

ACS Summer Workshop

“Mentoring and Supporting Contingent Faculty: Fostering Inclusive Department Culture and Practices”

Facilitated by Jana Mathews (jmathews@rollins.edu), Lucy Littler (llittler@rollins.edu), and Andrew Rippeon (anrippeon@davidson.edu)

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

Tuesday, June 14, 2022 11am - 12:30pm EDT (10am - 11:30am CDT)

Even though contingent faculty members are critically important to the sustainability of our colleges, these individuals often lack both access to quality mentoring and opportunities for meaningful professional development. This workshop aims to develop concrete and innovative solutions to overcome barriers of accessibility and promote a culture of faculty inclusivity. Guiding questions include: What do we "owe" in terms of mentorship and professional training do we "owe" newly minted PhD VAPs and other short-term faculty? How can institutions elevate the stature of long-term non-tenure-track faculty members and open up leadership pathways for them? Resulting resources will include an open-access idea bank of models, strategies, and best practices for supporting and mentoring contingent faculty and a multi-institutional network (LinkedIn or email group) of faculty and staff who can be queried for advice, support, or future collaborative initiatives.

LINK TO SUGGESTED RESOURCES AND READINGS COMPILED BY WORKSHOP FACILITATORS

PRE-WORKSHOP SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES FROM WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

What does/do your current institution/s and previous institution/s do well when it comes to supporting and elevating the work of contingent faculty?

Excellent professional development opportunities are provided and/or vetted and promoted. Classroom visits, informal and formal valuations have been helpful.

Faculty dean tried to create a more predictable policy on evaluation and also eliminated one-year contracts (partly in response to COVID but this change will apparently endure). We've recently had conversations between contingent faculty and the committee that oversees committee service and elections and communicates directly with the faculty dean. That committee then shared concerns expressed during those meetings with the dean (concerns were anonymized).

Faculty development funds (particularly for travel) and professional development programming are equally available to contingent folks as to tenure track folks.

As a department, we try to make a visiting position here more than a holding pattern until their next TT search: we want them to leave us as an improved version of themselves and a better candidate for a TT position: strengthened teaching ability, sometimes having explored research ideas (though the teaching load is usually enough to keep them fully occupied).

They offer workshops, my supervisors check in on me to make sure that I am comfortable and on task, and they provide me the opportunity to be creative with my course design. I have been able to be a part of different opportunities and have been encouraged to participate (so long as it does not become too much for me).

Not much, although there is variation among departments and occasional institutional recognition. Overall, we are seen simultaneously as an integral element of the teaching faculty and as a problem to be solved.

professional development funds such as conference travel

We include our visiting faculty in orientation. My department assigns a mentor though the campus does not.

In general, my institution seems to have non-hierarchical values, so that there are public expression of support for contingent faculty. The challenge can be putting those values into practice.

There is relatively good pay for part-time faculty who are paid per course (\$3000 - \$5000). Some of the departments at my university integrate contingent faculty well and have generous professional development funds available (equivalent to non-contingent faculty).

Visiting professors go through orientation with tenure-track professors; they are assigned a faculty mentor and attend mentor meetings throughout their first year.

Support is mostly very informal, it will come from the graciousness of department chairs, Tenure faculty and the Collaborative for Teaching and Learning, but a lot of resources and leadership opportunities are offered to our contingent faculty, either for course design, conference traveling, and 2 to 3 prep's instead of 4. However, as it is very informal, it also varies from department to department. There is a lot of good will, but not much of codification of these resources.

What changes to policy, culture, or practice can you envision that would positively impact the professional lives of contingent faculty at ACS institutions? 10 responses

In light of the constantly moving and multi-dimensional disruptions of teaching during the pandemic, I am not sure what suggestion/idea would be applicable in the next instance.

Clarity of expectations and responsibilities from the dean, chair, and the faculty member, which probably means regular meetings, benchmarks, exit interviews, or regular reviews for faculty who are on long-term contingent contracts.

Most of this might be pandemic-related, but I have honestly met so few of my colleagues that it feels like it is difficult to have a support system on campus. It is not that it does not exist, but it can be very isolating when you see very few people from your own department during a semester. There also feels like there is an institutional top-down divide between contingent and permanent faculty, which my department tries to mitigate, but it is hard not to notice that it exists.

