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# Instructor Impermanence and the Need for Community College Adjunct Faculty Reform in Colorado

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**T**he open-access Colorado Community College System (CCCS) serves 138,000 students annually and functions as Colorado's gateway to post-secondary education and college success. In 2016 the CCCS reported awarding a total of 11,560 CTE certificates and degrees from its 13 member colleges (CCCS, Fact Sheet). For the 2015 calendar year, CCCS reported that 11,049 of its students transferred to public and private 4-year institutes (CCCS, Fact Sheet). CCCS member institutions also served 22,117 high school students in undergraduate coursework, facilitating their advancement to post-secondary education (CCCS, Fact Sheet). CCCS colleges also served 24,370 students with some form of remedial education designed to prepare them for college-level coursework (CCCS, Fact Sheet). There is no dispute that CCCS colleges provide an essential post-secondary springboard to success in the state of Colorado. Nor can there be any dispute that CCCS has a substantial beneficial impact on the Colorado economy, contributing 5.8 billion USD annually to the state's economy (CCCS, Fact Sheet).

Yet there is a dark side to CCCS service and success. While enrollments and instructional demands on the System have grown steadily over the past decade, investments in instructional personnel have not.

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The System's regular instructional staff, the key to its existence and performance, has grown modestly, while reliance on part-time staff, adjunct instructors, has spiked (see Table 1). Since 2007 CCCS institutions have added 169 full-time instructors, a 17% increase, while during the same period they added 1425 adjuncts, a 44% increase—most of this growth has occurred since 2014. Adjunct instructors now number more than 4600 individuals, constituting 80 % of CCCS's instructional workforce.

Table 1. CCCS Full-Time and Adjunct Faculty, 2007 and 2015

CCCS Faculty	2007	2017	Percent Increase
• Full-Time	983	1152	17%
• Adjunct	3242	4667	44%
Total Faculty	4226	5819	
Adjuncts as percent of total faculty	.767	.802	

Source: AAUP CORA request to CCCS, 2017.

This clear shift to adjunct-based instruction follows national trends in college and university instructional employment over the past couple decades. It is evident at Colorado's 4-years institutions as well. Essentially, enrollment growth in higher education has been sustained and supported with temporary instructors.

Until recently, little attention has been paid to the circumstances attendant to this instructional shift, a marked shift towards greater instructor impermanence. CCCS, like many of its peers, justified this change as driven by financial necessity, evident in declining state per-capita student support and growing public demands on its resources. As community colleges have historically relied on temporary instructors to a greater extent than 4-year institutions, the temptation to address new challenges by markedly expanding the adjunct workforce is obvious (O'Banion). Adjunct instructors worked for less—less wages, less benefits, and less support. Adjunct instructors worked at-will, allowing administrators maximum personnel flexibility in serving variable student demand for instructional services. Lost in the personnel calculus was an appreciation of the professional, academic, mentoring, and advisory values that regular, stable, full-time faculty bring to student learning and career development.

The Colorado Conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has been concerned with this problem for better than a decade (Hudson). The current disinvestment in full-time instructional staff has serious unintended effects that are particularly consequential in terms of diminished learning outcomes for students, and the institutional ability to meet the public's reasonable expectations that a

community college degree is every bit as worthy as one conferred by a 4-year public college or university (Humphreys). The effects have not been as yet adequately studied and understood but can be logically extrapolated from what we know about student learning. The only viable solution for mitigating these adverse effects is strengthening investment in regular and adjunct faculty, restoring professionalism in instructional delivery, and ensuring that a strong pool of highly qualified, institutionally committed faculty are available and invested over the long-term in advancing student success at each CCCS campus.

### **Data and Interpretation**

While there is some reason to suppose that CCCS collects and retains more detailed data on adjunct instruction, little of this, aside from annual reports on number of adjunct instructors employed at particular institutions, is made publicly available. Comparative data on adjunct instruction at all levels of Colorado's public higher education system is likewise unreported and generally unavailable—nor is such information to be had from the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE). We have been unable to find any information examining the impact of adjunct instruction on learning outcomes in Colorado. In the following report it has been necessary to rely heavily on the observations of individual faculty respondents at Colorado's higher education institutions. Despite this substantial reliance on anecdotal observation, we argue that the effects of instructor impermanence can be logically extrapolated from what we know about student learning based on the accumulating evidence of the differential impact of adjunct versus regular and tenure-track faculty that is now available in the scholarly literature on student learning outcomes in higher education.

