

Chapter 17



Supporting Adjunct Faculty

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Adjunct instructors are often the first teacher a basic skills student meets at a college, the person who labors mightily to help construct the building that houses the student’s academic dreams. Although teaching specific mathematics, English or ESL skills, these hard-working professors must also instill students with confidence, all the while educating them about how to become a learner. As Chapter 6 discusses, assuming a “learner identity” is the most important task that basic skills students must master, the skill that will show them how to use the building supplies they are amassing for their own individual academic construction.

Yet adjunct instructors face many unique challenges in their work, ones that full-time faculty do not. This chapter is written by an adjunct faculty member and former long-term adjunct in acknowledgement of those difficulties and with gratitude for all the creative ways that part-time faculty have managed to overcome them. The California Community College system would not be the positive and thriving place that it is today without our adjuncts! This chapter is also written for those administrators and full-time faculty who wish to explore the hurdles that adjuncts face and who would like to find better ways to support their very important work.



Reality Check

Let’s start with a checklist about an adjunct instructor’s work life. If you are part-time faculty, check any and all of the challenges listed below that arise from your current teaching assignment at one or more colleges. If you are not an adjunct, imagine what your working life would be like under any of these circumstances.

- No time to attend department or other college governance meetings.
- No time to attend flex activities or, if you do, no reimbursement for it.
- No office assigned.
- No location to conveniently meet with students.
- No easily accessible reproduction facilities.
- No contact person to help with campus logistics.

- No course outline or other guidance provided for the classes you are assigned to teach.
- Fear that you will be in one location and the materials you need will be somewhere else.
- Different campus SLO assessment processes, course outlines and expectations for the same course you teach at different colleges.

How many did you check? If you had two or less, you are teaching at a college that comprehends the challenges that adjuncts face and has made efforts to help you in your work. If you had three or more checked, a lot more could be done to assist your successful involvement with students and the college as a whole.

While you may be laboring with no office or support, we know that you persist in your work with dedication and passion because you want to see students succeed. Let's take a look at some of the data about adjunct faculty and basic skills that reveal the very essential role adjunct faculty have in promoting student success.



How Many Adjuncts Teach Basic Skills Courses?

The Chancellor's Office Report on Staffing for Fall 2006 states that there were 18,196 Tenured to 41,624 Temporary faculty. Think about the numbers! Temporary or adjunct faculty outnumber full-timers slightly more than 2:1. This is often acknowledged, but justified by a difference in FTE (full time equivalent) numbers. Yet the FTE count from the same report shows that Tenured faculty's FTE is 17,614.2 compared to 15,041.6 Temporary.¹ The difference is not as much as many suppose.

But these numbers don't give the full picture of how many adjunct faculty are teaching basic skills courses. *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges*, sometimes referred to as the Poppy Copy, tried to discover some hard numbers. It reports that nationwide 67 percent of faculty teaching remedial courses are employed part-time (Shults, 2000). In its 1998 survey of practices related to basic skills, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges found that 56.5 percent of credit basic skills instructors were part-time faculty, with numbers up to 70 percent when noncredit courses were considered (Academic Senate, 2000).²

California seems to be in keeping with the rest of the country. Hardworking adjunct faculty teach the majority of basic skills courses. It is adjunct faculty who open the door to students, providing them with the tools and materials they need for building academic success. The efforts of the Basic Skills Initiative will come to naught if colleges do not focus on adjunct needs and provide adjunct faculty with more tools for the crucial role they play in all disciplines, but particularly in basic skills courses.

¹ *California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Report on Staffing for Fall 2006 Statewide Detail*

² *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges*, The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges, July 2007 (second edition) pg 21



As An Adjunct, What Am I Legally Mandated To Do?

In case one of the items you checked on the reality checklist was the one about lacking guidance from your college about the classes you teach, we would like to share the legal requirements for your job. Those of you already in the know may want to skip ahead to the next section of this chapter.

An intrepid instructor, brave enough to explore the California Education Code, will find the answer to “what am I mandated to do?” in legal language. The statutes apply to all faculty, whether adjunct or full-time. However, adjunct faculty do not always receive an orientation to these requirements when hired. If you are feeling courageous, you can access the Ed Code yourself online at: www.leginfo.ca.gov/calaw.html. Relevant sections include CALIFORNIA CODES, **EDUCATION CODE**, SECTION 87400-87488 for academic employees, and Part 25 Chapter 4. Employment--Certificated Employees and Instructional Materials Article 1 Prohibited Acts Section 78900-78907.

