

# ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND THE INTEGRATION OF PART-TIME FACULTY

Debra Burke, Western Carolina University

## ABSTRACT

*Part-time faculty employed by institutions of higher education as a percentage of total institutional faculty increased in the last decades. This trend is attributed to several factors such as costs, competition, and a desire for staffing flexibility. Increased reliance on part-time faculty, however, can present issues for accreditation. AACSB International defines supporting faculty as members who primarily teach, and who do not participate in the intellectual or operational life of the school. In contrast, participating faculty members, in addition to teaching, engage in a broader range of activities in support of the school's mission, such as advising, research, service commitments, participation in shared governance and policy guidance. Certain percentage thresholds must be maintained for participating faculty in programs and disciplines. Although participating faculty members tend to be long-term members of the faculty, permanent employment is not key. This presentation will discuss ways in which supporting faculty, typically part-time faculty, can be involved in a more significant way with the mission of the college and become contributing members. Such an inclusive approach, which provides part-time faculty with professional development opportunities, research support, and integration into program activities, can prove to be mutually beneficial.*

**JEL:** A10, A30

**KEYWORDS:** Accreditation, Credentials, Participating Faculty, Supporting Faculty, Adjunct Faculty, Part-time Faculty, Faculty Sufficiency

## INTRODUCTION

This article juxtaposes the concerns about the sharp increase in the growth of part-time faculty with the potential problems that such growth may cause for accreditation. It surmises that an inclusive approach to the integration of part-time faculty may not only allay fears regarding quality concerns about the expansion of this faculty group, but also address potential accreditation concerns. First, the paper will discuss the growth in part-time faculty and the benefits of including them in university development opportunities. Then it will address the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation standards concerning participating and supporting faculty members. Finally, it will propose strategies for incorporating these adjunct faculty into the life of the university to improve the experience for all constituents while staying within prescribed boundaries required of participating faculty, i.e., those faculty who are dedicated to advancing the mission of the school.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Fall enrollment numbers demonstrate significant growth in postsecondary students increasing 23 percent between 1995 and 2005, and 14 percent between 2005 and 2015 (Fast Facts, 2018). Understandably, the number of faculty in degree-granting, postsecondary institutions increased 51 percent from fall 1999 to fall 2016, but with full-time faculty increasing only 38 percent during that period, and part-time faculty increasing to 74 percent, almost twice as much, from 1999 to 2011 (but decreasing 4 percent between 2011

and 2016) (Way, 2018). Only 30.2 percent of faculty were employed part time in 1975, compared to 48 percent of all faculty members in 2005 (Monks, 2009). Thus, the increased demand for faculty in response to institutional growth has been satisfied in large part through the employment of part-time faculty.

Several factors have influenced the trend including 1) increasing financial pressures, 2) changes in government funding for higher education, 3) a growing concern about college spending on faculty, 4) increased competition from nontraditional education providers, 5) demands for flexibility and 6) changes in student enrollment and demographics (Frye, 2017). Hiring part-time instructors can mitigate the need for full-time faculty to teach an overload to meet demand, provide expertise that is not available within a program and keep program costs manageable (Hill, 2019). “Their short-term, inexpensive contracts, offering no obligation of renewal, provide institutions with much-needed options in managing budgets.” (Rowh, 2018, p. 41). While reliance on part-time instructors may have increased dramatically, there is not necessarily a corresponding decrease in educational outcomes. One study found that instruction by full-time faculty does not lead to higher graduation and transfer rates when compared to instruction by part-time faculty (Rossol-Allison & Beyers, 2011). However, part-time instructors often are detached from university life, not well-compensated, and excluded from opportunities available to fulltime faculty. Because faculty play a critical part in realizing institutional roles and missions and fostering teaching and learning, all faculty, not just tenure track or full-time members, must be integrated into the fabric of institutional life (Morphew, Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2017). Developing a more inclusive attitude about part-time faculty can produce benefits for students, faculty, the educational institution, and accreditation expectations.

