DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 284 513 HE 020 643

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TITLE	Part-time Faculty: Higher Education at a Crossroads. ERIC Digest 84-4.
INSTITUTION	Association for the Study of Higher Education.; ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	84
CONTRACT	400-82-0011
NOTE	3p.; This digest is a summary of ED 251 058.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	College Administration; *College Faculty; *Employment Practices; Higher Education; *Part Time Faculty; *Personnel Policy; Teacher Characteristics; Trend Analysis
IDENTIFIERS	ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

The current use of part-time faculty and issues regarding this practice are addressed. Ways that part-time faculty affect the quality of academic programs are discussed, including the frequent characterization of them as "second-class citizens." Policies and practices are shaped by the diverse characteristics of part-timers, institutional needs and traditions, the labor market, and legal and collective bargaining constraints. However, the idea that employment of part-time faculty is a casual departmental affair rather than a planned institutional effort is obsolete. Institutional policies and practices should take into account the differences among part-timers in their qualifications, functions performed, and contributions to the school's educational objectives. (LB)

ED284513

ERIC DIGEST

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Part-time Faculty: Higher Education at a Crossroads

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More than a quarter million part-time faculty are employed in American colleges and universities (NCES 1980). A reasonable guess is that they carry 15 percent of the total college-level teaching load. Most part-timers are poorly paid, have marginal job security at best, and get little institutional support for their teaching efforts. Nearly all to some extent resent the uncollegial treatment they receive and are frustrated by the impediments to good teaching performance they must put up with. But on balance, they are sufficiently satisfied to continue. Some teach more for the prestige it provides in relation to their full-time careers than for the money. Few rely wholly on part-time teaching for their livelihoods.

Policy issues regarding part-jtime faculty are clouded and complicated by problems with definitions and data. Federal data are inadequate and not regularly updated; state studies are seldom compatible, either with federal studies or with one another. Independent studies are infrequent and usually too limited in scope to support generalizations. And no major study has been undertaken since the late 1970s. Available statistics about academic qualifications, personal characteristics, professional aspirations, teaching loads, and compensation are sparse and out of date.

How Do Part-time Faculty Affect the Quality of Academic Programs?

The number of part-time faculty has steadily increased over the past three decades, and their role in higher education may well expand further in coming years. By 1980, 32 percent of all faculty were part-timers (NCES 1980). Fifty-three percent of these part-timers are in two-year colleges, 34 percent are in four-year colleges, and 13 percent are in universities (Eliason 1980; Tuckman 1978). Therefore, their teaching performance can and does affect the overall quality of academic programs. Institutions by and large have not recognized that part-time faculty can be a major asset to their academic programs. Part-timers are painfully aware that administrators and full-time faculty see them as second-class citizens. The increased numbers of part-timers pose a challenge:

> *The jury remains out on the question of whether part-timers augment the quality of higher education or whether they debase it. Whether they will become a larger force in the next two decades will depend, in large part, on the policies that institutions of higher education will adopt in the next few years. Part-timers are neither good nor bad for academe in their own right. Instead they are a diverse group with many different motives and goals. Whether we learn to employ them in a constructive manner will surely be one of the most fascinating questions of the 80's* (Tuckman and Tuckman 1981, p. 7).

What Influences Institutional Policies and Practices for the Employment of Part-time Faculty?

Policies and practices are shaped by the diverse characteristics of part-timers; by institutional needs, missions, and traditions; by the academic labor market; and by legal and collective bargaining constraints.

Part-time faculty vary widely in their reasons for seeking part-time employment, their faculty roles, and their career aspirations. A large study in 1976-77 by Howard Tuckman and associates identified seven categories of part-timers, ranging from semiretired academics to people whose principal occupation is homemaking. Many part-timers are employed full time in other occupations and teach part time for personal satisfaction. Others put together two or more part-time teaching jobs that add up to full-time work. Graduate students and those who hold advanced degrees but cannot find full-time teaching positions are the most dissatisfied part-timers, in part because they are most strongly motivated to pursue full-time academic careers (Tuckman 1978). Part-timers can be categorized according to their primary motivation for teaching part-time; in order of importance, these motives are personal satisfaction, enhancement of one's nonacademic career, and economic (Leslie, Kellams, and Gunne 1982).

