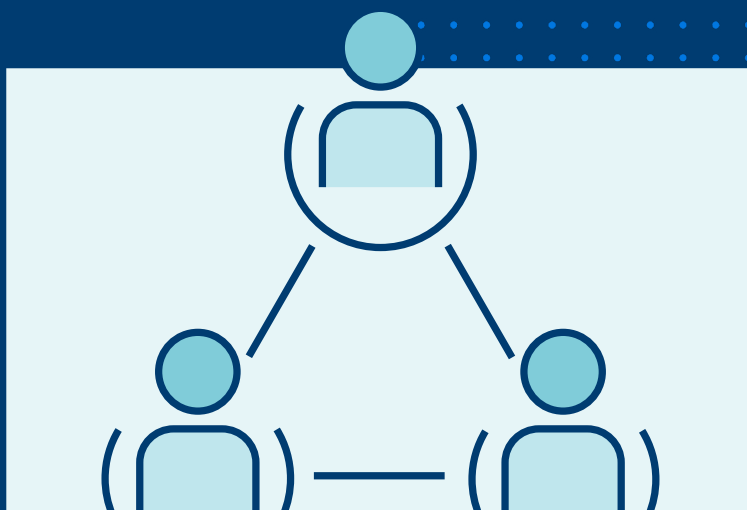


Supporting Online Adjunct Faculty Across Institutional Roles

An Inclusive Playbook for Academic Leaders
& Instructional Support Staff



every learner
everywhere



OLC ONLINE LEARNING™
CONSORTIUM

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About the Organizations



WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET) is the leader in the practice, policy, & advocacy of digital learning in higher education. WCET is a member-driven non-profit which brings together colleges, universities, higher education organizations, and companies to collectively improve the quality and reach of technology-enhanced learning programs. Learn more at wcet.wiche.edu.



ONLINE LEARNING
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The Online Learning Consortium (OLC) is a collaborative community of education leaders and innovators dedicated to advancing quality digital teaching and learning experiences designed to reach and engage the modern learner – anyone, anywhere, anytime. OLC inspires innovation and quality through an extensive set of resources, including best-practice publications, quality benchmarking, leading-edge instruction, community-driven conferences, practitioner-based and empirical research, and expert guidance. The growing OLC community includes faculty members, administrators, trainers, instructional designers, and other learning professionals, as well as educational institutions, professional societies, and corporate enterprises. Learn more at onlinelearningconsortium.org.



Every Learner Everywhere is a network of twelve partner organizations with expertise in evaluating, implementing, scaling, and measuring the efficacy of education technologies, curriculum and course design strategies, teaching practices, and support services that personalize instruction for students in blended and online learning environments. Our mission is to help institutions use new technology to innovate teaching and learning, with the ultimate goal of improving learning outcomes for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students, poverty-affected students, and first-generation students. Our collaborative work aims to advance equity in higher education centers on the transformation of postsecondary teaching and learning. We build capacity in colleges and universities to improve student outcomes with digital learning through direct technical assistance, timely resources and toolkits, and ongoing analysis of institution practices and market trends. For more information about Every Learner Everywhere and its collaborative approach to equitize higher education through digital learning, visit everylearnereverywhere.org.

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Executive Summary

What Is a Playbook?

A playbook provides context and actionable strategies for challenges experienced in institutions of higher education.

What Can I Expect from This Playbook?

This playbook aims to extend the work of [Online Adjunct Faculty: A Survey of Institutional Policies and Practices](#) by providing actionable strategies to better support online adjunct faculty from various roles across the institution. Inspired by the data collected in the initial study's surveys and interviews, this playbook will provide six actionable strategies and different implementation tips for the intended audience. These actionable strategies include:

- establishing clear expectations for online teaching;
- developing effective onboarding and training experiences;
- creating opportunities for connection and community;
- using data to maximize the quality of instruction;
- incentivizing key professional development areas; and
- recognizing exemplary online adjunct faculty.

Who Is the Intended Audience of This Playbook?

This playbook is designed to serve as a resource for instructional support staff (e.g., instructional designers, faculty developers, technology trainers, directors of centers for teaching and learning), academic leaders (e.g., department chairs, program coordinators, deans), and executive leaders (e.g., provosts, chancellors, presidents) across institutional types as they analyze, develop, and enhance their online adjunct faculty support systems. This playbook also includes a checklist for adjunct faculty to prepare, design, and facilitate courses (Note: This resource is also fully adaptable for use by individuals who onboard and train adjunct faculty).

Why Online Adjunct Faculty?

We use the term online adjunct faculty throughout the playbook to refer to any non-tenure track faculty, which includes full- and part-time faculty, instructors, lecturers, and any other professionals delivering instruction at colleges and universities. We intentionally use faculty to signify their expertise, credentials, and importance to the profession.

