

Committee on Adjunct Faculty Support – Midyear Report

Fall 2020

Membership

Chair: Jason McClain

Members: Julie Way, Leslie Harlacker, Ann Leith, Christina Myers, Joy McBride, Sharon Lovell, John Keller, David McGraw, John Hulvey, Jason McClain

Charge: Complete the work of determining the feasibility of the recommendations proposed in the Compensation Advisory Committee Adjunct Faculty Report of April 2017 and, as appropriate, identify strategies and/or alternatives to:

1. Consider the feasibility of administering a salary adjustment plan designed to recognize long-serving, high-performing adjunct faculty.
2. Create and publish an Adjunct Faculty Orientation document to serve as a readily accessible resource.
3. Explore the viability of providing additional benefits to adjunct faculty, such as no or reduced parking fee, discounted meal plans, and/or bookstore gift cards.
4. Explore the option of offering a health insurance plan to adjunct faculty who do not have access to one.

Summary of Current Semester (Fall 2020) Activity:

- Adjunct faculty orientation resources updated; synchronized with current JMU web standards and formats, prepared for handoff to Faculty Senate Adjunct Affairs Committee.
- Benefit options for adjunct faculty explored, health insurance benefit requires action at state legislative levels and/or authorization from the state to pursue viable alternatives. Other university benefit options clarified. Ongoing inquiries with HR/DHRM to explore health insurance alternatives.
- Salary adjustment plan strategies proposed to recognize long-serving, high-performing adjunct faculty with clearly articulated and understood annual evaluation and special recognition criteria.
- Prepare for transition of survey instrument to the Faculty Senate Adjunct Affairs Committee to administer regularly (annually/bi-annually) and continue to provide a voice for adjunct faculty and promote transparency/open lines of communication with administration, etc.
- Prior accomplishments: adjunct faculty orientation resource developed/updated for new adjunct faculty; adjunct survey initiated in 2018-19 and transitioned to oversight by the Faculty Senate Adjunct Affairs Committee, adjunct base pay minimum of \$1000/credit hour + COLA of 2% implemented (re-visit – adjunct base pay adjusted/reduced for COVID related budget reductions).

Future Work Planned:

- Finalize recommendations for future actions to consider on behalf of adjunct faculty in response to the Compensation Advisory Committee report; and conclude this phase of our work.

Appendices

- A: Benefits Subcommittee Report – December 2020
- B: Orientation Subcommittee Report – December 2020
- C: Compensation Subcommittee Report – December 2020
- D: Survey Subcommittee Report – December 2020

A: Benefits Subcommittee Report – December 2020

Submitted by: Jason McClain

Subcommittee members: Ann Leith, Leslie Harlacker, Sharon Lovell, Jason McClain

Charge:

- Explore the viability of providing additional benefits to adjuncts (i.e. health insurance, discounted meal plan options, reduced parking fees, research grants, etc.) (CAC)

Updates:

- Health insurance not currently an option for PT employees of the Commonwealth as outlined in the Personnel Act.
- Establishing legislative clearance/precedent for Commonwealth of Virginia part-time employees to be eligible for health insurance continues to be a challenge.
- Outreach to various contacts for prospect of health insurance benefit for part-time employees is ongoing.
- ACA data review to evaluate health insurance price points for various individual scenarios (TBD).

Actions:

- DHRM “request for information” may help to determine if university could be authorized to proceed with health insurance procurement process.
- If authorized, RFP for health insurance through broker could potentially be developed.
- We cannot advertise for insurance broker/agents selectively; we would need to work with procurement.
- Use ACA data to validate RFI request results and evaluate cost comparisons (TBD).
- Adjunct block meal plan carry-over? Yes, block meal plans for all employees (FT and PT) carry forward until used.
- Adjunct parking rates, are they the same for all adjuncts? Rates table for adjuncts is maintained by Parking Services, and download of HR/Payroll data dictates rate amount for all employees (<https://www.jmu.edu/parking/faculty-staff/faculty-staff-fees.shtml>).
- Research grant program (current allocation of \$35,000 managed by CFI); advertising/awareness challenges amongst adjunct faculty; funds have been used primarily as travel grants to this point – CFI to continue managing the program, will re-visit efforts to improve advertising/awareness of program amongst adjunct faculty.

Recommendations:

- HR to proceed with review of Personnel Act, and prospect of future development of health insurance procurement opportunity with local broker.
- Support Faculty Senate of Virginia lobbying efforts for adjunct health insurance benefit option.
- If health insurance not viable through VA/JMU, explore health insurance alternatives (HSA?, other).
- Consider increasing research grant provisions when budget allows, but in deference to higher priority adjunct faculty salary/benefit concerns.

B: Orientation Subcommittee Report – December 2020

Submitted by: Christina Myers

Subcommittee members: Julie Sorge Way, Leslie Harlacker, Christina Myers

Charge:

- Create and publish an Adjunct Faculty orientation document to serve as a readily accessible resource (CAC).