### Part-Time Contingent Faculty

A population usually with full-time jobs, part-time instructors often bring a wealth of real-world experience and subject-matter expertise to the classroom, but may lack knowledge of pedagogical theory and learning techniques, which can have a negative impact on student retention and contribute to adjunct-faculty attrition (Lorenzetti, 2019). Often, student success for retention and completion rests in large part upon their efforts (Anft, 2018). Therefore, it is wise to invest in this population and provide training in areas such as classroom organization and management, content presentation, and techniques for fostering learning (Lorenzetti, 2019), particularly given the large number of students they teach.

Mentoring part-time faculty can have a positive institutional impact by fostering increased communications, improved satisfaction with employment, increased feelings of worth and belonging, increased departmental college and university involvement, increased knowledge of learning management systems and technology, increased institutional effectiveness and quality, and an enhanced skill set for contingent faculty (Luna, 2018). Mentoring is particularly important for online adjunct faculty who are spatially detached as well, albeit more challenging. Nevertheless, “[I]f institutions are able to offer online educational successfully to students, it should follow that they can build an infrastructure to facilitate communications, professional development and mentoring” (Luna, 2018).

Including part-time members in faculty development programs allows them to unite with full time faculty through shared professional experiences, and lessens the gap between them both geographically and culturally, resulting in a greater sense of shared institutional identity (Donnelli, Mandernach, & Dailey, 2019). Encouraging them to participate in professional development activities not only demonstrates that they are valued, but also can enhance program efficiency and the student experience (Garcia, McNaughtan & Nehls, 2018). It is a good practice to prepare part-time faculty for their role in the college, for example, by encouraging them to attend workshops at the institution’s center for teaching and learning, familiarizing them with assessment protocols and sharing sample rubrics for assignments (Focarile, 2018). Providing orientation and mentorship programs, access to pedagogical workshops and videos, as well as access to

certifications, such as *Quality Matters*<sup>TM</sup> for online teaching, along with other faculty development activities, helps to build professionalism and a sense of belonging to a community (Hill, 2019).

Relying heavily on part-time faculty without providing enough support for their craft could impair the achievement of institutional goals for quality and completion; moreover, just-in-time hiring practices without performance evaluation procedures can adversely impact the teaching and learning experience (Roney & Ulerick, 2013). Because part-time faculty can be isolated, it is beneficial to integrate them into the academic community. As noted previously they should be incorporated into institutional life by participating in orientation and ongoing professional development activities, as well as being included in institutional databases and systems (Morphew, Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2017). Other options to integrate part-time faculty more fully into the academic community include inviting them to faculty meetings, listing them on departmental websites, providing financial support for professional development, and ensuring formative feedback of their performance (Rowh, 2018).

Typically, only full-time faculty participate in accreditation exercises, serve on hiring committees, and provide oversight to curricular reforms. However, as the percentage of full-time faculty shrinks, the service work load does not; this reality requires full-time faculty to assume greater service loads, which can compromise their research agenda, as well as teaching and learning responsibilities (Nutting, 2003). Including part-time faculty in appropriate roles in institutional affairs can alleviate that stress, to a degree. Developing a sense of community aids the retention of this pool of faculty, and reduces turnover. (Hill, 2019). If possible, part-time faculty should be provided space for interacting with students, library access, photocopying services as well as access to computers (Nutting, 2003). Sponsoring an annual event geared toward part-time faculty allows educators to share tips and to highlight campus resources (Anft, 2018). Annual awards recognizing the contribution of part-time faculty should be encouraged, as well (Roney & Ulerick, 2013). To the extent feasible, multi-year appointment should be considered because the expectation of continuity may prompt part-time faculty to become more vested in the institution, encourage an ongoing relationship with students, and provide a more formal avenue for peer review and formative feedback (Gluckman, 2017). In sum, acknowledging the contribution of part-time faculty and taking steps to assist in their professional development, as well as to include them in the campus community, benefits everyone involved: full-time faculty, part-time faculty, students, and the institution.