### **The Problem of Instructor Impermanence**

The colleges that comprise the CCC System are not unique in placing a good deal of the instruction load on adjunct faculty. The practice is nearly as old as the modern (post-World War II) community college system in America. It is no secret that America's community colleges emerged and rapidly grew after 1945 in the interstice between K-12 and 4-year institutions in an effort to provide affordable, locally accessible post-secondary training for a rapidly expanding national workforce (Cohen, et al.). The community college education model that emerged was predicated on the assumption that much, if not most, of the student clientele needed vocational training for in-demand careers, allowing seamless transition to the workforce—just a fraction of these students would seek an Associate of Arts degree for the purpose of transferring to 4-year universities (Cohen, et al.)

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By the 1970's this assumption was put to the test as larger numbers of community college students sought 4-year degrees. Today, as evident in presidential pronouncements (Smith), the community college role as a launching pad to 4-year college degrees is more pronounced than ever.<sup>1</sup> This development has fundamentally altered the original occupational/vocational model for faculty employment, one where a typical faculty member might be regularly employed in some vocation while teaching a clinical course at the community college. Today, professionally trained humanities, social scientists, and STEM disciplines faculty are needed and hired part-time without any reasonable capability of alternative employment during the instructional period.<sup>2</sup>

If Colorado's community colleges are to launch students towards 4-year degrees, a foundational axiom of Colorado's General Transfer Pathways protocol (GT-Pathways), then the issue of instructional impermanence acquires greater importance. The governing assumption here is that a passing grade in a GT-Pathways course is directly equivalent to a passing grade in an equivalent course offered at a 4-year institution. Performance is assumed to be transitive, of equivalent quality. But is it?

Consider the circumstances (see Table 2). We know that CCCS's urban colleges have rapidly grown their adjunct workforce since 2010, and that these adjunct faculty are at-will employees. Although CCCS makes no data on adjunct faculty turnover available (and it is not clear if this data is collected), anecdotal information available to AAUP suggests there is a high rate of instructional turnover in GT-Pathways courses. Multi-year contracts, even relatively short-term contracts of 1-3 years, are simply unavailable to adjunct faculty. While some highly committed adjunct faculty have sought to make careers of college teaching in the face of the high uncertainty and risk of non-renewal, there is absolutely no institutional incentive baked into the present system of adjunct faculty employment to do so. Thus, with few exceptions, GT-Pathways courses across the board suffer from instructional impermanence (Humphreys). The same cannot be said of GT-Pathways courses at 4-year institutions

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<sup>1</sup> The ability of community colleges to actually serve this transfer function successfully is a matter for debate. The most thorough study to-date found that bachelor's degree attainment by community colleges transfer students lagged significantly behind those students who entered a 4-year institution as freshmen. This can be taken as evidence that community colleges should attend to the quality of their programs and not just access, retention, and graduation rates. See, Alfonso (873-903).

<sup>2</sup> It is true that some instructional faculty teach classes after normal working hours or on weekends. But the majority of CCCS curriculum is offered during the 8am-5pm working day, Monday-Friday. These instructors have no real option of alternative work and, if working a 3 to 4 course load, have little time available for alternative work even if an alternative employment was available.

which rely less heavily on adjunct faculty instruction and, even at the adjunct faculty level, provide greater incentives in the form of wages, professional supports, and the availability of multi-year contracts (up to 3 years under state law) to career oriented adjuncts (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Instructional Conditions in 4-year and Community Colleges**

Condition	4-Year College or University	Community College
Instructor Credentials	Ph.D./M.F.A./M.A.; greater likelihood instructor is research active in field and institutionally incentivized to do so.	M.A./M.F.A. dominant; little likelihood and no institutional incentive to be research active in field (though some are).
Instructional Autonomy (design of syllabus; assignments; material requirements)	Considerable autonomy (not counting GTAs)*	Little autonomy for adjunct instructors (Syllabi and often instructional strategies imposed and predetermined; texts predetermined; materials predetermined)
Professional Office Availability for Faculty	Available (usually including adjunct faculty)	Provide for regular faculty; rarely available to adjuncts
Adjunct Faculty Mentoring Opportunities for Students	Variable but more likely to occur given other supports	Generally low owing to absence of other supports, including office space
Professional Development	PD supports widely available for regular faculty and some support for adjuncts	Some support for regular faculty but little to no PD support for adjuncts
Access to Computers and Copiers	Provided to regular faculty and usually available for adjunct faculty	Provided to regular faculty but often unavailable for adjunct faculty
Adjunct access to college information and data streams	Variable but generally high	Variable but generally low

\*Graduate Teaching Assistants

The prevalence of instructor impermanence in the CCC System is reinforced by the lack of incentives for improved instruction and mentoring presently available for adjunct faculty. All elements of the adjunct instructional experience are conducive to instructor turnover and transience. With modest exceptions, adjunct instructors at CCCS colleges

