



# Part-Time Faculty in the Florida Community College System: A Status Report

John Winn, Commissioner

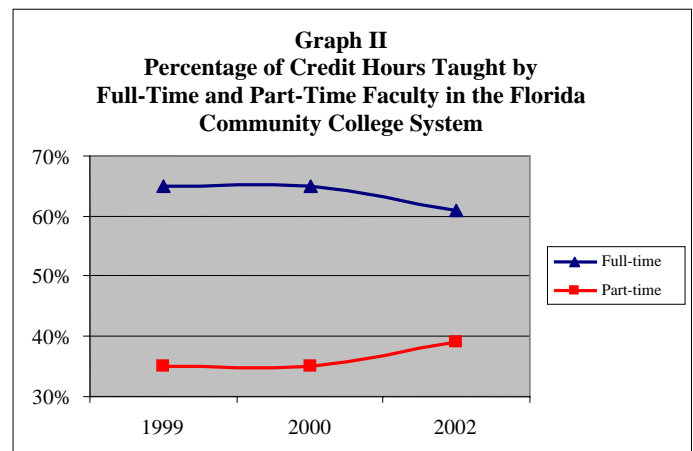
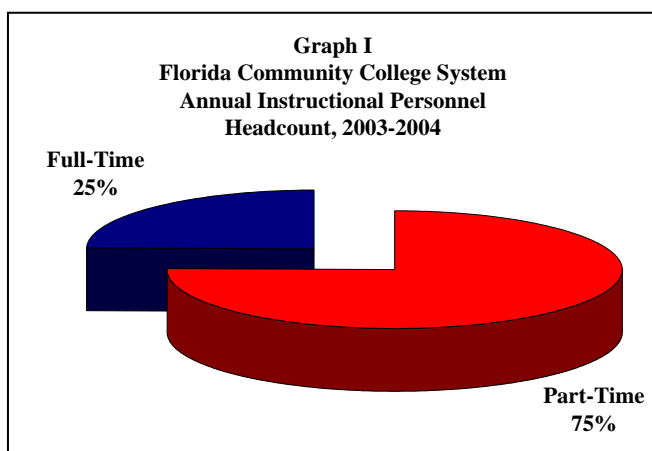
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J. David Armstrong, Jr., Chancellor

Most community college faculty, by headcount, are part-time. Community college programs, such as workforce education, adult basic education, and English as a second language, rely heavily on the knowledge, skills, and practical experience that part-time faculty bring to the classroom. Part-time faculty provide institutions with alternatives and flexibility to manage fluctuating budgets, as well as recruiting working professionals with excellent practical career experience into the classroom. In fall 2003, the Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education conducted a survey of community colleges regarding their policies and procedures for part-time faculty. The survey results are presented throughout this document.

**Community colleges turn to part-time faculty: a continuing trend.** Due to financial shortfalls faced by community colleges and the desire to quickly respond to community needs, the demand for part-time faculty has increased steadily over the past 30 years. According to Ostertag (as cited in Lankard, 1993), between 1970 and 1988, the number of part-time faculty employed by community colleges nationally grew by 164% compared to 37% for full-time faculty. In 1995, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that only 35% of faculty at public two-year colleges were full-time. More recently, the number of part-time faculty (22,658) serving in Florida's Community College System (FCCS) accounted for 75% of the faculty headcount in 2003-04<sup>1</sup>, but taught only 45% of the courses (see Graph I).

Part-time faculty in the FCCS taught 40% of all credit hours in 2002, a five percent increase from 2001 (see Graph II). In the FCCS, there are on average three part-time instructional personnel for every one full-time instructional personnel. The ratio of part-time to full-time instructional personnel ranges from a minimum of 1:1 to a maximum of 5:1.



Data source: 2002-03 Florida Community College System Student and 2003-04 Personnel Data Base

<sup>1</sup> Annual Instructional Personnel Headcount was pulled from the Personnel Data Base, 2003-04.