Career-stage-specific mentoring opportunities, grant support, and eligibility for teaching and scholarship awards should be available equally to all faculty. Contingent faculty should be contracted well in advance of the first day of classes, and should be compensated for preparation for classes whether or not the classes meet enrollment minimums. Long-term contingent faculty should be provided more job security and opportunities for advancement.

seems to be dependent upon department on my campus to some extent. would like to see little more cross department interactions in that regard for contingent faculty, fostering cross-pollination if you will

We need to stop relying so heavily on adjuncts and offer multi-year contracts. We need to allow for lecturer lines instead of visiting lines. We need to make sure contracts come out sooner. We need to pay better, mentor better, offer resources, and seek out contingent faculty voices.

If it can be done without overburdening contingent faculty, more space for sharing the voices and concerns of contingent faculty. For instance, might there be a standing agenda item for reports from contingent faculty? I say this as someone tenured over twenty years ago at my current institution, who began as a VAP, and has been learning some of the differences in contingency between then and now. I surely should have listened more carefully to contingent colleagues before now! But established, structural spaces for the voices and concerns of contingent colleagues might help.

Ideally, we might also have more awareness of how our contingent colleagues arrived in a vexed environment. Contingent faculty sometimes come to campus under politically, emotionally fraught conditions. A department says, "We need a tenure-track line in this field." The dean says, "Not yet. How

about a VAP?" The contingent faculty member then becomes the representative of their field at the institution. In addition to the pressures of professional development, there are the pressures of demonstrating the centrality and viability of one's field. So a new course that might be listed as taught by "Staff" needs a robust enrollment and glowing course evaluations and a cadre of students who want more courses in the same field; otherwise, it's not helping the department in its argument with the dean. This VAP-as-test-case model seems to get deployed at my institution for nontraditional fields, such as Asian American Studies. A contingent faculty member might be coming from an R1 institution where the importance of their field is assumed and affirmed; the burden of evangelism may be unexpected and unfair.

There is a harmful culture of disregarding contingent faculty or treating them as second-class citizens. There needs to be more pay, more stability, more respect, and representation in university bodies of self-governance.

From talking with contingent faculty, I think the worst thing that they go through is feeling like they aren't working toward anything permanent and that they won't be given any special treatment in a job search, even though they have given a lot to the institution. There are some departments that view visiting faculty as temporary and let them know it ("we'll be doing a national search and we'll just have to see"); whereas other departments treat visiting faculty as the front-runner in any upcoming job searches (or at least provide them with verbal credit for what they've done so far).

There needs to be a standardization of policies about contingent faculty. That will need to come from chairs and TT faculty, either through the Faculty Senate or allies, as it will not happen by itself. As soon as that standardization comes to happen, a change of culture will gradually happen as well. Both in policy and in culture, we need to drop the idea of contingent faculty and have just faculty. Although salaries and benefits will be different for TT or NTT, resources and support must not be.

Clarity and transparency in the selection and support of NTT will be essential. Some policies that should be standardize are: campus participation, campus service, class teaching and preparation (prep 2 or 3 when teaching 4), campus resources and mentorship, long term contracts, research time, promotions (Lecture I, II, and Practice, especially for long term NTT).

How can institutions creatively imagine contingent faculty (including and especially individuals who teach at multiple institutions simultaneously or sequentially) as valuable assets? What do these faculty bring to the institution that permanent faculty do not?

Not that these are unique to non-permanent faculty, but such can add further dimensions of diversity via sociocultural backgrounds, life experiences, training in specialized areas of one's field, and they provide courses not frequently offered by permanent faculty.

I think at one time our leadership saw these faculty as short-term visitors who would inject energy and new perspectives into departments and programs. That's a lot to put on a short-term visitor and work that is probably better reserved for "marquee" visitors who come for a semester or a year as named professors of practice. For long-term non-tenured visitors, my experience/perspective is that they allow greater flexibility for the permanent faculty to do what they specialize in. I think we need to get our institutions to be really clear about what they want from contingent faculty -- and if that's relatively inexpensive labor, they need to declare that.

They bring perspective from seeing multiple institutions, each with their own idiosyncratic structures and habits and ways to tackle issues that are common across higher ed.

We are constantly researching and put in positions where we are actively learning. For better or worse, we are also fully aware that our positions could disappear at any moment, so we try very hard to be the best teachers that we can be. We also work with a diverse student base and learn from our multiple roles, which we transfer into our teaching.

