

The Support of Adjunct Faculty: An Academic Imperative

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There is a marked increase in the number of adjunct faculty being hired nationally and internationally, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, in all academic arenas, including schools of social work. The development and support of adjunct faculty at a school of social work at one flagship university in the United States is discussed and described, including an examination of the issues leading to the increased use of adjuncts; the linkage of adjuncts to tenured faculty in the delivery of classroom teaching and teaching technologies; the inclusion of adjuncts into the broader academic culture; and the specific training, support, and retention needed to improve the quality of teaching done by adjuncts. In addition, linkage of the university to the community is examined as experienced social work practitioners, many of whom represent diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives, bring their seasoned administrative, policy, or clinical skills into the classroom. Systemic effects of these changes within social work academic programs are discussed, as well as broader and more far-reaching implications for social work practice.

Keywords: Social Work Adjunct Faculty; Social Work Lecturers; Higher Education; Non-tenure Track Faculty; Higher Education Hiring Practices

Introduction

The number of non-tenured faculty in schools of social work has increased three-fold in the past 15 years, resulting in the almost equal use of non-tenure track and tenure-track faculty in social work education programs (Noble, 2000). This hiring trend is reflected as well in all parts of academia where approximately 40% of all university faculty are being hired for part-time positions (Leslie, 1998), and when some adjunct positions are going unfilled. For example, in Fall 2003, there remained as many as

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250–300 adjunct faculty positions unfilled at all levels of higher education in the United States as well as 50–100 adjunct faculty positions unfilled abroad (higherjobs.com, 2003). As an example of increased adjunct faculty hiring trends in the international academic community, Soochow University, a publicly funded four-year university in Tapei, Taiwan, with a total student enrollment of 12,000, has 499 full-time and tenure-track faculty and 730 adjunct non-tenured track faculty (higherjobs.com, 2003).

While the causes for these substantial shifts in academic hiring practices have garnered considerable comment and discussion, there seems to be three primary issues relevant to the increased use of adjuncts in social work education: first, an inadequate supply of full-time doctoral instructors to staff the rapidly expanding numbers of BSW and MSW programs in the country; second, a larger net gain financially to colleges and universities in relation to tuition and faculty salary ratios when adjuncts are hired (Noble, 2000); and third, the release of tenured social work faculty from teaching responsibilities to allow for increased research and/or administrative duties. In addition, professional education in other disciplines including law, medicine, and nursing has historically encouraged the hiring of adjunct faculty who are established practitioners in the community and who bring particular expertise to the classroom.

The benefits of employing adjunct social work faculty are many. Practicing social workers bring current policy or practice perspectives into the classroom, represent a wide diversity of ethnic and cultural perspectives, link academic programs to the community, and reciprocally become better informed practitioners. However, concerns have also been raised in relation to the hiring of adjunct social work faculty, including inadequate monitoring of the quality and rigor of teaching instruction; the financial exploitation of adjunct instructors; the isolation of part-time faculty from the over-all school of social work environment; the employment of adjuncts in lieu of opening more tenure-track positions; and mixed responses from accreditation site visit teams (Klein *et al.*, 1996).

Given the increased numbers of adjunct faculty involved in the delivery of social work education, and the budgetary constraints in higher education which may well support this trend, the likelihood is that this development will continue well into the next decade and beyond. Additionally, the fundamental social work value of understanding and clarifying the change process predisposes an analysis of how one social work academic program is striving to enhance, promote, and professionalize the role of the social work adjunct faculty member. This will include a general discussion of issues related to adjunct faculty development, as well as particular views and concerns as seen from the perspective of various social work education stakeholders.

