

Request That Salaries of Part-time Adjunct Faculty be Raised

I ask that we raise the salaries of part-time adjunct faculty in our college for the 2014-15 academic year. The college budget is probably already stretched, and this will naturally require a new commitment of funds from the central administration in framing next year's budget. This commitment, however, should be made because these part-time faculty make an important contribution to our college—providing high quality instruction and also making it possible for regular faculty to enjoy more time for research and scholarly writing. I think that part-time adjunct instructors deserve a long-overdue raise.

Let me begin by emphasizing that our faculty in the college, and the university as a whole, have expressed great concern over salary justice (with good reason). While I was not one of those targeted in the recent punitive reduction of raises, I do know that what is an injustice to one is an injustice to all. We must all work to make sure that the central administration reverses these unjust punishments and apologizes to those so punished.

At the same time, we cannot be concerned with justice at only one level. Part-time adjunct faculty receive a salary of \$3,000 per 3-hour course, and they have been at this level for at least ten years. To my knowledge, they never get raises of any kind, no matter their levels of degree, experience, or effectiveness. As a matter of comparison, when I was a graduate student at the university of Iowa 30 years ago (1983), I made the same amount (\$3,000) for teaching a 3-hour course on a part-time, adjunct basis. This figure no longer seems just.

It is true that we are perhaps staffing too many sections with instructors on part-time adjunct contracts. Departments and programs do need to limit the number of such contracts as much as possible. At the same time, with faculties the size we have, and with the commitments at so many levels of the curriculum, we sometimes have little choice.

In the case of Film Studies, we do not have a regular faculty per se but borrow faculty from other departments. Even then, we do not have sufficient expertise, especially in the creative and production side of film studies, to work without such appointments. Moreover, departments like English teach a range of core courses, many in first-year writing. Many on adjunct contracts are current doctoral students, but an increasing number are not. Indeed, since English hopes to decrease the size of its graduate student population (to reflect national trends and increase placement rates), it is likely that we will need more rather than fewer of such contracts. Even if we work to change these circumstances—by increasing the number of regular faculty teaching at the 100 and 200 levels, by developing 3-year post-doctoral teaching fellowships, and by other methods, we will still require a number of part-time, adjunct positions for the foreseeable future. If so, we should see to it that those doing the work are paid a just wage.

Let me add, in the interest of transparency, that my wife usually teaches a writing class for the English department, on a part-time adjunct basis, at least once a year. Obviously, an increase would benefit her and our family. This, however, is not my motivation for arguing for increased salaries. Indeed, and I can speak only for myself in this, I would be willing to forego

my own raise next year in order to make funds available for an increase in the part-time adjunct salaries.

Of course, salaries for part-time adjunct college teachers are not high in St. Louis, and so SLU still compares somewhat favorably with several other institutions. Even so, should that be our justification? Should we not, as an institution preparing students to be “people for others,” lead the way in providing just wages (and, Lord willing, someday even benefits) for part-time workers? If we increase the salaries paid to part-time adjunct instructors, we just might encourage other institutions to do so—raising all boats in the rising tide we create.

Such an increase would also likely improve the quality of instruction, because many who teach on a part-time adjunct basis must take contracts at several different institutions in order to maintain even a marginally living wage. A higher salary would limit the number of sections they might need to take on at other institutions, leaving more time for these instructors to devote to their SLU students. It would also make SLU more competitive in recruiting the best possible instructors.

For all these reasons, I would urge that we agree that the salaries be raised, and ask Dean Barber to bring the issue to the higher administration. I would argue that, beginning with the 2015 Fiscal Year, the salary of a part-time adjunct instructor in our college should be \$5,000 for a three-hour course. I know that seems like a massive increase, but consider how long they have been without one. I would urge this both on the basis of offering just wages and on the basis of improving the quality of instruction. Thank you.