Review of Selected Policies and Practices and Connections to Student Learning

It is important for administrators, faculty, and policy makers to understand and consider how policies commonly associated with non-tenure-track faculty roles and working environments impact student learning. Many policies impede the ability of faculty to provide effective instruction that is aligned with departmental and institutional goals for learning outcomes. On many campuses, current policies create conditions wherein these faculty are inaccessible to students outside of scheduled class time and are not permitted to have a role in decision-making, including decisions about the courses they teach. While many policies and practices negatively impact equity and morale, below we discuss how certain conditions created by policies – or a lack of policies – influence the ability of institutions to maximize the benefits of non-tenure-track faculty contributions to student learning.

Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Hiring and Contract Renewal

Employment policies that contribute to an unsupportive working environment and ultimately shape faculty members' ability to contribute to student learning outcomes may begin to have an effect before an instructor is even hired. In many cases, faculty are recruited and hired to teach at the very last minute, leaving little time to prepare for the term ahead by doing things such as updating course readings, defining learning goals, and developing a course plan, assuming instructors are allowed to make such decisions. In their study of part-time faculty, Gappa and Leslie (1993) noted, "Recruitment and hiring set the tone for employment relations with part-time faculty because they are frequently the first contact between the institution and the part-timer (or non-tenure-track faculty member)" (p. 145).

Most studies agree that colleges have no formal or systemized process for recruitment or hiring and approach the hiring of non-tenure-track faculty very casually (Cross and Goldenberg, 2009; Gappa and Leslie, 1993). For example, many of the colleges in Gappa and Leslie's study (1993) had no formal criteria for the appointment of part-time faculty, although community colleges tended to have more standardized qualifications or criteria than other types of institutions. Baldwin and Chronister (2001) found that many institutions or departments hired individuals within days of the start of the semester. The short time frame between hiring and beginning work allows little if any time for preparation for teaching, but also denies non-tenure-track faculty important opportunities to receive a formal orientation to the institution, department, colleagues, and campus policies (including policies related to instruction, grading, and students).

The problems associated with hiring policies and the timing of staffing decisions do not end once a non-tenure-track faculty member is hired to teach. Various surveys have found job security to frequently be one of the top three concerns of existing full- and part-time faculty (National Education Association, 2002; American Federation of Teachers, 2010). A lack of long-term commitments is also very demoralizing for faculty who have themselves committed time, energy, and resources to an institution and students (Cross & Goldenberg,

2010). Baldwin and Chronister (2001) found that one year was the most common contract length across all institutions for full-time non-tenure-track faculty, although a limited number of institutions use multi-year contracts for these appointments. As is often the case, though, part-time faculty face even more vulnerability and while they may be hired on an ongoing basis, they typically have to be re-hired each term and are informed of their reappointment only a few days before the semester begins (Gappa and Leslie, 1993).

While such instances of late renewal and hiring present challenges for those who continue to teach at an institution, it is sometimes the case that very little notice is given to faculty whose contracts are not extended. Hollenshead and others (2007) found that two out of every five part-time instructors are given a month or less notice of non-renewal. Faculty can find themselves trying to find new employment at another institution within days of the beginning of the academic term. While most institutions tend to keep on both full-time and part-time non-tenure-track faculty and non-renewal is less common, such circumstances do not give faculty a sense of job security, rather an institutional pattern exists for them to be hired back (Gappa and Leslie, 1993; Conley and Leslie, 2002).

Examples of Employment and Hiring Policies' Connection to Student Learning:

- Last minute scheduling and hiring of instructional faculty impedes preparation for teaching and diminishes the quality of instruction a faculty member is able to provide to students (Kezar, in press, in review).
- The lack of multi-year contracts or any commitment to hire back lecturers results in non-tenure-track faculty cycling in and out of academic programs, impacts preparation and faculty development, quality of teaching, and the ongoing placement of teachers who have experience on a campus and knowledge of students, the institution, or department (Kezar, in press, in review).
- Course scheduling decisions are not always informed by input from non-tenure-track faculty. Since the instructors who teach a course do not participate in scheduling (if they have even been hired yet), the class times selected often permit part-time faculty little time to commute from jobs at other institutions, impacting their ability to arrive on-time, to be prepared, and to meet with students before and after class (Kezar, in press, in review).