Defining Terms and Issues

The growing body of higher education literature has generally used the terms 'adjunct', 'part-time', and 'contract' faculty interchangeably and have defined these

terms as: ‘... those individuals who are temporary, non-tenure track faculty employed less than full-time’ (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 3). A review of research related to adjunct teaching in academia, including social work, reveals seven primary areas of focus: university funding considerations (Murphy, 2002; Noble, 2000); quality of instruction (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Klein *et al.*, 1996; Murphy, 2002); grade inflation (Sonner, 2000); adjunct training, support, and development (Bethke & Nelson, 1994; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Moehs, 1992; Thompson, 1995); salary, job security, and benefit inequities (Frakt & Castagnera, 2000; Sonner, 2000); distance learning and technology (Micceri, 1996); and implications for the future (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Veldman *et al.*, 1999).

While the literature cited focuses on particular aspects of adjunct teaching, all seven areas are highly interconnected. For example, adjuncts with minimal job security may rely heavily upon positive student teaching evaluations to retain their jobs, which may impact both the rigor of instruction provided as well as possible grade inflation (Sonner, 2000). Similarly, as higher education tuition fees and endowments have not kept pace with rising faculty and development costs, the professional position of faculty may be vulnerable to renegotiation with an emphasis placed on managerial flexibility in relation to academic workload. In turn, adjunct faculty may be hired with little advance notice in order to meet exigent budgetary changes and/or increased student registrations, limiting adequate support and preparatory training as they go into the classroom (Rhoades, 1996).

Financial Considerations

Financial considerations, particularly in view of recent nation-wide state legislative budget deficits, are viewed as the single most important factor influencing the rise in the use of adjunct faculty. Adjuncts across disciplines teach an average of six courses per year (often at different universities) and are paid an average of \$2,500 per course (Frakt & Castagnera, 2000). Some institutions provide salaries and benefits to adjuncts who teach at least half-time, but most typically do not. Moreover, many universities and colleges are realizing that it is more cost-effective to keep part-time faculty who are unsupported to conduct formal research rather than traditional tenured professors, whose research may be supported with course-load reductions and sabbaticals (Murphy, 2002).

In social work, the increased rate of adjunct hiring has also been related to an inadequate supply of doctoral instructors to staff the rapidly expanding number of BSW and MSW programs across the country. While this provides a rationale for hiring adjunct social work faculty somewhat apart from budgetary considerations, McMurty & McClelland (1997) viewed the three-fold increase from 1987 to 1994 of adjunct faculty in schools of social work as somewhat exploitative and inconsistent with social work values. Noble (2000) goes on to argue that while the inadequate supply of doctoral-level instructors in social work education may certainly be the case, colleges and universities have recognized the unique properties of social work education that permit the reaping of a ‘windfall of profit or gain’ (p. 94). Using an

actual, typical mid-sized university's school of social work program for comparison, Noble (2000) cites that the salaries of adjunct faculty in that program produced almost a 42% net cost gain for the university, as compared to 17.2% for assistant professors, 19.5% for associate professors, 25.0% for field educators, and -3.5% for full professors (p. 95).

Quality of Instruction

Studies have revealed equivocal results concerning the quality of instruction provided by adjunct instructors. Jackson (1986, cited in Sonner, 2000) found that students in general do not rate adjuncts as highly as full-time faculty, with full-time faculty rated higher on knowledge of the subject, presentation of the material, and other key issues. In a pilot study of 175 social work students across 10 schools of social work, Klein *et al.* (1996) found that students regard adjunct faculty as somewhat less effective than full-time faculty with the mean differences between the full-time and adjunct faculty being 0.76 for overall course quality, 0.79 for availability, and 0.63 for teaching skills. However in separate studies, Clark (1990, cited in Sonner, 2000) and Bolge (1995, cited in Sonner, 2000) compared scores on standardized exit exams between students (from various disciplines) who had been taught by adjuncts and those taught by full-time faculty, and concluded that there were no differences in the performance of students in the two groups.