“We are trying now to be more inclusive in our language and just calling folks faculty rather than calling them adjuncts...I think it's important because it sends a message to include those adjunct faculty as part of the institution and to help them understand that you don't just come in and teach and leave.”

—Institutional and Digital Learning Leader,
Community College

Introduction

“ In our world, adjuncts often get the short end of the stick, and giving them as much as possible for the experience, and the credit and the expertise that they have, I think, makes for a better experience for them that translates into a better experience for students. And that’s why we’re all here; if we weren’t in it for the students, we wouldn’t be here.”

Deb Maeder, MSE, Ed.D., Director of Digital Education and Instructional Design, Bryan College of Health Sciences

Over the past forty years, a significant shift has occurred surrounding who is responsible for teaching at colleges and universities across the U.S. Tenured and tenure-track faculty used to represent the majority of teaching faculty; however, recent data reveals that today “75 percent of faculty are not eligible for tenure, and 47 percent hold part-time positions” (American Federation of Teachers, 2022, p. 1). After enduring the pandemic, a shift also occurred in how instruction is delivered, whereby students are relying more on online learning modalities. A recent survey revealed that 60 percent of students reported a significant shift to mostly remote instruction for the 2020–2021 academic year, and “almost all institutions report using adjuncts to teach online” (Cameron et al., 2021). Taken together, these shifts in the higher education landscape have resulted in the rapid increase of and reliance on online adjunct faculty (i.e., non-tenure track, instructors, or contingent faculty) to deliver instruction and ultimately foster student success.

Despite the increasing reliance on online adjunct faculty across the U.S., institutional support for them has lagged behind support for tenure-track faculty. Studies have shown that adjunct faculty broadly lack access to key resources, such as email or office space, help with instructional design despite a desire for such assistance (Bolitzer, 2019), meaningful professional development opportunities (Burleigh et al., 2021), pay that is commensurate with experience and credentials, and responsibilities that go beyond teaching such as student support and advising (Flaherty, 2022). Studies have shown the importance of creating institutional support and connections for online adjunct faculty to address these challenges to improve teaching effectiveness and retention (Burleigh et al., 2021; Gelman et al., 2022; Kezar et al., 2019).

Put simply, online adjunct faculty need more support, and the time to ensure they get the necessary support is now. In the summer of 2021, the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET) and the Online Learning Consortium (OLC), with support from the Every Learner Everywhere Network, conducted a study to examine current practices for hiring, onboarding, developing, and supporting online adjunct faculty with the goal of publishing resources to help academic leaders operationalize this knowledge and improve online faculty experiences at their institutions. In the report, [Online Adjunct Faculty: A Survey of Institutional Policies and Practices](#), researchers shared findings from the study and several preliminary recommendations for supporting adjunct faculty who teach online. This piece extends the work of the report by presenting six concrete strategies for academic leaders, college-level leaders, and instructional design staff to adopt now to better support their online adjunct faculty and the community of students and learners in their classrooms.

Research Recap

Key findings from the study (see [Online Adjunct Faculty: A Survey of Institutional Policies and Practices](#)) revealed there is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to hiring, onboarding, training, and supporting online adjunct faculty. Most notably, the study revealed a number of significant findings and recommendations that can be applied to institutional models and organizational structures to better support online adjunct faculty.



Our key findings include:

- 1. Common policies are still lacking.** When compared to 2015, more institutions are developing email response and grading time policies; however, large numbers of schools still lack these policies. This also holds true for written policies on online office hours.
- 2. Mandatory training and instructional design support is decreasing.** In a number of cases, institutions require less mandatory training prior to teaching online than in 2015. This is especially the case for online orientation to student services and online technologies as well as training in effective teaching methods.
- 3. Culturally relevant pedagogical training may not be required but is still prevalent.** While not quite 17 percent of respondents indicated that training on digital learning, diversity, equity, and inclusion was required of online adjunct faculty prior to teaching, over a third of respondents indicated that all of their online adjunct faculty had access to training on culturally relevant pedagogical practices.
- 4. The pandemic did not significantly change professional development requirements for faculty.** Over 54 percent of respondents indicated that the pandemic has not changed the amount of professional development required of online adjunct faculty.
- 5. The most effective online pedagogical practices are often those identified as the most challenging to implement.** Some of the same practices associated with the most effective online adjunct faculty are also identified as some of the most challenging practices to implement. Many of these practices also correspond with evidence-based teaching practices known to be particularly beneficial to students.



Recommendations

Based on the findings of the survey, as well as interviews with over a dozen higher education administrators and leaders, we have developed a number of recommendations of best practices for the use and support of online adjunct faculty. We understand that each institution has its own unique situations and, therefore, these recommendations may not be applicable for all institutions. Nevertheless, we hope these recommendations will help institutions better support and utilize online adjunct faculty.

