



## **Department Chair Online Resource Center**

# **Assessment Mechanisms Help Develop Adjunct and Part-Time Faculty**

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Beulah Heights Bible College (BHBC) is an incredibly diverse institution for a private, four-year theological college with less than 700 students. Of its 42 faculty, 35 (70 percent) are part time or adjuncts and are as diverse as the largely adult student body. Since many of these faculty are ministerial professionals, it is not surprising that they choose to remain on an adjunct basis. In many cases, however, part-time and adjunct faculty's needs had been left on the back burner. In a time of tightening budgets, expanding distance learning options, and need for specialization, adjunct faculty are an extremely important commodity to any institution, regardless of size.

How does an academic administration remain in touch with and evaluate such a diverse cohort of instructors? How do we determine if the integration and application of other disciplines and methodologies is taking place? How can such faculty be given the opportunity to share their observations and personal needs relative to the college? BHBC has created two assessment techniques to answer these questions. The results of these assessments are placed in their faculty portfolios and can be used as comparisons of personal and professional growth year by year.

The first is actually a self-evaluation instrument developed to serve as both an assessment of professional progress and as a reminder of the standards that BHBC expects of all instructors. The instrument reflects the syllabi and instructor criteria stated in the faculty handbook. Their responses are designed to isolate comparative strengths and needs in their role at BHBC. The self-evaluation begins with two sets of statements that the instructor rates on a scale from 1 to 4 (1 signifies "excelling," 2 means "performing adequately," 3 indicates that one "may need some improvement," and 4 denotes "much improvement needed"). The third part is a short-answer section on personal growth. Statements include:

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## **I. CURRICULUM/CONTENT**

1. I write a clear, concise syllabus that students from any culture can understand.
2. I establish clear instructional objectives that match students' needs and abilities.
3. All essential content areas are addressed through the course.
4. Students are regularly introduced to new and relevant resources in the course.
5. I have a significant and personal grasp of the subject areas I teach.
6. I have solid understanding of other disciplines related to this course.
7. I understand and stress the proper writing formats needed for typed papers.
8. I consistently make changes and revisions needed to refine the course.

## **II. INSTRUCTION**

9. I have a solid understanding of the needs, learning styles, and stages of development in adult students.
10. I am comfortable and adept at using a variety of audiovisual and technical tools in teaching.
11. I make myself available for personal consultation with students after class and during the week.
12. Class time is budgeted well and consistently throughout the semester.
13. I regularly encourage dialogue among students in class.
14. I accept errors and mistakes as a natural part of learning.
15. I arrange the session so that interaction is easy for students.
16. The prior experience of students is taken into consideration in the learning activities.
17. A variety of learning methods, other than lecture, is used.
18. I consistently give clear feedback on student performance and problems in a timely manner through notes, papers, and tests.

### III. PERSONAL GROWTH (SHORT ANSWER)

19. Additional books I have read for the course this semester.
20. Books I have read this year in other subjects outside this course.
21. Professional seminars and conferences I have attended this year.
22. My greatest challenge/struggle this year as an instructor.
23. What I found most fulfilling this semester as an instructor.
24. Areas in which I would like to become more effective.

Each instructor completes and submits this assessment before meeting with the associate dean near the end of the semester. The instructors also get a copy.

The second method is the interview with the associate dean, who uses a list of 10 key questions that guides the 30- to 40-minute conference and elicits an often more transparent conversation about instructors' professional needs, suggestions, and long-term goals. The questions include the following:

1. What did you find challenging this academic year about your course location? Setting? Time period?
2. Do you feel you accomplished your course objectives/outcomes?
3. What methodologies did you use in the classroom?
4. What worked in your instruction? What didn't work? Why?
5. What would you do differently?
6. How would you state your "philosophy" of education?
7. What have you learned about yourself this year?
8. How can BHBC help/support you?
9. What suggestions could you make about improving BHBC?
10. What more would you like to be doing here?

These mechanisms have been extremely helpful, especially when triangulating the responses from student course evaluations, self-evaluations, and the interview. This assists deans and department heads in identifying areas for faculty development and responding to the needs and suggestions of part-time and adjunct faculty. The process not only assures adjuncts and part-timers of their value in the academic system, but it gives them a voice amidst other professionals and builds an ongoing relationship with deans that otherwise can be lost in the midst of busy schedules. These mechanisms also have revealed those part-timers and adjuncts who most likely could aspire to full-time positions or, at least, become significant members of various faculty committees (textbooks, curriculum, library, advising, assessment, etc.). The sporadic attendance of faculty meetings by part-time faculty cannot possibly address or reveal all of these needs.

While the self-evaluations may eventually be sent back and forth electronically, nothing will replace the face-to-face conferences that affirm and engage part-time and adjunct faculty in a personal way. These usually take place during June and July. The practice has been time consuming, especially when an institution has a sizeable number of adjuncts. However, the effort will have immeasurable value in maintaining collegiality and ensuring a key academic "return on investment."

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