In the Klein *et al.* (1996) study, it is worth noting that social work programs with higher utilization of adjunct faculty, as well as higher perceived availability of adjunct faculty by students, had higher satisfaction ratings by students of adjunct teaching. The authors asserted that providing adjuncts with tangible, visible institutional support (office space, telephones, etc.) may significantly affect student perception of the quality of their teaching. In the same study, three-fifths (60%) of the social work students indicated that adjuncts were important in introducing contemporary practice into the classroom, with less than one-fifth (20%) reporting that adjuncts were not important in this regard (Klein *et al.*, 1996). In reporting on the importance of assimilating contract faculty into the over-all social work program, Strom-Gottfried & Dunlap (2002) supported this notion, describing adjuncts as 'individuals who typically possess relevant, contemporary practice experience and who bring specialized knowledge and skills to the curriculum ... making them highly sought after by administrators and highly prized by students' (p. 3).

In terms of qualifications to teach, in their land-mark study of 467 faculty, administrators and deans from a wide variety of academic disciplines across the country, Gappa & Leslie (1993) found that in general adjunct faculty were better qualified for their teaching assignments than was commonly assumed. For example, the proportion of part-time faculty with doctoral degrees at public research institutions (68%), and at private research institutions (50%) was greater than one might assume. However, in social work programs, where the MSW is considered the terminal professional degree, the proportion of adjuncts with doctoral degrees has

been found to be considerably lower, with less than 20% of non-tenure track and part-time social work faculty holding the doctoral degree (McMurty & McClelland, 1997).

Grade Inflation

Although we found no specific literature regarding grade inflation in social work programs, Jackson (1986) found that student grades are related to instructor rank. While these studies have focused on comparing graduate teaching assistants with full-time faculty, or have been conducted at community colleges, research results have consistently revealed that lower-ranking faculty assign higher grades than do senior faculty. Sonner (2000), in a study of 395 classes at a small public four-year university, found that even after controlling for other factors which might explain the difference (class size, subject, and class level), grades tended to be higher in classes taught by adjunct faculty. Implications from the Sonner (2000) study suggest that one reason that adjuncts may give higher grades is driven by a real concern for their 'term by term hiring'; needing good student evaluations to be rehired may necessitate giving inflated grades.

Adjunct Training, Support, and Development

Increasingly, universities and colleges are providing specific support and training for adjuncts (Bethke & Nelson, 1994; Thompson, 1995). The focus of support and training vary but generally coalesce around teaching methodologies; curriculum development; tiered decision-making for long-time adjuncts; formation of adjunct instructor committees; well-equipped offices and supplies; inclusion in departmental social events; having an 'Adjunct Appreciation Day'; and the concept of 'preferred adjunct' status for long-time adjuncts providing increased employment stability and benefits (Frakt & Castagnera, 2000). Many of the innovations regarding support and training to adjuncts also emphasize the related issue of assimilating adjuncts into the broader academic community (Bethke & Nelson, 1994; Gappa & Leslie, 1993). Moehs (1992) suggests that staff interaction between full-time faculty and adjuncts is essential, and recommends 'staff calibration sessions' to provide a professional link between the two groups.

Strom-Gottfried & Dunlap (2002) describe in detail a pilot development and training program for adjuncts at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work. A one-day training is offered at the beginning of the semester focused on four primary areas: (1) forces that shape the social work curriculum (including CSWE standards); (2) effective teaching strategies including the components of effective instruction, adult education theory, and demonstrations of active, collaborative, and experiential learning; (3) policies and procedures (grading, syllabus preparation, departmental and university policies); and (4) anticipating potential problems (challenging classroom situations). Lunch and refreshments are provided, and continuing education credits are given for this one-day training.

The Development of Adjunct Faculty in one School of Social Work

In the mid-1990s, a school of social work located at a Carnegie Research I University began making a concerted effort to recruit, train, and retain competent adjunct faculty. On average, 21 (38%) out of approximately 56 graduate level courses offered in the Fall semester were being taught by adjuncts. In part, this was a result of full-time faculty carrying significant teaching, research, and grant-writing responsibilities. This increased reliance upon adjuncts to deliver classroom teaching was the impetus for the dean and program directors to plan for more intentional inclusion and support of adjuncts into the broader academic program.