- 1. Create sustained, structured connections with online adjunct faculty.** Create one-on-one or small group mentoring programs to provide continuous support to online adjunct faculty. A program that offers a combination of regular meetings, as-needed interactions, and feedback from experienced faculty provides robust opportunities for connection and development for online adjunct faculty.
- 2. Offer training options that extend beyond traditional business hours.** Offer training options that fit with adjunct faculty schedules. Offering asynchronous faculty training options, as well as synchronous or on-campus training on evenings and weekends, can make it more likely adjuncts are available to attend.
- 3. Incentivize professional development options for online adjunct faculty.** Compensate adjunct faculty for their time and incentivize attendance by offering compensation for professional development offerings.
- 4. Tailor training content to meet top online adjunct faculty challenges.** Gather data to understand top faculty challenges at your institution and tailor training content to meet their needs. According to this study, top challenges and topics for training include:
 - collaborative learning;
 - creating connections between students;
 - facilitating group discussion;
 - active learning strategies;
 - creating an inclusive classroom;
 - culturally relevant teaching.
- 5. Provide recognition for exemplary online adjunct faculty who use effective practices.** Acknowledge the successes of online adjunct faculty using effective practices to connect with students. Formal means of recognition include awards or the opportunity to be featured on the program's website. Informal means of recognition might include a personal thank-you email, message, or call.
- 6. Create well-designed policies that guide instructors in determining when and how to respond to students.** Despite evidence that students benefit from timely and consistent communication and feedback from their instructors, many institutions still lack policies on timely interactions with students. Such policies can help ensure that faculty are creating supportive and meaningful learning environments for all students.

The 119 unique two-year and four-year institutions across the U.S. that are represented in the survey findings and described in follow-up interviews showcased policies and practices stemming from a variety of organizational models for online learning. These include:

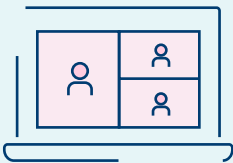
- **centralized organizational structures**, in which online learning leadership and management for the entire institution originated through a specific office, leadership, and staff who are responsible for the hiring, training, onboarding, support, and assessment of online adjunct faculty across the institution;
- **decentralized organizational structures**, in which online learning leadership and management is relegated to individual colleges, programs, or departments, whereby each college, program, or department designates responsibility to administrators or chairs who are responsible for the hiring, training, onboarding, support, and assessment of online adjunct faculty; and
- **mixed-model organizational structures**, in which some elements of online learning, including online adjunct faculty hiring, onboarding, training, support, and assessment are centralized and other elements are under the purview of individual colleges, programs, or departments.

Actionable Strategies

To apply the findings and recommendations, six actionable strategies are presented to operationalize how institutional leaders in varying capacities can successfully support online adjunct faculty at their institutions through policies, training, connection, and rewards. Each strategy includes survey and interview data highlights from the study, brief context about the significance of the strategy, actionable ideas for specific institutional capacities (i.e., executive leadership, college and department leadership, instructional support staff), and some resources to reference for implementation.

Strategies include the following:

1 Establish clear expectations for online teaching



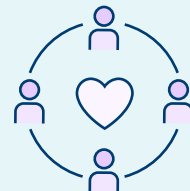
Create well-designed policies that assist instructors in determining the guiding tenets of quality at your institution.

2 Develop effective onboarding & training experiences



Establish efficient, flexible, targeted, and effective experiences to best support their teaching and learning.

3 Create opportunities for connection & community



Leverage various modalities and structures to create sustained, structured connection.

4 Use data to maximize the quality of instruction



Understand your institution and the larger landscape to develop tailored learning and support experiences.

5 Incentivize key professional development areas



Identify ways to promote participation in areas that are important to student learning and success.

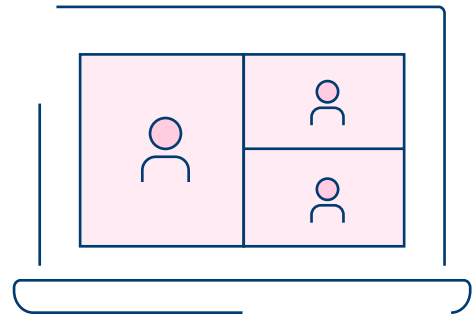
6 Recognize exemplary adjunct faculty



Acknowledge, publicly and privately, excellence in online teaching.

The graphic below further demonstrates what institutional connections each strategy has for creating policies, training and connection opportunities, and rewards for exemplary adjunct faculty:





Strategy 1

Establish Clear Expectations for Online Teaching


“ All courses online instructors teach are really robust courses. They are designed with rich lesson material, and they are organized on a weekly basis so each instructor knows exactly what lesson materials will be studied. Additionally, we have extensive lesson notes for the instructors outlining what the students are going to be learning this week and also some gotchas for them to look out for.”

