutional support, teaching effectiveness, preparation*

## Focusing on Adjunct Faculty: Investing in Supportive Programs and Educational Opportunities

### **Introduction**

The importance and greater reliance on adjunct faculty in educational institutions has consistently increased in the last 30 years. The academic environment is experiencing a shortage of tenure track or tenured faculty to fill vacant positions, resulting in hiring adjunct faculty to meet the requirements of the programs. Adjunct faculty offer educational institutions first-hand knowledge of best practices in the field, new trends and techniques relevant to the profession, and the ability to merge practice skills with classroom instruction. Adjunct faculty have the expectation of being effective in the classroom and sustaining academic quality without being properly prepared for teaching in an academic setting. Investment in institutional support for adjunct faculty is vital to the growth of academic institutions in the near future. A presentation at the Baccalaureate Program Directors (BPD) annual conference held at the Sheraton Hotel in New Orleans, Louisiana, in March 2017 provided an avenue for sharing the results of a research study focusing on adjunct faculty. The purpose of the presentation was to gain feedback from administrators about their experiences with supporting adjunct faculty at their institution and to provide strategies for developing educational opportunities and integrated programs for adjunct faculty.

### **Baccalaureate Program Directors (BPD) Presentation Proposal**

#### **Title of Presentation:**

Focusing on Adjunct Faculty: Investing in Supportive Programs and Educational Opportunities

**Abstract:**

In higher education, the perception of adjunct faculty as valued team members contradicts the lack of investment in supportive programs and educational opportunities. This paper will examine ways to provide institutional support to enhance the academic experience for adjuncts. Attendees will learn strategies for developing opportunities and integrative programs.

**Proposal:**

The importance and increased reliance of adjunct faculty in educational institutions is well documented (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001 as cited in Gehrke & Kezar, 2015; Charlier & Williams, 2011; Diegel, 2013; Komos, 2013). According to a 2012 National Center for Education Statistics report (as cited in Jolley, Cross, & Bryant, 2014), part-time instructional staff in all institutions of higher education exceeded full-time faculty members for the first time, accounting for 50% of all instructional staff. The same report indicated part-time faculty in community colleges exceed the instructional staff by 70%.

Full-time faculty members have several academic responsibilities, such as writing or modifying curriculum, participating on committees, advising students, and creating departmental policies, whereas adjunct faculty do not have these responsibilities. However, there is an expectation for adjunct faculty to be effective in the classroom and to sustain academic quality without having knowledge or exposure to the protocol and processes of academia. The institutional focus for most adjunct faculty is usually on the particulars of the course, such as class location and time, course title, and textbooks, and not on teaching strategies, the curriculum content, pedagogy, or classroom management. This lack of acclimation and integration of adjunct faculty into higher learning contradicts the expectation for adjunct faculty to be effective in the classroom and to sustain academic quality.



Learning new techniques, strategies, and best practices enhances the knowledge and skill base for adjunct faculty. However, this learning is not possible if the adjunct faculty is not equipped with the proper knowledge or tools needed to navigate the academic environment. Lack of oversight of adjunct faculty can also result in frustrations and isolation (Wallen, 2004). How can educational institutions decrease the frustrations and feelings of isolation, while increasing effectiveness and academic quality? This paper and presentation will discuss methods for increasing educational opportunities and developing academic models that support and integrate adjunct faculty into higher learning.

### **Learning Objectives**

- a. Participants will learn strategies for building supportive opportunities for adjuncts within educational settings
- b. Participants will demonstrate methods for increasing teaching effectiveness for adjuncts through integrative programs.
- c. Participants will examine existing academic models of support for adjuncts.

Keywords: adjuncts, effectiveness, support

### **Critical Analysis of the Presentation**

The presentation title, “*Focusing on Adjunct Faculty: Investing in Supportive Programs and Educational Opportunities*,” discusses the results of the research study conducted in August 2016. The presentation relates to my overall banded dissertation focus of the importance and increased reliance on adjunct faculty in educational institutions and the lack of preparation provided to this group. The purpose of the presentation is to share the information from the research study, receive feedback about the experiences other academic institutions

have with supporting adjunct faculty, and to share ideas and strategies for providing more educational and professional opportunities for adjunct faculty within an academic setting. This presentation is an important component of my scholarly work because it provides the results of the research study to an audience of social work educators and administrators who are decision makers with similar interests and the desire to learn new information. The feedback from the group inspired me with ideas for expanding the current research into additional articles and future presentations (see Appendices A for the conference program and presenter's page, Appendix B for the proposal acceptance letter and Appendix C for the conference proposal).