One of the preliminary steps in structuring more support for adjuncts was to take inventory of some of the demographics of the existing adjuncts. Out of 32 adjuncts formally listed, 21 were women and 11 were men. All had their MSW degrees, and six had doctoral degrees. Levels of post MSW practice experience ranged from 8 to 32 years and were represented by social work professionals in every type of social work leadership position in the community. These included child welfare supervisors and trainers, mental health and family agency executive directors, state policy administrators, directors of medical social service departments, residential treatment center supervisors, a state legislator, experienced clinicians in private practice, attorneys and judges with social work degrees, and mental health program evaluators and researchers. Many adjuncts had contributed scholarly research to social work and other professional journals, and some were co-investigators on grant-funded research in their respective agencies.

After the inventory of adjunct faculty was compiled, a needs assessment was conducted. This included administering a 'needs assessment questionnaire' to adjuncts to determine their interests and concerns. From the information gained, plans were created to support adjunct faculty in five primary arenas: (1) creation of a salaried half-time faculty adjunct liaison position; (2) department-wide recognition of adjuncts as essential contributors to the social work program, including their inclusion in social and academic functions; (3) creation of more intentional information systems to facilitate departmental and university-wide information sharing with and among adjuncts; (4) scheduling established times for tenure-track and adjunct faculty to come together for course work-group planning, resource-sharing, and discussion; and (5) in-service teaching workshops coordinated with the established university Teaching Effectiveness Center to provide increased familiarity with instructional methodologies and classroom teaching strategies.

The Adjunct Liaison Position and Recognition of Adjuncts

With approximately 32 adjunct faculty coming on campus during the academic year, it was imperative to have a primary on-campus contact person for the adjuncts. The 'adjunct faculty liaison' position was created with several mandates. First, the liaison was to provide assistance to new adjunct hires with course development, syllabus preparation, and classroom resources. Second, the liaison would provide a 'one-stop'

point of information and support for adjuncts. Third, the liaison would attend regular academic faculty meetings to provide information to adjuncts. Fourth, the liaison would help create a training and development infrastructure for adjuncts, utilizing expert campus teaching specialists. Finally, the liaison would facilitate contact and collaboration between tenure-track and adjunct faculty teaching different sections of the same course.

An adjunct faculty member who had taught for a number of years as an adjunct faculty at the school of social work was hired for the liaison position. This individual had an MSW and PhD in Social Work, and was credentialed as a licensed clinical social worker. Given that the topic of her dissertation focused on evaluating effective teaching in schools of social work, it was anticipated that she would bring a particular level of interest and expertise in social work education to the liaison role.

Departmental Recognition of Adjuncts

One of the primary themes that emerged from the needs assessment of adjunct faculty concerned a sense of isolation from the social work program in general. A corollary to this theme was a sense of ‘invisibility’, particularly if the adjunct taught evening courses when there was little to no opportunity for contact with other faculty. Several changes were made to address these concerns.

The adjunct faculty office was cleaned up, reorganized, made brighter with plants and wall prints, and equipped with two new computers for adjunct use. Four separate work-stations were arranged in the adjunct office, for adjuncts to use both during their posted office hours as well as at other times. The departmental registration course schedule began to include adjuncts’ names attached to their courses (rather than as ‘TBA’), something that had not been done before. Students especially appreciated knowing for which instructor they were registering. In order to give adjunct faculty ample time to prepare for their course, the associate dean, whenever possible, began contacting potential adjunct faculty members three or four months in advance of the semester start. Directly outside of the adjunct faculty office, adjuncts’ names were printed on a faculty name plate, to be changed each semester as course assignments changed. Publishing adjunct faculty names in the course schedule, as well as outside the adjunct office, delivered a clear, specific message to adjuncts that they were valued and deserved recognition as professionals teaching in the department. Another helpful step towards inclusion was adjunct faculty ‘Brown Bag’ lunches held once or twice a semester. Invitations were sent by email to all adjuncts asking them to come together at the noon lunch hour at the School of Social Work, allowing an opportunity to informally share concerns or issues that they may have. The adjunct faculty liaison and associate dean were also available for questions or to share university or departmental information. Attendance was consistent with between six and ten adjuncts at each Brown Bag lunch, with different adjuncts attending from one semester to the next. This provided many first-time opportunities to interact, network, and learn about new teaching perspectives. Several issues regarding exam development, grading, and even managing challenging students were

discussed at these informal lunches. In a similar vein, when holiday or other departmental celebrations were held, all adjuncts were invited along with full-time faculty. Often they could not attend due to other professional commitments, but truly appreciated feeling included in the social work academic community.

