

JANUARY 26, 2018

# Part-time Faculty Experiences and Needs: Preliminary Research Findings

Susan Bickerstaff

# Community College Research Center

Areas of research include:

- The role of the community college
- High school to college transitions
- Developmental education & adult basic skills
- Student services and financial aid
- Online learning and instructional technology
- Student persistence, completion, and transfer
- College to career and workforce education
- Improving institutional performance



# Research Question and Data Sources

- Who are part-time faculty at the six participating community colleges and what are their experiences?
- Data sources:
  - 59 interviews and focus groups with part-time and full-time faculty members and administrators
  - 482 responses from a survey administered to full-time and part-time faculty (39% response rate)

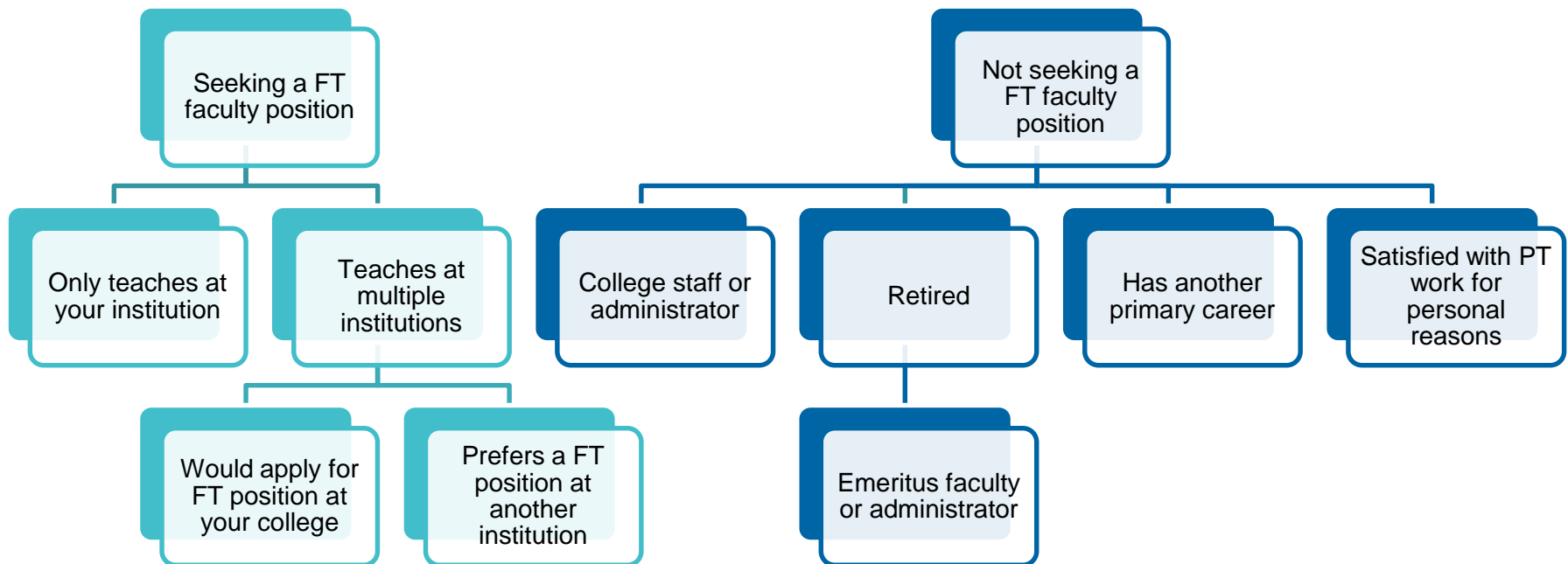
# Part-time Faculty Characteristics

Fall 2016 Faculty Survey (N = 254)	Part-time
Female	64%
White	72%
Doctoral degree	13%
Master's degree	73%
Degree in education/teaching credential	50%
Years at college	9
Years teaching experience (any level)	18
Average age	52

# Part-time Faculty Characteristics

Fall 2016 Faculty Survey (N = 482)	Part-time	Full-time
Female	64%	60%
White	72%	62%
Doctoral degree	13%	29%
Master's degree	73%	62%
Degree in education/teaching credential	50%	38%
Years at college	9	13
Years teaching experience (any level)	18	19
Average age	52	48

# Part-time Faculty have a Range of Employment Goals and Experiences



# Part-time Faculty Employment Status

Fall 2016 Faculty Survey (N = 254)	Part-time
Consider teaching in higher education to be your primary career	64%
Currently only employed in this part-time position	34%
Currently have a full-time job elsewhere	19%
Retired from another job	21%
Hold teaching positions at more than one college or university	33%
Would apply for a full-time faculty position at this college	51%

# Part-time Faculty Experiences

- Experiences are shaped by systemic, institutional, and departmental conditions
- Three features of professional experiences:

Complicated

Autonomous

Impassioned



## Complicated

- *“As an adjunct I feel like I'm a lot like my students. I'm trying to kind of like scrap together a better life and I think a lot of the practices that we're trying to use to engage students we should be using to engage adjuncts. I mean we have very similar very complicated life structures. I think that's one of the reasons a lot of us really enjoy what we're doing and we make connections with students because we understand a lot of the struggles that they're going through in a really tangible way.”*
- *“My work schedule changes at the last minute. This makes very difficult for me to have 1-2 other part-time jobs that I need to survive financially.”*

# Challenge of Finding Pertinent Information

- *“I haven't been informed of many of the policies associated with my position, so I constantly have to ask for information and have made a few mistakes. I ended up ordering my textbooks late. I also made a mistake about canceling a class. It was my fault, but some kind of handbook of policies and procedures would be helpful.”*
- *“I had to figure a lot of things out and it was lot of like me emailing my Chair and asking her questions and her emailing me back.”*

Complicated

# Impacts on Instructional Quality

- *“I need to be set up for success. So when I'm getting classes the day before or when I'm not given any instruction on how to access books or when the copy machine is down and I have to make 50 syllabi then I'm stressed and I'm rushed. I'm a big believer in being prepared the very first day because it just kind of sets the mood and the tone for the classroom. So when those types of things happen it makes students not trust you or not believe in you.”*

Complicated

## Autonomous

- In survey data, across ten areas of satisfaction, autonomy is ranked highest.
  - *“I love my job because of benign neglect: you leave me alone, and I pay you back by doing the best job I can.”*
  - *“I think that focus on our independence and our ownership of material and respecting that we are able to do that is really wonderful.”*

# Isolation as the Dark Side of Autonomy

- *“I don't really feel connected to the department. I know the supervisor and the secretary, but I don't know anyone else and haven't really been encouraged to meet with anyone else. I don't know very much about the school itself. I am inundated with emails about things that may be important, but I don't really know how important.”*
- Proportion of survey respondents who agree that they have strong professional relationships with colleagues:
  - Part-time: 55%
  - Full-time: 86%

Autonomous

## Impassioned

- *“The students, my colleagues and the subject I teach are the reasons I love being here.”*
- *“Love my department, love my chair, but the life of an adjunct sucks.”*
- The proportion of faculty reporting being extremely or moderately satisfied with their position, overall:
  - Part-time: 68%
  - Full-time: 71%

# Uncompensated Work

- *“I’d get here at 8 o’clock in the morning and I’d work a full day until 3 or 4 o’clock in the afternoon because [my schedule allowed it]. Sometimes I would just stay because I got to work with other people and see what was going on, get to be committees and things. Yes I’m not getting compensated for it but I’m learning more about how things work here and hopefully that’ll lead to a full-time position.”*

Impassioned