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Greater Stability and Inclusion for Part-time and Full-time Faculty at Dominican University of California

2022 Winner of the Delphi Award

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From the Delphi Project database of

Example Best Practices to Support Non-Tenure-Track Faculty

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Example Best Practices in Process to Support Non-Tenure-Track Faculty

- ✓ Bridging the Siloed Divide Through Collaboration with the Adjunct Faculty Union

Dominican University of California (Dominican) is a small independent college in San Rafael, CA, and one of the oldest universities in the state. It is also designated as a Minority Serving Institution, serving large populations of Hispanic (HSI) and Asian American Native American Pacific Islander (AANAPSI) students. Dominican has a significant number of non-tenure-track faculty with 32 full-time term faculty (FTTF) and 204 part-time adjunct faculty (PTTF). Faculty off the tenure-track contribute meaningfully to its more than 60 undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Dominican has an institutional mission to develop ethical leaders and socially-responsible global citizens. However, the institution recognizes that the extremely high cost of housing in the surrounding area poses ethical and financial challenges for all employees, including faculty — both part-time and full-time — who are attempting to contribute to the mission and live comfortably while doing so. These issues led Dominican to create intentional supports related to recruiting, retaining, and supporting all faculty regardless of rank. The supports they built were attempts to unify Dominican faculty as one and remove structural barriers that hindered term, and especially, adjunct faculty's, sense of belonging, professionalization, well-being and livelihood.

Example Best Practices

Access to Multi-Year Contracts and Greater Contract Transparency

Dominican prioritized a key policy change regarding greater access to multi-year contracts for continuing term faculty — those full-time faculty eligible for re/appointment and renewable terms. The new policy allows continuing term faculty to apply for a three-year appointment after three consecutive years of full-time employment at the university. After that, continuing term faculty can apply for multi-year appointments. Multi-year contracts offer stability to term faculty, who make up about 30% of the full-time faculty.

Additionally, new policies have ensured greater transparency between the institution/department and adjunct faculty. Dominican created a new policy that stipulates a secured date to deliver class contracts. Adjunct faculty are now also assigned to courses based on seniority and incumbency across campus. These two policy changes afford adjuncts a level of predictability as to when they will receive contracts and how they will be placed in class assignments. These changes minimize surprises and the anxiety that unexpected surprises may bring about.

Improved Rank/Promotion Policies and Rewards

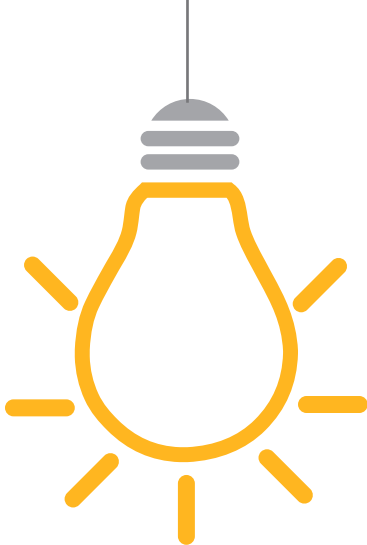
The rank and promotion policies for adjunct faculty at Dominican have been improved in various ways to facilitate employment stability and transparency. Under the new policy, adjuncts progress through the tier system based on credited points (1 point for one credit course unit). As adjuncts earn points, they progress through a tier system and their rank and pay increase accordingly. Their titles also progress as they accumulate more points. For example, faculty in tier 1 with 0-25 points have the title Adjunct Instructor or Adjunct Professor of Practice I. When they accumulate 26-50

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points, they receive a new title of Adjunct Assistant Professor or Adjunct Professor of Practice II. Relevant professional experience, a terminal degree, and teaching at another regionally-accredited academic institution also gives faculty more points and allows them to progress through the tier system at a speed of their choosing. These new promotion policies professionalize adjuncts by acknowledging professional accomplishments, rewarding long-term commitment and promoting greater employment stability.