### AACSB Classifications

The mission of the AACSB is to foster engagement, accelerate innovation, and amplify impact in business education. As key participants in business education, faculty qualifications and sufficiency are critical components of the AACSB's accreditation standards. Having sufficient faculty who are engaged in the mission of the institution and who contribute to its intellect vitality are crucial. Standard 5 on faculty sufficiency and deployment provides that the school must maintain and deploy "a faculty sufficient to ensure quality outcomes across the range of degree programs it offers and to achieve other components of its mission. Students in all programs, disciplines, locations, and delivery modes have the opportunity to receive instruction from appropriately qualified faculty." This standard defines a participating faculty member as one who is actively and deeply engaged in the activities of the school in matters beyond direct teaching responsibilities. Examples listed include: participation in policy decisions, advising, research, service, as well as directing extracurricular activities, providing academic and career advising, representing the school on institutional committees and participating in the governance of the school by serving on committees responsible for academic policymaking and/or other decisions.

The standard recognizes that, typically, participating faculty are long-term members of the faculty; nevertheless, faculty may be classified as participating regardless of whether 1) their appointments are of a full-time or part-time nature, 2) their position with the school is the faculty member's principal employment, or 3) the school has tenure policies. Therefore, full-time employment at the school is not the litmus test.

In adopting the 2003 revised standards the committee moved away from the fulltime--part-time distinction, which defines a contractual relationship, in favor of “the extent the intellectual capacities of that faculty member are engaged in the school” (Thompson, 2004). Under current standards a participating faculty member may participate in “faculty development activities and have non-teaching assignments, such as advising, as appropriate to the faculty role the school has defined, taking into consideration the depth and breadth of the non-teaching assignment” (AACSB Standard 5, 2013). In other words, these faculty members engage with the institution beyond teaching responsibilities. The movement away from a contractual definition of participating/supporting, for example, recognizes the value that could be added to curriculum development by a working professional adjunct faculty member with a full-time practice who is familiar with market needs and expectations (Thompson, 2004).

In contrast a “supporting faculty member does not, as a rule, participate in the intellectual or operational life of the school beyond the direct performance of teaching responsibilities” (AACSB Standard 5, 2013). Usually, a supporting faculty member is appointed on an ad hoc basis exclusively to fulfill teaching responsibilities for a term or academic year without the expectation of continuation. A supporting faculty member “does not have deliberative or involvement rights on faculty issues, membership on faculty committees, or assigned responsibilities beyond direct teaching functions” (AACSB Standard 5, 2013). In sum, these faculty members only support the teaching function of the school and not its holistic mission. To judge the difference between participating and supporting faculty, an accredited school must adopt and apply criteria for documenting faculty members’ roles that are consistent with its mission and that meet the spirit and intent of Standard 5. “The criteria should address: The activities that are required to attain participating status. The priority and value of different activity outcomes reflecting the mission and strategic management processes. Quality standards required of each activity and how quality is assured. The depth and breadth of activities expected within a typical AACSB accreditation review cycle to maintain participating status.” (AACSB Standard 5, 2013).

One university’s criteria for classifying faculty as participating during the academic year required a minimum of three of the following criteria to be met annually: 1) serve on a department, college or university committee, 2) advise students, 3) advise a business student organization or engages in chapter activities, 3) regularly attend and participate in department meetings, 4) regularly attend and participate in faculty assemblies, 5) participate in the assessment system, 6) attend professional development activities and 7) demonstrate scholarly activity (Polimeni & Burke, 2018). Standard 5 specifies that the criteria selected to classify faculty as participating or supporting must be consistent with the academic unit’s mission. Depending the division of labor across faculty and professional staff, a sufficient number of participating faculty are needed to perform or oversee curriculum development, course development, course delivery, assessment and assurance of learning, other activities that support instructional goals and the achievement of other mission activities. Mission activities include, for example, intellectual contributions, executive education, if appropriate, community service, economic development, institutional service, service in academic organizations, consulting activities, and other expectations the school holds for faculty members. Standard 5 also provides ratios for participating and supporting faculty, with participating faculty members being expected to deliver at least 75 percent of the school's teaching (measured by credit hours, contact hours, or other appropriate metric), and at least 60 percent of the teaching in each discipline, academic program, location, and delivery mode. Participating faculty should be distributed “across programs, disciplines, locations, and delivery modes consistent with the school’s mission” (AACSB Standard 5, 2013). If a “substantial proportion of a business school’s faculty resources hold primary faculty appointments with other institutions, the school must provide documentation of how this faculty model supports mission achievement, overall high quality, and continuous improvement and how this model is consistent with the spirit and intent of this standard,” particularly how the “faculty model is consistent with achieving the research expectations of the school” (AACSB Standard 5, 2013).