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are denied regular office space, lack private space to counsel students, dedicated access to computers and office supplies, and professional development opportunities, are docked pay for health related and professional development related absence from the classroom, and are seldom credited for mentoring or for extracurricular investments in student success.<sup>3</sup> These realities limit the capacity for adjunct faculty to meet with, provide instructional feedback, or otherwise counsel students concerning academic performance, academic opportunities, and career options that are vital to student success.<sup>4</sup> While some of these services are provided by professional counseling offices at CCCS institutions, these are no real substitute for effective faculty-student engagement in and out of the classroom (Kezar & Maxey).<sup>5</sup> Experienced instructors are essential and non-substitutable for providing scholarly guidance and feedback on student learning and mastery of course materials. They are considerably more likely than generic counselors to know of innovative learning techniques, of developments in their disciplines, and useful knowledge about networks and resources students can avail themselves of to boost their performance and success in a particular course. These supports are of particular help to GT-Pathways students whose aim is to transfer to a 4-year institution. While counselors may explain admissions requirements, skilled instructors will understand and explain the practices, expectations, and challenges facing students in specific disciplines and areas of instruction and may provide letters of recommendation and specific contacts for accessing programs that students can obtain nowhere else. The key, of course, is enabling adjunct faculty instructors to perform these roles and tasks.

A further stimulus to instructor impermanence is found in the treatment of adjunct instructors who may find themselves in professional disagreement or circumstantial conflict with college administrators. All adjunct instructors in Colorado public colleges and universities are vulnerable here, but the worst cases are found in the CCC System. The System's encouragement of top down, hierarchical, and standardized approaches to pedagogy, approaches that limit instructor discretion in the development and application of course syllabi and instructional techniques, violate many of the assumptions associated with notions of pedagogical autonomy and academic freedom in American higher education. They also contrast with prevailing practices in 4-year

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<sup>3</sup> Select interviews with adjunct faculty members at Front Range Community College, Community College of Aurora, Red Rocks Community College, and the Community College of Denver.

<sup>4</sup> Various studies document the adverse impact of such deficits on adjunct instructor performance (Kezar & Gerke; Kezar, 586).

<sup>5</sup> This is particularly true for minority students and students of color. See, Kezar & Maxey (29-42).

institutions where greater instructor autonomy is allowed, and even encouraged, for its essential value in advancing academic freedom and the development of human knowledge. While these strictures are rationalized by administrators in part as providing quality assurance and facilitating a seamless GT Pathways student transition to 4-year institutions, they also generate reasonable and professionally grounded differences among instructors regarding the best practices for instructional methods and implementation. Adjunct instructors face dismissal or non-renewal for expressing concerns about these matters and have little recourse to grievance procedures, dispute settlement, or other means of resolving differences. Such a situation recently led to an AAUP censure of the Community College of Aurora for abruptly dismissing a well-regarded adjunct instructor (AAUP, Academic Freedom). Such instances draw adverse publicity and are demoralizing, especially for adjunct instructors who have good reason to believe they are treated with indifference and a general lack of respect for their professional views and concerns. These conflicts also draw attention to the difference between cookie cutter pedagogical approaches and the independent pedagogical approaches and higher expectations of mastery of a given subject that tend to prevail in 4-year institutions. Such lock-step pedagogy can be a potential roadblock to successful transition from community college instruction to instruction in the 4-year institutions.

In sum, instructor impermanence, a pedagogical environment dominated by the high turnover and transience of adjunct faculty instructors, is an undeniable long-term problem and one that has thus traveled far under the radar screen of CCCS priorities. In addition, the working conditions under which adjuncts labor are not conducive to high quality teaching and learning. Any argument that today's CCCS GT-Pathways instruction is as reliable and robust as same-course offerings at 4-year colleges has the burden of proving that instructor impermanence is no matter of serious concern when the goal is, and should be, improving the reliability of transfer student success to 4-year institutions. It simply makes sense for CCCS to seek measures that reduce instructor impermanence as a barrier to student success—and, by extension, the overall success of CCCS contributions to the GT-Pathways program.

### **Institutional Conditions Sustaining Instructional Impermanence**

The AAUP is well aware that CCCS has resisted actions to improve the conditions of adjunct faculty employment. CCCS has justified its position on the basis of financial resource limitations, coupled with a reluctance to raise student tuition to cover the projected cost of boosting adjunct faculty compensation and/or investing additional resources in adjunct faculty instruction. While we have previously demonstrated (Fichtenbaum), and continue to believe, that CCCS has the capacity to address many of these issues through a modest reordering of priorities, we also understand the Board's aversion to increasing its exposure to financial risk considering

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its long history of prudent financial management. The financial stability of the current outmoded business model is only achieved by slighting the instructional mission. This makes no real sense, cannot be a source of pride and commendation for CCCS as an institution, and is not likely to contribute to gains in GT-Pathways student transfer success over the long run.

