



Professional Development for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty at Kennesaw State University

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✓ Learning Community

✓ Annual Conference

✓ Teaching Award

✓ Workshops

Kennesaw State University (KSU) is a public, four-year university in Georgia; across two campuses, KSU enrolls about 40,000 students per year. The Carnegie Classification recently shifted KSU from an R3 to an R2 institution, reflecting the institution's growing focus on research in addition to teaching. KSU employs more than 1,800 faculty; of those, roughly 1,000 are non-tenure-track faculty (NTTF), including about 750 who are part-time (adjunct faculty members).

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) at KSU supports the success of faculty and graduate teaching assistants through institution-wide initiatives focused on career success as well as on instructional development; these opportunities include workshops, one-to-one consultations, and more intensive multi-day programs. For several years, an educational specialist in the center focused exclusively on meeting the needs of adjuncts. In addition, CETL staff have partnered with administrators in different colleges to support college-level instructional development efforts, reflecting a multi-level approach to professional development.

In this case study, we begin by discussing the environmental context at the state and institutional levels, as policies at both levels have implications for how professional development is positioned to support the success of NTTF at KSU. We then describe three CETL initiatives that have specifically targeted adjunct faculty: workshops, a faculty learning community, and the Teaching Academy institute. After discussing these institution-level efforts, we outline professional development initiatives employed in two colleges- the College of Science and Mathematics (CSM) and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (RCHSS).

Environmental Context: State Influences

The state of Georgia has defined specific career roles and promotion procedures for NTTF that are used across the state's public postsecondary institutions. Most full-time NTTF are lecturers, with the potential for promotion to senior lecturer, while a few are clinical faculty who have a promotion structure similar to tenure-track faculty (assistant, associate, and full) even though they are non-tenure-track.

To ensure that the workloads of part-time faculty are reflective of their part-time position, the state has mandated that adjuncts report their working time each week, with a maximum of 18.25 hours per week allowed. Professional

development activities are included in working time, which has shaped the scheduling and format of opportunities geared towards adjuncts.

The state has also defined a limited-term full-time faculty position in order to create flexibility for meeting changing enrollment needs; this position is limited to two years. At KSU, there are a number of faculty who have moved from part-time status into the limited-term role, then transitioning back to part-time status after two years.

Environmental Context: Institutional Influences

Within the institution, the faculty senate at KSU created a part-time faculty council in 2012, and the part-time faculty council president is a voting member of the larger senate. Departments with a significant population of adjuncts are required to have a representative in the part-time council and every department is invited to select a representative. To support the effectiveness of councilmembers, many meetings begin with a speaker who shares institutional knowledge on topics such as technology and human resources. The part-time faculty council has played an important role in identifying the needs of adjuncts and advocating for equitable policies, programs, and practices that support the success of part-time faculty. They also communicate opportunities such as professional development to adjuncts

Linking Professional Development to Student Success

There has been an increasing emphasis on student success at KSU that is common on many campuses nationally. In response to this, a Student Success Council was formed with representatives from many constituencies from across campus, including academic leaders from various colleges and administrators from academic support, advising, housing, and career development. In monthly meetings, the council worked to create a unified statement that defines student success not only in terms of academic achievement and retention, but also through students' sense of belonging, individual development, and preparation for becoming engaged citizens. This work allowed for greater institutional alignment, especially as college-level efforts including professional development can be strategically linked to student success. In addition, the council worked with other campus constituencies, including the human resources committee and the faculty senate, to institutionalize these student success principles through the inclusion of language in policies and processes related to staff evaluations, tenure and promotion documents, and more.

Recently, Kennesaw has hired a new associate vice provost for student success. The work of the council has been transitioned to the person serving in that role, and the council has been disbanded. Cross-functional teams can be particularly effective for aligning and integrating efforts in different arenas; in particular, the work of the council was particularly useful for demonstrating the value of professional development initiatives as they help to make clear the connection between instructional effectiveness and student success.

CETL: Professional Development Initiatives for Part-Time Faculty

In this section, we focus on three professional development initiatives developed by CETL specifically for adjuncts: workshops, a faculty learning community, and the Teaching Academy institute. For each initiative, we focus on how CETL tailored professional development to better support adjuncts and lessons learned. We also discuss how CETL assessed the needs of part-time faculty and briefly describe other resources the center provides for adjuncts.

Workshops

The CETL hosts several workshops geared towards adjuncts each semester, including topics such as campus resources available to part-time faculty and creating more transparent assignments. To facilitate access, the educational specialist offers each workshop three times: once at each of KSU's two campuses and once virtually as a synchronous webinar. Additionally, the specialist now also records an asynchronous version that is available on demand. These options reflect that different types of adjuncts have different needs, based on their other commitments. For instance, some adjuncts prefer the interactive nature of the synchronous webinars held during lunchtime, while others need the flexibility of the shorter, asynchronous version. Additionally, the specialist found that workshop attendance dwindled in the middle of the semester; as a result, workshop scheduling is now clustered at the beginning and end of each semester, when adjuncts may have more motivation to engage in professional development and connect with colleagues.