To translate this legalese into English, your responsibilities are to:

- Follow the course document of record.
- Provide instruction in accordance with established curriculum and course outlines.
- Teach critical thinking. All higher education courses, including basic skills classes, must involve critical thinking, not just memory work.
- Maintain appropriate standards of professional conduct and ethics.
- Maintain current knowledge in the subject matter areas.
- Fulfill professional responsibilities of a part-time/temporary faculty member.
- Teach all scheduled classes.
- Maintain accurate records.
- Maintain confidentiality of student records.

In addition to what you must do, the Ed Code spells out what you can't do. This includes taking money for use of published materials and using published materials without acquiring appropriate permissions.

Regarding evaluation, Section 87663 of the Ed Code states: “*Temporary employees shall be evaluated within the first year of employment. Thereafter, evaluation shall be at least once every six regular semesters, or once every nine regular quarters, as applicable.*”



What Other Info May You Need?

If you checked many items on the Reality Checklist, you may feel as if you need more information from your college to better help your students succeed. Sometimes getting the textbook, the keys to the classroom, the name of the course you have been assigned to teach and maybe a map of the campus just isn't enough. The information you may need is as varied as the total number of adjunct faculty in the state. Here's a list of items that other adjunct faculty have found useful. Warning: some of this is utterly obvious,

but you may not be surprised to learn that some adjuncts have had to walk into the classroom and begin teaching without receiving some of this information from the college that has hired them.

- Course outline
- Course Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's)
- Course prerequisites
- Course post requisites
- Campus map
- College catalog
- Course description
- Campus copy protocol
- Desk copy of the textbook assigned to the class
- Academic calendar detailing holidays and final exam dates
- Your campus email address
- Your campus phone number
- Your campus mail box location
- Class rosters
- Office supply location

The good news is that in this day and age much of the above list is available online at the college web site. The remaining items most likely can be obtained from the department office support staff.

A word about pre and post requisites: as you are surely aware, many basic skills courses are part of a sequence. It's as important for you to know what students should be able to do when they enter your course and what they will be expected to do in the next one as it is for you to understand the specific requirements of your particular class. Many departments have spent hours trying to align the classes so that the skills build. You may have not been able to attend those meetings or were hired after this work was completed, so you may not be fully aware of how your course fits in to the whole. The course outlines of the pre and post classes should also be made available to you, but this does not always happen. If it hasn't, find out where you can get them.

Another note about those pesky SLOs: Since colleges across the state are in the process of writing SLOs and designing methods to assess them, with various schools at different stages of the process, you need to find out what is expected of faculty at each of the institutions where you teach. The processes will probably differ from college to college. If you would like to know more about SLOs and how they can be assessed in basic skills courses, take a look at Chapter 15 in this handbook.

The appendix of this chapter contains information on what's included in a course outline if you need it.



Adjunct Survivor Tips: Getting Organized

As an adjunct instructor, this is crucial. If you are a freeway flyer, teaching at more than one institution and without an office or place where you can store things, organization is the key to a sane life. It is probably the one thing that has saved countless adjuncts over the years. Here are a few suggestions:

- Designate a location for each assigned class whether it be a box, bag, or corner of a room. Having one location for materials concerning each class will simplify the semester.
- If teaching at multiple campuses, using one plastic tub (with a lid) for each campus will help sort and simplify all of the paperwork involved.
- One adjunct we know favors a craft bag on wheels. She writes, “It has all those handy elastics for my pens, a zipper for my scissors, rulers and stapler and two big sections – one for each class. This bag goes to each class with me so all the assignments being turned in go in the appropriate folder. Having one place to put my papers helps in getting work completed on time, eliminates wasted time searching for student work and focuses time on getting the papers graded. Organization takes some thought and maybe a little planning, but saves headaches in the long run. Now supply whatever you use with writing implements and any office supplies you want to have in the classroom. My craft bag even has a mini stapler and pencil sharpener.”
- For organizing the paperwork, buy several colors of file folders and a binder for each class.
- In the binder, use dividers for the calendar, grade book, lesson plans, hand outs and syllabus. You may want to add another section headed TO DO with a pocket folder and lined notebook to keep track of your to-do list. Having a pouch in the binder for pens is convenient. A stack of sticky notes and 3 x 5 cards come in handy.
- Organize the designated area (tub, trunk, craft bag or location) using colored folders. Sometimes it helps to use one color per class.
- If most of your work is done on the computer, consider using a USB drive that goes everywhere with you. It can contain folders for each of your classes with the handouts, tests and anything else that you need.
- Another adjunct suggests this organizing technique: “Early in the semester (usually the first test – week 2) each student is assigned a number. This number is their *secret* number. For the rest of the semester, as a grade and attendance sheets go through the class, they will look at their scores and mark their attendance using their secret number. It simplifies recording my grades and gives them a random identifier. Each assignment being turned in has their name and number in the upper right hand corner so entering scores is simplified.”
- Contact your book rep. One instructor wrote, “This has proved to be a wealth of support for my students. In addition to the text book, there are often videos, test generators, PowerPoint presentations and online resources available. Several of the textbooks I’ve used in the past have provided supplemental video tapes that I put on reserve at the library for student use. My students then have an opportunity to view the classroom material at their own pace from a different perspective watching other instructors discussing the textbook topics.”
- Organize your students! Many of our basic skills students lack the organizational and study skills for successful completion of college level work. This handbook contains some materials that might be helpful. Chapter 5 contains a Student Success Checklist. Chapter 8 has a Time Management Grid that can be used to lead a discussion on the time requirements of a class.