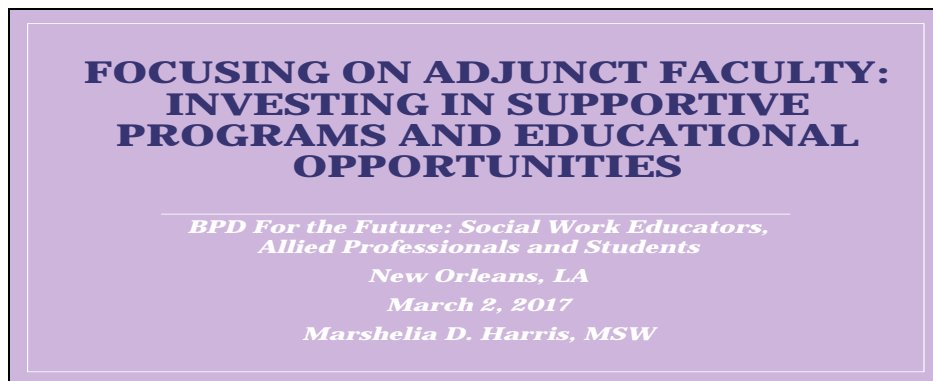
I submitted a conference proposal to the Baccalaureate Program Director's annual conference because the audience consists of social work educators and administrators and serves as a venue for presenting information to colleagues with similar interests and experiences in the field of social work. I had also presented as part of a group at this conference in a previous year and thought the audience would positively receive the information. Even with the prior experience, I was initially very nervous about solely presenting the material in a competent and confident manner. I imagined low attendance and the inability to engage the attendees in the presentation. This was not the case at all and I immediately felt comfortable with the attendees once the presentation started. The strength of the presentation was my knowledge of the subject matter and the ability to engage the audience in a productive discussion. The discussions were relevant to the subject matter and supported the information in the presentation. My ability to facilitate the discussions in a casual way by asking questions and sharing information with the attendees led to the attendees generating helpful ideas and learning from each other.

The primary lesson of learning for me was being aware of who the audience was and

their level of interest in the subject matter. This awareness helped me to engage the attendees in my presentation by asking questions that led to information sharing among the group. The attendee's energy level made the presentation feel more like a "think tank" with colleagues versus a paper presentation. An area of improvement for me is to learn to speak slower and allow the attendee's time to grasp the information before moving on to the next topic. Being conscious of the time initially created a high level of anxiety but that changed once I moved out of the sight of the clock and focused on the presentation. Finally, a critical lesson learned was to have trust in self and believe the information shared is of interest and value to others.

**Annotated Power Point Slides.** The presentation slides with annotation of the content, my thought processes, and a summary of the feedback from the attendees are in this section and provide additional details about the presentation.

Slide 1



This is the cover page for this writer's paper presentation at the Baccalaureate Program Director's (BPD) annual meeting. The title of the presentation list BPD's theme for the 2017 conference, the date and place of the conference, and the presenter's name.

Slide 2

### Learning Objectives

- Learn strategies for building supportive opportunities for adjuncts within educational settings
- Demonstrate methods for increasing teaching effectiveness for adjuncts through integrative programs.
- Examine existing academic models of support for adjunct faculty.

There are three learning objectives for this presentation with a focus on developing strategies to assist adjunct faculty in increasing teacher effectiveness through institutional programs and support.