Insufficient Orientation and Access to Professional Development

Various studies have noted that non-tenure-track faculty, both part-time and full-time, are often excluded from orientation programs and workshops that are made available to other faculty and staff to provide important human resources information, training for work roles, and a review of policies (Gappa and Leslie, 1993; Schell and Stock, 2001; Conley and Leslie, 2002). A limited set of institutions provide a handbook to non-tenure-track faculty or rely on department chairs to offer some sort of welcome and socialization, although this often does not occur (Baldwin and Chronister, 2001; Gappa and Leslie, 1993). The absence of a proper orientation is one of several factors that represents a lack of investment in the training and development of non-tenure-track faculty. From the moment they are first hired and often continuing throughout their employment, these individuals do not have access to resources such as mentoring or funding for training and conferences to support their professional development (Baldwin and Chronister, 2001; Kezar & Sam, 2010).

Some campuses are beginning to recognize the importance of providing these opportunities for all faculty. For example, institutions are increasingly creating planned programs for developing and improving teaching effectiveness, which is the primary role of non-tenure-track faculty (Baldwin and Chronister, 2001). These

programs help to introduce faculty to new pedagogies and teaching practices. This is a positive step forward, although these programs are typically intended to meet institutional goals, rather than the professional development of individual faculty. Non-tenure-track faculty do not usually receive funding such as that available to tenure-track faculty for travel to participate in conferences, off-campus professional development programs, or research (Baldwin and Chronister, 2001; Gappa and Leslie, 1993; Conley and Leslie, 2002).

Examples of Orientation and Professional Development Policies' Connection to Student Learning:

- A lack of access to professional development impacts faculty adoption and use of pedagogical approaches and teaching strategies that inform the development of course and learning goals and the sequencing of concepts (Kezar, in press, in review). The use of ineffective or outdated pedagogies create an obstacle for the intellectual stimulation of students, which affects their enthusiasm for learning and making connections to course materials and topics.
- Faculty who do not receive professional development or mentoring may receive useful feedback on their teaching practices, limiting feedback to responses to student evaluations (Kezar, in press, in review). They may have no sense of whether their teaching is effective or may be unaware of the type of professional development that is needed to improve their skills. Faculty who receive no professional development or mentoring may also be poorly prepared to advise students and help them address problems and challenges.
- More than providing opportunities for professional growth, mentoring is one more way for faculty to build collegiality among the ranks and brainstorm about teaching and learning issues (Kezar, in press, in review).

Exclusion from Curriculum Design and Decisions

Another major concern for non-tenure-track faculty is the circumscribed nature of teaching, whereby they have little input into curriculum design and implementation (Kezar & Sam, 2010). The lack of input into the creation of curriculum and syllabus, textbook selection, or decisions affected their morale, status, and efficacy as a professional (Baldwin and Chronister, 2001). Thus, whether or not they are hired in a manner that permits any time to prepare to teach, non-tenure-track faculty are often excluded from participating in essential dialogue and decision-making over the very content they teach. Many are not included in department communication and faculty meetings, where information about broader curricular goals and plans to work toward them are shared and discussed among faculty. As a result, these faculty members, many of whom are well educated and very knowledgeable about the subjects they teach, are limited in their ability to make contributions to academic and curricular planning. They may even be asked to teach courses using another instructor's syllabus and materials or course plans that have not been updated or are misaligned with current institutional learning goals.

Moreover, they are often restricted from teaching upper-division courses, which leads to monotonous teaching of the same course multiple times during a semester or year (Kezar & Sam, 2010). By not teaching upper-division courses, they are often not able to keep up to date with changes in the field and be challenged by students as they mature and can ask more complex questions. Non-tenure-track faculty feel they are falling behind in professional knowledge that is important to their success and rejuvenation.

