Adjunct Faculty Support

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Adjunct Faculty Support Design team was charged with the following tasks: research adjunct faculty design systems at other community colleges, establish a philosophical framework for adjunct faculty at MVCC, identify and define components of an effective faculty support system, conduct a needs assessment and survey adjunct faculty for their perceptions and needs, research and identify areas for improvement and/or modification to current practices, and define a comprehensive system for adjunct faculty support. Since receiving our charge, the Team has met bi-weekly to complete our tasks. The following summarizes our work on each task.

1. Research:

The Design Team was asked to research the practices at Metropolitan Community College, Johnson County Community College, and Prairie State Community College. These schools were contacted by phone by members of the Team. We also gathered information from SUNY Morrisville. In addition we were able to get the text of a presentation by Johnson CCC on their Adjunct Certification Training Program which was given at the NCSPOD Conference in October. The gathered information was then shared with the team members. A common practice at each of these schools is that there is a system in place for adjunct support. Many of our observations are included in our recommendations that follow.

2. Philosophical Framework:

As our starting point the Team developed the following philosophy statement:

PHILOSOPHY FOR ADJUNCT SUPPORT INITIATIVE

An engaged faculty is essential to a learning-centered community college. Because some 20% of the courses at Mohawk Valley Community College are taught by adjunct faculty members, they are as important to the students and the college as full-time faculty in maintaining a high level of academic integrity and consistency, in developing students' skills and knowledge of content areas, and in modeling scholarly and professional behavior. At the same time, adjunct faculty members tend to be on campus less often, have fewer opportunities for engagement with other adjuncts and full-time faculty, and have less access to formal and informal professional development networks. In order to bridge the gap between a generally lower level of overall institutional involvement and a higher level of expectations for academic outcomes, we believe that special, formalized efforts are needed to engage and support the adjunct faculty member.

3. Key Components:

Our research on adjunct support systems identified these components. There is a person (or persons) who has responsibility for coordinating support for the adjuncts across all departments. Communication is

fostered by means of a web site and/or a newsletter which provides current information on the changes within the college and policies that affect those teaching. At the start of each semester there is a meeting that includes refreshments, a focus on teaching, and department specific information. There are workshops provided that explain teaching strategies, campus information systems, syllabus preparation, evaluation, and assessment issues. Professional growth is encouraged with opportunities for coursework and travel. These components have helped to form our recommendations as noted in item 6.

4. Survey:

A survey was developed by the Team and distributed to about 140 adjuncts involved in teaching at MVCC in the fall 2007 semester. There were 36 returned for a 26% rate of return. Many of the survey questions were open ended which made for difficulties in collating the responses. However, each team member was given all the responses to read and make conclusions. Several themes appeared. The adjuncts are generally happy with their MVCC experience, the rate of pay needs to be improved, there is a need for better communication, and a desire of earlier notice for courses. Also, information was gathered from other colleges in the area relative to rates of pay. The data clearly supports the perceptions of the adjuncts.

5. Identify Areas for Improvement:

Since there does not exist a comprehensive system for adjunct support across the College, the first recommendation would be to put such a system in place. Our findings are summarized in part 6 below.

6. Define a Comprehensive Adjunct Faculty Support System:

The Team recommends that the College establish a comprehensive support system for adjuncts. In order to provide for that system, the team recommends that the position of Adjunct Coordinator be established with responsibilities as below.

Adjunct Coordinator:

- 1. Be an advocate for adjuncts.
- 2. Assist in the design and upkeep of a Website for Adjuncts.
- 3. Establish a monthly newsletter to include a summer issue.
- 4. Update the General Policy Handbook for adjuncts.
- 5. Develop topical workshops scheduled by need, appealing to a broad audience such as teaching strategies, classroom management, and College procedures and policies.
- 6. Develop a mechanism for increased departmental interaction such as department specific topics, course review, and best practices.
- 7. Develop a semester survey of Adjuncts to get input on course related issues and general college policy.
- 8. Establish a liaison plan with full time faculty that is department specific.

- 9. Advocate for adjunct rank advancement and increased compensation to a level competitive with area colleges.
- 10. Establish a budget to support travel and professional development.
- 11. Arrange for fall and spring convocations.
- 12. The Adjunct Coordinator should be a 10 month appointment to report to the Vice-President for Instruction to coordinate with the fall and spring semesters.

Minimum Adjunct Qualifications*:

In order to bring the hiring of adjuncts back into the departments, we need to look at a set of minimum qualifications that can be used to hire adjuncts by the department head. Any recommendations would be reviewed solely by the VP for Instruction. In this way the hiring of instruction would lie within instruction. For all departments:

A Master's Degree in the discipline will be approved by the department head.

For all departments:

The department head may approve an adjunct faculty member with a Bachelor's degree in the field and a Master's degree in some other area in consultation with the Vice-President for Instruction.

For Art; Engineering Technology and Trade; Engineering Computer Science and Physical Sciences; Life Science; Mathematics; and Nursing Departments:

The Department Head may approve a Bachelor's degree in the field after consultation with the Vice-President for Instruction and the President.

For all other degrees/certificates:

The Vice-President for Instruction and the President must approve these in advance.

*These qualifications are for hires after the date of adoption of this policy by the appropriate parties.

Advisory Committee:

In order to support the role of the Adjunct Coordinator the Design Team recommends that an Advisory Committee be established to work with the coordinator and to provide guidance and advice on issues as they arise. The membership of the committee should include, but not be limited to: 2 department heads, 2 full time teaching faculty, 6 adjunct teaching faculty, 2 clerical support persons, a person from the Registration's Office, and the Coordinator.

Adjunct Coordinator Search:

The Adjunct Faculty Support Design Team would like to be involved with the search for the adjunct coordinator.

The survey of area colleges in regard to compensation and a blank form of our adjunct survey will be attached as separate documents. If there is a need for the completed adjunct surveys, then they can be made available.