The CCCS Board and administration, at least tacitly, acknowledge that adjunct instructors deserve better treatment, although to date, they have yet to acknowledge that instructor impermanence may compromise certain aspects of the community college instructional program. In November 2014, a task force convened by CCCS released 10 recommendations intended “to achieve the goals of improving the experience of adjunct instructors and effecting change to a culture of great inclusion and support across all CCCS colleges” (SBCCOE, Topic). In February 2015, the Board accepted 8 of the 10 recommendations but not the need for a substantial rise in compensation (SBCCOE, Topic). Subsequently, in November 2015, the CCCS President reported on system-wide implementation of these recommendations (CCCS, CCCS Adjunct Task Force Recommendations). Unfortunately, as AAUP documented in February 2016 (AAUP Chapters), not much had changed in regard to the working conditions for the 80% of CCCS faculty who are adjuncts. This is especially true in regard to pay and benefit equity,<sup>6</sup> shared governance, academic freedom, and professional development opportunities. It is hard to avoid concluding that the administration’s efforts were little more than public relations aimed at staunching public criticism and deflecting attention from the serious structural problems associated with instructor impermanence. For the record, little has been done to strengthen the conditions of adjunct instruction since the 2015 initiative.

As the AAUP had previously reported, and as we have mentioned above, the conditions of adjunct instructional service that sustain instructor

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<sup>6</sup> For example, though the CCCS Adjunct Task Force recommended a 28% increase to adjunct compensation, adjuncts received just a 3% raise in 2016. Since then, adjuncts have received another 3% raise. The problem here is that this rate of increase does not keep pace even with inflation. A hypothetical example will suffice to illustrate this point. If average adjunct compensation was \$2,500.00 per course in 2010, that same course should today be compensated at \$2844.00 in 2017 just to keep pace with inflation, according to the Department of Labor’s CPI Inflation Calculator (U.S. DOL). Even with two consecutive 3% raises since 2010 totaling \$150.00, the per-course compensation fell \$194.00 short of matching inflation. While there may have been other raises since 2010 that we are not aware of, this simple exercise suggests that CCCS adjunct pay increases are not, in fact, increases. At best they may have kept adjunct pay current to inflation, at worst adjunct compensation is steadily declining.

and instructional impermanence fall into several distinct categories, including: 1) wages and benefits; 2) pedagogical and professional supports; 3) due process deficits; and 4) shared governance deficits.

### **Wages and benefits**

Remuneration rates for CCCS adjuncts vary some from discipline to discipline, and across colleges, but remain almost uniformly low, averaging roughly \$2500 per class,<sup>7</sup> or around \$20,000 annually for instructors teaching four classes a semester for two consecutive semesters.<sup>8</sup> This is just half the level of remuneration for adjuncts teaching at leading 4-year institutions, which, if we take Colorado State University as a point of comparison, pays \$4600+ per class to adjunct instructors, or \$36,800 annually for a four class load over two consecutive semesters (see Table 3).<sup>9</sup> The low rate of CCCS adjunct compensation is an obvious disincentive to instructor retention, falling well below any reasonable “living wage” minimum floor.<sup>10</sup> CCCS administrators have long argued that adjunct wages are meant to be supplementary wages and not the basis for full-time employment. As we have argued above, this argument is disingenuous. Taken at face value, it is nothing less than an argument for instructional impermanence. CCCS institutions continue to benefit from a roster of adjunct instructors who have sought to cobble together a living by teaching a full roster of classes each semester. This practice is tacitly encouraged by CCCS administrators who implicitly understand that a reliable corps of experienced, professionally motivated instructors committed to their institutions for a longer term is, in fact, a highly

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<sup>7</sup> The \$2500.00 figure for per course compensation is roughly the median of the three steps for instructor compensation per credit hour at Front Range Community College in 2017-2018. We use the FRCC data as a proxy for adjunct faculty compensation at CCCS colleges even though it may overstate actual compensation at various other institutions (FRCC, 13, *Compensation*).

<sup>8</sup> A four course per semester teaching load is usually regarded as a normal teaching load for college faculty who have no other research, administrative, or advisory responsibilities.