Institute

The Teaching Academy for Part-Time Faculty is an intensive 2-day program that introduces adjuncts to research on student learning related to topics such as prior knowledge, motivation, practice and feedback, and classroom climate. The institute includes interactive sessions and deliverables such as course plans and learning journals that emphasize the practical application of new knowledge to their classrooms. The program uses a hybrid design with an in-person welcome and closing that is supplemented with moderated discussions online to provide greater flexibility for adjuncts' busy schedules.

Adjuncts receive \$750 for completing the institute. Cohorts have varied from 12 to 75 participants based on available funding. This initiative is scheduled annually during spring break to facilitate adjunct participation given state regulations related to working hours.

SPACE Conference

The CETL has also organized a one-day academic conference centering adjuncts nationally, which was held annually between 2016-2019. SPACE (The Symposium for Part-time, Adjunct, and Contingent Educators) offers opportunities for NTTF to present original scholarship related to teaching innovations and disciplinary knowledge in a peer-reviewed setting. The conference is held during the summer in Atlanta, Georgia with low registration fees in order to be accessible widely to adjunct faculty in support of their professional development.

Website and Listserv

The CETL also has a dedicated page on their website including information about the scholarly teaching programs and services available to adjuncts and offering resources such as a guidebook for teaching and a blog that spotlights issues of interest specifically to adjuncts. They also host an email listserv where they send a monthly email about upcoming professional development opportunities and highlight the accomplishments of adjunct faculty.

Teaching Award

The CETL manages a number of teaching awards with the monetary support of the KSU Foundation, including the Outstanding Part-Time Teaching Award, which provides \$5,000 in recognition of adjunct faculty. Each college determines its own nomination process, and the CETL does not limit the number of nominations received.

Learning Community

The CETL hosts multiple faculty-proposed learning communities each year where groups of 5-7 faculty engage in sustained learning across the academic year; topics and group composition are flexible, so that faculty may engage in interdisciplinary conversations about student success or focus on one specific course within a department. Deliverables include an individually written reflection about changes to teaching and a collaboratively authored white paper that can be shared with others. These learning communities can include faculty across career tracks.

While there is no direct compensation for participation, faculty can access funds for professional development resources such as books during the learning community and can use up to \$1000 in professional development travel funds in the following year if currently employed by KSU.

Lessons Learned: FLC

In 2016-2017, the CETL hosted an interdisciplinary learning community specifically for adjuncts with mixed results, revealing a number of challenges to engaging part-time faculty using models designed for full-time faculty. For instance, some participants expected that the learning community would be like a series of workshops led by CETL staff and were surprised about the amount of reading and writing they were expected to do on their own. In addition, several adjuncts faced challenges related to attending meetings, especially as the learning community spanned the fall and spring semesters. While CETL staff tried using a more flexible approach by letting people call in to meetings rather than attending in person, it was difficult to maintain the momentum necessary to create a thriving community. Taken as a whole, these challenges reflect the importance of tailoring professional development initiatives for adjuncts in the design stage, as even modifications during the FLC led to a less successful initiative.

CETL Adjunct Needs Assessment

In order to better meet the needs of adjuncts, CETL has conducted a survey of part-time faculty every three years, using email invitations and also asking department chairs to recommend participation; more than 200 adjuncts responded to the last survey. While the specialist developed programs based on survey responses, these programs were not always well-attended. This experience highlights that there may be a gap between how adjuncts would like to engage in professional development in an idealized world and the realities of adjunct life.

Professional Development in the College of Science and Mathematics

Through a partnership with CETL, the College of Science and Mathematics (CSM) offers faculty learning communities (FLCs) in order to increase the use of research-based teaching practices, redesigning courses to implement more active and relevant learning activities, and fostering a culture of teaching innovation and collaboration across disciplines. FLCs are open to faculty across career roles and are co-facilitated by the Assistant Dean for Faculty and Student Success and an educational specialist from the CETL.

Learning Community

The CSM has developed a yearlong opportunity that combines a faculty learning community with course transformation teams in order to help the college achieve strategic goals related to student success and sense of belonging: a larger

interdisciplinary cohort of faculty participates in FLC workshops while smaller teams of 4-6 faculty focus on specific courses and curricular issues. For instance, an interdisciplinary team of faculty from math, statistics, and physics worked to create better alignment of the calculus concepts and language used across departments in order to help students make connections across disciplines. As many of the students who take anatomy and physiology courses in the college apply for KSU's nursing program, another interdisciplinary team focused on revising these courses to better reflect a learning community in order to help students develop a support network that can help them succeed. Several teams have focused on redesigning the labs associated with a specific course, including a team from biology and two teams that have focused on labs associated with specific courses in chemistry.