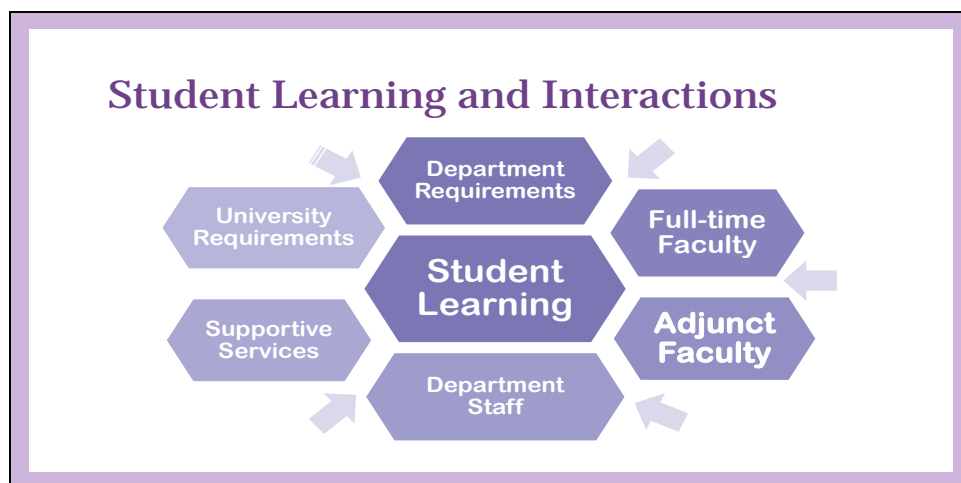
Slide 3

### Basic Facts

- In 1975, approximately 57% of all faculty members were tenured and adjunct faculty accounted for 30% of the workforce.
- In 2003, the tenured faculty decreased to 35%, and the adjunct faculty increased to 46% (Umbach, 2007).
- According to a 2012 National Center for Education Statistics report (as cited in Jolley, Cross, & Bryant, 2014), part-time instructional staff in all institutions of higher education exceeded full-time faculty members for the first time, accounting for **50%** of all instructional staff.
- The same report indicated part-time faculty in community colleges exceeded **70%** of instructional staff.

This is an overview of the literature review from this writer's research study. The literature shows a steady increase of the use of adjunct faculty over the last forty years and supports the presentation and research study conducted by this writer.

Slide 4



This diagram shows the relationship between student learning and interactions with different entities or departments within the academic setting. The research indicates that many students have more contact with adjunct faculty than other entities or departments during the student's academic lifetime. This diagram supports the results of the research study conducted by this writer.

Slide 5

### Importance of Adjunct Faculty

- Adjunct faculty have a significant presence in higher education institutions, are the center point of contact with the majority of students, and are the *least prepared to teach* (Diegel, 2013).

This slide acknowledges the significance and relevance of adjunct faculty in academic institutions, their involvement in student learning, and the lack of preparation provided to adjunct faculty by academic institutions. The presenter asked the question, "Why are adjunct faculty the least prepared, and can this change?"

Slide 6

## Expectations and Contradictions

- Adjunct faculty are expected to be effective in the classroom and to sustain academic quality.
- Adjunct faculty are not provided the knowledge or exposure to the protocol and processes of academia.
- Lack of acclimation and integration of adjunct faculty into higher learning contradicts the expectation.

This slide identifies the expectations of adjunct faculty in academic institutions and highlights the contradiction between the expectations set forth by the institutions and the lack of preparation provided. The presenter asked the question, “what can administrators do to prepare adjunct faculty for a better learning experience?”

Slide 7

## Through the Lens of the Adjunct Faculty

- Perceived as educators rather than staff, earning a fair wage, and other rewards that full-time faculty receives (Dolan, Hall, Karlsson, Martinak, 2013).
- Professional development opportunities.
- Course objectives that are clearly written and the ability to view the textbook before starting class.
- Viewed as valued members of the academy (Diegel, 2013).



This slide shares information from the research study conducted by this writer. It provides the adjunct faculty perception of their needs to become more effective in academic institutions.

## Slide 8

## Research Questions ??

- What are the expectations of adjunct faculty as educators in higher education settings?
- How are supportive opportunities defined by adjunct faculty within higher education?
- What is the level of confidence for adjunct faculty teaching in higher education?
- How much training was provided to adjunct faculty prior to teaching the first class?
- How do adjunct faculty perceive their professional experience as preparation for being effective in the classroom?
- How can administrators and faculty assist adjunct faculty with being effective in the classroom?

This slide lists the research questions used in the research study to provide the attendees with additional information about the presentation and how it connects to the study.