<sup>9</sup> Colorado State University President Anthony Frank has publicly stated that a full-time adjunct instructional load should warrant no less than a wage of \$40,000 annually, with benefits, and ability to participate in university governance. Frank addressed the importance of adjunct instructors in his 2013 presidential address (Frank).

<sup>10</sup> At \$15.00 an hour, the 2015 annual compensation level thought to allow a single individual a minimum living wage as a nation-wide average, would total \$31,200 USD. Calculated and adjusted for Colorado the 2016 living wage is less, at roughly \$12 dollars an hour, or \$24,584.00 annually for a single individual. It bears noting that many CCCS adjuncts support at least one child, which in Colorado, in 2016, required \$53,452.00 annually as an adequate wage minimum. See, Massachusetts Institute of Technology).

desirable instructional foundation that complements the limited number of full-time instructors. Actual practice, then, points to administrative acknowledgement that full-time or near full-time adjunct employment is a desirable basis for curriculum delivery. Were this not so, administrators could have placed a draconian cap on the number of courses any instructor could teach and a cap on the number of semesters they could teach those courses. That they have not done so may be taken as administrative acknowledgement of the need for a reliable corps of adjunct instructors, particularly those tasked with delivering GT-Pathways courses.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 3. Adjunct Faculty Compensation Rates at Leading Colorado Colleges and Universities\***

Institution	Per course average compensation	Per semester compensation based on 4 course load per semester	Annual compensation (2 semester full-time, 4-course load)
Denver University	\$4000.00-\$6000.00	\$16,000.00-\$24,000.00	\$32,000.00-\$48,000.00
U. Colorado-Boulder	\$4,500.00	\$18,000.00	\$36,000.00
U. Colorado, Colorado Springs	\$2,700.00-\$5,000.00	\$10,800.00-\$20,000.00	\$21,600.00-\$40,000.00
U. Northern Colorado	\$3153.00-\$3,783.00	\$12,612.00-\$15,132.00	\$25,224.00-\$30,264.00
Mesa State U.	\$3,126.00-\$3,501.00	\$12,504.00-\$14,004.00	\$25,008.00-\$28,008.00
CSU-Pueblo	\$3000.00	\$15,000.00	\$30,000.00
CSU-Ft. Collins	\$4,800.00+	\$19,200.00+	\$38,400.00+
Colorado School of Mines	\$5000.00-\$8,000.00	\$20,000.00-\$32,000.00	\$40,000.00-\$64,000.00

Sources: Information provided by AAUP member faculty at each of the mentioned institutions (See Appendix 2 for list of names).

\*Before tax.

<sup>11</sup> In fact, after federal enactment of the Affordable Care Act in 2010 some CCCS colleges did cap the total course-loads available to adjuncts, and eliminated office hour requirements, precisely to avoid the 30 hour a week threshold obligating institutions to pay health benefits to adjunct instructors.

### **Pedagogy and Professional Supports**

Reflecting common practice nationwide, colleges within the CCC System have set pedagogical standards for instruction of particular subjects that are consistent with disciplinary expectations. Likewise, full-time faculty, usually consulting with unit heads, have normally selected textbooks and certain instructional materials to be used by faculty (including adjuncts) in teaching specific subjects. The GT-Pathways protocol, in fact, assumes that a certain baseline of knowledge and skills will be sustained in particular subject areas by faculty at all Colorado higher education institutions (CCHE).

Such practices are accepted as reasonable conditions for pedagogy of certain introductory subject matter by the AAUP, subject to the caveat that all faculty, including adjuncts, should enjoy the freedom to teach and present the materials they are professionally qualified to teach (AAUP, *The Freedom*). However, they are not without complication. Adhering to them means that faculty must have a good deal of input into the design of syllabi, assignments, and all elements of the evaluation process. Unfortunately, some CCCS colleges are now asserting ever greater control over syllabi design and assignments, particularly in GT-Pathways courses, in an effort to improve retention, graded achievement, and graduation rates.<sup>12</sup> These efforts have included reducing the number of assignments and assessments required and enforcing rules about the percentage of students who must pass the course. While this has been done with the support of the affected full-time faculty, and appears to be in technical compliance with the letter of the GT-Pathways protocol, there is some risk that the quality of student success may be compromised, burdening 4-year institutions with transfer students unprepared for rigorous instruction at this level (Alfonso). This greater administrative intrusion into faculty authority for syllabi construction and pedagogy, in violation of long-standing assumptions concerning the freedom to teach, is a matter of growing concern at the AAUP.