My university has a First-Year Experience program for entering students that could not function without contingent faculty. I coordinate one of these courses with a faculty every fall of anywhere from six to eight instructors. About half are contingent faculty, and some of those juggle multiple appointments. These FYE positions are one-semester appointments, even though the university knows that we will need the same faculty to return year after year.

The contingent faculty who teach in the program are not just valuable, they are invaluable. And yet they have no job security, meager recognition and support, and are living paycheck to paycheck. It is not in the financial interest of the institution to do much better by them, and even when there is some acknowledgment of their value other institutional priorities generally take precedence.

tough ask....these faculty do bring diversity of experiences, especially in the moment.

Contingent faculty are exposed to a variety of ideas, approaches, and ways of doing things. They meet students from a variety of backgrounds at the same time and work within a variety of structures and

curriculums. They use different technologies. They are resilient, adaptable, and knowledgeable. They can offer new perspectives. While I believe all faculty, regardless of contract type, are valuable assets, I know that is not always a shared view. And I know that the increasing reliance on contingent faculty is deeply concerning and as we try to support current contingent faculty we should also be fighting for structural and cultural change to reduce the uncertainties, struggles, and risks they face.

Plenty to say here, but in the interest of time, I will look forward to talking this morning!

This is a really hard question, because I feel like no one wants to be in this position (working at multiple institutions; on short-term contracts, etc.) They bring cheaper labor, allow the faculty member and the institution to see if it is a good fit...perhaps the best thing to do is making them a part of the department in as many ways as possible. Contingent faculty need to feel included. Another thing is to give them some decision-making power about when they teach and in what location. This seems like the least we can do.

Although I believe institutions must offer the resources to keep a NTT faculty that stays in one institution and is not traveling from one job to another, I also understand this may not be possible. That said, a "traveling" faculty brings perspective and adaptability. They may not have the time to serve consistently to their students, but there are ways in which an institution can support this faculty to establish a relationship with their students without taking away from their social life. The chair and the institution must embrace the reality of this "traveling" faculty and have an open conversation with them to work with their schedule, how long the faculty needs to travel from one site to the other, if they can have an office where to HQ while waiting to get to their other classes, and how they can support potential student collaboration from the classes this faculty is teaching. That would highlight the perspective and adaptability the faculty can bring to the contingent position.

WORKSHOP AGENDA

11:00-11:10am Introductions and overview of the goals and aims of this workshop

11:10-11:15 [Google Jamboard](#) What does contingency look like at your institution? (See below for responses)

11:15-12:00pm Case Studies and discussion

Case Study 1: New ABD VAP hire onboarding

Dr. S just accepted a 2-year VAP position at a small liberal arts college in the South. They are ABD at their current R1 institution in the Midwest. As at TA, they have been instructor of record for a handful of first-year undergraduate competency classes in their department, and they have

worked with a full professor as a small group discussion leader and exam proctor in some of their upper-level courses. In their new position as VAP, Dr. S will be on a 4-4 load, teaching at multiple levels of the curriculum. Dr. S's dissertation advisor has indicated they need to defend within their first 6-9 months as a VAP so they can then focus solely on building their CV and their continuing job search.

Questions for discussion:

From department's POV: What are the expectations of this individual? What is or should be the relationship between this individual and the department/department chair? What does the department owe this individual in terms of professional development, mentorship, and training?

From new hire's POV: What questions should you ask your department chair? What should or could you ask for (in terms of support, mentorship, or resources) and how and when do you do it?

Case Study 2: Permanent/long-term faculty member

Dr. Z is a long-term non-tenure-track faculty member (serving for 8+ years, first for several years at a SLAC in the northeast, and then for several years at a SLAC in the southeast). Over a span of eight years, they have built a record of research, teaching and advising, and service comparable to their tenured and tenure-track colleagues: book, chapter, and article publications; regular thesis and Independent Study supervision in addition to a full load of classes; and participation in standing and ad hoc committee work, departmental searches, and departmental governance. Dr. Z is appointed in a program that needs consistent staffing, but which has not been institutionally supported by tenure-track lines. Recently converted from a nominal "visitor" to an "assistant professor of the practice," Dr. Z is now in the middle of the longest contract term of their career: 4 years. While grateful for the stability of this four-year term after many years of one- and two-year contracts, and the relative insulation from the volatility of the academic job-market, Dr. Z nevertheless remains aware of their time of service (as equivalent to the traditional time to tenure) as well as of the differential allocation of resources, support, and recognition between tenured and tenure-track faculty and NTT faculty at their institution.

