

# Recognizing and Sustaining Adjunct Faculty Engagement

Michael Bates, Ed.D.

Dean of Teaching, Learning, and Distance Education

Board of Trustees Meeting - December 12, 2018

## Understanding the Needs of Part-Time Faculty at Six Community Colleges

By Susan Bickerstaff and Octaviano Chavarín

Over the past decade, community colleges have engaged in an array of reforms focused on increasing student learning, persistence, and completion. This work has included reforms to developmental education, advising, and student support services. And more recently, community colleges in many states have embarked on whole-institution reforms designed to impact multiple dimensions of the student experience, from intake to completion. Yet, within this broad reform movement, an area that has garnered less attention is the working conditions of adjunct faculty. In community colleges, about 67 percent of instructional faculty are part-time (Hurlburt & McGarrah, 2016). A long history of research has shown that part-time faculty work under challenging conditions with limited institutional support (e.g., Kezar & Sam, 2013; Kezar, 2013; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2008). Not unrelated to these circumstances are research findings suggesting that students taught by part-time faculty have less favorable outcomes in terms of persistence, completion, and transfer (Eagan & Jaeger, 2009; Ran & Xu, 2017; Yu, Campbell, & Mendoza, 2015). Thus, a comprehensive vision for the improvement of community colleges must include improving the working conditions of adjunct faculty, as doing so may well have attendant implications for student success.

This recognition is the rationale for *Engaging Adjunct Faculty in the Student Success Movement*, a project launched in 2016 by Achieving the Dream (ATD), a nonprofit organization focused on evidence-based, institutional improvement of community colleges to promote student success. The project acknowledges the critical role faculty play not only in supporting student learning and course persistence but also in shaping students' broader perceptions and experiences at college (Rendon, 1994; Tinto, 2004). Six ATD leader colleges<sup>1</sup> were selected through a competitive process to receive funds and technical assistance to develop and pilot scalable strategies to engage and



**A comprehensive vision for the improvement of community colleges must include improving the working conditions of adjunct faculty.**



*A comprehensive vision for the improvement of community colleges must include improving the working conditions of adjunct faculty.*

## Understanding the Needs of Part-Time Faculty at Six Community Colleges

By Susan Bickerstaff and Octaviano Chavarin

Over the past decade, community colleges have engaged in an array of reforms focused on increasing student learning, persistence, and completion. This work has included reforms to developmental education, advising, and student support services. And more recently, community colleges in many states have embarked on whole-institution reforms designed to impact multiple dimensions of the student experience, from intake to completion. Yet, within this broad reform movement, an area that has garnered less attention is the working conditions of adjunct faculty. In community colleges, about 67 percent of instructional faculty are part-time (Hurlburt & McGarrah, 2016). A long history of research has shown that part-time faculty work under challenging conditions with limited institutional support (e.g., Kezar & Sam, 2013; Kezar, 2013; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2008). Not unrelated to these circumstances are research findings suggesting that students taught by part-time faculty have less favorable outcomes in terms of persistence, completion, and transfer (Eagan & Jaeger, 2009; Ran & Xu, 2017; Yu, Campbell, & Mendoza, 2015). Thus, a comprehensive vision for the improvement of community colleges must include improving the working conditions of adjunct faculty, as doing so may well have attendant implications for student success.

This recognition is the rationale for *Engaging Adjunct Faculty in the Student Success Movement*, a project launched in 2016 by Achieving the Dream (ATD), a nonprofit organization focused on evidence-based, institutional improvement of community colleges to promote student success. The project acknowledges the critical role faculty play not only in supporting student learning and course persistence but also in shaping students' broader perceptions and experiences at college (Rendon, 1994; Tinto, 2004). Six ATD leader colleges<sup>1</sup> were selected through a competitive process to receive funds and technical assistance to develop and pilot scalable strategies to engage and



**A comprehensive vision for the improvement of community colleges must include improving the working conditions of adjunct faculty.**