Eric B. Karl, Associate Online Vice President of Brigham Young University–Idaho

One of the most important things institutions can do to support quality online teaching is to collaboratively create well-designed policies that assist faculty at all levels in determining the guiding tenets of quality instruction for their institution. Despite evidence that students benefit from timely and consistent communication and feedback from their instructors, many institutions still lack policies on timely interactions with students. Such policies can help ensure that faculty create supportive and meaningful learning environments for all students.

Executive Leadership

- Lead a **cross-institutional team** to examine the effective practices and expectations of faculty who teach online courses.
- Collaborate to develop institution-wide minimum expectations for qualifications to teach online for faculty.
- Collaborate to create institution-wide minimum expectations for teaching policies (e.g., email response times, grading response times) for faculty who teach online courses.

 See “Tips for Assembling Your Cross-Institutional Team” on page 16.

College & Department Leadership

- Work with your college or department to examine the effective practices and expectations of faculty who teach online courses.
- Collaborate across your college or in your department to develop college-wide or departmental-wide minimum expectations for the qualifications of faculty who teach online courses.
- Collaborate across your college or your department to establish college-wide or departmental-wide minimum expectations for teaching policies (e.g., email response times, grading response times) for faculty who teach online courses.
- Clearly communicate expectations for online teaching from initial recruitment, through the hiring process, and during each semester of teaching.

Instructional Support

- Prepare to share information, make recommendations, and have conversations with executive, college, and department leadership about minimum online teaching expectations (e.g., email response times, grading times). Use tools and resources to build your knowledge about best practices for creating teaching standards for online courses.
- Create course blueprints for online courses with online lesson materials, resources, and week-to-week guides built into the learning management system (LMS) for new faculty.
- Lead from where you are, meaning you should aim to recognize your agency to advocate for your area's and your institution's quality online teaching.

“We run our potential instructors through a candidate assessment course which teaches them about the asynchronous nature of online learning, how to engage with students, and how to look out for students who are struggling. It’s a week-long course where they engage with facilitators and other potential faculty. They learn what an LMS is, how to use it, and how to engage in that modality as part of the course. They also create little instructional videos and engage each other through discussion boards, just so they know what would be expected of them. As an organization, we monitor how these potential instructors perform in this course, and we see that many instructors perform fabulously. And we have found that these are the ones that will perform even better after being hired and will really go above and beyond for their students”

Eric B. Karl, Associate Online Vice President of Brigham Young University–Idaho



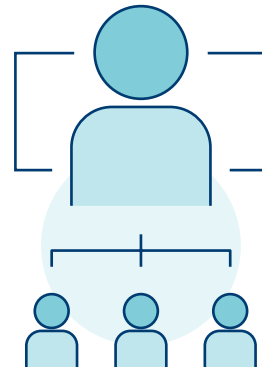
Tips for Assembling Your Cross-Institutional Team to Support Adjunct Faculty

One of the most important strategies for developing a focus on quality online teaching is getting the right people in the right place to talk about quality in online learning in productive ways. Supporting adjunct faculty supports quality teaching and, ultimately, student success.

The [Administration of Online Programs](#) scorecard serves as a guide to help academic leaders uncover key areas, stakeholder groups, and focus areas to support collaboration around identifying minimum expectations for online teaching.

AREAS	GROUPS	WHY INCLUDE THESE GROUPS?
<p>Executive Leadership</p> <hr/> <p>Academic Leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presidents & Vice Presidents • Chancellors & Vice Chancellors • Provosts & Vice Provosts <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deans, Associate Deans, & Assistant Deans • Department Chairs • Program Coordinators • Faculty 	<p>These groups are responsible for integrating digital, blended, and online learning into the institution’s strategy, as well as developing measurable goals and aligning resources to support the strategy across the institution. These groups are also tasked with leading, developing, and facilitating quality digital, blended, and online courses and programs.</p> <p>Another key function of these groups is to help establish quality criteria for both instructors (e.g., email response times, grading times) and overall course performance (e.g., student satisfaction, outcome achievement).</p> <p>Additionally, these groups need to help establish processes and procedures for adjunct faculty who do not meet the expectations (e.g., re-contracting decisions, performance coaching). Given this focus on strategy and operationalization, individuals in these groups are key stakeholders in the collaborative creation of minimum expectation guidelines and policies for syllabi, design, facilitation, interaction, and feedback.</p>
<p>Governance Groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty Governance • Academic Staff Governance • Student Governance 	<p>As these groups are dedicated to quality learning experiences from various perspectives, including them in expectation and policy development is crucial in obtaining support and more significant buy-in from your broader institutional audience.</p>