## Slide 9

## Methods & Results

- Snowball sample (n = 34) included adjunct faculty affiliated with several universities in the United States.
- A survey design via Qualtrics, a cloud-based survey tool provided a direct link to the survey.
- The questionnaire was designed to gather information from current and former adjunct faculty about their experiences and challenges of transitioning into an academic setting.
- The goal was to understand the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of adjunct faculty working in academic settings.
- About half of the survey responses supported the hypothesis that adjunct faculty sought institutional support to increase effectiveness.
- Learning more about teaching strategies (38%, n= 11) was ranked first and understanding the course relationship to the curriculum (24%, n= 7) was listed second as their definition of supportive opportunities.
- Collaboration with other adjuncts and/or faculty (55%, n=16) ranked first followed by consistent and regular supervision (14%, n=4) as the support needed from administrators and faculty.

This slide provides the methodology used for the research study, the purpose of the study, and some of the results. The writer used this information to highlight the perspective of the adjunct faculty discussed on previous slides and to help the attendees view the issue of lack of support through the lens of the adjunct.

Slide 10

## Teacher Effectiveness

Quality teaching is linked to professional development, a sense of belonging, and understanding the academic culture (Morton, 2012).

According to Weimer (1997), “effective teaching is much more than the assemblage of an impressive collection of techniques. It is in the management of that repertoire that true excellence emerges – the ability in the ambiguous, fluid environment of a classroom to make choices about techniques and weave them into the fabric as the pattern for that day emerges” (p. 58).

### Strategies for Increasing Teacher Effectiveness

- Provide ways to navigate the academic setting.
- Identify methods for classroom management.
- Review syllabus structure and explain assignments.
- Connect the course to the curriculum and the program requirements.

This slide defines teacher effectiveness from two different authors and provides strategies for the discussion about how adjunct faculty can increase their effectiveness as a member of the faculty team.

Slide 11

## Institutional Support

Investment in institutional support for adjunct faculty is vital to the growth of academic institutions.

- Formal orientation and continual training.
- Connect best practices to teaching strategies.
- Knowledge about departmental and university protocols.
- Exposure to university resources.
- Networking with faculty across disciplines.
- Participation on university committees.

The writer invited the attendees to provide examples of institutional support provided at their home institutions. This discussion led to an exchange of ideas for the attendees for offering additional ways for supporting adjunct faculty.



## Slide 12

## Existing Academic Models

- Rio Salado College in Tempe, Arizona uses a systems approach to meet the functional needs of adjunct faculty (Smith, 2011).
- Maryland Consortium for Adjunct Faculty Professional Development (MCAFPD). Provide professional development and share best practices and resources for adjunct faculty. (Dolan, Hall, Karlsson, & Martinak, 2013).
- College of Dupage Dupage, Illinois has an Office of Adjunct Faculty Support (OAFS) (Overstreet, 2014).
- St. Catherine University – University of St. Thomas has an adjunct faculty council and professional development program.
- Indiana University has the faculty academy on excellence in teaching (FACET).

This slide highlights some existing institutional support models in various academic institutions across the United States. The list stimulated ideas for the attendees about what type of supportive programs or educational opportunities they can suggest to their home institutions.

## Slide 13

## Developing Supportive Opportunities

- Collaborate with seasoned adjunct faculty to develop a mentoring program
- Pair with full-time faculty on research or community engaged services or projects.
- Create awareness of relevant and appropriate training for adjunct faculty.
- Develop virtual workshops, face-to-face workshops, or newsletters as training resources.
- Invite adjunct faculty to participate in faculty meetings either in person or via technology.
- Meet with adjunct faculty at the beginning of each semester to check-in.
- Use a co-teaching model, peer review of courses, and regular supervision to help build skills and knowledge.
- Create an adjunct faculty council to quickly disseminate information and gain more insight into the specific needs of this group.

This slide offers administrators additional tools and strategies for developing supportive opportunities for adjunct faculty at their home institutions. The group shared additional ideas and thoughts and discussed the pros and cons of implementing the suggestions.

Slide 14



This is the closing slide for this writer with contact information for the attendees. The writer thanked the group for attending and asked if there were additional questions.

In addition to the annotated slides listed above, there is a link to the slides in pdf form. Double click in this cover page to link to the entire presentation.

