

Priorities for Adjunct Faculty

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Introduction

Adjunct faculty are a loyal and experienced group of individuals who provide instruction and other services for students at RIT. Although they perform work equivalent to full-time faculty, they are compensated at a much lower rate and receive almost no real benefits. More than 25% of all adjunct faculty have been at RIT for 10 or more years, with 15% having been at the Institute for over 15 years. More than 50% are over 50 years of age. Nineteen percent have doctoral degrees and over 44% have master's degrees. Seven percent are currently pursuing terminal degrees. Many express satisfaction in working with RIT students and their colleagues. However, there is dissatisfaction with more than a few aspects of their situation.

The RIT chapter of AAUP has conducted a survey of adjunct faculty to determine their backgrounds, needs, interests, and concerns. An analysis of the survey results shows that adjunct faculty at RIT have a number of priorities that they would like addressed by the university administration. The following are a list of those priorities along with related survey results and other pertinent information.

Priorities

1. The number one priority for adjunct faculty at RIT is an increase in pay to make up for that lost to inflation since 2003, and along with that, the future provision of regular increases to adjunct faculty at the same level as that given each year to full-time faculty and staff.

According to the survey conducted by the RIT chapter of AAUP, more than 46% of RIT adjunct faculty members are the sole support of themselves or their families. Only slightly more than half have full-time jobs anywhere in addition to their adjunct teaching at RIT. Nearly 30% also teach as an adjunct elsewhere with 13% of all RIT adjuncts teaching at more than one other institution. For 14%, adjunct teaching at RIT is their only employment. More than 45% report they are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their RIT pay, with none reporting they are very satisfied.

This belies the traditional view of adjuncts as persons who are employed full-time in their fields and who are called in to teach a specific course related to their particular expertise. Rather, the suggestion here is that just short of a majority of RIT adjunct faculty members rely upon their compensation from RIT as a substantial portion of their total income. This portion has not kept pace with inflation since there appears to have been no general merit or cost-of-living increases for adjunct faculty since 2003, with some adjuncts claiming not to have received an increase for 15 to 20 years. At the same time, other faculty and staff have received regular increases that have kept pace with inflation. According to the Bureau of Labor statistics, adjunct pay would need to increase by 18% to have the same purchasing power as it did in 2003 which is the last year in which adjuncts (at least in the College of Liberal Arts) received an increase.

This does not tell the whole story, since for adjuncts, commuting cost is much higher per unit of income and commuting costs have increased much faster than the rate of inflation. Gasoline prices alone have gone from \$1.59 national average per gallon of regular at the start of the 2003-04 academic year to \$4.07 as of June 28th, 2008. Local costs are higher, averaging

around \$4.25. For many adjuncts, it is also necessary to pay an increasingly higher cost for reserved parking in order to insure that they can get on or off campus quickly enough to move back and forth to other jobs and commitments. Other costs related to vehicle use have also increased.

National organizations that represent both adjunct and full-time faculty, including NEA, AFT, and AAUP, all support the principle of pay equity for part-time faculty. RIT has been moving in the opposite direction however, widening the gap by giving annual increases to full time faculty, while leaving adjuncts with static compensation that declines in true value.

These are comments related to pay that were made on the survey:

- When you divide the pay for an adjunct contract by the number of hours typically worked, the pay per hour is far less than what can be made in the industry. This makes the retention of professionals as adjuncts very difficult
- Pay for an adjunct is horrible, and the total lack of benefits is unconscionable -- especially in light of amount of money RIT takes in per course... Also, I have two doctorates, teach in COLA, and receive less money per credit hour than people with lesser degrees in other colleges. When I said something to the administrators in COLA, they said they could not do anything about it because based on the amount of money the COLA receives; it has to divide it up in a manner to pay for all their adjuncts regardless of the qualifications of the teachers. Thus, I make less than people with just master's degrees in other colleges.
- I have taught on and off for a total of 10 years (over a period of 15 years). The adjunct faculty contract salary offered to me has basically not changed over the years, even though during the same period of time the inflation rate has increased by double digits and student tuition at RIT has also increased by high double digits.
- ... I am in my 5th year as an adjunct professor and my pay is the same now as it was in 2004. Primarily, I do not do this for the money, but as the cost of everything else goes up, it would be nice to receive a little extra compensation year over year.
- I have been an adjunct at RIT for over 20 yrs. My greatest complaint concerns the amount we are paid to teach. While my classes were once a part of the College of Continuing Education, I received periodic raises. For the past 15 or so yrs my classes were transferred to another college on campus. This college does not give pay raises to adjuncts. I have been working for the same stipend per class per quarter for the past 15 yrs in spite of inflation and the raising cost of living no salary adjustments have been made. This I find to be deplorable. The bottom line for me is this; I can take it or leave it. I have no other options. Yet, my classes have more than doubled in terms of enrollment and I find the students to be less qualified and prepared for higher education. I have a friend who began teaching at RIT less than a year ago. He teaches at another college on campus. He was hired at the same rate I have been making for the past 15 yrs, and within the past 6 months he has received enough in pay raises so that he now makes more than I do.
- In my particular department (as may be the case in many others), the adjunct instructors far outnumber the full-time faculty. We are teaching applied music courses which require that we teach each individual student in our section one-on-one, each week of the quarter. We do NOT meet for one or two class meetings of 2-3 hours each