PARTICIPANTS. As a result of these visibility of this work, the number of learning community participants has grown from 9 to more than 30 faculty. Learning communities have included a mix of faculty across career roles. The use of course transformation teams has been particularly beneficial for the part-time faculty who have participated, because it engages them in close communication with other faculty in their discipline and/or similar STEM disciplines and demonstrates their commitment to effective teaching. As a result, several adjuncts who have worked in FLCs have since been hired as full-time lecturers.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT. In the larger learning community workshops, faculty learn about research related to effective teaching in STEM; they are then expected to experiment with a new activity or assignment in their course that relates to their FLC learning and to consider how the topic fits into their course transformation. Topics for the larger learning community meetings are tailored to address college and departmental goals. The Assistant Dean meets with each department chair annually to learn about departmental goals and identify opportunities for course transformation teams. These discussions and the college strategic plan shapes workshop topics and creates a stronger sense of community for faculty through alignment of priorities. Faculty who have participated in college learning communities more than once also have flexibility to pursue an independent project in lieu of attending any workshops they have already participated in.

The learning community begins in the spring semester with workshops and course transformation meetings; during the summer, faculty continue course transformation work and participate in an institute where they create a more detailed plan for their fall course. In the fall, they implement redesigned courses, conduct peer observations, and continue meeting for workshops and as smaller teams. During the fall and spring semesters, the larger cohort meets about once per month, and transformation teams are expected to meet individually about twice a month. The yearlong structure allows for continuing collaboration and improvement within the FLCs; however, it may also be a barrier to participation by some part-time faculty members who are hired on a per-semester basis.

COMPENSATION AND RECOGNITION. Faculty are compensated \$1000 for each semester, with \$2000 paid in the first summer and \$1000 paid in the summer after participation. Full-time faculty can also negotiate with their department chairs to receive a course release instead of funding. Additionally, FLC participants are recognized at a college faculty meeting in January, with certificates awarded to those who have completed the program and the new cohort announced a stipend of \$1,000.

DELIVERABLES. One way that these FLCs promote a cultural shift around teaching in the college is through dissemination of FLC deliverables, as faculty are expected to share the resources and materials they develop with others in the CSM interested in promoting student success. For instance, FLC participants post sample materials, webinars, annotated notes,

and reflections on the college's shared online instructional resources website; faculty also lead sessions at department talks or presentations, lunches, and seminars.

CONNECTION TO POLICY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE. The FLCs have raised awareness about the importance of creating cohesiveness across courses, which led to a college-wide initiative. The college curriculum committee is in the process of examining all of the courses and programs to align with college-wide goals for student learning.

ASSESSMENT. The CSM is using multiple approaches to assess the impact of FLCs. They have quantitatively examined achievement among students who have taken courses with faculty who have participated in FLCs compared to those whose faculty have not participated; however, results have been mixed, likely as students' course experiences are confounded by other college initiatives (e.g., supplemental instruction, learning assistants).

The teaching narratives that faculty complete as part of their annual review process have also been used to assess how participants talk about their teaching practices, course goals, and perspectives of students for multiple years after participation; the results of this assessment have been used to further refine the FLC workshops and messaging.

In addition, the effectiveness of FLCs is also visible in the shifting culture of the college and in faculty behaviors. For instance, some faculty who were initially resistant now champion the FLCs. While this is an informal type of assessment, efforts such as the curricular alignment committee demonstrate that the FLCs have contributed to organizational change, and the increase in conversations among faculty about teaching and support of faculty provide powerful evidence of the program's impact.

Professional Development in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences

The Norman J. Radow College of Humanities and Social Sciences (RCHSS) is the largest college in KSU. The college offers a number of professional development opportunities for faculty, including book groups, workshops, and learning communities. To plan the topic of professional development offerings, the Associate Dean for Faculty and Student Development and Strategic Initiatives considers strategic and quality enhancement goals for the college. Thus, these opportunities are aligned with current priorities and needs in the college to create consistency across initiatives.

For many of the professional development opportunities in the college, the Associate Dean partners with the CETL to avoid duplication of efforts. The use of strategic co-sponsorship facilitates the success of professional development initiatives in the college. For instance, the college does marketing and provides space for events, as faculty are often more attentive to opportunities that are more localized. Educational specialists from CETL then facilitate events, leveraging their expertise to provide high-quality content and discussions. This collaboration also serves to introduce RCHSS faculty to the CETL, raising the visibility of other opportunities the center offers.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

Each year the RCHSS offers multiple discussion groups that offer opportunities for faculty and staff to read and discuss a common book. Previous book groups have focused on topics such as small teaching and creating work-life balance. Book groups are quite popular and offer a means to break down departmental and disciplinary silos in the college. As discussions are well-attended, these groups offer opportunities for adjuncts to connect with other faculty members across

the college. In particular, part-time faculty have expressed appreciation for having a space to engage in conversation with peers about the craft of teaching.