**Annotated Slides**

**Focusing on Adjunct Faculty:  
Investing in Supportive Programs and Educational Opportunities**

***BPD For the Future: Social  
Work Educators, Allied  
Professionals and Students  
New Orleans, LA  
March 2, 2017  
Marshelia D. Harris, MSW***

This is the cover page for this writer's paper presentation at the Baccalaureate Program Director's (BPD) annual meeting. The title of the presentation is listed first followed by BPD's theme for the 2017 conference, the date and place of the conference, and the presenter's name.

**Summary of Feedback from Attendees.** Twenty attendees completed the evaluation and provided constructive and positive feedback. The rating scale was a 5-point Likert scale with eight questions. This writer received high ratings in the areas of being knowledgeable about the

subject matter, being engaging, clearly explaining the material, and sharing new techniques and strategies. Please refer to the appendix for the actual evaluation form.

During the presentation, the energy was high and the attendees were fully engaged in the presentation. After the presentation, attendees expressed the importance of being intentional about including more opportunities for adjunct faculty and acknowledging the gifts they provide to the academic institutions. The comments listed on the evaluation form supported the overall discussion during the presentation:

- I was not sure if this presentation was worth by time and I must admit that I learned more than I expected.
- I enjoyed the way you facilitated the discussions and interacted with the audience.
- I am going to share this information with the faculty team at my institution.
- I have gained so many ideas about how to enhance our professional development program for adjunct faculty.
- Thank you for a wonderful and informative presentation.
- Try to speak slower; I did not catch all of the information provided.
- Our treatment of adjunct faculty contradicts our social work code of ethics and is really a social injustice that the profession needs to address!

## Annotated References

Charlier, H. D., & Williams, M.R. (2011). The reliance on and demand for adjunct faculty members in America's rural, suburban, and urban community colleges. *Community College Review*, 39(2), 160-180.

This article focuses on the increase demand for adjunct faculty in community colleges, in various educational settings across the United States. The authors discuss the turnover rate among adjuncts, the inability to offer a higher rate of pay, and reasons for not hiring full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty. This article is relevant to this presentation because it provides a foundation for increased reliance on adjunct faculty from rural to urban community colleges.

Diegel, B. L. (2013). Perceptions of community college adjunct faculty and division chairpersons: Support, mentoring, and professional development to sustain academic quality. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, 37(8), 596-607.

This article provides an overview of the perceptions of adjunct faculty in community college settings, and the support sought to sustain academic quality. This article gives the adjunct faculty a voice and allows them to identify areas of improvement in the professional development of adjunct faculty. This article is relevant to the presentation because it supports the research study conducted by this writer in August 2016.

Dolan, D.M., Hall, M.S., Karlsson, C.R., & Martinak, M. L. (2013). Five years later: Maryland adjuncts tell us (again) who they are and what they want. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, 61(1), 35-45. doi:10.1080/07377363.2013.758552.

This article is a follow-up to an original survey completing five years earlier by the Maryland Consortium for Adjunct Faculty Professional Development. The authors point to the similarities from the first survey and the changes that took place once the survey was completed. The Maryland Consortium administered a questionnaire to 1,645 to gather information about the adjunct faculty opinions about being in higher learning and being part of the faculty team. This article is relevant to the presentation because of the large number of adjunct faculty surveyed and the implications for current trends in hiring adjunct faculty.

Gehrke, S. J., & Kezar, A. (2015). Supporting non-tenure-track faculty at 4-year colleges and universities. *Educational Policy*, 29(6), 926-960.

There were 264 academic deans surveyed about the support provided to non-tenure-track faculty. The findings indicate the decisions to support this group is not as much of a priority as the support provided to tenured or tenure track faculty. This article is relevant to the presentation because it highlights the role of the deans in the decision making process to support adjunct faculty.

Jolley, M. R., Cross, E., & Bryant, M. (2014). A critical challenge: The engagement and assessment of contingent, part-time adjunct faculty professors in United States community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, 38(2/3), 218-230.

The National Center for Education Statistics report indicated adjunct faculty made up 50% of the academic instructional staff in most universities and more than 70% in community colleges. This report gathered data about teaching conditions and revealed the lack of institutional engagement

for adjunct faculty. This article is relevant to the presentation because it highlights the importance of institutional preparation for adjunct faculty.

Komos, M. (2013). "Thanks for asking": Adjunct faculty members' views of effective teaching.

*Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 24(4), 133-164.

