



Connecting Non Full-time Faculty to Institutional Mission: A Guidebook for College / University Administrators and Faculty Developers

Leora Baron-Nixon, Stylus, 2007.

Reviewed by Martin Springborg, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Center for Teaching and Learning

In *Connecting Non Full-time Faculty to Institutional Mission*, Leora Baron-Nixon gives those at any institution with the will and the power to affect change a strong set of guidelines to fully integrate “non full-time” instructors into their campus culture. The book is organized into five main sections, each devoted to a different sort of connection: to the institution, the department, to teaching, students, and to scholarship. Each of these five sections is further broken down into research-based challenges and suggestions for practical “action plans.”

The book’s introduction offers myriad reasons why adjunct faculty are desirable and how they are often viewed as expendable. The main reasons are those we have all heard before: money, flexibility, and the lack of “political fallout” should they need to be let go. She goes on to describe the nuances of those who teach part-time, and how today’s appointments differ considerably from those created not so long ago. In this description, she offers three main types of part-time faculty: working professionals who are active in their fields; academicians who piece together a full-time equivalent workload by teaching at several institutions; and those who teach simply because they love teaching, but may not care to do it full-time. (In this last group she includes retired professionals, full-time mothers, and graduate students.) She may have missed a fourth type here—those part-timers who teach a near full-time load for a long duration at a single institution. I offer this suggestion because I believe this group may include faculty members who, because of the nature of their appointments and the sheer amount of time spent on one campus, are more easily integrated into the culture of their institution.

Baron-Nixon’s descriptions of part-time faculty types are part of an important and broader discussion of the language around their appointments. I agree with her statements here about the need for a new term for part-time or adjunct instructors. She argues, citing data from the U.S. Department of Education as well as other sources, that the sheer number of part-time instructors working today suggests that we need to revisit the terminology. She also describes how some of the old terms for part-time faculty may impede progress toward connecting them to our institutions. For example, terms like “associate” or “affiliate” may be more inclusive than the terms “adjunct” or “part-time.” While the author’s use of “non full-time” is inclusive of a multitude of appointment types, it would probably not be useful (for the same reasons “adjunct” or “part-time” would not be useful) in fostering connections between part-time faculty members and their full-time colleagues.

The author carefully covers such matters as needs determination for part-time appointments and selection of those faculty members. Baron-Nixon also provides an overview of part-

time faculty contracts and benefits—subjects containing a great deal of complexity, and of great importance when trying to recognize the contributions of non full-time faculty members to one's institution.

Of particular interest to faculty and administrators who arrange programming for their part-time colleagues will be Baron-Nixon's guide to non-full-time faculty orientation. Here, she offers six pages of suggestions, ranging from what to include in the program to what to include in a part-time faculty handbook. My only question after reading the author's suggestions on orientation was why she advocates for separate part-time faculty and full-time faculty orientation programs. Granted, she advises that more than one part-time faculty orientation be offered throughout the year, due to the fluid nature of part-time appointments and start times. Still, when one of our ultimate goals is connecting these two groups of colleagues, any separation seems somewhat of a step in the wrong direction.

On connection to faculty colleagues, Baron-Nixon details many key steps to take, including involving part-time faculty in curriculum development, committee work, and departmental meetings. I was impressed with her follow-up to these suggestions in her discussion of how to connect part-time faculty to teaching. In this section, she devotes four pages to the subject of engaging part-time faculty in teaching and learning development. Here, she writes directly to the need for training in curriculum development, grading standards, and textbook and resource development.

At 130 pages, this book does not cover all of the detail one would imagine be included in any set of answers to the complex problem of integrating non full-time faculty in one's institution. The author does not profess to have presented all possible answers in this guidebook, nor does she suggest that the action plans she offers will be easy to implement. I found this frank and honest, yet data-driven, approach the subject refreshing. The main utility of the book lies in providing a solid opening to the journey of integrating non full-time faculty into one's institution.

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