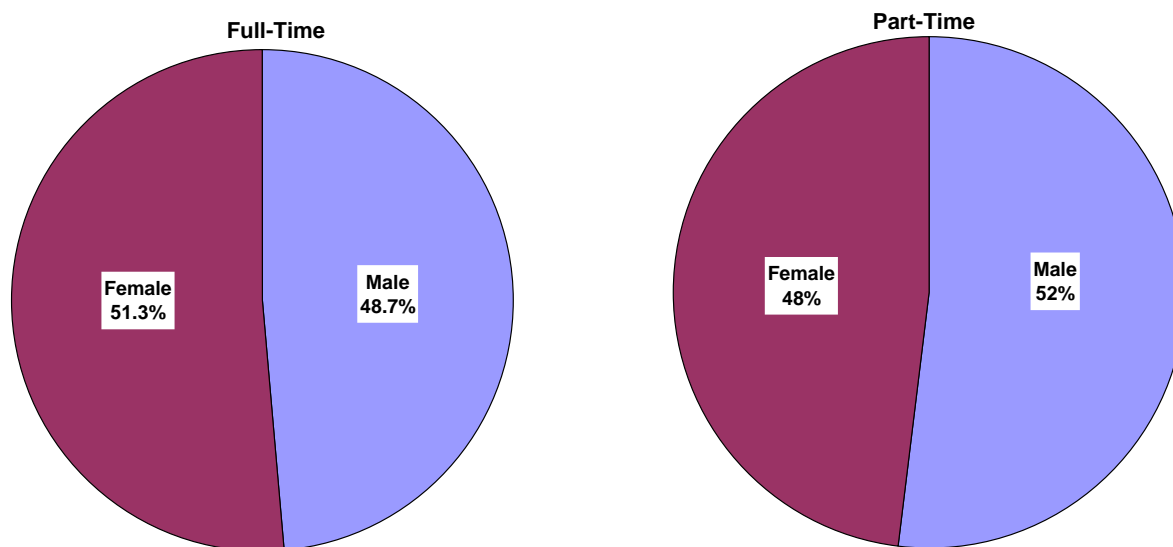
**Is the quality of instruction jeopardized by hiring more part-time faculty?** Although critics allege that part-time faculty negatively impact the quality of instruction, no evidence exists that suggests differences in the quality of instruction between full- and part-time faculty (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Gappa & Leslie, 1999; Grubb, 1999; and Wyles, 1998, as cited in Gappa and Leslie, 2002). In fact, Gappa and Leslie (1993) found during their study of 18 colleges and universities that “part-time faculty are, for the most part, superbly qualified for their teaching assignments, highly committed, and conscientious about doing their jobs” (p. 6). Additionally, McGuire (1993) noted that part-time faculty often receive the same student ratings and achieve the same student outcomes as full-time faculty. Part-time and full-time instructional personnel in the FCCS are equally well-educated. In the FCCS, 8% of part-time instructional personnel have doctorates and 38% have masters degrees. This is not substantially lower than the figures for full-time instructional personnel, which are 19% with doctorates and 59% with masters.

McGuire (1993) argues that part-time faculty are a curriculum resource. They “bring breadth, depth, and relevance to the curriculum and allow colleges to teach subjects that would otherwise be excluded from the curriculum” (McGuire, 1993). McGuire also states part-time faculty provide students a link to the workplace (through possible job placement) and a link to the community (many part-time faculty are community leaders).

**Who are the part-time faculty?** In 1999, a national survey of 2,000 community college faculty members at 114 institutions was conducted by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges. The survey found 52% of part-time faculty surveyed held masters degrees. Over half of the part-time faculty members surveyed had five or more years of experience at their current institutions, and nearly one-third reported over ten years of teaching experience at one community college.

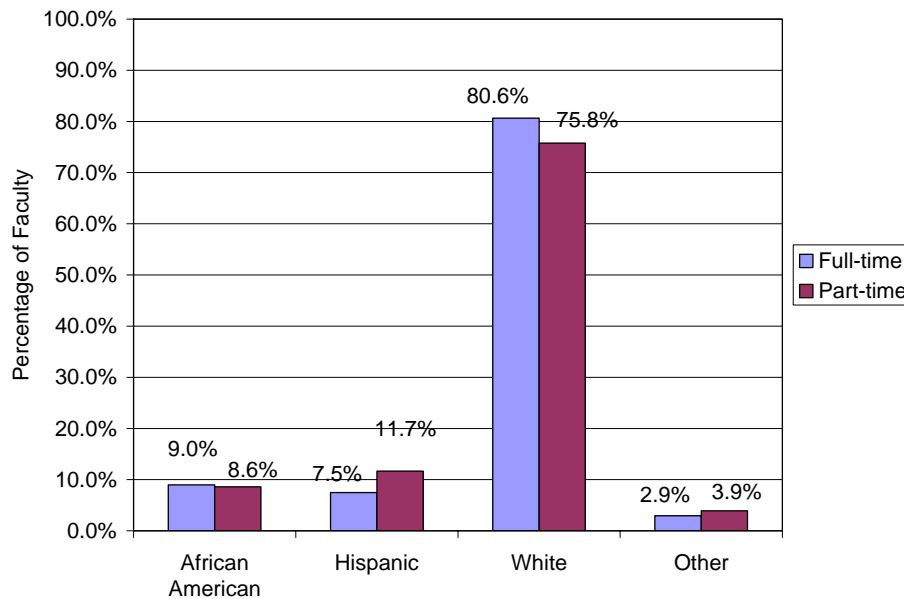
As mentioned earlier, in Fall 2002-03, 78% of all faculty were part-time. Of those part-time faculty, 48% were female (see Graph III). The racial/ethnic breakdown of full-time and part-time faculty is similar. Part-time faculty have a larger proportion of Hispanics, whereas full-time faculty have a slightly larger proportion of African Americans.