This article provides the results of a research study where adjunct faculty completed a questionnaire about their experience working in academic institutions. The study examined the characteristics of effective teaching based on three factors: Regard for the student, instructor competence, and instructional proficiency. This article is relevant to the presentation because it creates the foundation for the need to provide supportive opportunities to increase teacher effectiveness.

## Appendix A

## Conference Program and Presentation Page

Baccalaureate Program Director's Annual Conference

New Orleans, LA

March 1 – 5, 2017

General Information

Presenter Information

Continuing Education

Exhibits &amp; Marketing

Hotel and Travel

## ***BPD For the Future: Social Work Educators, Allied Professionals and Students***

The 2017 BPD Annual Conference will address a wide range of topics related, but not limited to, teaching and administering baccalaureate social work programs, field education, global social work, advocacy, and connecting classroom education to community practice.

### **Conference Planning Committee:**

Shannon Cambron, Chair

Francis Origanti, Vice Chair

Nicole Cavanagh, Registrar

Gladys Merrick, Local Planning

Nathalie Jones, Social Media and Marketing

Amanda Scott, Executive Director

Mary Jo Olsavsky, Meetings Coordinator

**March 1-5, 2017 At-a-Glance**

## March 1

- Pre Conference Workshops
- Opening Plenary
- Opening Reception (light refreshments)

## March 2

- Welcome Breakfast (food function)
- President's Address
- Educational Sessions
- Federico Memorial Lecture

## March 3

- Educational Sessions
- Wahlberg Health & Wellness Walk/Run
- "Not so Shameless" Party

## March 4

- Educational Sessions
- Annual Awards Banquet (food function)

## March 5

- Educational Sessions

**Opening Plenary Keynote Speaker**





Tim Wise is among the most prominent anti-racist writers and educators in the United States. He has spent the past 20 years speaking to audiences in all 50 states, on over 1000 college and high school campuses, at hundreds of professional and academic conferences, and to community groups across the country.

Wise appears regularly on CNN and MSNBC to discuss race issues and was featured in a 2007 segment on 20/20. He graduated from Tulane University in 1990 and received antiracism training from the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, in New Orleans.

## **Open Calls**

### **Ron Federico Memorial Lecture**

Congratulations to Heather Sloane for being selected as the 2017 Federico Memorial Lecturer. She will be honored during the Federico Memorial Lecture on Thursday, March 2nd at 3:15.

### **Student Posters**

Poster proposals have been reviewed and decisions will be sent out to all students by January 1st.

### **Professional Recognition Awards**

Congratulations to Peggy Pittman-Munke for being selected for the 2016 Lifetime Achievement Award. Dr. Munke will be honored at the 2017 Annual Conference during the awards banquet on Saturday, March 4, 2017.

**Scholarship Status: Proposals are under review**

In partnership with the University of Michigan School of Social Work, the BPD Board of Directors invites all BPD members to encourage outstanding BSW students to submit a proposal for the 2017 Jim Wahlberg BSW Student Scholar Award. The recipient will present their paper at a special invitation session at the 2018 BPD Conference in Atlanta.

Appendix A

BPD Presentation Page

The Association of Baccalaureate

Social Work Program Directors

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2017



**Marshelia D. Harris**

FIELD COORDINATOR

Indiana University Northwest

ABOUT

Marshelia Harris, MSW, Field Coordinator for the Bachelor of Social Work Program, Indiana University School of Social Work, Northwest campus. Teach policy, administration, and community engagement across the bachelor and master of social work programs. A licensed child welfare specialist with several years of administrative experience in social services working with mentally ill pregnant and parenting teens. Received MSW from Indiana University Northwest and pursuing a Doctorate in Social Work at St. Catherine University - University of St. Thomas.

SESSION

**Thursday, March 2**

3:15pm - 4:30pm

Estherwood

Focusing on Adjunct Faculty: Investing in Supportive Programs and Educational Opportunities



+ Add to Your Schedule

## Appendix B

## Conference Proposal Acceptance Letter

## BPD Annual Conference Submission Decision LetterA

BPD Conference Planning Committee <noreply@precismail.com>

Tue 9/20/2016 5:11 PM

To: Harris, Marshelia D <mdharris@iun.edu>;

Dear Marshelia Harris :

We are delighted to inform you that your proposal, reference # 0844-000201, has been accepted by our reviewers and recommended for presentation at the 2017 BPD Annual Conference in New Orleans, LA. Please review the information below and adhere to all noted deadlines for having your presentation included in the conference program. All information to be included in the program is listed below and will be printed as submitted if no changes are received by the deadline.