AREAS	GROUPS	WHY INCLUDE THESE GROUPS?
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students taking online courses who represent diverse perspectives 	<p>Institutions often overlook student representation when creating minimum expectations and policies. However, students provide a critical perspective regarding what contributes to their learning. Academic leaders should gather, share, and respond to diverse students' perspectives about the quality of their learning experiences by fostering conversations and supporting programs to support student learning. This ensures leaders are effectively using student data and perspectives to drive decision-making.</p>
Technology Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Information Officers & Chief Technology Officers • Directors of Learning Technology • Information Technology Managers (e.g., Help Desks, Academic Applications, Technology Training) 	<p>These individuals tend to have a deep understanding of technology systems that support learning, often providing support and training opportunities to adjunct faculty, staff, and students on how to use them effectively in their work. Including them enables integration of support and training needs and requirements. Communicating the available technology supports and sharing knowledge about whom to connect with and how to access support are important steps for preparing adjunct faculty to utilize the supports available to their teaching.</p>
Instructional Support Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers for Teaching and Learning (CTLs) • Learning Technology Centers (LTCs) • Colleges or departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors & Assistant Directors of LTCs & CTLs • Instructional Designers in CTLs, LTCs, colleges, and departments • Teaching and Learning Consultants in CTLs, LTCs, colleges, and departments • eLearning Specialists in CTLs, LTCs, colleges, and departments 	<p>These individuals support instructional staff in designing and facilitating quality online courses and programs through consultations and programming by leveraging research-driven practices and synergizing technologies effectively in support of those practices. They often have knowledge of tools and resources that can help guide discussion and collaboration around minimum expectations and policies. Adjunct faculty, particularly faculty who are professionals in their field and have little to no formal learning in course design or effective pedagogical practices, can significantly benefit from the services of instructional support staff.</p>



Strategy 2

Develop Effective Onboarding & Training Experiences

“ We have award-winning programs that are carefully constructed and developed. [We have] quality contributing faculty trained and mentored, and this is not by accident.”

Anonymous participant, survey response

Adjunct faculty need and want training to improve their pedagogical practices. Still, they often have tight schedules, time constraints, and competing work obligations that restrict their ability to receive the technical and pedagogical resources available to other faculty. In general, institutions want adjuncts to use their limited contractual time to provide high-quality learning experiences that lead to student success. Effective onboarding and training experiences provide faculty with a solid base of institutional, departmental, and pedagogical knowledge to set them up to successfully use their content knowledge to drive student learning in the online classroom.

One anonymous survey respondent noted, “We have award-winning programs that are carefully constructed and developed. [We have] quality contributing faculty trained and mentored and this is not by accident.” As this demonstrates, the training and professional development opportunities for adjuncts need to be efficient, flexible, targeted, and effective to best support their teaching and learning.

Executive Leadership

- Set strategy and expectations for the appropriate onboarding and training of adjunct faculty members.
- Appropriately resource instructional support teams and instructional technology teams to implement the agreed-upon strategy and expectations.

College & Department Leadership

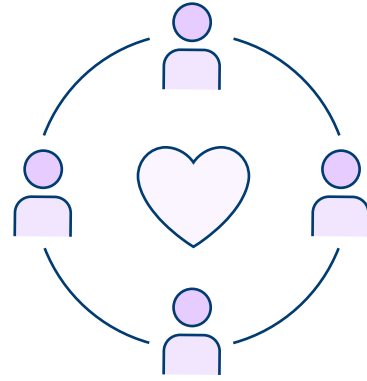
- Limit the number of pieces of training and minimize the time commitment necessary for training and development to avoid taxing faculty who may have other professional obligations.
- Consider providing ways for online adjunct faculty to opt out of training or development sessions, modules, or courses in which they can already demonstrate mastery.
- Set expectations for training and development requirements during the hiring process.
- Prioritize timely contracting with new adjunct faculty to allow for professional development.
- Design training and development to closely emulate a teaching experience for active and relevant learning of effective online practices.

Instructional Support

- Offer training and development options that extend beyond traditional business hours.
- Set clear expectations about the time commitment for all training and development sessions, modules, and courses.
- Segment training and development to maximum personalized professional development.
- Incorporate feedback mechanisms to respond to the shifting needs of adjuncts.

“Implementation of asynchronous training that utilizes best practices in online instruction has created the best outcomes for us. In this type of training, faculty are trained on best practices while they experience use of those same practices as they engage as a student in the training.”

—Anonymous participant,
survey response



Strategy 3

Create Opportunities for Connection & Community

“ Online adjunct faculty are part of our community and investing in them is important.”