As the liaison role evolved over time, certain aspects of the new role were clarified. First, the liaison would not be involved in either hiring or renewing adjunct faculty contracts. Rather, this decision rested with the dean and the associate dean. Nor would she would have access to end of the semester teaching evaluations. Neither of these administrative responsibilities would be appropriate for a liaison, who was to represent and support adjuncts. However, during the liaison's monthly meetings with the associate dean, their mutual assessment of how well adjuncts seemed to be performing became a focus of discussion. Likewise, as the liaison might encounter expert social work professionals in the community, she could refer these interested professionals to the school, a particularly important role as the available pool of qualified adjuncts fluctuated from semester to semester.

An unanticipated aspect of the liaison position was that as students realized there was such a position, some began to share directly with the liaison their thoughts, positive and otherwise, about their adjunct professors. Again, the non-authoritative liaison role had to be clarified for students, though it was important to listen to their concerns and when appropriate, redirect them to the dean, associate dean, or program directors. Conversely, an important liaison function was served when adjunct faculty had student concerns. Strategies to help work through student issues were collaboratively discussed with adjuncts. This included encouraging adjuncts to learn about and use the well-established level review system already in place in the School of Social Work, to address concerns around students' academic and professional performance.

A unique and most appreciated measure of support to adjuncts was the hiring of a part-time teaching assistant (TA) assigned to adjunct faculty. The liaison coordinated a system for the part-time TA to equitably provide grading, copying, and research support for several adjuncts each semester. Once this system was in place, the 'hands-on' practical help the TA provided to adjuncts, who were often coming to campus within one hour of class, was immeasurable, serving to underscore the adjuncts' importance to the program.

Improved Information-sharing

With a university of 50,000+ students, and a social work program of over 600 students, it was not uncommon for adjuncts to feel out of the information loop. Several solutions were considered to help resolve this lack of access to information. First, the liaison was added to the university's e-mail list-serve, so that any information sent to the entire faculty, whether from the broader university system or from the School of Social Work, could be disseminated to adjuncts. The liaison would cull out the information which might be useful or informative for adjuncts, and this would be sent on via an all-adjunct faculty list-serve. Adjuncts became aware

of, for example, major speakers, presentations, and special events coming to campus that they might not have otherwise known about. An emphasis was placed upon informing adjuncts of evidence-based research presentations on campus that had relevance to their course topics, which could be integrated into a teaching module. The liaison also attempted to summarize for adjuncts relevant information discussed at School of Social Work faculty meetings, including changes in faculty and staff structure, new faculty or staff hired, and re-accreditation processes that effected curriculum and syllabi revisions. Information-sharing was also improved in the other direction, from adjuncts to the full-time faculty. For example, results of the adjunct faculty's 'needs assessment', taken in the initial phase of the adjunct development process, were shared in a written report at a regular faculty meeting.

One aspect of information-sharing had to do with access to recent and relevant evidence-based research to better inform classroom teaching. Efforts were made to ask tenured and tenure-track faculty to forward to the adjunct liaison relevant journal articles related to their teaching areas. In addition, the liaison worked closely with the adjunct faculty teaching assistant to undertake a major literature review of recent evidence-based texts and journal articles in support of the four areas of social work education: practice, HBSE, policy, and research. Selected texts, research articles, and videos were collected in an 'Evidence-based Resource Center' to be used by adjunct faculty, located in the adjunct faculty office. All adjuncts are invited to review the resources collected, particularly as they update syllabi and their class reading lists to include the latest evidence-based research relevant to their courses.