Strategies for Integration

The increase in adjunct faculty in institutions of higher education represents a trend that may not abate soon. As discussed previously, it is advisable for colleges and universities to involve part-time faculty in the academic community. Providing professional development activities and supporting both their pedagogical content knowledge as well as their discipline content knowledge enhances the educational experience of the student. Adopting an inclusive approach also connects part-time faculty with the university community so that they are not isolated, but instead are involved in the mission of the school. Standard 5 of the AACSB accreditation standards subtly supports this direction by not necessarily classifying part-time faculty as supporting faculty. Instead, the standard evaluates whether they perform function in support of the mission of the school, and not whether their appointment is full-time. How can faculty members who are part time be considered participating rather than supporting?

Participation in shared governance represents one avenue for inclusion that technology can easily facilitate, even with part-time faculty teaching in distance programs. For online part-time faculty, or even for residential affiliates who are employed elsewhere, Skype®, Zoom®, webinars, and other aids allow for faculty members to participate in faculty meetings (departmental or college), committee meetings, professional development activities offered by the institution through its teaching center or in other events, such as research seminars. Some part-time faculty, both distance and residential affiliates, may be accomplished in their field of expertise and could be included on advisory board appointments for the university, college, or department. Often that expertise could translate into mentoring students or coaching student competitions, or inviting lectures by the affiliate on their subject matter expertise. Establishing a career mentors program is another way to leverage that expertise for the benefit of the students enrolled in both distance and residential programs. Encouraging participation in alumni events offers another conduit for involvement by part-time faculty in the life of the school.

Given the pay scale of part-time instructors, it is not necessarily reasonable to expect them to pay to participate in professional development events. Nevertheless, funding travel for part-time faculty members so that they could present intellectual contributions at conferences and attend development events on campus or elsewhere is certainly more affordable than funding a faculty line. Continuity is important under AACSB standards, as well as being important to part-time faculty. Providing formative feedback on the performance of part-time faculty members, and to the extent possible, offering contract renewal options based upon performance evaluations, allows the benefits of both reflective and forward-looking assurances. To this end, it is advisable to have an application process for differentiating *Participating Affiliates* from *Supporting Adjuncts* with a list of requirements for the classification. This step also helps to delineate the difference between the two groups as required by Standard 5.

For example, one requirement should be that the participating affiliate maintain credentials that would make them *qualified* under AACSB standards, defined as faculty members “who sustain intellectual capital in their fields of teaching, demonstrating currency and relevance of intellectual capital to support the school’s mission, expected outcomes, and strategies, including teaching, scholarship, and other mission components.” (AACSB Standard 15, 2013). Under Standard 15, qualified faculty sustain intellectual capital in their fields of teaching and demonstrate “currency and relevance of intellectual capital to support the school’s mission, expected outcomes, and strategies, including teaching, scholarship, and other mission components” (AACSB Standard 15, 2013). The categories for qualified faculty status consider the initial academic preparation, initial professional experience, and sustained academic and professional engagement as defined in the four classifications of Scholarly Practitioners (SP), Instructional Practitioners (IP), Scholarly Academics (SA), and Practice Academics (PA).

Also, there should be a menu of options for actively and deeply engaging in the activities of the school in matters beyond direct teaching responsibilities (Standard 5). Opportunities include: directing

extracurricular activities, providing academic and career advising, representing the school on institutional committees, joining college committees, participating in course development, delivery and assessment, mentoring students or student projects, producing high-quality and impactful intellectual contributions, engaging in executive education, community service, service in academic organizations, service supporting economic development, and organizational consulting (AACSB Standard 5). Table 1 illustrates a range of potential activities across the functional areas of policy decisions, shared governance, advising, research, and other service commitments.