WORKSHOPS

The RCHSS also offers a number of workshops through partnership with the CETL; these initiatives include about 50-80 faculty across departments and include deliverables. Faculty receive compensation for completing these initiatives that varies based on the time and effort required. One recent 2.5-hour workshop focused on designing opportunities for reflection in the classroom; completers received \$250. The college also recently hosted an initiative on Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) that offered \$500 for participating in two 90-minute in-person workshops and submitting two TILT-ed assignments for peer review and dissemination. Exemplars from the TILT project were posted on the college's website.

These initiatives encourage faculty to make smaller, targeted changes to teaching that will yield significant impact. While asking faculty to completely redesign a course or change the way they are teaching might be overwhelming, workshops introduce faculty to larger principles of effective teaching and then ask them to focus on specific ways to integrate these principles through application in their courses.

Learning Community

The RCHSS has also developed faculty learning communities (FLCs) that emphasize the implementation and assessment of instructional change. The college recently offered an FLC for Course Design that spanned two semesters, with the goal of focusing on improving student success in courses with high DFW rates through involved instructional adjustments.

PARTICIPANTS. The Course Redesign FLC included 16 participants representing a mix of faculty across career roles and disciplines. While a number of NTTF participated, FLCs generally privilege full-time faculty because of the time commitment required.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT. The FLC was divided into three modules, each completed during a semester. In the first module, participants engaged in intense learning related to best practices in teaching and learning and create plans for implementation, including designing course materials and resources. They also participated in an intensive summer experience for the second module. In the third module, faculty implemented changes and collected data on their experience, the experiences of their students, and outcomes.

COMPENSATION AND RECOGNITION. Faculty received \$1000 for each module they completed.

DELIVERABLES. Faculty were expected to share their implementation plan, materials, and outcomes with peers in the FLC during their second semester of participation. They were also expected to disseminate their findings to other faculty in their department and within the college. This is one way the college works to encourage sharing of best practices among colleagues, extending the reach and impact of professional development.

CONNECTION TO POLICY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE. Designing FLCs to have interdisciplinary cohorts was an intentional decision that positions FLCs as an incubator for departmental change. Participants who are motivated to rethink their instructional practices often share their learning with colleagues in formal and informal ways, fostering departmental conversations about curriculum that can create cultural shifts.

ASSESSMENT. The college regularly uses surveys to assess faculty's perceptions of learning after professional development engagement. In addition, the college recently conducted a survey of all faculty to better understand their perceptions, interests, and needs.

Best Practices for Supporting the Inclusivity of NTTF in Professional Development

- ✓ CETL created a role dedicated to developing professional development initiatives for part-time faculty, which allowed for opportunities that were tailored to meet the needs of adjuncts.
- ✓ The use of course transformation teams such as those used by CSM can be particularly effective for helping adjuncts develop a sense of belonging through fostering departmental collegiality.
- ✓ The college-level initiatives reflect realistic deliverables for faculty with heavy teaching loads: intensive course redesign is successful through collaborative efforts in CSM, while the independent projects completed in RCHSS reflect changing some aspects of a course.
- ✓ Leaders at KSU have awareness of the challenges and opportunities to offering professional development for adjuncts that are created by different aspects of governance and work in creative ways to provide support for part-time faculty.

Best Practices for Designing Multi-level Approaches to Professional Development

The suite of professional development offered through TRESTLE at CU Boulder demonstrates several best practices related to the inclusivity of NTTF, especially in terms of being welcoming of adjunct faculty.

- ✓ Through partnering with CETL, the CSM and the RCHSS have developed college-specific professional development initiatives that employ research-based designs for FLCs based on the expertise of educational specialists, while also allowing for more discipline-specific cohorts that can facilitate faculty's perceptions of relevance.
- ✓ The combined model used by CSM achieves multiple goals: large cohort-based workshops helped faculty develop a wider interdisciplinary network and fostered more conversations about teaching among faculty. At the same time, faculty sometimes struggle in interdisciplinary conversations about teaching, and so course transformation teams offer a more intimate space for faculty from the same or similar disciplines to work on instructional improvement focused on a common goal.
- ✓ As it can be difficult to measure the impact of professional development initiatives that lead to incremental change, the RCHSS uses multiple methods, including experiential evaluation.
- ✓ The creation of the Student Success Council creates greater alignment across functional areas of the university and allows leaders to explicitly demonstrate how professional development of NTTF at all levels is critical to students' learning, belonging, and success.



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