Engagement of Teaching Intensive Faculty

What does ‘Engagement’ mean?

Teaching-intensive faculty members, both full-time and part-time, bring expertise, perspective and talent to the departmental enterprise. Many departments have found that intentional partnerships with teaching-intensive faculty have added essential expertise and experience to the educational goals of the department, and that these partnerships have led to significant success in achieving the department’s mission.

Engaging teaching-intensive faculty in the broad array of a department’s activities makes it possible to create the collaborative and professional culture that is essential for departments to provide the best educational experience for their students. Such a culture is characterized by opportunities for sharing and communicating common departmental program goals; receiving feedback from classroom experiences; and exchanging information on mentoring and advising of students. Involving teaching-intensive faculty in discussions about the curriculum goals of the program benefits the department, the students and all faculty members, ultimately resulting in an enhanced quality of education at UAlbany.

This chapter describes ways that a department can facilitate integration and engagement of teaching-intensive faculty members, both part-time and full-time. Departments that regularly review their practices to make sure they include all faculty members, and are proactive in creating a culture that shares and disseminates information, have found that they are more easily able to foster a rich and intellectually engaged student experience.

Best practices gleaned from surveys at UAlbany and reviews of national best practices relating to integration covered in this section of the handbook include:

- Communication 1
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- Mentoring
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- Recognition 9

Communication

Establishing strong and consistent communication with teaching-intensive faculty is essential to their integration into the life and mission of the department. Departments
mindful of the special challenges of effective communication with part-time faculty have found ways to ensure that they are able to communicate directly with the department administrative staff, support staff, and other faculty members within the department in a variety of formats.

**Best Practices/Recommendations for Increasing Communication**

- Create an email distribution list for departmental announcements to ALL faculty
- Update the email distribution list at the beginning of each semester (fall, spring, and summer) to include faculty who may have been added for the new term
- Create a listserv for ALL faculty to share experiences and learn from others
- Send faculty meeting reports to part-time faculty
- Inform part-time faculty of available resources and opportunities such as travel, FRAP, and professional development grants, etc.
- Include part-time faculty in departmental meetings (see Inclusion, below)

**Department Notes and Ideas:**
Inclusion
Creating a culture of inclusion among all faculty, given the vast physical and virtual spaces across which teaching occurs, presents challenges. Departments can help mitigate the problems of dislocation and isolation by extending invitations to all teaching-intensive faculty to attend faculty meetings, and other events at which introductions and exchanges between faculty occur. When asked, one part-time faculty member praised the department’s efforts, saying: “...we are invited to many departmental discussions, we are kept in the loop of all departmental activity on the department email lists and because we teach undergraduate classes, we are always kept in the loop on expectations and requirements of our work in the classroom.”

Best Practices/Recommendations for Increasing Inclusion

✓ Invite part-time and full-time teaching-intensive faculty to faculty meetings, research symposia, conversations, brown bags, informal gatherings, and social events
✓ Organize meetings between part-time faculty specifically to exchange ideas
✓ Offer skill building and professional development opportunities to the entire department
✓ Invite the all faculty to join the department at the University Fall Faculty Retreat
✓ Include part-time and full-time teaching intensive faculty in the undergraduate program faculty listing and post nameplates on office doors where possible
✓ Ensure teaching intensive faculty are aware of resources such as the CHEER Fund and the Food for Thought Program (www.albany.edu/student_engagement)

Department Notes and Ideas:
Program Development
Teaching-intensive faculty—both part-time and full-time—are in a good position to provide additional perspectives on the student experience in the classroom and how the courses they teach achieve the goals of the department. Many successful departments have found that involving and inviting teaching-intensive to engage in program development can elicit relevant empirical data that enhances the effectiveness of their programs.

Best Practices/Recommendations for Involving Part-time and Full-time Teaching-Intensive Faculty in Program Development

- Explain the overall program’s mission and goals to all faculty
- Emphasize how a course taught by a teaching-intensive faculty member supports the mission and goals and how it relates to the other courses taught in the program
- Solicit input from teaching-intensive faculty about how to better integrate the course they are teaching into the overall program
- Solicit feedback from teaching-intensive faculty about how to improve the infrastructure of the program (advising, mentoring, course sequencing, etc.)
- Solicit feedback from teaching-intensive faculty about the undergraduate experience in the program
- Involve teaching-intensive faculty in discussions and decisions regarding text selection
- Clarify the flow from undergraduate to graduate programs within the department
- Offer teaching-intensive faculty opportunities to teach different courses within the program

Department Notes and Ideas:
Service
Departments that successfully create a collaborative climate foster teaching-intensive faculty members’ initiative by actively inviting them to participate in formal service opportunities within the department, at various levels of the university, and in direct service to students. One part-time teaching-intensive faculty member was pleased to report: “I am considered a faculty member in all respects – I serve on department and school committees, participate in searches, etc.”

