Adjunct issues committee meeting, May 22, 2009

Members present: Lara Branen, Ted Crowell, Michael Kaufman, Michael Ludder, Mike Starkey

The majority of the meeting was spent brainstorming ideas to help adjunct faculty during the budget crisis. Suggestions made by various individuals on the committee included:

- Assuring that adjunct opinions and adjunct dissenting votes get on the record in council meetings (in the minutes) to document where we stand.
- Pay cuts - Requesting “across the board” salary cuts from the President down.
- Adjusting priority of hourly assignments so that retired faculty who return to teach as adjuncts do not take an adjunct’s like-load assignment.
- Exploring the cost savings to the District of retired faculty being treated as new hires rather than continuing on the same step as when they retired.
- Giving Adjuncts priority for summer schedule.
- Prioritizing assignments to preserve adjunct like load, before providing overload to full time faculty.
- Capping overload at a lower percentage, such as 120% instead of 140%.
- Exploring a separate overload salary schedule.

More on overload: It was pointed out that the load report is a public document that can be accessed by anyone. The full time perspective that not all overload impacts adjunct and that some faculty need their overload assignments as much as adjuncts was considered. The general feeling of the group is that when overload is at the expense of adjunct faculty jobs, that it should somehow be curbed.

There was a brief discussion about Adjunct Health Benefits in general. It was reiterated by one individual that the Blue Shield plan is so expensive for him that, in his opinion, one would be better off procuring a health plan independently. In this faculty member’s estimation Kaiser is the only viable choice available to adjunct. It was mentioned that the Costco Health Insurance plan may be a relatively inexpensive alternative for adjunct not wishing to go on SRJC’s Adjunct Medical Benefit Program.

All agree that there needs to be equal pay for equal work between adjuncts and full time faculty and that this disparity continues to trouble us.
Adjunct Issues February 25, 2009  5:15 – 6:00 p.m.
Present: Alex Alixopulos, Lara Branen, Ted Crowell, Lynn Harenburg-Miller, Michael Kaufman, and Mike Starkey

Discussion items

Retirement Options – Judith Bernstein clarified the various options available to adjunct faculty after which we discussed the Social Security issue. Points raised included 1) the economical reality that the option of Social Security will cost the District more than the current plans and therefore probably will not go anywhere at present with the budget crisis, and 2) Michael Ludder’s assertion that the District is obligated to provide retirement programs that are comparable money-wise to Social Security benefits. Further research into the District’s legal obligation with respect to offering Social Security to adjunct is considered desirable.

Idea of an Adjunct Grievance Officer: We discussed the fact that any of us might act in an advisory capacity to part-time colleagues experiencing problems. It was further mentioned that we should refer to the grievance officer as appropriate. The contract states that faculty members may have an additional representative with them in a conciliation or grievance meeting, so currently this is a possibility. It was pointed out that to create a new official position, the Bylaws would have to be changed and that this would present an additional expense for AFA.

Email communications: We all agree that we want fellow adjunct faculty members to know that we are “here for them” in a support capacity (in a general sense not necessarily in terms of grievances). We discussed once more that communicating with all adjunct by email would be a way to let them know we want to represent their concerns and to invite them to contact us.

We again discussed scheduling and the idea of a uniform process. All agree that transparency is desirable but not all of us believe that all departments should be required to follow the same process since the contract allows for unique departmental procedures.

When Article 16 is rewritten we would like to have further protections of adjunct in bumping scenarios.

Michael Kaufman gave a brief adjunct benefit update to let us know that for now the next year adjunct medical benefits are safe but after that, the District is still not interested in funding the program so it could be in jeopardy.
Fall 2008 Adjunct Issues Committee

December 12, 2008  5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
Present:  Alex Alixopulos, Lara Branen, Ted Crowell, Lynn Harenburg-Miller, Michael Kaufman, and Mike Starkey

Issues of concern were identified and discussed including the following:

- We discussed the problem of lack of ACDAF funding in spring and how that will impact adjunct service on committees and the Senate. All agreed it is crucial to have adjunct representation for shared governance and that adjunct need a voice especially considering the ratio of adjunct/regular faculty on campus. There was some discussion about whether we should serve on committees without pay. The downside to not continuing to serve is we lose our voice.
- We talked about the Cancellation Policy and all agree that there should be a minimum of two class meetings to give classes a fair chance to “go” and to compensate faculty for prep time. The faculty member should receive a warning that a course is about to be cancelled. The two days of class would also give students time to adjust their schedule with help from the instructor.
- Departmental hourly assignment procedures. All agree that there should be transparency – departments should allow all of those receiving hourly assignment to see the entire schedule and voice concerns and opinions about the overall course offerings in our departments. In several departments represented by our group, there is no ability to see the overall schedule until it comes out in the schedule of classes. It was also suggested that it would be desirable to have some uniformity across departments, although it was also pointed out that departments are allowed to develop their own procedures as long as procedures are consistent with the contract language.
- Voting rights. Adjunct faculty members are not allowed to vote in all departments. Considering the shared governance model, this came as a surprise to some of us.
- Mike Starkey stated that in his opinion the adjunct health benefit is not a benefit for some adjunct because it is more expensive to go on the Blue Shield plan than to independently procure the equivalent health insurance. It was pointed out that Kaiser is less expensive but perhaps not as attractive an option. (On subsequent review of these minutes, Ted Crowell added that health insurance is a benefit even if not all adjunct faculty members choose to participate or choose the more expensive plan.)
- Full-time faculty rehired as hourly start on Step 9. We question this practice however, it was pointed out that retirees last for an average of two years so perhaps not a huge expense. Even though full-time retirees might come back for only a short stint it seems that to be fair once faculty have retired if they want to teach as adjunct, they should be re-hired and then placed on the appropriate step.
- The regular faculty hiring process for adjuncts. We discussed a mandatory interview for adjunct applicants, but agreed this would not help much and perhaps wouldn’t be realistic in large departments although it was pointed out that not all adjunct faculty want to apply for full time openings. At the least, adjunct faculty should be educated on the way the process works and percentage of new hires that are adjunct so there are realistic expectations.
- List serve emails to adjunct from AFA adjunct. This would be a way to communicate with fellow faculty by AFA adjunct representatives, but could create fissions in AFA so would need to be handled with caution.
- Suggestion for adjunct to write Dialogue articles. Dialogue could be used for open discourse on adjunct issues.
- Adjunct vs. Part-time: Lara Branen brought up a concern that the title “adjunct” is distasteful and asked if we wouldn’t rather be referred to as “part-time”. Ted Crowell suggested that “hourly” is preferable. This matter did not capture the committee’s imagination as an important issue.