Collaboration between Tenure-track and Adjunct Faculty

In the arena of increased communication and collaboration between full-time and adjunct faculty, some challenges have been observed. Once per year, prior to the beginning of the fall semester, course work-groups met to work on syllabi development, areas of focus, and resource-sharing for different sections of the same course. The primary objective was to link adjunct faculty with a 'lead instructor' and other tenured/tenure-track faculty teaching in the same area. While these work-group sessions were well-attended by both full-time faculty and adjuncts, and feedback was generally positive, it remained a challenge for both full-time and adjunct faculty to continue contact during the semester. Time constraints were most often cited as the limiting factor, yet the 'culture' separating adjuncts from full-time faculty may have been relevant as well. This cultural divide between full-time and adjunct faculty is documented in the literature (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Moehs, 1992), with full-time faculty often skeptical of the academic credentials and skill-level of adjuncts. Conversely, adjuncts are unsure of how to best demonstrate their considerable knowledge and practice experience. Each group seems to have pre-conceived notions about the other, so that professional collaboration remains a challenge. These differences have been noted by social work students (Fagan, 1995) who comment that they enjoy learning about the 'real-world' practice experiences from adjunct faculty, as well as the more theoretical and research-based perspectives from tenured and

tenure-track faculty, yet wish the two perspectives could be more fully integrated in the classroom.

To address this academic divide, the associate dean and adjunct liaison have made concerted efforts to personally link adjunct faculty with full-time faculty. This has typically been done in the form of personal phone calls to faculty members, asking them directly to assist a particular adjunct faculty member with their course.

In-service Training Workshops for Adjuncts

A clearly articulated request stated in the adjuncts' needs assessment was 'more instruction in teaching methodologies'. As such, seasoned faculty from the School of Social Work, as well as staff from the University's Center for Teaching Effectiveness, come together to plan a yearly in-service training for adjunct faculty. These trainings are held in a three-hour block during an evening toward the end of the Spring semester. A light dinner is included, and social work licensing continuing education units (CEUs) are provided. Attendance has been as high as 80% of adjuncts, with excellent feedback regarding both the content and structure of the trainings. The foci of the three-hour trainings have coalesced around the following: (1) exam development and grading criteria as a function of coursework goals; (2) fostering critical thinking skills in the classroom; (3) managing challenging classroom situations; (4) CSWE re-accreditation standards and curriculum revisions; (5) small-group training on the technology-based 'media-consoles' that are available in each classroom; and (6) using the syllabus as an on-going assessment tool, contract-for-work, and guide for teaching. After each training session, adjuncts complete a workshop evaluation to indicate what topics or areas of concern they may want to include in the following year's in-service training.

An important additional benefit of the in-service trainings has been a sense of increased collegiality and inclusion in the social work program. As a result of the success of the two in-service trainings to date, an option is being considered to invite *all* beginning faculty to these trainings, including post-doctoral appointments and newly-hired tenure-track faculty, many of whom have had limited teaching experience.

An Adjunct Faculty Member's Perspective

As the preceding discussion has aptly pointed out, being an adjunct faculty member at the School of Social Work today offers ample opportunity for achieving job satisfaction. For example, the in-service training workshops have provided valuable assistance to adjuncts, particularly those with limited teaching experience, in being exposed to the principles of teaching excellence, understanding how the various pieces of the social work curriculum fit together, and in removing certain practical barriers such as gaining access to copying facilities, navigating parking, and learning how to maximize the available classroom technology. The workshops have also

provided an opportunity for adjunct faculty to get to know one another and share information about themselves, their agencies, and the courses they teach.

In addition, the 'Brown Bag' lunches have provided a relaxed environment, whereby adjunct faculty come together to discuss problems and opportunities they have discovered in their various classes. They have become an important informal mutual help support group for those who are able to attend.