Table 1: Activities to Support Participating Faculty Status

<b>Policy Decisions/Service</b>	<b>Advising</b>	<b>Research</b>
<i>Faculty Governance</i>	<i>Directing extra-curricular activities</i>	<i>Development Activities</i>
<i>Committees</i>	<i>Academic and career counseling</i>	<i>Intellectual contributions</i>
Serving on College or University committees	Advising student clubs or preparing students for competitions	Funded travel to attend development events at the university or elsewhere
Serving on College or University advisory boards	Being Career Mentors for students in distance or residential programs	Funded travel to present at conferences, symposiums, colloquiums
Participating in departmental and/or college meetings	Participating in alumni events Organizational or economic	Invited participation in professional development programs or speaker series
Participating in course development and peer review of teaching	development consulting	Producing intellectual contributions in support of the school's mission
Participating in curriculum development and assessment	Supervising internships and/or independent studies	

*This table summarizes the three major categories of matters beyond direct teaching responsibilities, i.e., policy decisions/service commitments, advising, and research, complemented with examples of appropriate activities under each heading, the engagement of which could support the status of the contributing faculty classification.*

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This article discusses the increasing number of part-time faculty at institutions of higher education, a trend that is not likely to abate soon. It asserts that making efforts to include this category of faculty into the life of the institution, by committing resources to their professional success and expanding their opportunities for contribution, will benefit stakeholders in higher education. The article also discusses the AACSB standard on faculty sufficiency, and the classification of participating versus supporting faculty, noting that the standard allows part-time faculty to be classified as participating providing they are engaged with, and contribute to, the mission of the institution. For fast-growing programs or situations in which searching a permanent faculty line is not an option, being able to classify part-time faculty as participating could be crucial for compliance with accreditation standards. Finally, the article suggests strategies for incorporating part-time faculty into the life of the institution to ensure quality outcomes across degree programs, to assist with accreditation expectations, and to achieve other components of the mission.

There are limitations to this strategic goal of inclusion. More involvement may not be feasible for all part-time faculty, given their other professional commitments. Further, the collective bargaining in unionized faculties may impose constraints on how part-time faculty are incorporated into the existing structure, particularly given that adjunct faculty are increasingly becoming union members (Edwards & Tolley, 2018). Finally, any future evaluation of this topic could compare the institution of a *Participating Affiliate* program with existing *Executive in Residence* programs, which further a school's mission of quality business education by inviting executives to share their expertise with students. These programs are organized to allow executives to provide, for example, lectures, workshops, career counseling, competition judging, supervision of course projects, and assistance with networking, and thus, may be instructive for a programs designed to incorporate part-time faculty into similar engaged roles.

