

Student Benefits

Students Benefit from a Majority of Full-time Faculty

Research shows that part-time faculty are highly-qualified instructors who receive similar student ratings to those of full-time faculty. They are as committed to and usually as satisfied with their work as full-time faculty. Contingent faculty are committed to their students—within the constraints of their job duties, their resources, and their pay. Many do more than they are paid for, giving the equivalent of volunteer time to their colleges.

Despite these factors, recent research shows that having too large a proportion of instruction delivered by a contingent faculty workforce **does affect** the learning environment, because of the variety of student needs that cannot be met *outside* the classroom. We support a significant increase in the proportion of full-time tenured faculty on our state's campuses and the fair and equitable treatment of the core of part-time faculty who serve our students.



- **Graduation rates:** A recent study by UW Professor Dan Jacoby shows “the part-time faculty ratio of an institution significantly and negatively affected its graduation rate.”¹ **The Spellman Commission and other recent reports** have a goal of improving graduation rates.
- **Advising:** The Community College Survey of Student Engagement showed that “Despite students' preference for faculty advisers, about 10 percent of full-time and 40 percent of part-time instructors reported spending no time advising students....That means many students may never receive academic advising from an instructor, because two thirds of faculty members at 2-year colleges nationwide teach part time.”²
- **Student success:** The National Survey of Student Engagement showed that “Students who participate in collaborative learning and educational activities outside the classroom and who *interact more with faculty members* get better grades, are more satisfied with their education, and are more likely to remain in college. But the gains from those practices are even greater for students from underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds, or from those who come to college less prepared than their peers.” Many part-time faculty have to teach on multiple campuses or have other careers, and they often lack suitable office space, which makes it difficult for them to be as available to students outside of the classroom as are full-time faculty.³

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- **Availability:** Full-time faculty are generally more available to offer independent study, research experience, and individual help to students.
- **Pressures of work:** The current core of full-time faculty, which has not increased as the number of students has increased, cannot adequately support student learning and institutional needs outside of class through necessary committee work, accreditation studies, curriculum and program review, tenure review, grant-writing, and hiring obligations
- **Grade inflation:** Several studies have shown that part-time faculty tend to give higher grades than tenured faculty. The studies speculate that this effect is created by their insecure positions, which are highly dependent on anonymous student evaluations, rather than to the quality of their teaching.⁴

¹ Dan Jacoby, "Uneven labor standards undermine community colleges," *The Seattle Times*, October 12, 2006.

¹ Robin Wilson, "Study Sees Link Between Part-Time Instructors and Graduation Rates," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 27, 2006.

² Elyse Ashburn, "2-Year-College Students Rarely Use Advisers, Survey Shows," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 1, 2006.

³ Paula Wasley, "Underrepresented Students Benefit Most From 'Engagement,'" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 17, 2006.)

⁴ "Even after controlling for the impact of other factors that could explain the differences, grades tend to be higher in classes taught by part-time faculty faculty." Brenda S. Sonner, "A Is for 'Part-time faculty': Examining Grade Inflation in Higher Education," *Journal of Education for Business*, v76 i1, (Sept 2000): 5.

⁴ A study by sociologists Melanie Moore and Richard Trahan (1998) found that "Achieved organizational status in terms of rank and tenure is significantly related to grades awarded. Instructors with less secure positions give higher grades on average than instructors with more secure positions." "Tenure Status and Grading Practices," *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 41, No. 4, (1998):775-781.

⁴ "The authors found that grade inflation was related to faculty status with significant differences seen between mean grade point averages of students being taught by tenured and part-time faculty faculty and between those students taught by nontenured and part-time faculty faculty. They also found that average grades given by part-time faculty were higher than those of either tenured or nontenured faculty. Thus, the results indicate the increased use of part-time faculty faculty exacerbates grade inflation in higher education." Boualem Kezim, Susan E Pariseau, Frances Quinn, "Is grade inflation related to faculty status?" *Journal of Education for Business*, (Jul/Aug 2005):358.

⁴ "Evidence is found that part-time and nontenure-track instructors give higher grades even after accounting for many alternative explanations for grade differences." (Joseph K. Cavanaugh, "What did you get? A faculty grade comparison" *Quality Assurance in Education*, 14:2, (2006):179- 186