**Graph III**  
**Gender Breakdown of Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty in the FCCS, Fall 2002-03**



Source: *The Fact Book*, Florida Community College System, March 2003.

**Graph IV**  
**Racial/Ethnic Composition of Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty in the FCCS, 2002-03**



Source: *The Fact Book*, Florida Community College System, March 2003.

**How do community colleges find and keep part-time faculty?** To recruit part-time faculty, the institutions use school contacts and Web sites to find qualified adjunct faculty. Newspaper ads are run, but generally this is done only if the institution cannot find faculty through other means.

To retain adjunct faculty, community colleges are making a concerted effort to include adjunct faculty in the institutional culture. Some institutions are creating professional development specifically geared towards part-time faculty. Many institutions are providing financial incentives or choices in scheduling for returning adjunct faculty. According to Florida's community colleges, salaries for part-time faculty have increased over the past few years to a level comparable to adjunct positions at other institutions of higher learning in their area.

**How do Florida's community colleges ensure quality instruction among part-time faculty?** To ensure quality instruction among part-time faculty, community colleges provide activities to orient and integrate part-time faculty into campus life. Most of the community colleges (19 out of 28) offer some form of orientation, and a few institutions offer financial incentives to attend the orientation. Half of the community colleges allow part-time faculty to participate in campus-based committees, and a quarter of the institutions allow part-time faculty to participate in departmental meetings. This allows part-time faculty to bond with the institution and creates a desire to provide quality instruction.

Additionally, all institutions conduct student evaluations and departmental evaluations. Most of the institutions have a mentoring program that pairs part-time faculty with full-time faculty. Almost all have professional development opportunities for part-time faculty. A few institutions hold special workshops for part-time faculty only, some of which are mandatory. Most institutions allow part-time faculty to participate in all on-campus developmental programs, and a few allow them to participate in off-campus developmental programs.

One argument currently playing out in the literature is that the level of exposure of First-Time-In-College (FTIC) students to part-time faculty affects future retention. Timothy Schibik and Charles Harrington (2004)

recently found that, at least for four-year institutions, when part-time faculty taught more than half of a FTIC student's courses there was a negative impact on the retention of those students. The possibility of this impact also being true in community colleges should be considered as institutions are addressing retention issues.

***What are the policies associated with part-time faculty?*** In 1994, the State Board of Community Colleges adopted a set of recommendations related to part-time faculty. Recommendations included recruiting and maintaining a pool of qualified part-time faculty, orienting part-time faculty to campus life, providing a full-time faculty mentor, and including part-time faculty in departmental and college faculty meetings. As can be determined given the information presented above, the majority of institutions are implementing the State Board's recommendations. Three institutions were already using the recommendations, 14 began implementing the recommendations, 5 institutions have not yet begun to use the recommendations, and 5 institutions had staff who were employed after the recommendations were in place and were unaware if they changed any policies.

When trying to implement the recommendations some institutions faced obstacles. Four community colleges had financing and budgeting related obstacles. These included a lack of financial resources to pay adjunct faculty for departmental meetings and funding for the positions. Three institutions had trouble adhering to the recommendation that the institution "should require clearly identified times for part-time faculty to be available to their students outside of scheduled instruction" (Guidelines for Effective Use of Part-time Faculty, State Board of Community Colleges, 1994). This is due to community colleges wanting to provide students with the most convenient ways to communicate with adjunct faculty (i.e., via e-mail, telephone, or by appointment). Three community colleges reported finding time to train faculty was a problem, and six institutions reported finding qualified faculty was a problem. Almost half of the institutions (15 out of 28) reported no obstacles at all.

Many of Florida's community colleges decided to formulate their own policies related to part-time faculty. The successful strategies fall into two main categories: inclusion in faculty information and the mentoring program. Inclusion in faculty information refers to adjunct faculty having e-mail access, allowing them to participate in faculty activities, participation in the orientation session, and participation in professional development activities. The mentoring program is one where a full-time faculty member is paired with a part-time faculty member. The full-time faculty help guide the part-time faculty and are there to provide assistance and information throughout the semester.

Community colleges are encouraged to continue to adhere to the guidelines approved by the State Board of Community Colleges in 1994 (please see the attached document).

For more information about part-time faculty in the FCCS, please contact Dr. Pat Windham at [Pat.Windham@fldoe.org](mailto:Pat.Windham@fldoe.org) or (850) 245-9482.

### References

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