## REFERENCES

- Anft, Michael (2018) “Colleges Step up Professional Development for Adjuncts,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, vol. 65(16), December 21, 2018, p.1.
- Donnelli, Emily, B. Jean Mandernach, & Amber Dailey (2015). “Development on Demand: Professional Enhancement Resources for a Geographically-Diverse Faculty, Special Report: Best Practices for Training and Retaining Online Adjunct Faculty.” Retrieved April 4, 2019, from *Faculty Focus*: <https://www.facultyfocus.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Best-Practices-for-Training-and-Retaining-Online-Adjunct-Faculty.pdf>.
- Edwards, Kristen & Tolley, Kim (June 3, 2018). “Do Unions Help Adjuncts? What dozens of collective-bargaining agreements can tell us.” Retrieved June 4, 2019, from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Do-Unions-Help-Adjuncts-/243566>.
- “Fast Facts.” Retrieved April 20, 2019, from *National Center for Education Statistics*: <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98>.
- Focarile, Teresa (Aug. 2018). “Adjunct Faculty: A Department Chair’s Guide to Orienting New Instructors.” Retrieved April 3, 2019, from *Academic Impressions*: <https://www.academicimpressions.com/blog/guide-orienting-adjunct-faculty/>
- Frye, Joanna R (2017). “Organizational Pressures Driving the Growth of Contingent Faculty,” *New Directions for Institutional Research*, vol. 2017(176), December 2017, p. 27-39.
- Garcia, Hugo A., Jon McNaughtan & Kim Nehls (2018). “The Current and Future State of Contingent Faculty,” *New Directions of Institutional Research*, vol. 2017(176), December, 2017, p. 111-115.
- Gluckman, Nell (2017). “Universities Take Steps to Improves Working Conditions as Adjuncts,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Vol. 63(32), April 14, 2017, p.6.
- Hill, Christopher (2015). “Giving Part-Time Online Instructors What They Need, Special Report: Best Practices for Training and Retaining Online Adjunct Faculty.” Retrieved April 1, 2019 from *Faculty Focus*: <https://www.facultyfocus.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Best-Practices-for-Training-and-Retaining-Online-Adjunct-Faculty.pdf>.
- Lorenzetti, Jennifer Patterson (2015). “The Virtual Faculty Lounge: Providing Online Faculty Development for Adjunct Instructors, Special Report: Best Practices for Training and Retaining Online Adjunct Faculty.” Retrieved April 1, 2019, from *Faculty Focus*: <https://www.facultyfocus.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Best-Practices-for-Training-and-Retaining-Online-Adjunct-Faculty.pdf>.
- Luna, Gaye (2018) “Making Visible our Invisible Faculty: Mentoring for Contingent Online Faculty,” *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, vol. 18(2), 2018, p. 52-65.
- Monks, James (2009). “Who Are the Part-Time Faculty?” Retrieved April 20, 2019, from *Academe*, American Association of University Professors: <https://www.aaup.org/article/who-are-part-time-faculty#.XF8vi7h7mM8> (July-August 2009).
- Morphew, Christopher, Kelly Ward & Lisa Wolf-Wendel (2017). “Contingent Faculty Composition and Utilization: Perspectives from Independent Colleges and Universities,” *New Directions for Institutional Research*, vol. 2017(176), December 2017, pp. 67-81.

Murphy Nutting, Maureen (2003). "Part-Time Faculty: Why Should We Care?" *New Directions for Higher Education*, No.123, Fall 2003, p. 33-39.

Polimeni, Ralph S. & Jacqueline A. Burke, (2018). "Accounting for Faculty Sufficiency and Qualification Indicators for AACSB International's Accounting and/or Business Accreditation," *Journal of the Academy of Business Education*, vol. 19, Spring 2018, p. 106-117.

Roney, Kristen & Sarah L. Ulerick (2013). "A Roadmap to Engaging Part-Time Faculty in High Impact Practices," *Peer Review, Association of American Colleges & Universities*, June 2013, p. 24-26.

Rossol-Allison, Patrick M. & Natalie J. Alleman Beyers (2011). "The Role of Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty in Student Learning Outcomes." Retrieved April 8 2019, from *AIR 2011 Forum, Toronto, Ontario, Canada*: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED531726.pdf>.

Rowh, Mark (2018). "Paying Up," *University Business*, March 2018, p. 41-43.

Thompson, Kenneth R. (2004). "A Conversation with Milton Blood: The New AACSB Standards," *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, Vol. 3(4), December 2004, p. 429-439.

Way, Dan E. (2018). "With Colleges Shifting to Adjuncts, Teaching Quality May Suffer." Retrieved April 14, 2019, from *The James C. Martin Center for Academic Renewal* (June 22, 2018): <https://www.jamesmartin.center/2018/06/with-colleges-shifting-to-adjuncts-teaching-quality-may-suffer/>.

(2013). "Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation." Retrieved April 3, 2019, from *AACSB International: The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business*: <https://www.aacsb.edu/-/media/aacsb/docs/accreditation/business/standards-and-tables/2018-business-standards.ashx?la=en&hash=B9AF18F3FA0DF19B352B605CBCE17959E32445D9> (last revised July 2018).

## BIOGRAPHY

Debra Burke is a professor of Business Law. Her research appears in law reviews and pedagogy journals such as the *Journal of Legal Studies Education*.