

Dean & Provost

Building and Leading Successful Learning Communities

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 3

November 2006

Educate your adjuncts, improve morale and retention

Imagine that you're new to teaching. You're unfamiliar with your new college's policies and procedures and haven't the slightest idea of how you will be expected to grade. You don't even know where the library is.

Welcome to the world of an adjunct instructor. During a recent Webinar hosted by **AdjunctSuccess**, a company that provides professional development for adjuncts, **Richard Lyons** discussed why it's important to have a structure in place for educating part-time instructors. Lyons is one of the company's founders.

Educating adjuncts should begin at an orientation. There you should provide your new instructors with a checklist so you — and they — can keep track of whether or not they've been told all they need to know, Lyons said.

"By using this checklist during the orientation, you will ensure that adjuncts will be less likely to make mistakes in the future," he said.

Items that should be covered during the orientation range from how to obtain a faculty ID card to critical classroom issues such as grading and attendance protocols, according to an AdjunctSuccess checklist. New adjuncts should be required to sign and date the checklist to verify that they have been briefed on the information, Lyons said.

Also, the checklist can be used to gather information about your adjuncts such as their availability, courses they're interested in teaching, and their reasons for teaching. Understanding their needs will allow you to be a better supervisor and will help you hold on to good instructors, he added.

To accommodate the varying schedules of part-timers, consider offering orientations in multiple formats like the **University of Central Florida**. New instructors at UCF have the choice of attending orientation online, in a workshop, or during a full-day retreat, Lyons said.

Aside from orientations, many colleges also choose to offer a mentoring program for new adjuncts. But this shouldn't be the only professional development available to new instructors.

"We need to have systems in place," he said. "You need orientation protocol and a teaching course for new instructors. Without these, a mentor will be asked monotonous questions like 'Where's my mailbox?' that should have already been answered."

HELPFUL HINTS

Create an orientation checklist to avoid future problems

Know that your adjunct instructors are knowledgeable before they ever set foot in a classroom by providing them with a checklist during orientation.

During a recent Webinar hosted by **AdjunctSuccess**, a company that provides professional development for adjuncts, **Richard Lyons** stressed the importance of knowing what should be covered at orientation.

He's one of the founders of the company.

Here are some key issues that the AdjunctSuccess Orientation Checklist suggests you cover with new instructors:

- Necessary certifications (note any missing items).
- Probable class sizes and drop/add procedures.
- Student attendance and grading protocols.
- Classroom issues.
- Instructor evaluations.
- Student support resources.
- Faculty support resources.
- Course-specific information. ■

A resource library should also be available to your adjuncts so that they can learn more about legislation like the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and institutional policies that could impact them, Lyons said.

For a list of online resources for adjuncts, visit Lyons' other venture, the **Faculty Development Associates'** Web site, at www.developfaculty.com/online/index.html.

Finally, your part-timers should receive an ongoing education to help them deliver courses more effectively

and keep them abreast of trends in the teaching industry.

If you offer full-time faculty members professional development, remember to include your adjuncts. Another alternative is to take advantage of resources offered by companies like AdjunctSuccess, which will host 15 Webinars this year that are available to individuals or institutions for a fee. ■

For more information about AdjunctSuccess' services, contact Richard Lyons at lyons@adjunctsuccess.net.