That CCCS adjunct faculty labor with fewer professional supports than their full-time faculty colleagues is well known. These conditions have arguably improved in recent years but continue to lag behind those enjoyed by adjunct instructors in 4-year institutions. Teaching faculty (full-time or adjunct) require certain facilities for effective professional performance. These facilities include reliable access to office space, meeting areas, computers and WIFI, printers, telephones, office supplies, and secretarial assistance. Unfortunately, adjunct faculty state-wide have variable access to these resources, and CCCS adjuncts appear among the worst off. An informal canvas of adjunct faculty at various CCCS

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<sup>12</sup> This initiative is called “Gateway to Success” at the Community College of Aurora (Prendergast). At Pueblo Community College it goes by the label “Gateway to College” (Pueblo CC).

campuses suggests that office space, when provided, consists only of a single shared or common office with a variable number of non-dedicated computers, printers, and telephones available on a first-come, first-served basis. Such facilities are sub-optimal at best. Adjunct faculty are compelled to queue and compete with each other for space. Space for student-faculty consultation is entirely public<sup>13</sup>, non-conducive to discussing grades, programs of study, and other U.S. FERPA (1974) protected subject matter with students. There is little space available for quiet preparation or reflection on pedagogical matters beyond libraries and student centers. Lacking office telephones, CCCS adjuncts effectively subsidize the colleges they serve by using personal cellphones rather than dedicated land lines.

Adjunct faculty serving CCCS colleges also lack access to professional development opportunities. We should note that certain institutionally necessary learning activities, such as attending workshops on how to fill out CCCS paperwork, learning how to evacuate a classroom in response to a shooter or respond to a tornado drill, learning to use Excel software, and learning the online grading system, etc., do not qualify as professional development. These are requisite administrative skills unrelated to a faculty member's professional expertise or pedagogy. They are, however, often the only "professional development" provided.

Professional development encompasses faculty learning and research opportunities that enable teachers and researchers to remain abreast of developments in their scholarly fields, acquire new pedagogical skills, familiarize themselves with new instructional technologies, and advance their own research and scholarship in professional societies. This is an area where adjunct faculty at most 4-year institutions have at least some opportunities in the form of travel funds, compensated absence for participation in unit approved professional conferences or symposia, and access to unit compensated learning activities. But few such opportunities are extended to CCCS adjuncts. At least one CCCS college hosts a "Teaching with Technology" day-long in-service training event at one of its several campuses, but reports from adjunct faculty suggest minimal incentives are given for participation (FRCC, Teaching with Technology).<sup>14</sup> Other colleges host short in-service events but offer no compensation or financial supports for participating. In fact, the opposite appears to be true: adjunct faculty, if missing class to take advantage of

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<sup>13</sup> Public space should be understood to include hallways, coffee shops, library rooms, or even the adjunct's motor vehicle, -- a circumstance which may be hazardous.

<sup>14</sup> There is an individual Teaching with Technology Award given annually to a faculty member that makes no distinction between regular and adjunct faculty (FRCC, Teaching with Technology).

such events, have their wages docked on a pro-rated basis for time lost to in-class instruction. This is certainly a disincentive to adjunct faculty professional development and suggests that CCCS accepts little responsibility for insuring that adjunct faculty, even long-serving adjunct faculty, have the knowledge and resources they need to stay current and succeed in their chosen professional fields. When adjunct faculty account for more than 80% of all instruction in the System, students are arguably disserved by this indifference to the professional needs of adjunct instructional staff.

### **Due Process Deficit**

Effective due process is an essential condition of academic freedom and a valuable tool for resolving disputes in academic settings. The CCC System sustains a due process mechanism for resolving disputes between administrators and full-time faculty but makes no dispute resolution procedure available to adjunct faculty (SBCCOE, BP 3-20). It was this circumstance that led to an AAUP censure of the Community College of Aurora in June 2017 in the case of CCA's dismissal of Nathaniel Bork (AAUP, AAUP Adds ). The AAUP has long maintained that all faculty actively employed by a higher education institution, inclusive of adjuncts, must have access to due process when disputes arise that might lead to their dismissal (AAUP, Recommended Institutional Regulations). Mr. Bork's dismissal in mid-semester, while he was on payroll, was a clear violation of AAUP's longstanding institutional recommendations bearing on dispute settlement.

