

Supporting Statement on Best Practices in Supporting Contingent Faculty

At UCA, 25% of our faculty are employed on a part-time or contingent basis, and these faculty teach 10% of the Student Semester Hours (SSCH) we offer¹. The labor that goes into these courses, most often lower-division core courses, is crucial for retention and benefits not only UCA's students but also faculty in all disciplines. Nationwide, on average, contingent appointments comprise 50-70% of faculty appointments², a practice the AAUP considers exploitative of faculty and detrimental to students. UCA's commitment to employing a high proportion of faculty on a full-time basis is commendable. However, there is more we can do to ensure that our part-time and visiting faculty have sufficient institutional and collegial support.

Some of UCA's contingent faculty have identified practices that would provide this support; these suggestions align with the findings of formal and informal research on academic labor on a national scale³. In both cases, best practices for supporting part-time and visiting colleagues include: providing and maintaining lines of communication among faculty ranks, creating opportunities for scholarly and pedagogical collaboration, and providing opportunities for professional development. Additionally, UCA's contingent faculty suggest establishing mechanisms that allow contingent faculty to contribute to departmental strategic planning and providing documentation that can be used in application materials, such as regular written performance reviews, formal teaching observations, and letters of recommendation.

Resolution on Best Practices in Supporting Contingent Faculty

WHEREAS part-time and contingent faculty often teach the same courses and have the same credentials as their full-time counterparts,

And WHEREAS the majority of UCA's part-time and visiting faculty are seeking full-time continuing employment, whether at UCA or elsewhere,

And WHEREAS a culture of mentorship is widely accepted as beneficial to a successful academic job search,

¹ University of Central Arkansas Office of Institutional Research. (2016). "Key performance indicators." Retrieved from <http://uca.edu/ir/kpi/>

² American Association of University Professors. (n.d.) "Background facts on contingent faculty." Retrieved from <https://www.aaup.org/issues/contingency/background-facts>

³ Iber (2014); Tegtmeier (2015); Kazar and Bernstein-Sierra (2016); Pérez (2018)

And WHEREAS the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) provides an interdisciplinary space for faculty to collaborate and learn about the ideas that define our community culture,

And WHEREAS the Director of CTE has expressed support for developing practical, everyday collaborations between tenured and contingent faculty intended to contribute to a more inclusive culture at UCA,

And WHEREAS members of UCA's contingent faculty report that they would benefit from greater visibility and from opportunities for professional development and collaboration with tenured and tenure-track faculty;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate supports the development of training workshops for tenured and tenure-track faculty and administrators, offered through CTE, in best practices for supporting contingent faculty within UCA as an institution and in our respective national and regional disciplinary communities.

April 17, 2018 v3