Questions for discussion:

- How does Dr. Z's case illustrate structural barriers preventing them and individuals in similar situations from participating fully in the academic and cultural life of the institution?
- What policy-based changes would empower individuals and elevate their work at and contributions to the college?
- What might an institution owe this individual in terms of professional development and research support?

12:00-12:25pm Guided Discussion of related issues, starting with this question posed in the pre-workshop survey

12:25-12:30pm Wind up and next steps; introduce artifacts and solicit submissions for idea bank

WORKSHOP NOTES AND BRAINSTORMING IDEAS RAISED DURING CONVERSATION

MAJOR TRENDS IN THE CONVERSATION

- Need for Transparency
 - Clearly written policy (so we're not "depending on the kindness of strangers")
 - Expectations (from both the department's and the new hire's POV)
 - Culture ("You can attend the meeting if you want to"...What does that even mean? Too much subtext for the new hire to interpret, especially without institutional/cultural knowledge)
- Friction between institutional and individual needs, when in the position of the CF member.
 - i.e. not contractually obligated to produce research/serve, but needing to do so because of market pressures, etc.
- Policy + Support + Recognition = Culture Shift
 - Policy: see below
 - Support:
 - Various kinds of support (policy/cultural) should be targeted to reflect the many types of contingency: an ABD VAP has different needs than a full-time Lecturer/Prof of Practice
 - Digital presence: put contingent faculty bios on department websites
 - Listserv for contingent faculty to ask questions/find answers/create community
 - "Buddy" system, pair new hires with more a mentor/team of mentors
 - Recognition: see below
 - Culture Shift: This wasn't said aloud but it is always the elephant in the room: Why aren't these well-known issues taken up/solved? What's in the way? Is there a (financial/cultural) cost to supporting contingent faculty that we are not acknowledging?
 - Further Culture Shift: Avoid//move away from "It's your job to get another job," and move toward "How can we better prepare you//set you up to approach the job market?"

IDEAS FOR POLICIES

- Standardization of policy (institution's bylaws) so support doesn't "sunset" with the goodwill of individuals. Many institutions' bylaws were written in a time when there were far fewer contingent faculty, now "contingency is the future" but our bylaws don't reflect that reality
 - Compare the policy governing TT and NTT professional life, note that detailed policy on paper can seem like a burden of requirements but in practice is actually support
 - The language of written policy should "sound like policy"
 - Faculty governance should take up this task as a high priority item (Faculty Affairs Committee, Deans' Council, etc.)
 - Whenever possible, CF should be represented in those discussions; i.e. liaisons or as members of those committees, and CF should be compensated/otherwise recognized for that service (either monetarily, through reductions, or at the very least through more robust letters/evaluations during review and job search)
- "One sheet" onboarding document
 - Could be institution-wide
 - Could be ACS-wide (per Stephanie's interest in meeting follow-up, perhaps there's a ACS-funded project here?)
 - Could have columns providing options (must choose 2 action items from each category of support/need, etc.) to make institution/consortium-wide adoption/adherence tenable (a strict list would be too limiting given the different characters, cultures, needs of such a diverse group)
 - Could be written from both POVs (the hiring department and the new hire) and presented to both during hiring/onboarding process to increase transparency and initiate a conversation about both the institution's and the new hire's needs/goals
 - There could be a follow-up onboarding document that captures this conversation/negotiation about what support will be needed/provided, and what the expectations are from both POVs, these documents could be filed and then referenced and updated as needed throughout the new hire's appointment, used in the evaluation/professional development process, etc.
- Centers for Teaching and Learning (or similar) should regularly take up CF professional development issues, e.g.:
 - How to read/use teaching evaluations; Preparing application materials; How to prepare for review and re-appointment [if longer serving CF]