Because they lack due process protections, adjunct faculty are placed in a precarious situation should pedagogical differences arise with full-time colleagues, unit heads, and/or other administrators. While in-contract dismissal is unusual, it is not unusual at all for college administrators to simply refuse to re-hire an adjunct faculty member once the semester is over or discourage their continued employment by offering them fewer classes (and corresponding reduced remuneration) than that to which they are accustomed. No cause need be provided, nor is any face-to-face discussion required for a non-renewal decision. The same circumstances that apply to a first-semester adjunct also apply to one with 15 years of nearly continuous service. It does not require much imagination to appreciate how this contractual precarity can stifle meaningful dialogue between adjunct instructors and their superiors on professional matters. The absence of meaningful due process procedures underscore and reinforce these dysfunctional circumstances. It is hard to argue that adjunct faculty enjoy academic freedom when the risk of dissent or professional disagreement is loss of a job with no recourse to dispute resolution procedures. And it is harder still to suppose that discouragement of the professional voices of an instructional group that comprises the overwhelming majority of CCCS faculty is not a substantial loss of professional expertise to CCCS' colleges.

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### **Shared Governance Deficit**

The participation of the faculty in the governance of higher education institutions in matters related to their professional expertise is widely viewed as an essential condition for the practice of academic freedom. This is the long-held view of the AAUP (Statement on Government). The CCC System appears to lack a uniform policy supporting faculty inclusion in institutional governance, though various member colleges have established procedures, including the creation of faculty senates and other advisory bodies. Adjunct faculty may be represented in these bodies, though anecdotal evidence available to the AAUP suggests these representatives are disproportionately few in number and selected by administration rather than adjunct faculty on those campuses.

Various other consultative mechanisms appear to be employed on an ad hoc basis, including administrative “listening” sessions and ad hoc committees convened by unit heads to address particular issues. These committees may or may not include adjunct faculty. The irregularity of such mechanisms, the absence of established and regularly scheduled procedures for eliciting adjunct faculty views, and the patronage-like quality of these solicitations, when coupled with the absence of any due process protection for adjunct faculty and the low compensation of these individuals, practically ensure that adjunct faculty are discouraged from any meaningful participation in shared governance at these colleges.

### **Pathways to Reducing Instructional Impermanence: AAUP Recommendations to the SBCCOE**

Reducing and mitigating instructor impermanence in the CCCS is, and ought to be, a matter of serious concern as the System transitions to new leadership in 2018. Efforts to establish a more stable instructional workforce can only enhance the effectiveness, quality, reliability, and ultimately, the prestige of and public confidence in the educational outputs of CCCS colleges. Importantly, such efforts will enable CCCS to fend off potential criticism of its administration of the GT-Pathways protocol. This latter concern should, in our view, weigh heavily in CCCS Board thinking about the long-term sustainability of its transfer curriculum and public confidence in that process.

As noted above, CCCS administrators have, to date, argued that fiscal constraints constrain them from investing in improvements in adjunct faculty employment conditions short of taking a few small incremental measures favoring adjunct conditions that are largely symbolic in nature—the recent \$70 a course per semester wage increase for long-serving adjunct faculty being a case in point. Such claims are belied by the data. In the last five years, while the CCCS has raised administration salaries 30-50%, and its full-time faculty salaries 20%, the adjunct faculty have received each year a pay raise that averages \$4.80/week. Indeed, the wages the CCCS pays its adjunct faculty have

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been the subject of numerous press reports, including not only Westword, but also The Guardian, Daily Kos, Jezebel, KGNU Radio and the Boulder Daily Camera. The so-called “tiered-pay” schedule that some of the colleges have instituted reflects accurately the low estate of adjunct faculty within the CCCS System. If we take FRCC’s instructor pay matrix as a proxy, according to the chart, an adjunct faculty member with more than a decade of CCCS experience (Step 3 instructor) qualifies for compensation of \$86 per semester credit hour more than an entry level (Step 1) instructor with no prior experience for a net gain of \$5.73 a week (FRCC, Compensation). This translates to a gain of \$1032 a semester for a four course load or \$68.00 a week. This Step 3 instructor makes \$21,288.00 annually. Compare this to the recent 20 percent increase the full-time faculty recently received that averages \$188/week (FRCC, Compensation), on top of base salaries ranging from \$53,000.00-\$57,000.00 annually (with benefits) (FRCC, Compensation 5), and the difference is plain enough to see. As the AAUP has documented, adjunct salaries are so low that many must rely on food stamps, food banks, and renting out rooms in their domiciles to survive (Awad).<sup>15</sup>

The AAUP Colorado Conference remains convinced the System can and should do more even if it not ready to embrace a single payment schedule for all CCCS faculty—which is the natural and affordable solution to instructor impermanence. Accordingly, we propose that the CCCS Board demonstrate its commitment to addressing instructor impermanence by adopting policy measures that contribute to strengthening the adjunct faculty workforce.