Accepted presenters should plan to attend the entire conference and be prepared to present on any of the conference dates (March 1-5, 2017). We will be scheduling sessions over the next few weeks and all presentations will be scheduled and/or paired according to topic area. If you are presenting in more than one session, you may be scheduled for both presentations on the same day but not in the same time slot. Due to the number of activities that must be scheduled we are unable to take special requests for presentation dates and times.

Please review the information and deadlines below as they relate to your presentation and travel planning. If your plans have changed and you are unable to present at the conference, please contact us immediately. Again, we thank you for your submission and look forward to a wonderful conference.

**Presentation Information (to be listed in the program):**

*Title:* Focusing on Adjunct Faculty: Investing in Supportive Programs and Educational Opportunities

*Track:* Faculty Development

*Format:* Paper

*Abstract:* In higher education, the perception of adjunct faculty as valued team members contradicts with the lack of investment in supportive programs and educational opportunities. This paper will examine ways to provide institutional support to enhance the academic experience for adjuncts. Attendees will learn strategies for developing opportunities and integrative programs.

*Primary Presenter:* Marshelia Harris

*University/Affiliation:* Indiana University Northwest

*State/Location:* Indiana

Additional Presenters: No (co-presenters will receive a separate letter with their contact information listed)

**Scheduling:**

Accepted presenters should be prepared to present at any time during the March 1-5 conference. Pre-conference sessions will be scheduled on Wednesday, March 1st and all other sessions will be scheduled between 8:00 am-4:30 pm on March 2nd - 4th and 8:00 am-12:00 pm on March 5th. Due to the number of activities that need to be scheduled we are unable to accommodate special requests for presentation dates/times.

**Length of Presentations:** Paper presentations consist of two sessions paired together in one 75-minute slot. Paper presenters each have equal presentation time and should allot time for questions at the end of their presentation. Workshop, round table, general session and invited speaker presentations are scheduled for 75 minutes each.

**Membership:** All non-BSW students must be paid 2017 members of BPD by January 1, 2017 in order to present at the conference. BPD does not offer membership waivers for community practitioners or non-invited speakers at this time. Membership fees for professionals are \$185 and \$60 for retirees. At this time, BPD does not have a student membership category and all non-BSW students presenting at the conference will need to pay the \$185 membership rate to present. Membership is not required for BSW students, but students presenting with faculty will pay the \$155 student conference rate, or the student volunteer rate to attend.

**Registration: All presenters must register for the conference. Registration will open by October 21st. Please visit our**

[[www.bpdonline.org](http://www.bpdonline.org)] website for additional information.

Technology: All general session, workshop and paper presentation rooms are furnished with an LCD and Screen. All other **presentation types are restricted from use of audio visual equipment. Additional presentation equipment can be ordered at an additional** charge to the speaker directly from the hotel. Audio Visual, electrical, and internet order forms are available through BPD.

Important Dates  
and Deadlines:

<b>*Changes to Presentation Info:</b>	October 21, 2016
<b>Session Cancellation Deadline: Session</b>	October 21, 2016
<b>Schedule Distributed Membership</b>	December 1, 2016
<b>Deadline:</b>	January 1, 2017

*\*Please note that changes in presentation info are limited to the removal of a speaker, and content of title, and abstract. Adding of speakers once a proposal has been accepted is prohibited.*

Amanda Scott

**BPD Executive Director**

**Shannon Cambron**

Conference Chair

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## Appendix C

## Conference Proposal

## Baccalaureate Program Director's (BPD) 2017 Presentation Proposal Submission

1. Name, Affiliation, and Contact information for all speakers

Marshelia Harris, MSW; BSW Field Coordinator, Indiana University Northwest  
[mdharris@iun.edu](mailto:mdharris@iun.edu) 219-981-5630