Examples of Curriculum Design Practices' Connection to Student Learning:

- By excluding non-tenure-track faculty from curriculum design or forcing rigid course guidelines, department chairs and others may not recognize the expertise and talents of faculty, creating scenarios where courses are created without consideration of students' capabilities and interests, textbooks do not match objectives, learning goals and courses are misaligned, problems with a course or the curriculum broadly are not addressed, and opportunities for capturing non-tenure-track faculty expertise are missed (Kezar, in press, in review).
- Lack of faculty input on textbook selection can result in the use of texts that are out-of-date, are not matched with course objectives, or fail to consider the existing knowledge of students in a program and their interests (Kezar, in press, in review).
- Since non-tenure-track faculty are not always privy to department communications such as emails or meetings they may have little or no contact with the tenured faculty, which limits participation in professional dialogue. The absence of a shared dialogue about courses and the curriculum creates the opportunity for course instruction and teaching materials to be misaligned with curricular objectives and academic policies that are set by the department faculty or institution (Kezar, in press, in review).

A Lack of Access to Office Space, Instructional Resources, and Staff Support

In order to fulfill their responsibilities as instructors, faculty often need to have access to instructional resources, space on campus, and administrative or support personnel. However, access to these resources for individual instructors on a campus or in an academic unit often differs (Kezar & Sam, 2010). Even in businesses, employers are supposed to provide the necessary supplies and support for employees to be able to fulfill their job responsibilities. Faculty need to be provided an office or shared office space that provides a place to meet with students and other colleagues, prepare for teaching, and meet other job responsibilities, from managing graduate assistance to field placements (Baldwin and Chronister, 2001; Gappa and Leslie, 1993). They also need appropriate clerical support for their teaching, service, and research demands and appropriate access to equipment such as a computer, photocopier, phone, facsimile machine, and other basic office equipment.