### **Wages and Benefits**

- We encourage the Board to revisit the 2015 Adjunct Task Force recommendation that adjunct faculty receive a 28% increase in per-class compensation. A 28% increase to per-class, per semester compensation of \$2400 equals \$3072, still well below compensation rates for adjuncts at most 4-year Colorado colleges and universities.
- We also encourage the Board to encourage System colleges to favor the retention of highly qualified, long serving adjunct faculty by offering these faculty a full-time or near full-time semester course load that qualifies them for any health benefits for which they may be eligible.

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<sup>15</sup> There is an individual Teaching with Technology Award given annually to a faculty member that makes no distinction between regular and adjunct faculty (FRCC, Teaching with Technology).

### **Pedagogy and Professional Supports**

- **Pedagogy.** We encourage the Board to review the current practice at some colleges now exerting greater supervision over syllabi construction, learning objectives, and student evaluation in the interest of maintaining a high-quality curriculum. If certain “streamlining” practices, whose effect is to attenuate the rigor of classes, are adopted for some courses, separate, more exacting sections should be set aside for GT-Pathways transfer oriented students.
- **Professional Supports.** We encourage the Board to insist that the System’s college presidents allocate additional dedicated space for adjunct use. These should include dedicated cubicle space for student consultation and mentoring. These spaces should be supplied with computers, WI-FI and internet connections, and telephone services that enable adjunct faculty to work more efficiently at less personal cost in class consultations and student advising.
- **Professional Enhancement.** We encourage the Board to adopt a policy that allows an adjunct faculty member teaching at least a half-time load for several consecutive semesters the time to attend at least one professional meeting related to their professional competence at year, missing a maximum of two consecutive class sessions per class, without having their wages docked for absence if substitute arrangements are made for class coverage.
- **Professional Enhancement.** The Board should encourage each college to establish a competitive fund for professional development dedicated to adjunct faculty instruction.

### **Due Process**

- **Dispute Resolution.** The Board should consider adopting a common published policy for dispute resolution that at minimum extends to in-contract adjunct faculty. We also believe that any adjunct faculty who served three or more terms within a span of three years should be entitled to a written explanation for any discontinuance, sufficient advance notice of discontinuance, and an opportunity to have that decision reviewed by a dispute resolution panel.

### **Shared Governance**

- **Common Faculty Handbook.** It is time the Board addressed the need for a common faculty handbook, or set of core handbook requirements that can be adapted to individual colleges, that addresses the need for inclusion of adjunct faculty in college

governance (see justification and key elements in Appendix 1 below).

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## **Appendix 1**

We believe the CCCS should adopt a common faculty handbook applicable to its member colleges. This handbook should be adopted utilizing the follow procedures:

- It should be drafted by a committee that meaningfully represents the faculty at the institution and across CCCS. This means that, since adjuncts constitute about two-thirds of the faculty, about two-thirds of the faculty committee members should be adjuncts. It goes without saying that, in order to achieve meaningful instructor representation, instructors should be paid for their time and service on such a committee.
- Committee members should be primarily or exclusively faculty. The administration, we are sure, will revise or add to the document the committee drafts; however, we feel it is essential for representative faculty members to play a lead role in drafting the document. Changes the administration makes should be made fully available to all faculty, preferably in an email or public notice summarizing all such changes.
- The handbook should be adopted in a secret vote by all faculty members at the institution, which is conducted by an online, third-party vendor. If the faculty do not vote in favor of the handbook, modifications should be made to the document addressing the concerns of the faculty. The handbook that is finally adopted should be one which has the support of a majority of the faculty.
- To be a meaningful document, the handbook must be available to all faculty. We would recommend that it be freely available on the college's web site. As an alternative, it could be emailed to all current faculty and then emailed to new hires, preferably at the time they are offered their first classes. We do not see a need for the CCCS to pay for printing the handbook so long as an electronic version is available to all faculty.
- If changes are made to the handbook to accommodate unforeseen circumstances, the revised handbook should be emailed to all faculty along with a summary of the changes in the new document.

Creating a faculty handbook for all CCCS faculty would have the following benefits:

- It would avoid confusion among the faculty— confusion which, under the current way of doing things, is almost unavoidable, even for veteran instructors— as to what the institution's policies are and what rights and responsibilities the faculty members have.

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- It would prevent inconsistencies, such as those outlined above in the discussion of Recommendation #10, between colleges in terms of how policies are implemented and how pay, support, and resources are made available to instructors.
- It would, we hope, set in place fair and consistent employment conditions for all faculty throughout the CCCS.
- It would spell out exactly what the differences are, as the CCCS sees them, between instructors and other faculty, again avoiding confusion.
- It would mean that the rules and standards for how the administration deals with faculty, instructors in particular, would now be in writing and available to all instructors.

## **Appendix 2: List of AAUP Faculty Contributing Adjunct Compensation Data**

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