Professional Development, Awards and Recognition

Dominican actively promotes professional development (PD) for term and adjunct faculty, inviting them to participate in PD sessions and paying them for their participation. Dominican is very intentional about content topics and the delivery of PD sessions; many sessions occur during the summer before the semester begins and when faculty are most likely to plan courses. The PD sessions are intentionally offered in online or hybrid formats to reduce the commuting burden and broaden access. Some past professional development session topics include online teaching and humanizing online learning, trauma-informed pedagogy and intercultural communication. These sessions are designed to ensure that



all faculty can better support the diverse body of students at Dominican. The University sets aside \$15,000 annually for adjuncts to receive hourly compensation for attending professional development activities.

Dominican also allocates \$20,000 for merit awards each year (no larger than \$1,000) to recognize the scholarly endeavors of adjuncts. Achievements include scholarly publications (i.e., books, journals, magazine/newspaper articles), conference presentations and professional performances/shows/exhibits. Achievements are reviewed and awards decided by a committee made up of both union representatives and adjunct faculty.

Benefits

As valued community members, term faculty are eligible to receive health benefits and provisions for sick leave. Adjunct faculty are eligible depending on the number of units they teach. In addition to the compensation for scholarly and professional activities, adjuncts are eligible to receive emergency funds when they encounter unexpected emergency expenditures. Term and adjunct faculty are both eligible for tuition remission benefits. Adjunct faculty specifically may enroll in one credit-earning course per semester, up to the number of courses they have taught in the past two years.

Compensation for Student Support and Course Cancellations

Adjuncts at Dominican are encouraged to participate in different types of work and activities across campus; they are compensated for their participation. The type of compensated work and activities for adjuncts include substitute teaching, writing letters of recommendation for students, being the first reader of a thesis, developing a new course, attending university meetings, activities, and programs (e.g., faculty forum, commencement, committee meetings, Freshman orientation week), and traveling to attend off-campus events. New policies have also instructed departments to compensate adjuncts if a class assignment specified in their contract is cancelled.

Instead of merely being elected onto these committees and the broader governance structure, adjuncts are now given a guaranteed seat.

Inclusion in and Compensation for Participating in Shared Governance

Adjuncts are also now included and compensated for participating in shared governance. Some committees they have served on include Faculty Forum, Diversity Action Group, Faculty Development Committee and the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee. Instead of merely being elected onto these committees and the broader governance structure, adjuncts are now given a guaranteed seat. Actively including adjunct faculty members committed to student success in shared governance has helped the university to advance its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and the continued improvement of campus culture.

Academic Staff Positions

Historically, adjuncts at Dominican have been tasked to piece together a consistent workload. Dominican made academic staff positions available to adjuncts to promote greater stability. This move ensures adjuncts receive a wealth of different professional experiences and opportunities to contribute to the student success mission at Dominican. Adjuncts can work in the Office of Community Engagement, serve as Integrative Coaches to provide students with wraparound support, or even work on behalf of the union as a union board member or steward. Access to these staff positions unlocks benefits and job security for many adjuncts who often struggle to make ends meet.

Example Best Practices in Process

Bridging the Siloed Divide through Collaboration with the Adjunct Faculty Union

In Dominican's case, many of the policy changes pertaining to adjunct faculty were the result of unionization. Dominican adjuncts elected to unionize through the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in 2014. The creation of the union helped significantly improve adjuncts' working conditions. In their first bargaining agreement, the union was able to secure protections and equitable compensation for adjuncts, including (but not limited to) compensation for participation in new faculty orientation, the creation of a labor-management committee with at least four union representatives, and access to Dominican's tuition remission program if an adjunct faculty member has taught at least one credit-earning course in the last two years. Unionization was integral to designing and implementing better supports for adjunct faculty at Dominican. Given the close-knit community of the university, instead of being a dividing force, unionization became a unifying force for all key stakeholders, including faculty, SEIU, Dominican administrators and the broader campus community.

Soon, Dominican was able to achieve systemic change for adjuncts through deep and intentional collaboration. There had been, historically, a divide between faculty and staff, faculty/staff and administrators, as well as full-time faculty and adjunct faculty. This division was partly settled when Academic Affairs began offering inclusive professional development opportunities that brought together different faculty members from across ranks. With student success at the center, Dominican and its many stakeholders were able to work together to achieve equitable changes for adjuncts and improvements across the university.

Visit The Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success for more example practices and a wide range of resources and toolkits to better support faculty off the tenure track at: pullias.usc.edu/delphi.

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