Best Practices for the Care and Keeping of Adjunct Faculty:

A Guide for Department Chairs at Salem State University

*Adjunct Faculty occupy temporary, part-time positions in which an individual is hired to teach a specified course or courses for one academic term. The timeline for hiring adjunct faculty is occasionally very short, and adjuncts may be officially separated from the University at the end of each semester. Basic fair hiring principles, though, should remain the same as those used for full-time faculty hires.*

***Did you know?***

1-It can take several weeks for all hiring paperwork to be completed. Without completed paperwork, the human resources office *can not* enter new adjuncts into the employment management system and those new hires can not get SSU email addresses or access to Canvas until they are in the system.

2- Not all part-time faculty members are paid the same. There are different pay rates depending on whether the person is teaching in Day vs. DGCE as well as how long they have been teaching here. Please check with human resources *before* you make an offer to a new hire to find out what the pay rate will be.

3- If you enter a date of separation on an adjunct faculty member’s EMS profile that person will be cut off from all communication with SSU. Their email address will be shut off and they will not be able to access Canvas. For your adjunct faculty members who teach during non-consecutive semesters that means they miss out on the opportunities to attend SSU events and professional development opportunities. They also will not be able to develop course materials in Canvas that will help them in future semesters. This suspension of access to university resources has a dramatic negative impact on the ability of adjunct faculty to meet the needs of their students and to prepare for teaching.

4- Being an adjunct faculty member is lonely. Many adjunct faculty members enjoy the opportunity to gather with others to discuss teaching and learning and appreciate being invited to department specific events and meetings. Creating opportunities for adjuncts to come together with other part timers, and full time faculty as well, reduces isolation and makes teaching part time less daunting, especially for first timers.

5- Not all opportunities to get together need to be face-to-face. Since many adjunct faculty members work either at other institutions or have full time jobs, online discussions can also provide valuable opportunities to exchange ideas.

6- Offering an orientation for new adjuncts helps build positive relationships within the department and the university. New adjunct faculty members need to be introduced to both SSU and department specific culture. This can be accomplished in several ways - either in person or online - and need not take a lot of time. The Center for Teaching Innovation offers a two-day conference in August and a full day conference in January designed specifically for adjunct faculty. These events offer a great way for new hires to become oriented to the university. A new hire orientation is part of each event so please encourage any newly hired adjunct faculty members to attend.

7- Consider starting a mentorship program within your department. Brand new adjunct faculty members are just like any new full time faculty members and asking veteran adjuncts to mentor new ones can help integrate the new hire into your department and will provide him/her with a valuable contact for when questions arise.

8- The Center for Teaching Innovation has developed a Canvas course (open to the public) to help adjunct faculty members as they settle into the SSU community. The web address is [salemstate.instructure.com/courses/1037597](https://salemstate.instructure.com/courses/1037597). It contains online resources, guides, links to specific areas of the SSU website that are relevant to their success as professors as well as a copy of a handbook that we have developed that answers a lot of the questions that newly hired part-time professors may have. In addition, if you forward the contact information for your new hires, we will reach out to that person to help ease his/her transition and answer any questions they may have about teaching and learning.

**Food for thought:** *(Adapted from The Delphi Project)*

* How might non-tenure track faculty in the department be encouraged and invited to have a more complete role in the life of the department?
* What are the potential benefits of increasing the amount and quality of interaction they have with faculty colleagues?
* What are the potential benefits of increasing the amount and quality of interaction they have with students?
* What are the benefits of ensuring that adjunct faculty are encouraged and supported in utilizing high impact practices, innovative pedagogies, and classroom technology? What is lost by not ensuring that all faculty can make use of these tools?
* Are adjunct faculty in your department invited to participate in professional development opportunities that are department specific?
* How might students be negatively affected when resources and support are not provided to adjunct faculty?

Further resources can be found at <http://www.thechangingfaculty.org/>

**Recruitment**

Many departments do not actively recruit adjunct faculty, as the number of qualified individuals interested in teaching outnumbers available positions. For other departments where there is a need for adjunct faculty in specialized courses and the number of qualified individuals is low, proactive strategies for recruitment are necessary. All departments should be careful to establish transparent policies and procedures.

Some departments maintain a pool of applications to which they return when a position becomes available. Applicants in the pool remain “active” for a set period of time. If such a pool is maintained and a position becomes available, it is important that every individual in the pool be considered for the open position.

**Selection/Hiring**

Every department should have policies and procedures for the selection/hiring of adjunct faculty.

Hiring policies do not need to be complex, rather, they should be created in an effort to make the hiring process as objective as possible, to ensure that adjunct faculty are hired on the basis of qualifications best suited for the class(es) to be taught, and to provide documentation to support the validity of the decision, if challenged.

Some departments have created policies with the following elements:

* minimum degree/experience
* a hiring committee that reviews materials submitted by the applicant and makes hiring recommendations to the chair
* a formal interview process prior to hiring
* a mock teaching experience prior to selection
* review of prior teaching and evaluation data

**Last Minute Hiring**

Oftentimes, departments need to hire adjuncts on very short notice. When such situations arise, departments should follow their regular procedures as closely as possible.

**Evaluation of Adjunct Faculty**

Formative and summative feedback (feedback both for the purpose of teaching improvement and for making personnel decisions) is important for the success of adjunct faculty. Departments should have a policy outlining a process of systematic feedback to and evaluation of adjunct faculty. Evaluation policies do not need to be complex and time consuming.

One of the services that the Center for Teaching Innovation offers is evaluation and formative feedback to any faculty members who are interested in strengthening their teaching practice. This is a completely confidential arrangement between the faculty member and the CTI. Please encourage your adjunct faculty members to take advantage of this opportunity, whether they are new adjuncts or veterans.

**Student Evaluations**

Salem State requires that all faculty, including adjuncts, be evaluated by students in their classes every semester. It is particularly important that adjuncts teaching at Salem State for the first time be provided with systematic feedback aimed at enhancing performance. Since the formal student evaluation procedure results in feedback coming significantly after the end of the semester during which they were conducted, many instructors find it beneficial to conduct their own student evaluations which can give them more immediate feedback. Department chairs may want to discuss this idea with all department adjuncts.

**Separation of Adjunct Faculty**

Adjunct faculty members are hired on Letters of Appointment that cover only one semester. Department chairs should clearly convey this to new adjuncts and are cautioned not to promise adjuncts employment beyond the term for which they have been hired.

**Notice of Ending Appointment**

Because each adjunct appointment ends automatically at the close of each semester, no notice is needed to end the appointment of adjunct faculty. There is no need to notify the adjunct faculty member that they will not receive another appointment.  However, as a courtesy, a department chair may choose to provide an adjunct faculty member with information about the lack of future employment. If you do so, you should provide as much lead time as possible and the reasons for your decision when notifying adjunct faculty that they will not be offered a teaching contract for the following or future semesters. Reasons might include low enrollment or lack of demand for the course, a change in staffing from part-time to full-time faculty, or performance issues.

**Department Meetings for Adjuncts**

While many departments do not include adjunct faculty in their regularly scheduled department meetings, it is helpful for all adjuncts to be invited to at least one meeting each semester designed to address issues related to their specific issues and concerns. This need not be a regularly scheduled department meeting. It could, and perhaps should, be one designed specifically for the adjunct faculty and need not involve full time faculty at all.

Creating collegiality and a sense of inclusion in the larger department is important in developing positive working relationships for your part time faculty, especially for those who may be teaching at multiple institutions. Giving adjunct faculty members the chance to check in with others who are teaching the same or similar courses helps them develop their teaching skills and gives them the opportunity to gain important institutional knowledge.