Dr. Thomas Cavanagh, Vice Provost for Digital Learning, University of Central Florida

Adjunct faculty often juggle providing high-quality learning experiences with their students and other responsibilities (e.g., teaching at other institutions, working in positions in their field of expertise). These competing responsibilities can make it difficult for institutions that provide services and support during traditional working hours to create opportunities for connection and community. However, establishing flexible ways to connect and create a community around teaching excellence is integral to the success of adjunct faculty and their students. Institutions may consider ways to create sustained, structured connections with online adjunct faculty through regular meetings, as-needed interactions, and feedback from experienced faculty.

Executive Leadership

- Invest in communities of practice through the institution's center for teaching and learning and discipline-specific communities of practice within academic departments.
- Support cross-collaborations where adjunct faculty connect and create a community around key areas of student success (e.g., tutoring, library, mental health services, career, and leadership development).
- Develop an inclusive institutional culture that values adjunct faculty and their contributions to student learning.
- Sponsor an adjunct faculty member advisory board to better assess the needs and concerns of adjunct faculty members.

College & Department Leadership

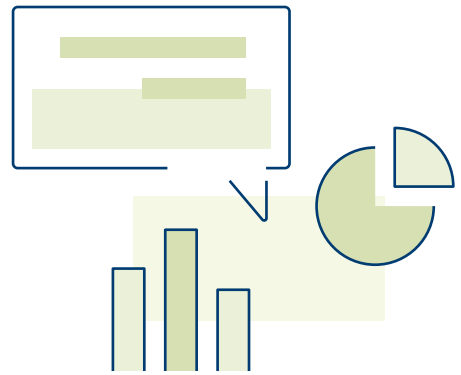
- Create a mentoring program that partners an experienced online faculty member with new online adjunct faculty.
- Develop synchronous meetings for all departmental faculty to share teaching challenges and solutions.
- Develop an asynchronous space where adjunct faculty members can collaborate and communicate with one another anytime.

Instructional Support

- Develop one-on-one or small group mentoring programs that leverage multiple flexible modalities with synchronous, asynchronous, and optional on-campus components to provide continuous support to online adjunct faculty.
- Plan a symposium for all faculty at the institution to share effective practices and build a professional community.
- Utilize Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching ([MERLOT](#)) as a resource to share amongst institutions.

“We have a staff and faculty group where their goal is to promote active teaching... so they held a lot of sessions that were less ‘here’s how to do this’ [and] more like community conversations instead. And they were really promoted that way and run that way where it was like, ‘we’re gonna throw out a few topics, let’s talk about this.’ So this really helps a lot of the people who are...new to online teaching brainstorm and commiserate a little bit naturally. This all happened over Zoom, but I think it really helped them feel like they had a place to go, other than the people in their immediate surroundings.”

—Jennifer Alberico, Director of Online Teaching and Learning, Community College of Vermont



Strategy 4

Use Data to Maximize the Quality of Instruction

“We typically run a midterm evaluation during each course offering. The survey is not an official measure of faculty performance like what we do for the official end of course evaluation, and the results are not kept on record. The adjunct faculty and the instructional designer will look at the feedback together halfway through the course and then the idea is they will talk about any areas of concern that pop up...But I think most people want to do well and if they are presented with constructive feedback they already are asking for help or trying to figure out how to remedy that.”

Jessica Franson, Managing Director, College of Business Online Programs, University of Wisconsin MBA Consortium



Creating training and connective experiences, such as one-on-one mentoring, community forums, or some other experience for faculty as they design and facilitate deep learning experiences is no easy task. It starts with understanding the teaching and learning landscape at one's institution and, more broadly, by collecting and reflecting on data and literature on the scholarship of teaching and learning. With this understanding, institutions at various levels of the organization can leverage data to make data-driven decisions to tailor their training and connective experiences to meet top instructional challenges.

Executive Leadership

- Set the strategy and expectations for multi-pronged data collection efforts, including surveys, focus groups, and document analysis, to gather teaching challenges from various stakeholders.
- Appropriately resource academic colleges and departments, instructional support, and instructional technology to implement the agreed-upon strategy and expectations for data collection and quality assurance activities.
- Share the findings of these multi-pronged data collection efforts with faculty and institutional support staff.
- Respond to key areas and topics that emerge from the data collection to support a data-driven decision-making culture around quality online education.

College & Department Leadership

- Gather data from your faculty and students to better understand top teaching challenges in your college or department.
- Share the findings from this data with all faculty in your college or department.
- Collaborate with faculty and instructional support professionals in your department, college, or institution to deliver specific, tailored, flexible training and connective experiences that meet the needs of your faculty.

