

Timeline and Next Phases of Learning Council's Part-Time FIG

Below is a summary of Learning Council's actions and this FIG activities Since Sept. 2013.

Part-Time Issues FIG Activities Fall 2013

On 6 Sept. 2013 this FIG was approved by Learning Council to investigate how part-time issues impact student success. The need for this FIG was determined after student members of Learning Council described problems they had meeting with Part-Time faculty—who typically lack office space and often have multiple jobs. This problem has the potential to impact many students because administration acknowledged that at least 70% of instruction at Gavilan is provided by part time instructors. Colette Marie McLaughlin, PhD, a part-time instructor, was appointed to lead a Part-Time Issues FIG in terms of student success. This FIG prepared and posted its initial report in advance of the Nov. 1 meeting on Learning Council's iLearn page. This report summarized extensive research findings revealing that the tendency of replacing expensive full-time faculty with low-cost part-time instructors as a means to balance budgets is negatively related to most measures of student success. This FIG's report included analysis of State data on community college budgets, compensation, and staffing levels. These data reveal Gavilan has among the State's highest proportion of part-time community college faculty and one of the highest paid top administrators, in terms wages in proportion to total expenditures. These coincided with Gavilan's staffing of classified support and full-time faculty being respectively 16.5% and 23.7% less than expected while our college's administration staff was 3.9% larger than expected and paid 2% higher than the State average as part-time faculty are were paid 2% lower than the State average. The report highlighted the need for Gavilan to address these disparities. Colette asked for comments. Susan Sweeny claimed the report was not clear and Colette specifically asked Susan other administrators to join the FIG. These requests received a rounding silence.

Part-Time Issues FIG Activities Spring 2014

The FIG consulted with a number of Gavilan part-time instructors during the spring. To help gain insights about Gavilan part-time instructors' concerns through two evolving surveys. Findings from these surveys are described below as are the reasons the chair of this FIG objects to Learning Council voting to remove this FIG from Learning Council's FIGs.

First survey

To help gain insights from Gavilan's diverse populations of part-time instructors, an initial survey of mostly open-ended questions was developed from a generic customer service survey and emailed to part-time (PT)/adjunct/contingent instructors who have email addresses listed on Gavilan's employee directory. Their initial responses yielded a 20%+ response rate.

Analysis of the first survey's responses revealed a range of opinions existed on all issues but responses also reflected research provided over the Fall and revealed most participants:

- a) valued Gavilan's students, its smaller than average class sizes, and collegiality.
- b) expressed concern about students, fairness, and low pay.

Many participants also expressed frustration about being unable to be as responsive to students' needs as they would like due to them being overwhelmed by their need to earn a living wage and many instructors constantly seeking employment and/or working at multiple colleges. Others described their inability to participate in campus activities and feeling they were expected/pressured to put in many hours of unpaid labor over and above required flex hours. Part-time faculty's actual rate of pay (counting unpaid labor indicated by participants) makes this largest employee on campus the lowest paid staff at Gavilan. Comments revealed this low rate of pay is further exacerbated in programs where lopsided proportions of PT to FT instructors require PT instructors to work even more unpaid hours because there are not enough full-time instructors to support these programs, this demand upon their limited time further decreases their ability to support students.

Research provided by the Part-Time Faculty Issues FIG this past year reveals this is a highly relevant FIG in terms of student success. Additionally a recent meeting with GCFA's Board confirmed there is much need for this FIG, albeit this FIG is focused upon learning and is needed to function separately from the union to provide research to develop recommendations grounded in data that could help our college address part-time/adjunct faculty issues that impact student success.

Second survey

In order to quantify qualitative responses, a second survey was developed that enabled participants respond to issues that were identified within the first survey. Additionally, updated email addresses were developed by mass mailing all faculty and helped locate additional participants. The second survey was sent to 147 email addresses and received a 30% response rate. The data provided by the survey are attached. While inequitable/inadequate compensation was viewed as the second most cited variable for impacting ability to benefit students, slightly over a third of the participants were satisfied with their pay and more part-time instructors felt it was easy to get needed support than not easy. Below are summaries of other more highly ranked responses.

1. Most often used job titles to self-describe position:

- Adjunct faculty (41%)
- Part-time instructor and/or faculty (32%)

2. Most often cited benefits of working at Gavilan:

- Contributing/using my expertise (59%)
- Peers are supportive (52%)
- Students are great (50%)

3. Most frequent Flex-Time Activities:

- Department Meetings (67%)
- Professional Development Workshops (67%)
- In-service Workshops/Training (55%)

4. *Most frequently cited obstacles toward providing services to support students:*

- Lack of benefits (64%)
- Inequitable/Inadequate compensation/wages (55%)
- Little/no transparency in decisions about my job (45%)
- Pressured to provide unpaid service (39%)

Part-time faculty did not support the demise of the Part-Time Faculty FIG

At the retreat, Susan Sweeny, requested that this FIG should be disbanded and absorbed by the union and/or other FIGs. Colette Marie McLaughlin objected explaining that this FIG was focused upon student success, and the union's focus is upon needs of instructors, not students. Additionally, Colette requested to be a member of the Instructional Improvement FIG months ago, yet has not been included in that FIG's activities nor have her emails been responded to about that FIG. Further, not one part-time instructor at the meeting supported the request to disband this FIG. Colette has submitted a request to address the Faculty Senate about the disbanding of this FIG. She believes this FIG provides a means to provide facts and data necessary for addressing how Gavilan's disproportionate numbers of part-time instructors impact student success. It is her belief what happened at Learning Council is illustrative of what the majority of part-time/adjunct faculty surveyed noted, those who make decisions at Gavilan do not prioritize needs of Part-time instructors. Finally, the research she provided Learning Council reveals this is not in the best interests of student success.

Efforts of the Part-Time Faculty FIG will be put to use

In closing, Colette Marie McLaughlin has since become the Central Region Executive Board Member for the California Part-time Faculty Association (CPFA). The extensive research provided by the Part-Time Issues FIG—that appears to have been ignored by Gavilan's Learning Council—will be put to use in collaboration with members of this organization's research efforts along with ongoing analysis and research developments. She remains hopeful these efforts will help educate the public and political leaders about the many ways issues related to part-time/adjunct faculty effect student success so they will call for needed changes.