week, but, in my case, provide 12-14 hours of individual instruction each week. Due to the specific nature of the work we do, we are compensated far below the market rate for our skill levels and abilities and the nature of music instruction is to be paid by each student by the hour (as in a private studio) at a rate ranging from \$40-60. As I compute my current compensation, my average is \$15-19 per lesson.

- I love teaching but it makes no economic sense any more. It distracts from my self-employed business. The lack of support from the school is discouraging. They supply the class requirements and let you on your own.
- I was a fulltime professor for over xx years and retired; I now teach one course each regular quarter ONLINE ONLY, so many of the questions (e.g, weekly commute time) do not apply. I do not know how much is paid me per credit; I receive a lump sum listed in the letter of appointment. The amount paid, however, has not increased in the past several years.
- I did it seven quarters, 2003-07, I was fine with it in general. I think the pay scale is low, and was disappointed that in 5 years it never changed, even after I received extremely strong student evaluations (best of all courses in my department 2 of the last 3 quarters I taught)...
- As a full professor at a local community college, I am paid significantly more per credit hour than at RIT...
- While I have been told that I am at the highest rate of pay for an adjunct based upon my degree, I have been at the same rate for my entire five years here, and respectfully believe that I am due a pay increase.
- As a full time faculty member I was paid more than twice as much for the same course I am teaching as an adjunct, and I had a budget and a teaching assistant.
- ... I love teaching at RIT, I do appreciate the tuition benefits, the pay/course could be much higher
- ...Pay rates are inequitable. Experience means little or nothing...
- MCC has an adjunct salary schedule which increases regularly with negotiated contracts. There is also a process for promotion (adjunct instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, even "full" adjunct professor) which one becomes eligible for every four years. Each promotion brings a modest raise. At RIT we just keep getting the same offer (in CLA, anyway) year after year, no matter what the cost of gasoline, etc.

2. A second priority is pay equity between colleges. As can be seen from the comments, there is the perception that some colleges pay far more than others. The principle of equal pay for equal work is long established in the U.S., yet there appear to be substantial differences between colleges at RIT. An informal survey shows that adjuncts in the College of Liberal Arts are compensated near the bottom of the Institute-wide pay scale and there is no opportunity either based upon living costs or merit to receive an increase. The College of Liberal Arts also assigns adjuncts to some of the largest classes, and in some cases, class sizes have been recently expanded by 10% with no increase in compensation for the additional work involved. It is understandable that some flexibility may be required to recruit adjuncts in fields where there is high demand for their services, however, the general principle of equity based upon workload and qualifications should apply. Therefore, there needs to be some reasonable scheme to achieve substantial pay equity within a short period of time.

3. Adjuncts also need a clear promotion path, standardized titles across colleges and preferably a means of attaining academic rank. Adjuncts also want priority consideration for full-time positions, either as tenure track faculty or as lecturers. Even Monroe Community College affords adjunct faculty academic rank and the opportunity for periodic promotion. Adjuncts there with several years of service are also guaranteed an interview for full time positions that become open. From the survey:

- I think RIT is an excellent place to work as an adjunct professor. I would hope someday I can work full time in my Department
- It would be nice to see long adjunct service rewarded with lecturer position appointments after a set number of consecutive terms. I feel that I am being abused by the system because I am local. My classes are among the most demanded within my college and yet I get no reward for this. I have been teaching for over five years for as many courses as the school can legally hire me. I think the school ought to recognize my value and honor it rather than abuse my strong commitment to the students that keeps me teaching. My student evaluations are always glowing and positive yet my Dean feels that that is inconsequential. In addition, as a local resource and a graduate of the school's MFA program that according to her I could never and I quote "rise to the top" ie. she will never hire me out right. Yet I am good enough to continually re-hire. I would say that if RIT hires an individual to teach for more than 2 years the same courses then that individual ought to be hired as a regular faculty member, not Tenure tracked but Lecturer and paid on par with full faculty of equal experience for courses taught.
- I should note that this Quarter I am a Lecturer. This is so because I am teaching at American University in Kosovo. However, I have been given no expectations that I would be a Lecturer, not an Adjunct, if I return to RIT... Rather, my biggest complaint is that there is no clear-cut career advancement for adjuncts. More specifically, I have all the necessary credentials and experience for a full-time position. (Note: since coming to RIT, I have finished my doctorate). I have, so far, waited patiently and in vain for a full-time slot to open. To get to the point, I have been happy at RIT and would like to continue, but am not sure if there is a future...
- I am an RIT alum (MBA 1977) who would love to teach here full time. I teach business courses and was encouraged to apply for a FT position - UNTIL I mentioned that my Doctorate is not from an AACSB institution! Because of that (in my opinion) ridiculous rule, RIT Business School will not consider me for a FT tenure position, but will still hire me to teach two courses every quarter! My experience and my evaluations indicate that I would perform very well. It's very FRUSTRATING!!
- ...a tenure track position opened in the department, I didn't make it through the first "cuts" applying for the job...I currently do. No interview was even offered...
- ... And when I requested an opportunity to meet with the Dean about a full-time teaching position, I was told that "you need to write a book." Between teaching classes at up to three different colleges during the same quarter/semester, when am I supposed to get the time and money to write my book. (Will RIT help?) Finally, when I did apply for full-time positions (especially as a person of color), one occasion, when I did not even receive an interview (after all the talk about the need for diversity), I sent a letter to the Office of Cultural Pluralism requesting that they look into the search process. I was told that admittedly there were problems on campus,

but please “be patient.” That was ten years ago. On the second occasion, after going through the interview process, I was told that RIT decided to stop the search because of changes in the strategic plan (whatever that is supposed to mean). I have also applied for other positions but have not received an interview. I am still being patient...

- It'd be nice if RIT offered full-time, permanent COLA positions to qualified adjuncts. If the college needs so many sections of writing courses taught year after year, it should commit to hiring a few more permanent instructors.
 - ...The other concern is the fact that I will not even be considered for a full time position without a PHD (even though I would be willing to work towards one). I am told this is an RIT policy for which I believe the students and the RIT brand suffer. Those of use with 20 years+ of industry experience will deliver a better product (students) to the market than a person with a PHD and limited industry experience. I feel there is little debate here based on my observations and feedback from my students.
 - ...RIT, however, can do more to help its adjuncts. That so many schools (unofficially of course) do not consider their adjuncts for advancement to full time tenure track positions speaks to a national prejudice regarding adjuncts as being only worthy of consideration as lower tier mercenaries, presumably because we have devalued ourselves by settling for less. This is usually the first of a considerable number of hoops to be jumped through to make the instructor experienced and therefore properly credentialed. Much time and preparation, and no small amount of creative energy are expended in what is often an enthusiastic and altruistically loyal exercise in service to the school and its students. This should not be rewarded with polite indifference and condescension when we step up to apply for the very jobs we have sometimes help craft. Rather the opposite should be mandated; first and preferential consideration should be given to adjuncts when considering applicants for full time, tenure track employment (particularly when such jobs fall within the specific skill sets and experience of said instructors). What does it say for an institution of higher learning that hires a work force responsible for teaching close to half of its classes, though concurrently considered unworthy of full time employment and pay, tenure and benefits?
4. Another important need is for access to office and storage space for all adjuncts. Currently, some schools provide space for adjuncts adjacent to teaching areas. Others provide none or else substandard space in out-of-the-way locations with no telephones, computer connections or storage. Adjuncts need private space to meet with students about grades and other issues that cannot be discussed in public areas without violating the provisions of FERPA. As mentioned in the survey:
- ...I am a retired individual...some days I carry in over 50 pounds of books etc. (since I have no office) from the outskirts of lot H to buildings 6, 9 or 1 ... I have never been treated this shabbily.
 - ... No offices are currently available; computer support is minimal and begrudged...
 - ... The adjunct office has no phone, no printer, and is across campus from my classrooms...
 - We need reliable office space, big enough to meet with students, with access to computers. Right now my students have to meet me in Wally's or in a hallway.