According to [Online Adjunct Faculty: A Survey of Institutional Policies and Practices](#), top challenges and topics for training include:

- collaborative learning
- creating connections between students
- facilitating group discussion
- active learning strategies
- creating an inclusive classroom
- culturally relevant teaching.

Instructional Support

- Gather data to understand the top teaching challenges at your institution.
- Stay abreast of emerging research (e.g., [Online Learning Journal](#)), tools (e.g., [Quality Scorecard Suite](#)), and broader stories (e.g., [Inside Higher Education](#), [Chronicle of Higher Education](#), [WCET](#), [EDUCAUSE](#)) from the field.
- Leverage data, literature, and standard tools to tailor professional development supports and efforts.

“Mid-semester, right around midterms, we have a formative evaluation where students evaluate their instructor on things like, ‘how well does your instructor engage with you, how well do they understand the subject matter, how well do they explain difficult concepts in the course, are they engaged, are they respectful?’. This formative evaluation provides really great feedback for the instructor. And it’s done at midterm, so they get that feedback and have a chance to better understand the students’ perspective and then make any improvements for the rest of the semester.”

—Eric B Karl, Associate Online Vice President of Brigham Young University—Idaho



Strategy 5

Incentivize Key Professional Development Areas

“ We are constantly finding ways to train faculty and give them professional development.”

Andrea Gravelle, Director of Online Learning, Carroll Community College

Incentivizing professional development through monetary compensation, awards, certificates, or recognition communicates the value of continuous learning and can impact the ability and willingness of adjunct faculty to engage in development activities. Although it varies by institution, most online adjunct faculty are paid less than their faculty counterparts yet are sometimes required to engage in professional development related to teaching and learning. Even when professional development is not required, many online adjunct faculty are committed to improving their craft and seek out professional development opportunities that they are not compensated for or are not factored into their salaries or contracts. While monetary incentives tend to be most popular with online adjunct faculty, professional development can be encouraged in other ways, such as awards, certificates, and public recognition.

Executive Leadership

- Allocate funds to incentivize professional development at the institutional level.
- Seek sources of grant funding to support professional development.
- Encourage and support requests for external professional development when opportunities are not available at your institution.
- Identify how to measure return on investment for professional development.

College & Department Leadership

- Use a tiered contracting system to prioritize contracting for adjunct faculty who have completed professional development activities.
- Build incentives for professional development into a continuous improvement model.

Instructional Support

- Maximize monetary impact by distributing smaller incentives to more faculty.
- Use digital badges and certificates to incentivize offerings and to recognize completion and achievement.
- Incorporate into professional development the creation of meaningful, practical artifacts (e.g., sample syllabi policies, assignment sheets, grading rubrics) from which online adjunct faculty may immediately benefit.
- Create easily digestible and short (i.e., 15 minutes) opportunities that target simple fixes to common teaching challenges.

“My instructional designer and I were beating our heads thinking ‘people come to professional development, but they’re not watching recorded videos of presentations very often. Everybody is so overloaded at this point, let’s not put anything else on anybody’s plate, [let’s] just make professional development quick and meaningful and move on.’ So we came up with ‘Easy Button’ workshops. They’re 15 minutes long and we get granular about what we are going to present... Because they are so short, that helps keep things fun and not dreary. One topic was on ‘Find and Replace’ in Word. A lot of faculty didn’t know that feature, but [it’s] life changing once you learn it... For that particular workshop, we had five or six people attend, and their reaction was extremely positive. However, because the workshops began Fall 2021, I can’t say exactly how successful they’ve been other than that people are coming, which for professional development opportunities can be kind of a big deal.”

—Andrea Gravelle, Director of Online Learning, Carroll Community College



Strategy 6

Recognize Exemplary Online Adjunct Faculty

“ We have two different awards that come out of our Faculty Center... one is a research incentive award for promising research by faculty, and the other is a teaching incentive award. So, if you are identified as a really great teacher, you can get a \$5,000 permanent raise based upon this award.”

Dr. Thomas Cavanagh, Vice Provost for Digital Learning, University of Central Florida

Online adjunct faculty are often educators dedicated to student success. Therefore, it is important to recognize their efforts and ability to effectively engage with their students. Additionally, when online adjunct faculty feel valued—and that value is publicly or privately recognized—they are more likely to feel vested in and remain at the institution for longer periods, bringing program and departmental consistency to the organization.

The [OLC Quality Framework](#) provides a five-pillar framework for quality online education. Educational leaders and faculty can use this

tool to ensure quality learning experiences for students. The first of the five pillars, the Learning Effectiveness pillar, defines a quality online education as one in which faculty and course developers utilize the unique affordances of the online environment to engage in best practices for learning, including course design, interaction, pedagogy, and assessment of learning outcomes. Acknowledging a faculty’s excellence in teaching as evidenced by the OLC Quality Framework or other instrument for measuring online teaching effectiveness can provide online adjunct faculty with professional credentials while also inspiring their colleagues.