While full-time non-tenure-track faculty generally receive adequate support and services to conduct their work, a variety of studies have demonstrated that part-time faculty have more limited access to resources that support their roles as instructors (Gappa and Leslie, 1993; Outcalt, 2002). Too often, non-tenure-track faculty, particularly part-timers, are expected to have a home office with all these materials and to buy their own supplies, putting an undue burden on faculty who are already paid less than their colleagues (Baldwin and Chronister, 2001; Gappa and Leslie, 1993). Not having access to certain resources does not only affect faculty members, but students, since a lack of instructional resources and private space to discuss student issues and concerns places unnecessary limits on effective instruction.
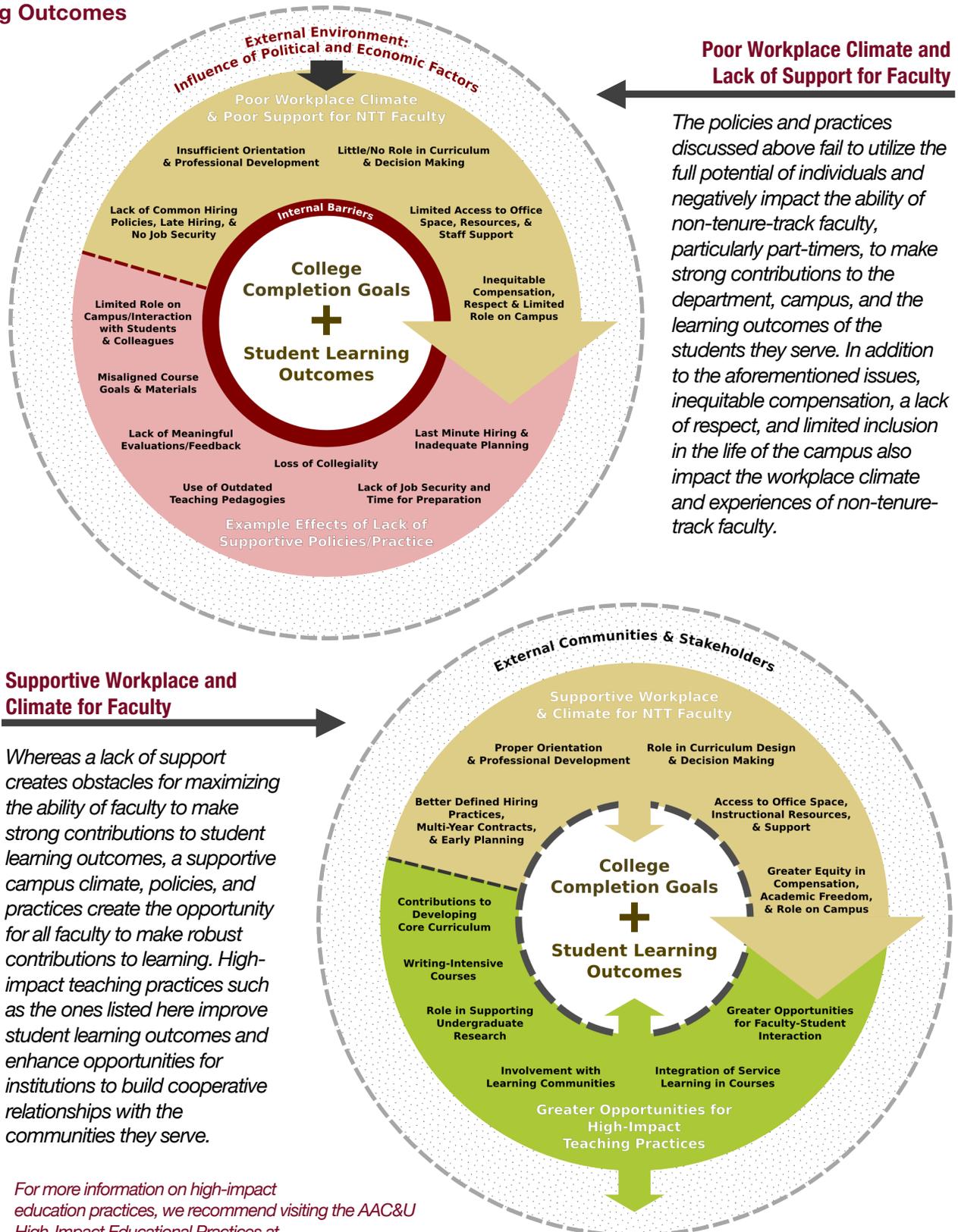
Examples of Support and Resource Policies and Practices' Connection to Student Learning:

- A lack of adequate materials and equipment affects class preparation and organization (Kezar, in press, in review).
- Non-tenure-track faculty, particularly those on part-time contracts, are not always provided office space on campus or in an area near other faculty. They may not have space where they can meet with students for advising or to discuss confidential matters, including those protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (Kezar, in press, in review; Kezar & Sam, 2010). A lack of office space also

impacts faculty members' ability to brainstorm with colleagues about curricula, teaching, and learning practices and prevents them from building networks and social capital for improving courses and instructional quality (Kezar, in press, in review).

- Since part-time faculty may find it difficult to be on campus when they are not teaching and many teach evening classes, they may not be able to utilize support services provided by university or department personnel who only work during regular business hours (Kezar & Sam, 2010). This limits their ability to improve upon practices and skills, as well as their knowledge of resources that may be of help to students.
- When they do not receive adequate support from administrative personnel, new faculty may not receive necessary information. If access to resources and staff is not ensured, non-tenure-track faculty may have to support themselves, procure their own resources or go without them, or find alternatives. This seemingly unnecessary exercise takes time away from teaching preparation and students (Kezar, in press, in review).
- Unlike their tenure-track counterparts, non-tenure-track faculty do not usually receive teaching assistants to help with coursework, particularly for large courses. They are expected to take on the burden of a course without any assistance, regardless of the number of students enrolled (Kezar & Sam, 2010).