Best Practices/Recommendations for Integrating Part-time and Full-time Teaching-intensive Faculty into Service Efforts

- *Invite all faculty to serve on university-wide committees*
- *Invite all faculty to serve on departmental committees, such as (but not limited to):*
  - Curriculum committee
  - Thesis advisor
  - Faculty searches
  - Undergraduate committee
  - Encourage and support part-time, along with full-time faculty, to mentor and advise undergraduate students

Department Notes and Ideas:
Resources

Departments that make available resources of all kinds, even when limited, to part-time and full-time teaching intensive faculty find that it enhances a culture of inclusion and satisfaction among faculty members. One teaching-intensive faculty member noted: “We use the same office space, and have direct access to administrative staff and resources as tenure track faculty do.” Such departments also notify all faculty members when opportunities for additional resources become available.

Best Practices/Recommendations for Utilizing Current Resources to Support Part-time Faculty

- Provide office space, even if shared among a set of part-time faculty
- Identify a contact person (in addition to the administrative support staff) who can guide the teaching-intensive faculty through curricular or instructional challenges
- Communicate eligibility requirements for travel grants, discretionary raises and grant opportunities to all faculty

Department Notes and Ideas:
**Mentoring**
Departments that encourage and facilitate informal opportunities for tenure track faculty to meet and mentor full-time and part-time teaching-intensive faculty find that they create a more congenial climate and new opportunities for fostering discussions about good teaching and expectations for the classroom. Appreciating the mentoring done in the department, one part-time faculty member said “Our director built morale and a community of like-minded educators by nurturing an environment of learning and handing down information to younger generations.”

**Best Practices/Recommendations for Mentoring Teaching-Intensive Faculty**

- Pair new part-time faculty with a full-time faculty member who teaches similar classes for advice and peer review of teaching materials and peer observations (see Evaluation chapter)
- Schedule professional development workshops, especially about teaching, specifically for teaching-intensive faculty, and at times they can attend
- Invite part-time faculty to participate in professional development events, meetings, colloquia, brown bags and retreats that full-time faculty attend
- Encourage mentors to invite teaching-intensive faculty to observe their classes

**Department Notes and Ideas:**
Graduate Students & Professional Staff as Instructors of Record

A challenge for departments with regard to graduate students who serve as Instructors of Record (IOR) is that these individuals, unlike part-time faculty, have a relationship with the department in addition to their responsibilities as a course instructor. Graduate students are normally integrated into the department as students. Everyone benefits when they are also offered tools and resources to support improved teaching. Graduate students have access to full-time faculty and to teaching models by taking courses. However, they may not fully understand how the curriculum works, what the department’s undergraduate mission is, and how they and the courses they teach fit into that mission. Departments that explicitly acknowledge the dual role graduate students play find that orienting and engaging graduate IOR as they do new part-time faculty members has improved the student experience.

Best Practices/Recommendations for Recognizing Unique Circumstances

- Include graduate student and professional staff Instructors of Record (IOR) in all the ways suggested for part-time faculty.
- Have graduate students meet other instructors who teach multiple sections of the same course or similar courses.
- Explain how the curriculum works, what the department’s undergraduate mission is and how the graduate students and the courses they teach fit into them
- Review how you include graduate students in the mission of the department:
  - Solicit input from grad IOR about how to better integrate the course they are teaching into the overall program
  - Solicit feedback from grad IOR about how to improve the infrastructure of the program (advising, mentoring, course sequencing, etc.)
  - Solicit feedback from grad IOR about the undergraduate experience in the program
- Inform graduate students about ITLAL’s professional development series
Department Notes and Ideas:
Recognition
Teaching-intensive faculty at UAlbany overwhelmingly report that they enjoy working at this institution. Departments that recognize these instructors, and that disseminate information about their accomplishments in a variety of formats, have found that it is easy to keep these dedicated teachers focused on their positive experiences here.

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<tr>
<th>Best Practices/Recommendations for Awards for Excellent Teaching</th>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Recognize outstanding teachers through departmental awards/prizes for excellence in teaching, making sure to include part-time and full-time teaching-intensive faculty, at the close of each year.</td>
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<td>✓ Ask students to nominate excellent professors, or innovative and engaging teaching strategies that motivated them</td>
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<td>✓ Solicit and actively prepare nominations for the University-wide President’s Award for Excellence in Teaching for teaching-intensive faculty.</td>
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<th>Best Practices/Recommendations for Increased Visibility of Teaching-Intensive Faculty Contributions</th>
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<td>✓ Announce successes and contributions of all faculty in the departmental newsletter</td>
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<td>✓ Include full-time and part-time teaching-intensive faculty in departmental websites</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Share successful teaching innovations at faculty meetings, seminars</td>
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Best Practices/Recommendations for Acknowledgement of Excellent Teaching and Service

- Provide a detailed letter from the chair or dean acknowledging excellent work
- Acknowledge contributions with a breakfast, lunch, or other social gathering
- Award merit increases: annually use the opportunity to review all faculty members’ teaching
- Extend thanks to teaching-intensive faculty via email, in-person conversations, or letter
- Make a regular effort to explore sources of support for scholarly and teaching work (conferences, etc.)

Department Notes and Ideas: