

## Faculty

### University Adjuncts Are Often Denied a Share of Shared Governance, Study Finds

By Peter Schmidt

Adjuncts remain largely excluded from faculty senates at most research universities, according to a groundbreaking study of which types of instructors can serve on such bodies.

Among the more than 100 research universities examined in the study, about two-thirds had faculty senates that were off-limits to adjunct instructors who had less than half the workload of a full-time faculty member.

The remainder of institutions were fairly evenly split between those with faculty senates that were much more open to non-tenure-track faculty members and those with faculty senates that more rigidly excluded them. About a sixth of the universities examined had faculty senates open to any adjunct faculty member, regardless of workload, while the faculty senates at another sixth precluded any adjunct involvement and were restricted to tenured or tenure-track professors.

The study, being presented in St. Louis this week at the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, represents the first attempt by researchers to quantify adjuncts' involvement in shared governance by examining faculty senates' eligibility criteria.

A paper summarizing the study's results says its finding of widespread exclusion of part-time faculty members shows that "many institutions have a considerable ways to go" when it comes to giving part-time instructors "a voice and meaningful role in institutional-level governance."

#### Not What the AAUP Recommends

If some adjunct faculty members actually have little interest in getting involved in faculty senates, "I wonder how much of that is due somewhat to the culture that institutions have," said one of the researchers behind the study, Willis A. Jones, an assistant professor of higher education at the University of Kentucky. He conducted the analysis with Wayne D. Lewis, an assistant professor of educational-leadership studies at Kentucky, and Neal H. Hutchens, an associate professor of education at Pennsylvania State University at University Park. They were assisted by two graduate students: David Brown at Kentucky and Paul Andrade at Penn State.

The picture that their study paints is at odds with the recommendations of the American Association of University Professors, which in January issued a report arguing that eligibility for voting or holding office in shared-governance bodies "should be the same for all faculty regardless of full- or part-time status."

The AAUP's report conceded that integrating contingent faculty members into college governance posed difficult questions, such as how to compensate such faculty members for governance-related activities, how to protect non-tenured faculty members' expression of opinion, and how to prevent administrators from unduly pressuring those with little job security.

But, the report argued, "no faculty member should be excluded from participation in governance because of the appointment conditions over which most have little control."

#### 'A Lot of Nuance'

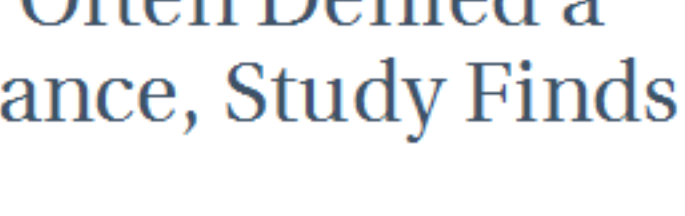
The researchers behind the study conducted it from August until last month by visiting university websites and closely examining faculty handbooks and faculty-senate constitutions and bylaws. They began their analysis with a random sample of 137 research universities, but ended up winnowing that number down to 105 after excluding institutions that lacked faculty senates or had faculty-senate policies that were unclear or unavailable online.

The 105 universities "surprised us with regards to the diversity of their policies," Mr. Jones said in an interview. "We thought there would be much more uniformity," he said, but instead the researchers found "a lot of nuance."

Similar results arose from a survey of faculty-senate leaders three years ago by an AAUP subcommittee on contingent faculty members and governance. That survey had a low response rate and other shortcomings, however, prompting the subcommittee to caution against using it to draw broad conclusions about higher education.

More than half of the adjuncts who have provided information about their working conditions to *The Chronicle's Adjunct Project* said they had no role in faculty governance. They do not represent a random sample of colleges, however, and come from a wider array of institutions than were covered either by the AAUP survey, whose respondents were mainly at doctoral or comprehensive institutions, or by the analysis of faculty-senate eligibility rules being presented this week.

The latest study also has important limitations, the paper summarizing it says. Among them, some of the documents viewed online might be out of date, and some are so ambiguous that it will take follow-up calls by researchers to confirm they were interpreted correctly. The paper characterizes the difficulty the researchers encountered in making sense of faculty-senate eligibility standards as emblematic of the problems non-tenure-track faculty members face in seeking a role in shared governance.