Figure 1. Conceptual Diagrams: Interactions of Non-Tenure-Track Policies and Practices on Student Learning Outcomes

External Environment:
Influence of Political and Economic Factors

Poor Workplace Climate & Poor Support for NTT Faculty

Insufficient Orientation & Professional Development

Little/No Role in Curriculum & Decision Making

Lack of Common Hiring Policies, Late Hiring, & No Job Security

Internal Barriers

Limited Access to Office Space, Resources, & Staff Support

College Completion Goals
+
Student Learning Outcomes

Inequitable Compensation, Respect & Limited Role on Campus

Limited Role on Campus/Interaction with Students & Colleagues

Misaligned Course Goals & Materials

Lack of Meaningful Evaluations/Feedback

Loss of Collegiality

Last Minute Hiring & Inadequate Planning

Use of Outdated Teaching Pedagogies

Lack of Job Security and Time for Preparation

Example Effects of Lack of Supportive Policies/Practice

Poor Workplace Climate and Lack of Support for Faculty

The policies and practices discussed above fail to utilize the full potential of individuals and negatively impact the ability of non-tenure-track faculty, particularly part-timers, to make strong contributions to the department, campus, and the learning outcomes of the students they serve. In addition to the aforementioned issues, inequitable compensation, a lack of respect, and limited inclusion in the life of the campus also impact the workplace climate and experiences of non-tenure-track faculty.

Supportive Workplace and Climate for Faculty

Whereas a lack of support creates obstacles for maximizing the ability of faculty to make strong contributions to student learning outcomes, a supportive campus climate, policies, and practices create the opportunity for all faculty to make robust contributions to learning. High-impact teaching practices such as the ones listed here improve student learning outcomes and enhance opportunities for institutions to build cooperative relationships with the communities they serve.

For more information on high-impact education practices, we recommend visiting the AAC&U High-Impact Educational Practices at http://www.aacu.org/leap/hip.cfm

External Communities & Stakeholders

Supportive Workplace & Climate for NTT Faculty

Proper Orientation & Professional Development

Role in Curriculum Design & Decision Making

Better Defined Hiring Practices, Multi-Year Contracts, & Early Planning

Access to Office Space, Instructional Resources, & Support

College Completion Goals
+
Student Learning Outcomes

Contributions to Developing Core Curriculum

Greater Equity in Compensation, Academic Freedom, & Role on Campus

Writing-Intensive Courses

Role in Supporting Undergraduate Research

Greater Opportunities for Faculty-Student Interaction

Involvement with Learning Communities

Integration of Service Learning in Courses

Greater Opportunities for High-Impact Teaching Practices

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The Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success

For more information please visit http://www.thechangingfaculty.org

Project Description

The nature of the American academic workforce has fundamentally shifted over the past several decades. Whereas full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty were once the norm, more than two-thirds of the professoriate in non-profit postsecondary education is now comprised of non-tenure-track faculty. New hires across all institutional types are now largely contingent and this number will continue to grow unless trends change. The purpose of this project is to examine and develop solutions to change the nature of the professoriate, the causes of the rise of non-tenure-track faculty, and the impact of this change on the teaching and learning environment.

Research Team and Partner Organizations

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Principal Investigator   Co-Investigator

In partnership with the Association of American College and Universities

AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,250 member institutions – including accredited public and private colleges, community colleges, and universities of every type and size.

About the Pullias Center for Higher Education

The Pullias Center for Higher Education is an interdisciplinary research unit led by Director, William G. Tierney, and Associate Director, Adrianna Kezar. The Center was established to engage the postsecondary-education community actively, and to serve as an important intellectual center within the Rossier School of Education; it draws significant support and commitment from the administration. The Center's mission is to improve urban higher education, strengthen school-university relationships, and to focus on international higher education, emphasizing Latin America and the Pacific Rim. Working on fulfilling that mission are the Center's faculty, research assistants, and staff.

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