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The On-line Adjunct Faculty Organization News

American Federation of Teachers Local 337, AFT-M, AFL-CIO

Winter Course Assignment Process Not Going as Well as Hoped Seniority List Failures Blamed for Much of the Problem

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Chief Grievance Officer

As anticipated, seniority rights and the course assignment process are proving to be the most difficult aspects of the implementation of the Adjunct Faculty Organization's first contract with HFCC. We continue to believe that both sides are acting in good faith, but that hasn't translated into a smooth implementation. The problems come from several sources: (1) a lack of understanding on the part of administrators regarding the requirements of our contract; (2) a lack of understanding on the part of our members (and others covered by our contract) regarding their rights under the contract—you can help "fix" that problem by reading this article all the way through; and (3) a failure by management to produce seniority lists in a timely fashion.

Seniority Lists

Ideally, before the class assignment process begins, each department should post two seniority lists for each "discipline" within the department. One list should identify "Senior Adjuncts" in order of their seniority points and the second list should identify "Probationary Adjuncts," also in order of their seniority points. You become a "Senior Adjunct" when you begin your ninth term work-

ing for the College (with the spring/summer sessions counting as one term), i.e. you become a Senior Adjunct after you complete eight terms of employment.

There is a lot of misinformation out there. Some administrators have misinterpreted the contract and need to be educated. Our best defense is a well-informed membership—take the time to read this article!

In some departments (e.g. sociology), there might be only two lists (one for Senior, the other for Probationary Adjuncts) while in other departments (e.g. business) there might be multiple lists for different specialties (such as economics and accounting). It will be fairly common for an adjunct to have a place on more than one list.

In rare cases a "Senior Adjunct" might have fewer seniority points than a "Probationary Adjunct." This might happen if a Senior Adjunct only rarely taught courses that

earned her points on one seniority list while regularly teaching courses that earn her points on another list.

Although the College has kept us informed of the problems they are having generating seniority lists, the fact is that the winter, 2010 term class assignment process is already well underway and the lists have yet to be finalized and are still a week or two away from even being made available to adjuncts. This situation, of course, is creating problems. So far, we have been satisfied that administrators are making a good faith effort to resolve the problems we are aware of as consistently with the requirements of our contract as possible. However, we are also aware that there is much we don't know. If you have a situation, or just a question, bring it to the attention of a steward or a member of the AFO Executive Board.

We want to make sure that such issues are resolved, but we also want to ensure that the process is much improved in coming terms. Allowing the status quo to continue is not an option: the College needs to produce and post seniority lists before the end of the current semester.

We encourage each of our members to ask their Associate Deans when the lists will be posted. If an Associate Dean won't give you a date, let us know. If the Associate Dean gives you a date and the lists aren't available on the promised date, follow up with her or him.

Scrutinize the Lists!

Once the lists are finally posted, it will be critically important for each and every AFO member (as well as agency-fee payers covered by our contract) to scrutinize the list and to personally check to make sure that the lists accurately reflect their actual seniority points. For the period prior to the fall, ~~2001~~ 2000 semester, an adjunct is awarded ten service points for each year in which she taught at least one course in a particular discipline. For academic years beginning on or after the fall of ~~2001~~ 2000, an adjunct earns one service point for each course taught plus one service point for each ~~year~~ semester in which she teaches at least one course in a particular discipline. **For instance, if an adjunct teaches three courses in the fall, three in the winter, and three in the spring/summer terms, she would earn a total of 12 service points—one for each of the nine classes taught plus one for each of the three semesters in which at least one course was taught.** The requirements, of course, are modified for librarians and counselors—33

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hours of work counts as one service point.

The Class Assignment Process

The first step in the class assignment process should be a request for information from the Associate Dean or a delegate. The specific procedures and deadlines are left to the discretion of individual administrators, but prior to assigning any classes, both Senior and Probationary Adjuncts should be given an opportunity to express their course preferences and their availability.

Once this information is collected and after classes are assigned to full-time faculty and to administrators working extra-contractual assignments, classes should be assigned to Senior Adjuncts.

Step Two: Senior Adjunct Course Assignments, Stage One

Classes should first be assigned to those Senior Adjuncts requesting a similar schedule to that taught in the corresponding semester of the prior academic year if such classes are available.

If a similar schedule is not available for some reason (e.g. a full-timer decides to teach the class, course cancellation, etc.), the affected Senior Adjunct should be offered other open sections, based on his or her stated availability, equaling the same number of credit hours as taught in the corresponding semester of the previous academic year. In the event that the Senior Adjunct has limited flexibility and no classes are available, he or she may be passed over.

If a Senior Adjunct is requesting a schedule change (as opposed to a similar schedule to that taught in the corresponding semester of the prior academic year), the scheduler should make every reasonable effort to accommodate the schedule change. This may mean assigning the Senior Adjunct a section that had been taught by a Probationary Adjunct in the corresponding semester of the prior academic year even if the Probationary Adjunct is requesting that class. *It does not mean re-assigning a less senior Senior Adjunct to another section to accommodate the Senior Adjunct requesting a schedule change.*

During this stage, the number of credits assigned to Senior Adjuncts should equal the number of credits taught in the corresponding semester of the previous academic year. That is,

a Senior Adjunct who taught six credits in the spring of 2009 would be limited to six credits for the spring of 2010 during this stage of the course assignment process.

Step Three: Probationary Adjunct Course Assignments

After classes are assigned to Senior Adjuncts as described above, classes should be assigned to Probationary Adjuncts following a similar procedure. Note, during this stage, the number of credits offered to Probationary Adjuncts should equal the number of credits they taught in the corresponding semester of the previous academic year. This means that a recently hired Probationary Adjunct (e.g. one hired in the previous semester and had therefore not taught in the corresponding semester of the previous academic year) may not be offered any classes during this stage of the class assignment process.

Step Four: Senior Adjunct Course Assignments, Stage Two

After classes are assigned to Probationary Adjuncts as described above, any open classes should be offered to Senior Adjuncts who wish to increase their teaching load (e.g. from six credits to nine credits) in order of their seniority.

Step Five: The Last Step until the Next Time

While it is not specifically required by the College's contract with the AFO, at this stage administrators may offer any additional open classes to Probationary Adjuncts who wish to increase their teaching load (including those recent new hires who have not yet been offered classes). Any remaining open classes after that will be assigned to new hires or AFO members offered temporary full- or part-time positions.

If you believe the course assignment process in your discipline for the winter, 2010 semester deviated significantly from this process, reach out to us by contacting a steward or a member of the Executive Board and we will do everything in our power to enforce our contract. In the absence of seniority lists we may have to agree to some compromises with regard to assignments for the winter, 2010, but management is aware of our demand that the process be improved when it comes to assigning courses in future terms.