- ... I would like a shared place to leave materials and to meet with students... I would like the students in my classes to have the same support as they would have in a regular class...
5. Benefits are also a priority although there were a wide range of responses to this issue. Over 71 % of adjuncts expressed dissatisfaction with benefits offered by the Institute. Some 30 % of adjuncts indicated that if RIT were to offer health insurance, it would be the sole insurance for either themselves (16%) or their entire family/household (14%). This would indicate that 30 % of RIT adjunct faculty are among the ranks of the 48 million Americans who lack any health insurance coverage. The survey indicated that 43 % of RIT adjuncts would appreciate paid or partially paid health insurance provided by RIT. Twenty-one percent would even accept a self-paid plan. Dental insurance was important for 40% and a retirement plan with matching funds was requested by 63%. The most sought after benefit was free reserved parking, with 69% finding it desirable.
 6. A benefits related issue is a change in tuition waiver policy to make it more widely known and more flexible, including a provision to bank benefits for future use. Some adjuncts were not initially aware that these benefits were available. Others believe that the requirement that such benefits be used only during quarters when the adjunct is teaching greatly reduces their value. This benefit, the only substantial one for adjuncts at RIT, has been reduced several times in recent years, requiring longer waiting periods and making it even less valuable. Here are comments from the survey:
 - For my circumstances, RIT has been very good, though it seems to me that there should be some means to bank tuition benefits. I have taught very many RIT courses, often two or three at once, then none for one or more quarters due to department needs. I don't have time to use tuition benefits when I'm teaching!
 - ... I did appreciate the tuition reimbursement that is available after 3 quarters, but I had to discover that on my own, no one offered it up even though they knew I had a son here... [Editorial Note: Tuition policy for family members of newly hired adjuncts has changed to require teaching for 15 quarters before they become available. For some adjuncts who teach only during Fall quarter, this could mean 15 years.]
 - I would like free tuition...
 - Full tuition waiver would be invaluable to me. My college has raised the level of education required to apply for full- time employment to a PhD
 7. Parking was an issue mentioned by many. Adjunct faculty who work at other jobs or businesses need to be able to get on and off campus quickly. Since many do not have office or storage space, they need to be in close proximity to their classrooms as they carry computers, books and other materials from their cars to their classrooms and back. With more than half of RIT adjuncts being over 50 years of age, this is an even more important issue.
 - Reserved parking should be given freely to ALL faculty...
 - My main area of complaint is the parking... I am a retired individual and can not believe that I do not have the courtesy of free parking a reasonable distance from where I teach...
 - Free Reserved Parking... would be great.
 8. Adjunct faculty want representation in the Faculty Senate. As a group of nearly 340 individuals that teach more than 40% of classes at RIT, it seems reasonable that adjuncts be

given representation in university affairs. Representation at the department and college level is also appropriate.

9. Adjuncts need an orientation to RIT, its facilities and benefits. To improve the quality of instruction offered by adjunct faculty, it is necessary to inform them about access to e-mail, MyCourses, library resources, computer labs and other facilities that affect interaction with students and student outcomes. The survey suggests that some adjuncts are not aware of the few available benefits. Having adjuncts understand these may produce higher satisfaction and retention.
10. Many adjunct faculty do research, publish, make local and national presentations, and perform service to their professions and communities. These contributions should be recognized by inclusion in RIT publications and public relations efforts. They should also be recognized in some way through institutional standing and compensation. Adjunct faculty who have been at RIT for at least a few years should be listed on departmental websites and in university and college catalogs.

In short, many adjunct faculty members are happy with their responsibilities and their students, but unhappy with the working conditions that they face on a daily basis. The primary complaint is unfairness in pay, with adjuncts being denied the same annual increases given all other employees at RIT and apparently being expected to work in perpetuity for the same compensation. A substantial adjustment is in order to compensate for past losses of effective income as a result of this policy. A calculator provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that an 18% increase in 2008 would just make up for the increases in cost of living since 2003, the last time the majority of adjuncts received a raise in pay. In addition, pay equity is a concern because adjuncts in the various colleges are paid widely varying rates for equivalent work. Another issue is that in most colleges there is no academic rank or opportunity for advancement, and adjuncts are apparently considered unqualified to hold tenure track positions teaching the same courses that they do as adjuncts.

Adjuncts would also appreciate a more flexible tuition waiver policy that would allow the use of tuition credits during periods when an adjunct is not teaching. Many are too busy to use the credit during quarters in which they are teaching classes. Office and storage space are also important, with many adjuncts having no place to meet with students or to keep frequently used materials. Parking is an issue because adjuncts need to be able to get on and off campus quickly to meet their other responsibilities outside of RIT. Adjuncts also need representation at the department, college, and university level.

It is important to consider that adjunct faculty who teach at RIT can now find more remunerative and convenient opportunities to teach elsewhere in the community and across the country. Locally, both the University of Rochester and Monroe Community College pay more on average than RIT for equivalent work. However, it should also be understood that competition for adjunct faculty is no longer solely a local issue. Online education is expanding rapidly and many online programs are compensating adjunct faculty at higher rates than at RIT or allowing them to teach more and smaller classes. Factoring in the absence of commuting and parking costs (which for some adjuncts at RIT can be as high as \$500 per quarter) and the ability to work at home, saving commuting time for more productive activities, this may be a better opportunity for many of the current adjunct faculty than continuing with RIT. The RIT chapter of AAUP and the adjunct faculty would appreciate prompt attention to and addressing of these concerns.