IDEAS FOR SUPPORTING CONTINGENT FACULTY

- Be aware of the courses that ABD faculty have taught at previous institutions and try to assign them courses that are familiar to them
- Reduce the number of new preps as much as possible for new faculty
- Try to assign them smaller-sized classes early on in their tenure
- Offer faculty input and agency when their courses are scheduled
- Assign new faculty members a designated mentor
- Have department chairs to schedule regular mentoring (not evaluative) check-ins, preferably taking place outside of the office
- Encourage department chairs and other faculty members to share their own contingent teaching experiences; teaching failures; and foibles to encourage a culture of inclusivity, acceptance, and endorsed risk taking
- Create an institutional website dedicated to contingent faculty resources, sample syllabi etc.
- Revisit the language used to talk about the status and value of contingent faculty in relation to the whole faculty body. Statements along the lines of “90% of our classes are taught by full-time faculty” imply a two-tier faculty model that privileges one category over another
- Utilize adjunct faculty, VAPs and faculty who have taught at multiple institutions an opportunity to share their experiences, best practices, and institutional wisdom in programmatic brainstorming exercises
- Recognize that teaching evaluation and observations are often the only material CF take with them between appointments, and treat these with the urgency and care they deserve; e.g.:
 - A 4th year TT junior faculty member might review // discuss evaluations // observations with a mentor as a form of course-correction or a check-in, but a CF member on the market might consider those evaluations//observations as a crucial product//part of their application packages, and thus use these in very different ways.

IDEAS FOR RECOGNIZING CONTINGENT FACULTY

- Offer research and syllabus awards for short-term faculty
- Offer specifically targeted awards for adjunct faculty
- Explore the possibility of opening up the eligibility of existing faculty awards to long-term contingent faculty (lecturers, professors of practice)
- Funding for contingent faculty travel/conference participation

TRENDS POSTED VIA Jamboard (activity used during our workshop)

Contingency is, of course, varied:

- A variety of appointments, often at the discretion of the department
- Various forms of NTT lines are usually lumped together under the term “contingent”
- Varies by department (some departments employ large numbers of contingent faculty, while others employ comparatively few). Several posters echo this: contingency varies by department and discipline.
- Status accrued differently: “folk hired on a per-course basis have a very different experience from VAPs.”
- “Adjuncts that stay at adjunct level for long periods, Post-doc fellowships for 1-2 years, visiting lecturers (meant to be 2-3 years, but many stay on longer), visiting assistant professors (2-3 years depending on appointment)”
- “In the writing program, our two full-time Lecturers teach a 4-4 teaching load and have benefits. Our nine adjuncts are hired to teach individual classes and are not allowed to teach more than 5 classes per academic year (per Human Resources).”

Contingent faculty receive varied levels of recognition, support, and benefits:

- Most but not all forms of NTT are offered some form of employee benefits.
- Departmental voting rights are unclear for contingent faculty.
- If contingency is “the exception, not the rule,” this often results in NTT being marginalized, and without policy or franchise built to consider them
- “Many permanent faculty don’t think much about contingents.”
- “A lot of support from direct supervisors to adjunct faculty, but not always from the higher-ups at the institution.”
- NTT faculty may have opportunities to do more work outside their contract, but these circumstances are often unclear.

Uses(s) of contingent faculty:

- Contingency often used in an “emergency” case: someone leaves at the last minute, etc.
- Key faculty for introductory curricula and first-year programs
- Long-term adjuncts used to teach topic(s) requiring specific expertise
- Pilot programs/courses without TT investment

Futures for contingent faculty:

- Visiting faculty have a history of being converted to TT on some campuses.

- However, transitions such as the above are not clear in their rationale, purpose, development, etc.
- Some “visitors” have perennial 1-year contracts and remain at the institution for 20+ years. Recently, there has been a move to make these contracts to 2 or 3 year contracts.”
- “Departments and programs hire contingent faculty for a variety of reasons. I think this variety reflects a shift? Something new? We've seen a real growth (doubling) in number of contingent faculty in the last decade.”

Institutional perspective(s) on contingency:

- “Contingency faculty are welcomed and supported at my current institution, but I have been at other institutes where contingent faculty are kind of just "out there" in the void with little and inconsistent contact with department members/leaders.”
- “Whether considered Contingent or not, I've always considered Contingent faculty as critical partners in our department's drive toward our mission/vision/goals/objectives.”
- “If on the market, personal and institutional priorities can conflict in terms of attention to immediate course instruction”
- “contingent faculty, sometimes unintentionally, miss day-to-day details that can shape their overall approach”
- “Some difficult experiences with contingent faculty, has made some institutions more skeptical or at least cautious and selective in such hires.”
- “Vary widely in experience... academic and non academic.... also vary in what their goals/expectations are for their current role and career trajectory.”
- And, responding directly to our prompt, “What does contingency look like at your institution?”:
 - “Look like” is an interesting point, as contingent faculty are frequently overlooked.