The reasons for employing part-timers also vary based upon institutions' needs and missions. The largest number of part-time faculty are employed by community colleges, where they slightly outnumber full-time faculty. Community colleges must meet local demand for courses and programs of immediate interest credit and noncredit, on and off campus. Part-time faculty are an integral part of the community college's effectiveness, and they generally have been accorded more respect and better treatment than those teaching in four-year institutions. Scattered efforts by institutions to give part-timers more teaching support and improve their morale have nearly all been in two-year colleges.

In four-year institutions, the ratio of part-time to full-time faculty is roughly one to three (Tuckman 1978). The flexibility and savings in costs that part-timers provide have been most important to small private schools. Part-timers have also been employed extensively in urban universities with large enrollments of part-time adult students. These universities are able to staff many programs with the rare concentration of talent available in urban areas. In universities with graduate programs and a supply of graduate teaching assistants, employment of part-time faculty has been less prevalent (Leslie, Kellams, and Gunne 1982; Tuckman and Vogler 1978).

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What Are the Constraints on the Employment of Part-time Faculty?

Two Supreme Court cases set legal precedent regarding the rights of part-time faculty: *Perry v. Sinderman* [408 U.S. 593 (1972)] and *Board of Regents v. Roth* [408 U.S. 564 (1972)]. The controlling precedents for these cases established that part-timers may be able to claim property rights not explicitly granted by an institution but accruing from policy, common practice, or acquiescence, and that part-timers do not have a right to due process in the non-renewal or termination of employment unless they can show that they have property rights. And most part-time faculty contracts make it very difficult for part-timers to establish property rights (Head 1979; Leslie, Kellams, and Gunne 1982).

Suits alleging denial of equal protection under the law have been largely unsuccessful. Institutions can argue that part-timers perform fewer tasks than full-time faculty and are employed on genuinely different terms; thus, a rational basis exists for unequal pay and benefits.

Collective bargaining affects the status of part-time faculty through decisions whether or not to include part-time faculty in bargaining units (Leslie and Ikenberry 1979). About 41 percent of all public-sector collective bargaining units include at least some part-timers, whereas only 28 percent of private-sector units do (Leslie, Kellams, and Gunne 1982). While the primary beneficiaries of collective bargaining have been full-time faculty, at least some part-timers have achieved more equitable compensation and improved working conditions as a result of contract negotiations.

What Conclusions and Recommendations Emerge from the Study of Part-time Faculty?

The idea that the employment of part-time faculty is a casual departmental affair rather than a planned institutional effort is obsolete. If educational quality is to be promoted and preserved, an institution's legitimate academic and financial needs must be balanced by the equally legitimate demands of part-time faculty for improved status, compensation, and services (Head 1979).

Expanded research and dissemination of information about part-time faculty at the institutional, state, regional, and national levels can lead to recognition of their importance and to revision of institutional policies and practices for their employment. Institutional researchers and higher education scholars need to examine part-time faculty employment as an integral part of their studies of faculty working conditions and careers (Brown 1982; Emmet 1981; Stern et al. 1981).

Institutional policies and practices should take into account the differences among part-time faculty in their qualifications, the functions they perform, and their contributions to the school's educational objectives. Institutions should replace freewheeling departmental autonomy with centralized responsibility and accountability for part-time faculty employment to ensure fair and humane treatment (Leslie, Kellams, and Gunne 1982). With centralized responsibility, institutions can establish policies and procedures that differentiate among part-timers, based on their individual characteristics and the reasons for which they were employed. These policies and practices should encompass recruitment and hiring, assignment and workload, support services, participation in governance, compensation, fringe benefits, and job security.

The challenge is not to provide parity with full-time faculty. Instead, it is to establish clearly articulated, well understood, humane, and equitable policies and practices that accommodate the variety among part-timers themselves (Head 1979; Smith 1980; Stern et al. 1981; Wallace 1982). Institutional policies and practices should place less emphasis upon a polarization between full-time, tenured faculty and part-time, temporary faculty. Faculty employment policies and practices should constitute a continuum embracing the total group: from full-time, tenured faculty to fully qualified, continuing part-time faculty interested in their teaching careers to contingency faculty hired to meet the demands of enrollment.

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This publication was partially prepared with funding from the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. 400-82-0011. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of NIE or the Department.