2. Brief biography for all presenters, including license information and/or credentials, experience and education (maximum of 150 words)
  - *Marshelia Harris, MSW*, field coordinator for the Bachelor of Social Work Program, Indiana University School of Social Work, Northwest campus. Teaches policy, administration, and community engagement across the bachelor and master of social work programs. A licensed child welfare specialist with several years of administrative experience in social services and case management. Received MSW from Indiana University Northwest and pursuing a Doctorate in Social Work at St. Catherine University – University of St. Thomas.
3. Presentation Format: Paper
4. Presenter Type:
  - a. Regular Qualified Presenter: any social work educator or allied professional meeting the requirements for submission.
5. Session Track: **Faculty Development**
6. Target audience: Intermediate – Deans, program chairs, field directors, program directors, and faculty
7. Title of Presentation: **Focusing on Adjunct Faculty: Investing in Supportive Programs and Educational Opportunities**
8. Abstract: Maximum of 50 words with no identifying information contained within.

In higher education, the perception of adjunct faculty as valued team members contradicts with the lack of investment in supportive programs and educational opportunities. This paper will examine ways to provide institutional support to enhance the academic experience for adjuncts. Attendees will learn strategies for developing opportunities and integrative programs.

9. Proposal: Maximum of 500 words, including references, with no identifying information contained within.

The importance and increased reliance of adjunct faculty in educational institutions is well-documented (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001 as cited in Gehrke & Kezar, 2015; Charlier & Williams, 2011; Diegel, 2013; Komos, 2013). According to a 2012 National Center for Education Statistics report (as cited in Jolley, Cross, & Bryant, 2014), part-time instructional staff in all institutions of higher education exceeded full-time faculty members for the first time, accounting for 50% of all instructional staff. The same report indicated part-time faculty in community colleges exceeded 70% of instructional staff.

Full-time faculty members have several academic responsibilities, such as writing or modifying curriculum, participating on committees, advising students, and creating departmental policies, whereas adjunct faculty do not have these responsibilities. However, adjunct faculty are expected to be effective in the classroom and to sustain academic quality without having knowledge or exposure to the protocol and processes of academia. The institutional focus for most adjunct faculty is usually on the particulars of the course, such as class location and time, course title, and textbooks, and not on teaching strategies, the curriculum content, pedagogy, or classroom management. This lack of acclimation and integration of adjunct faculty into higher learning contradicts the expectation for adjunct faculty to be effective in the classroom and to sustain academic quality.

Learning new techniques, strategies, and best practices enhances the knowledge and skill base for adjunct faculty. However, this learning is not possible if the adjunct faculty is not equipped with the proper knowledge or tools needed to navigate the academic environment. Lack of oversight of adjunct faculty can also result in frustrations and isolation (Wallen, 2004). How can educational institutions decrease the frustrations and feelings of isolation, while increasing effectiveness and academic quality? This paper and presentation will discuss methods for increasing educational opportunities and developing academic models that support and integrate adjunct faculty into higher learning.

## References

- Charlier, H. D., & Williams, M.R. (2011). The reliance on and demand for adjunct faculty members in America's rural, suburban, and urban community colleges. *Community College Review*, 39(2), 160-180.
- Diegel, B. L. (2013). Perceptions of community college adjunct faculty and division chairpersons: Support, mentoring, and professional development to sustain academic quality. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, 37(8), 596-607.
- Gehrke, S. J., & Kezar, A. (2015). Supporting non-tenure-track faculty at 4-year colleges and universities. *Educational Policy*, 29(6), 926-960.
- Jolley, M. R., Cross, E., & Bryant, M. (2014). A critical challenge: The engagement and assessment of contingent, part-time adjunct faculty professors in United States community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, 38(2/3), 218-230.

Komos, M. (2013). "Thanks for asking": Adjunct faculty members' views of effective teaching. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 24(4), 133-164.

Wallin, D. (2004). Valuing professional colleagues: Adjunct faculty in community and technical colleges. *Community Journal of Research and Practice*, 28, 373-391. doi: 10.1080/10668920490424078.

10. Three (3) Learning Objectives that clearly describe what attendees will be able to demonstrate as a result of having attended the session. Each outcome must be measurable/observable.
  - a. Participants will learn strategies for building supportive opportunities for adjuncts within educational settings
  - b. Participants will demonstrate methods for increasing teaching effectiveness for adjuncts through integrative programs.
  - c. Participants will examine existing academic models of support for adjuncts.
  
11. Three (3) Keywords: Adjuncts, effectiveness, support