Updates:

- There is a need for all information that adjunct faculty can refer to be in one, central location for easy access. Previously, such information was stored within a Canvas “course.” This proved to be insufficient, mainly due to the access needed by new adjuncts to even login to the course. This subcommittee will produce a reference for all new adjunct faculty (in addition to information for returning adjuncts) in a new format that is easily accessible and easy to find.

Actions:

- This subcommittee’s members have gained access to the current course in Canvas and reviewed all of its modules: Welcome, Teaching with technology, Being JMU faculty, Working at JMU, Being a JMU student and Foundation: Knowledge and Resources. Much of this information needs to be refreshed to reflect updates and changes that have occurred. This information will then be translated into an outline format that can be accessed from the Office of the Provost website.

Recommendations:

- Once this online source is established, it should be reviewed annually by the Adjunct Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate. Any updates and/or additions can be discussed with Academic Resources whose staff will work with the Office of the Provost to make changes.

C: Compensation Subcommittee Report – December 2020

Submitted by: John Hulvey

Subcommittee members: Ann Leith; David McGraw; John Hulvey; Jonathan Keller; Leslie Harlacker

Charge:

- Consider the feasibility of administering a salary adjustment plan designed to recognize long-serving, high-performing adjunct faculty (CAC).

Actions:

- *Defining the population:* We discussed defining the population and concluded that long-serving and high-performing may need to be separate categories in determining compensation. We recognized that all definitions would include some method of evaluating the adjunct faculty's satisfactory performance.
- Following discussion, the group suggests defining long-serving adjunct faculty as those that teach at least 1 class in five (5) consecutive academic years, OR teach ten (10) classes over nonconsecutive years.
- Defining a high-performing adjunct faculty proved more problematic due to the number of potential factors that could place someone into this category. Discussed factors included the following: teaching multiple classes per semester; faculty emeritus status; PhD in related field; Life experience or special certifications/credentials; teaching lab sections; willingness to teach a new or different course to meet a need; willingness to attempt or to evaluate new teaching methods; exceptional student evaluations; and teaching larger class sizes.
- The discussion regarding how to fairly compensate groups identified above was complicated by not knowing how adjunct faculty compensation is currently determined by individual departments or entire colleges. It was noted that some units do not change adjunct faculty compensation from year to year while other units provide increases based on full-time compensation changes or other such factors. It was also noted that some departments start certain 'high performing' adjunct faculty at a higher than standard wage. Departments that have already provided increases or have compensated high-performing adjunct faculty at a higher rate should not provide increases/bonuses when other departments have not historically taken these steps.

Recommendations:

- Obtain written outlines for how departments/colleges currently determine adjunct faculty compensation.
- Based on these responses, target departments/colleges with additional funding to create some equity among current adjunct faculty compensation practices. This analysis should include annual wage changes as well as starting compensation for designated 'high-performing' categories.
- Analyze 2019-20 adjunct faculty to determine the financial impact of moving long-serving faculty (as defined above) to a \$1,250 per credit hour base as previously recommended to the CAC.
- Once some equity has been established between the units (relative to full-time salaries within that unit), discuss/establish university-wide parameters for offering wage increases to adjunct faculty.
- Consider creating two separate funding pools: one related to wage increases between years and/or based on a 'long-serving' determination; and a second pool for units to control to offer 'bonuses' to high-performing adjunct faculty as the college or department identifies them. Determination of the 'bonus pool' funding to each college should be based on a predetermined calculation that could include the following: number of adjunct faculty; total adjunct faculty wages; and/or credit hour production by adjunct faculty relative to cost; however, all units should receive some level of funding to distribute.
- Evaluate these recommendations in relation to recommendations from other subcommittees, most notably the group dealing with offering 'benefits' to adjunct faculty.

D: Survey Subcommittee Report – December 2020

Submitted by: Christina Myers

Subcommittee members: Leslie Harlacker, Joy McBride, Christina Myers

Charge:

- Continue to build upon the adjunct faculty survey initiated in 2018-19, and transition the survey to the oversight of the Adjunct Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate (ATF).

Updates:

- The Adjunct Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate has determined that a survey should be sent out annually (or at least bi-annually) to all adjunct faculty. This group is currently discussing the data that would be most beneficial to gather via a survey and the timing for its distribution.

Actions:

- Once the Adjunct Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate has finalized details of the survey and determines a date for its distribution, Academic Resources will be notified to pull the most current list of adjunct faculty from PeopleSoft to create a listserv. The survey will be sent from the Academic Resources email address or that of the Office of the Provost. Results will be tabulated by the Adjunct Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate and communicated back to adjunct faculty.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended that lines of communication remain open between all committees involved and current adjunct faculty. This is an ever-changing situation for all, and transparency will allow adjuncts to participate in the process. An annual survey that is distributed to adjunct faculty, reviewed by the administration and acted upon in some fashion will keep the relationship and communication open.