

# Adjunct Instructors and the Faculty Senate



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*Three bulls for a long time pastured together. A Lion lay in ambush in the hope of making them his prey, but was afraid to attack them while they kept together. Having at last by guileful speeches succeeded in separating them, he attacked them without fear as they fed alone, and feasted on them one by one at his own leisure. —Aesop—*

Adjunct faculty members compose an increasing proportion of faculty at many universities. This is certainly the case at Temple. It is, I believe, past time for the full-time faculty, through our Senate, to recognize the importance of the role that our part-time faculty play in the education of our students, particularly our undergraduates. It is, in particular, time for us, the Senate, to attempt to formulate some guidelines for best practices in deploying adjuncts and other contingent faculty. This is something that we need to be doing in parallel with the current contractual negotiations, for the

Senate can speak about what *should* be as TAUP negotiates what *can* be.

It would be, however, an act of overweening conceit to think that the Senate can make any sort of meaningful recommendations about our adjunct colleagues without including them in the conversation, for they know better than we what problems they face and what matters to them. What should matter to all of us is the question of what practices are in the best interest of our students and at the same time fair to our teachers.

It is important to realize that our adjuncts are not a homogeneous collection. For some, part time teaching is a way of imparting their knowledge to students while working full time outside of the academy. This is common, for instance, in Boyer, Tyler, the Law School, and Fox, but is present in most of our schools and colleges. On the other hand, some of our adjuncts are hired in massive numbers to populate things like Mosaic. In these cases, it is more cost effective to hire many part timers without benefits than fewer full-time non-tenure-track professors. These are not comparable states of affair. The former seems similar to hiring a consultant. The latter feels rather like being Walmart. And the situation becomes even more complex once one heads north up Broad Street to the Health Sciences campus.

It is fairly easy to find things to criticize about the way things are currently being done. Adjunct faculty receive, at least in some schools, little to no orientation and little or no office space. If a person is trying to make a living by working part time for several different universities, this means that they will have little time available outside of class to interact with students.

But, in order to really understand the situation, we need to engage our part time faculty members in conversation. I think that the best way to do this is to begin to explore ways in which our adjuncts can begin to participate in our Faculty Senate. How this would eventually work out, I do not know, but I am convinced that we would all benefit from greater conversation leading to a greater understanding. A straightforward first step might be the formation of an *ad hoc* Senate committee, composed of Tenured/tenure-track faculty, non-tenure-track faculty, and part-time faculty, charged with creating a “best principles” document such as I envisioned above. If, in the course of their discussions, they were to come up with some recommendations about exploring integration into the Senate, that could be a good thing too.