Teaching Strategies

This handbook contains a wealth of material about teaching strategies for basic skills students. Check out the various discipline chapters to see what other faculty across the state are doing in your particular area. In addition, you may find it very valuable to read Chapter 5: Effective Practices for All Disciplines for cutting edge research on neuroscience, learning styles and metacognition. It contains specific materials and activities that have been proven to help basic skills students achieve more success. All of us, regardless of discipline, need to learn how to teach more actively and to ask students to reflect on their own learning. Research has shown that these two techniques vastly improve the success of basic skills students. Chapter 5 details both the research and the specific successful strategies.

You probably have successful strategies of your own that you can add to either Chapter 5 or the specific discipline chapters. The Academic Senate of the California Community Colleges is collecting effective practices and will host them on a website at Basic Skills Initiative <http://www.cccbsi.org>. One of our goals is to include at least one program, strategy, and/or project from each California community college. Complete the survey at the link listed below so you can share what you are doing so well in your own classroom. The survey link is: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=WHXjfzLZpIh3JVm0zMUBKw_3d_3d

And here's a really fun resource for you. Have a look at this link for professional training: <http://www.league.org/gettingresults/web>. The lessons it contains on active learning and student engagement are short but may be readily applicable in your classroom.

Finally, the appendix to this chapter contains information on syllabus writing and lesson plans, if you would find it helpful.



Use Professional Organizations to Keep Up To Date

One of the best ways to keep abreast of new teaching strategies and research in your field is through professional organizations. Across the state there are numerous professional organizations available to ALL community college instructors. Since the definition of a basic skills student is one who “lacks the foundational skills in reading, writing, math, English as a Second Language (ESL) necessary to succeed in college-level work,” the professional organizations related to those subjects are included. The mission statement for each of the organizations is taken from their website. The sites also provide further information on their goals and conferences. For funding to attend a conference, check with the division dean and/or the professional development office on your campus.

English Council of California Two-Year Colleges (ECCTYC)

URL: <http://ecctyc.org/>

The purpose of ECCTYC is to advance English teaching and learning in the two-year college by providing opportunities for the exchange of discipline information, promoting professional interaction and growth among its members, and articulating concerns of the discipline to professional and policy-making groups.

To support these goals, ECCTYC publishes the journal *inside english*, sponsors statewide conferences, holds annual statewide meetings of English department chairs, and represents two-year college English teachers' concerns in state and national issues affecting the English discipline.

California Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

URL: <http://www.catesol.org/>

CATESOL's mission is to promote excellence in education for English language learners and a high quality professional environment for their teachers. CATESOL represents teachers of English language learners throughout California and Nevada, at all levels and in all learning environments. CATESOL strives to:

- improve teacher preparation and provide opportunities which further professional expertise
- promote sound, research-based education policy and practices
- increase awareness of the strengths and needs of English language learners
- promote appreciation of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

California Mathematics Council Community Colleges (CMC³)

URL: <http://www.cmc3.org/>

The California Mathematics Council Community Colleges (CMC³) was founded in 1973 to provide a forum through which Community College mathematics faculty in Northern and Central California shall express themselves professionally at a local, state and national level and to support mathematical activity by students and faculty.

California Mathematics Council Community Colleges South CMC³-S

URL: <http://cmc3s.org/index.htm>

The California Mathematics Council, Community Colleges - South is a non-profit, education association. The objectives of the association are the following:

1. To encourage the development of effective mathematics programs;
2. To provide a collective voice for community college faculty in the interest of mathematics education;
3. To affiliate with other groups and organizations also directed toward the improvement of mathematics instruction;
4. To hold regular conferences, meetings and/or forums;
5. To communicate information related to the special interests of two year college mathematics instruction in California.