Comments (24)

### Most Popular

- 1. In Making Campuses Safe for Women, a Traveasy of Justice for Men
- 2. White Activist Wins Trustee Post After Implying He Is Black
- 3. Community Colleges Get Strategic About Enrollment
- 4. The STEM Crisis: Reality or Myth?
- 5. We Must Prepare Ph.D. Students for the Complicated Art of Teaching

Jobs by **Vitate** Search 5,445 opportunities

Browse by Position Type: All Types | Faculty/Research | Administrative | Executive | Jobs Outside Academe

Search by Keyword: POSITION TYPE KEYWORDS All Types Search

Top Jobs: Assistant Professor in Early Chri... University of Miami

Post a Job: **Vitate** is your link to top academic talent.

### Academe Today

Daily e-newsletter. Keep up with all that's happening in higher education with a free Chronicle report, e-mailed to you every weekday morning.

SIGN UP

### 24 comments

Leave a message...

Oldest Community My Disqus 14 Share

**Avatar libraryuser** · 3 days ago Does anyone at the AAUP demonstrate common sense? Does any business involve its "casual labor" or part-time staff in how to run the business at a policy level? Yes, you protect them with labor laws, but they have no inherent stake in the business, and they have no significant professional knowledge of its operations.

**Avatar misoulahead** → libraryuser · 3 days ago Except that adjuncts do know how the operations of a university are run, or should.

**Avatar chedie** → libraryuser · 3 days ago A university is not a business, and most adjuncts are well aware of how colleges operate..

**Avatar BemusedObserver2** → libraryuser · 3 days ago Exactly--this is insane. And it's an insult to non-teaching staff. The idea that an adjunct faculty member should have more of a say in the governance of the university than a longtime full-time staff member is just a further fetishization of the faculty role.

**Avatar robtmscott** → libraryuser · 3 days ago Actually, most businesses involve part-time staff making decisions in how to run the business at a policy level. They are called Boards of Directors.

**Avatar nfmorg** → robtmscott · a day ago Beautiful. Never thought about that--and, the "interlocking directorate" phenomena of all these high-flying networked corporate "part-timers." very good.

**Avatar concerned2011** → libraryuser · 3 days ago What's next, a learned study proving that the sun rises in the east? Can we be surprised that most full-time faculty members would not be willing to elect a part-timer to represent their views and set priorities at the university's most powerful forum?

**Avatar wassall** · 3 days ago Since adjuncts often teach at several colleges simultaneously, whose interests would they represent on one college's faculty senate?

**Avatar nfmorg** → wassall · a day ago Maybe the interests of students? Their own interests as faculty who are, more often than not, part-time not by choice but by dictate of an arbitrary rule that "caps" their hours and compels them to cobble together a living? The interests of all faculty in this increasingly distorted world of high ed, where all faculty are under pressure and might well consider the wisdom of cooperation across arbitrary divide-and-conquer borders? Alan Trevithick, adjunct, part-time, not by choice, at Westchester Community College, Laguardia Community College, Fordham University.

**Avatar stinkcat** · 3 days ago I spent the last academic year as a contingent faculty member and one of my favorite benefits was that I had no role in governance. I received more money than I get in my tenured position for fewer classes and no meetings. How can you beat that!

**Avatar oldcommprof** → stinkcat · 2 days ago Seems you don't value the faculty's role in the life and future of the institution. Exactly the type of person who should stay away. Service has long been treated as the red-headed step-child and you're a good example of why that is so.

**Avatar abichel** → oldcommprof · 2 days ago If the state of higher education today is reflective of the "service" of which you speak I think I'll side with stinkcat.

**Avatar abrower1234** · 2 days ago If faculty governance actually had anything to do with the way universities are run anymore, then this might be an issue. But as a tenured full professor, I don't feel like I have a voice, either.

**Avatar ralph12345** · 2 days ago I have listened for many years about the adverse situation of adjuncts. They are poorly paid, often drive for hours between jobs, lack proper office facilities, and now they apparently do not have sufficient involvement in governance.