Providing Clear and Accessible Information about Resources and Policies

Inviting Part-time Faculty Perspectives and Feedback

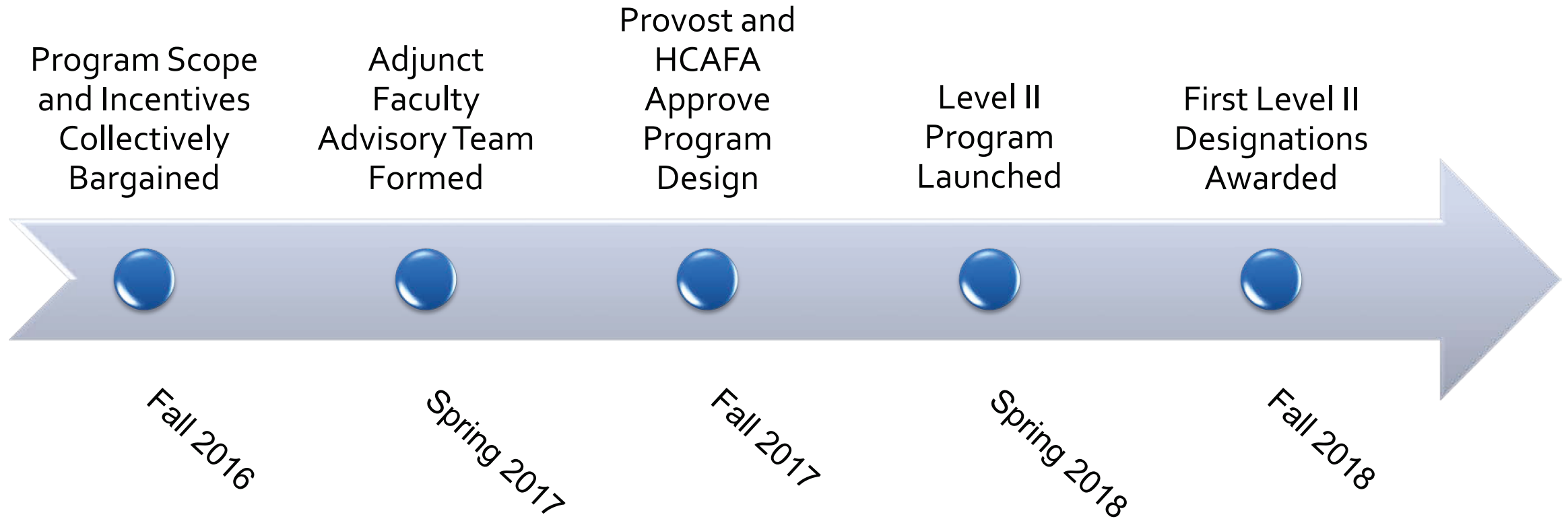
Creating Opportunities for Collaboration and Connection

Assessing Practices Related to Compensation and Advancement

# Level II Adjunct Faculty Engagement Program

Evidence of a body of work in the areas of professional development and college service...

- 2.5% pay increase
- Increase in course assignment and priority
- Guaranteed interview for full-time faculty position



# Level II Program Design



# ePortfolio Development

Built within Blackboard

Can be shared publicly

Includes:

- Professional development history
- Examples of classroom implementation
- College service history





# Profile of Level II Adjunct Faculty

29 faculty awarded Level II designation by review committee

17 transfer faculty

9 career program faculty

2 counseling faculty

1 library faculty

## Teaching at Multiple Colleges

**College Average – 40%**

**Level II Cohort – 62%**

## Full-time Faculty Aspirations

**College Average – 59%**

**Level II Cohort – 76%**



# Institutional Impact

- Continued engagement in professional development
- Attract and retain talented adjunct faculty
- More students impacted by adjunct faculty who have demonstrated excellent instruction and professional development
  - 62% indicated that the additional course assignment was their primary motivation for participating



**Khursheed Ichhaporia, Math & Science, Biology**

I like the ePortfolio feature the best because it allowed me to coalesce all of my thoughts about student success and student learning and put it down. I realized when I looked at the ePortfolio how far I've come, how much I've grown, and where I'm headed.

**Cindy Miller, Career & Technical Programs, Computer Information Systems**

There are so many adjuncts on campus so it was good to collaborate and communicate with them, and to learn from each other.