It is reassuring to know that the adjuncts have their own advocate in the form of the adjunct faculty liaison so that their issues and concerns can be conveyed to the school's administration in a timely manner. The adjunct faculty office provides a welcoming place to meet with students as well as reflect on one's class just prior to the time it meets. The office has created a sense of 'place' for the adjunct faculty and the students with whom they meet.

One thing that is greatly appreciated is the school's willingness to solicit the input of adjunct faculty on student reviews when concerns have been raised about a student's academic or professional development. This underscores the importance of the adjunct role in the school as well as the life of the students enrolled, and broadens the perspective that is brought to the table in conducting the reviews. It also contributes in a positive way to the 'gatekeeper' or stewardship role of the profession.

Efforts by the school to reach out to the adjunct faculty have reinforced the belief that the school is truly a learning community. Although adjunct faculty cannot (and should not) expect to enjoy the same stature as tenure-track faculty, they have been welcomed into the community as an integral part of what goes on. This creates a 'win-win' environment for students, faculty, and administrators alike.

A few ways in which the support of adjunct faculty could be further enhanced are identified below.

- Informal Brown Bag lunches that have become an important support group for adjunct faculty could be offered more frequently, perhaps focusing on advances in research or teaching.
- It remains important that adjunct faculty have direct access from time to time to the dean and the associate dean to learn more about the school's vision and how the school is working with other units across the university.
- Adjunct faculty members comprise a busy group of individuals—their time is divided among many competing priorities at their offices and in the community. Nonetheless, perhaps it would amplify their role in the school if they were encouraged to sit on faculty committees that address the key workings of the school. This might even become a requirement of being an adjunct faculty member, thereby distinguishing between those who are willing to make a short-term 'cameo' appearance as a guest lecturer and those who are committed to advancing the goals of the school and the interests of the students it serves.
- Assistant professors are assigned a faculty mentor upon their hire. Like new tenure-track faculty, new adjunct faculty could benefit from the mentorship of someone who has 'learned the ropes' and has been teaching in the school for a while. The mentor could be a seasoned tenured or tenure-track faculty member, or a similarly seasoned adjunct faculty member, who has taught the same or similar courses.

- The School of Social Work may want to consider establishing a teaching excellence award exclusively for its adjunct faculty. (One of the school's long-time adjunct faculty members was a recent recipient of a school-wide teaching excellence award!)
- The perennial issue of grading needs to be revisited, not in terms of providing training in the 'nuts and bolts' of grading (although that's needed as well), but in terms of the expectations of the school's administration and faculty and the relationship between grades and the ability of a student to become a competent social work practitioner. The true issue may not lie solely with the grade, but rather with the professional connection between the grade and learning competence related to effective social work practice. All faculty, particularly adjunct faculty, could benefit from this dialogue. Indeed, the school holds 'faculty symposia' once or twice a semester where critical issues related to social work higher education are discussed. Perhaps this could be the next faculty symposia topic, with all adjuncts invited to attend.

Implications for the Future of SW Education

There are several adjunct faculty issues mentioned that may impact the future of social work education. First, Sonner (2000) suggests that at the very least, adjuncts should receive training and support to abide by grading standards that are consistent with full-time faculty. There is a dilemma inherent in the grading issue, as it is clear that positive student evaluations are a relevant consideration when adjunct re-hiring decisions are made (Sonner, 2000). Knowing this, adjunct faculty may intentionally or unintentionally inflate class grades. A second consideration is the 'practice versus theory-based' teaching dichotomy that may exist between the teaching styles of adjunct and tenure-track faculty. Social work students may be correct to perceive that the most effective teaching in professional education demonstrates the synthesis of theory with actual practice (Fagan, 1995). This synthesis may require more intentional and structured collaboration between the two faculty groups. Finally, given the considerable budgetary constraints facing most institutions of higher learning in the first part of the twenty-first century (Murphy, 2002; Noble, 2000), and the cost effectiveness of hiring adjunct faculty (Murphy, 2002), the professionalization of this important teaching role within the social work national and international academic communities warrants close support and development.

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