I admit to being an economist. From my perspective the market has been consistently telling them that there is an excess of adjunct teachers, thus explaining the poor way in which they are remunerated. Were they in short! supply all of those conditions would be addressed in quick time. The solution? These good folks (and they are that and hard working as well) need to come to grips with the fact that if they are looking for decent wages and working conditions, they need to seek a different career. Whether it is fair or not (and the capitalist market often is unfair) our economy is based on supply and demand. Here the supply is just too large to sustain a well paid and well accommodated group of adjunct teachers.

**Avatar stinkcat** → ralph12345 · 2 days ago Indeed, it is the only way the low pay of adjuncts will be solved. Universities don't start off new Ph.Ds in finance at well over \$100k per year because they are benevolent, it is because the market demands it. If new finance doctorates would be willing to teach 12 courses a year for \$40k, they would be low paid adjuncts as well.

**Avatar nfmorg** → stinkcat · 2 days ago A new phd in sociology or history might be paid perhaps 70,000 in a first full-time tenure track position, and teach perhaps 4 or 6 courses a year. Don't jump right away to the outliers in this system. My point is not that there are no market forces at work, but that there are serious distortions introduced when full-time positions are converted into part-time ones. This has an effect that can be, must be, clearly distinguished from simple supply-demand models. Alan Trevithick

**Avatar nfmorg** → ralph12345 · 2 days ago However long you may have "listened," you show not the slightest of an understanding of the basic structure of the exploitation, which depends on a distortion of the market in which you seem to put so much faith. The demand for faculty, in fact, has grown steadily over the past forty years. There might be some merit to your basic argument if we saw an oversupply of qualified applicants for a shrinking full-time percentage of all faculty, but we don't. Instead, we see an almost perfectly sized supply of qualified candidates for, again, what has been steadily growing demand for faculty in all categories, by which we should understand a steadily and artificially shrinking percentage of full-timers and a concomitant growing number of part-timers. What is different is that institutions have been allowed to split full-time positions into part-time ones, forcing the now-majority faculty in all of higher education--contingent and adjunct, mostly part-time--to cobble together full-time livelihoods out of the actual requirements of the jobs. Of course, if you want, you can regard this as pure supply and demand, but only by accepting the idea that some market actors are allowed to make up rules--capped hours, limited contracts, and so-forth--and others are obliged to accept these things as the way of natural market functioning.

**Avatar abichel** → nfmorg · 2 days ago Wouldn't it be simpler to just call them slaves?

**Avatar jfoster** → abichel · 2 days ago Simpler, but incorrect. They are paid, not much, but slaves aren't paid at all. They can quit, slaves can't. And there is no Federal Fugitive Adjunct Act which requires that resigned and left adjuncts be apprehended and returned to the colleges where they adjuncted.

**Avatar ralph12345** → nfmorg · 2 days ago Oh, I agree with much of what you said. I am an antitrust economist and I think that markets are far from perfect and situations often contrived based on relative power. I believe in pure competition about as much as I believe in the Easter bunny.

But whatever the cause, supply is just too large to sustain a well paid and well accommodated group of adjunct teachers.

**Avatar nfmorg** → ralph12345 · 2 days ago I'm so glad--really--for your civility. I also still disagree, as do others more versed than I am in the numbers. But I just think it's not good practice to point to "oversupply" before doing a deeper analysis of how the field has been mucked around with.

**Avatar Monomachos** · 2 days ago The AAUP is dead wrong on this issue. Most of our adjuncts have full-time jobs elsewhere and have no connection other than their one class. Why should they have an equal say to those who work full-time?

**Avatar phonenear** · 2 days ago Seems to me that the article misses the real issue, which is how much power do most Faculty Senates really have to shape the most substantive decisions affecting the university, and how meaningful a force is Shared Governance (especially at private institutions, but one wonders too about public universities). Of course, maybe that's a bias on my part from being at a place where there really is no shared governance and the Faculty Senate has no great role.

**Avatar 11247122cd** · 2 days ago Adjuncts are the migrant workers of academia.

Subscribe Add Disqus to your site DISQUS

**The Chronicle Review**

Why Can't the Sciences and the Humanities Get Along?

**Manage Your Career**

Why I Am Dropping Out of Administration

**The Chronicle Review**

A Dropout's Tale