For an overview of the College Governance System visit:

<http://www.4faculty.org/includes/119r1.jsp>

Foundation for California Community Colleges

URL: <http://www.foundationccc.org/>

The Foundation for California Community Colleges is a unique non-profit organization that benefits, supports, and enhances California's Community Colleges—the largest higher education system in the nation. As the sole official auxiliary organization partnering with the California Community Colleges Board of Governors and System Office, we develop programs and services that save millions of dollars for colleges and students, promote excellence in education, and provide valuable learning opportunities for students throughout the state. We also support the system

through special initiatives, statewide awards, and direct donations to the colleges and the Network of California Community College Foundations.

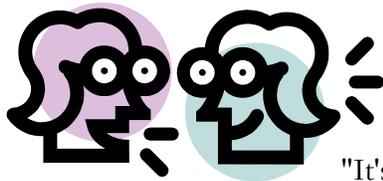
The Foundation for California Community Colleges (FCCC) supports an array of software programs, designed to benefit educational institutions, faculty, staff, and students at California Community Colleges and across the nation. They offer reduced prices on software by visiting: <http://www.foundationccc.org/CollegeBuys/SoftwareComputers/tabid/243/Default.aspx>

Northern California College Reading Association (NCCRA)

URL: <http://nccrereading.org/>

The objectives of this association are as follows:

1. To exchange ideas and techniques with regard to college reading and study skills programs in the areas of a. Course content and methods, b. Diagnosis of student reading and study skills problems, c. Evaluation and effectiveness of the programs, and d. State and national issues
2. To encourage the adoption of specific qualifications and standards for college teachers of reading and study skills.
3. To develop stronger liaison between community colleges and four-year colleges.
4. To develop stronger liaison with other reading and study skills associations.
5. To provide a mechanism for professional networking.



A Final Word

If you have read the statistics on the lack of success/completion of our basic skills students (see Chapter 1), you know that it is up to us to make changes to assist them. If we do not, as Yogi Berra says, "It's like deja vu all over again."

Appendix

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- Appendix A:** Course Outline Information
- Appendix B:** Course Syllabus Information
- Appendix C:** Lesson Plan Information

Appendix A

Course Outline Information

Each college formulates course outlines differently, but here is a partial list of what the course outline will detail:

- Date Revised:
- Title 5 Credit Status
- Course Name/Number
- Division:
- Course Title
- Units
- Weekly Hours Configuration
- Grading Method
- Method Of Instruction
- Basic Skills Status
- Materials Fee:
- Course Prerequisite
- Catalog Description
- Schedule Description
- Course Classification e.g. Liberal Arts/AA, Community Course, Remedial, Occupational Required, Remedial, Occupational Elective
- Course Transfer e.g. Non-Transfer/Non-AA, Transfer CSU, Non-Transfer AA
- Course Content And Scope/Topic Outline:
- Instructional Objectives:
- Method Of Student Evaluation:
- Instructional Methodologies:
- Writing Assignments/Proficiency Demonstration:
- Repeatability:
- Educational Materials:
- Curriculum Prerequisite, Corequisite And Advisory On Recommended Preparation

Some colleges are listing the student learning outcomes for the course in the Course Outlines and others have chosen not to do so. Some have them attached as an addendum to the outline, but are not part of the outline of record.

Appendix B

Course Syllabus Information

...experts say that when things go wrong in the classroom, fuzzy expectations are almost always to blame. Some teaching experts applaud the thoroughness as a coup for student learning. The comprehensive syllabus, they say, simultaneously protects the professor and prepares students for the demands of the course.³ (Wasley, 2008)

The syllabus is one way to communicate the course goals with the students. While we're sure that you have a syllabus on hand, here are two websites for quick click and type Syllabus Templates:

- <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/TC010184081033.aspx?pid=CT102530631033>
- <http://www.clt.cornell.edu/campus/teach/faculty/TeachingMaterials.html>

If updating a syllabus is on the agenda, here is a list of syllabus components to consider:

- Course Information
- Instructor Contact Information
- Course Description
- Course Objectives
- Course Requirements
- Assignments
- Course Policies
- Grading, Evaluation
- Texts
- Required Materials
- Course Calendar
- Classroom Conduct
- Study Tips/Learning Resources
- Academic Honesty Statement

³ Wasley, Paula, "The Syllabus Becomes a Repository of Legalese" Chronicle of Higher Education, v54 n27 pA1 Mar 2008

Appendix C

Lesson Plan Information

Preparing a lesson plan helps organize not only the subject material but also the method of instruction to accommodate the various learning styles. Here is a website for a click and fill in Lesson Plan Template: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/TC010184001033.aspx?pid=CT102530631033>

Possible Lesson Plan Components:

- Objective
- Simulations, Tools, Data, Illustrations, and Images
- Procedure
- Assessment/Evaluation
- Extensions and Homework Assignments
- Connections
- References
- Required Materials:
- Step-By-Step Procedures:
- Plan For Independent Practice:
- Closure (Reflect Anticipatory Set):