Executive Leadership

- Include online adjunct faculty for eligibility in institutional teaching awards or create teaching awards specifically for adjunct faculty.
- Support monetized teaching awards targeted at online adjunct faculty.

College & Department Leadership

- Use the [OLC Quality Scorecards](#) to identify exemplary online adjunct faculty.
- Nominate exemplary online adjunct faculty for institutional-level teaching awards.
- Spotlight exemplary online adjunct faculty at college and departmental venues.
- Take time to reach out to online adjunct faculty to recognize their achievements.
- Make a point of regularly recognizing faculty for teaching successes, in informal ways (e.g., a personal thank-you email noting the faculty member's contribution to student learning and to the success of the department.).

Instructional Support

- Incorporate methods into professional development for identifying stellar online adjunct faculty.
- Develop professional development opportunities that allow online adjunct faculty to showcase their effective pedagogical practices.
- Avoid mention of institutional ranks (faculty vs. adjunct) when recognizing online adjunct faculty for effective teaching practices.

“So that’s a big portion of that, of how we integrate those best practices...that just make all of the material that students will interact with accessible regardless of their learning needs.”

—Deb Maeder, MSE, Ed.D.,
Director of Digital Education
and Instructional Design,
Bryan College of Health
Sciences

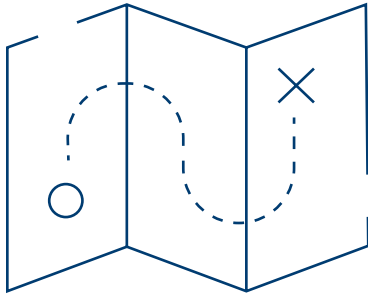
Conclusion

“ Ultimately, we’re about serving our students.”

Andrea Gravelle, Director of Online Learning, Carroll Community College

Most students at U.S. colleges and universities receive some direct instruction, either online or otherwise, from an adjunct faculty member. Given the rise in online, digital, and blended learning over the past few years, online adjunct faculty in particular are at the forefront of student learning and in many cases are the people who have the most direct interactions with students (American Federation of Teachers, 2022). Despite the incredible importance of online adjunct faculty, in conjunction with the general burnout and challenges associated with delivering most all instruction online during the pandemic, institutions still struggle to find tangible and pragmatic ways of supporting their crucial work.

We intend this playbook to encourage conversation around this topic and provide actionable steps that can be taken to better support online adjunct faculty to foster quality teaching and learning experiences for student success at all our institutions. To achieve this, we have written the six strategies targeted at multiple levels across institutions of higher education, including executive leadership, departmental and college leadership, and instructional support staff. We are confident that these evidence-based strategies are useful and can lead to better conditions and support for online adjunct faculty and their students. Put simply, supporting online adjunct faculty is important for the faculty members and perhaps the most direct way institutional leaders and staff can promote quality learning outcomes for students. Finally, we encourage academic leaders to use the roadmap below as a guide for implementing these strategies in both the short and the long term.



ACTION ROAD MAP

NOW

Leaders can take stock of what they and their institution are currently doing to support adjunct faculty in their teaching, professional development, and sense of belonging.

NEXT

Identify gaps in how adjunct faculty are supported and identify which strategies and/or tangible actions can be taken now to better support them and your students.

LATER

Check in with adjunct faculty and students, either informally or with structured data collection, to see how they feel they can be better supported and use the data to design a long-term and comprehensive plan for action. Share the data with institutional leaders and faculty and work collaboratively to respond to the needs emerging from the data through the development of programs, initiatives, and/or training tailored to fill these needs.

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Appendix:

Adjunct Reflection Checklist

The purpose of this reflection checklist is to support online adjunct faculty as they orient themselves to the institution for which they are teaching. In addition, this resource seeks to support online adjunct faculty as they engage in designing and facilitating their learning experiences. As we learned from the study, the responsibilities of online adjunct faculty may vary from institution to in-

stitution, and support may come from various roles within the institution. Whether you're an online adjunct faculty, a department chair, or an instructional support staff member, please feel free to use this checklist as-is or adapt it to your needs.

 For an interactive version of this document, [click here](#) to create your own editable copy of this worksheet in Google Docs.

Orienting Yourself to Institutions

✓	AREAS OF PREPARATION <i>Key questions for reflection</i>	NOTES <i>As you explore your institution's website and work with your chair or coordinator, use this space to take notes</i>
○	What are the policies and minimum expectations for online design and facilitation at the university and department levels?	
○	What onboarding experiences are available to me, particularly those that will integrate me both into the department and into teaching the course(s) I've been assigned?	
○	What professional development and technology support are available to me through my department, college, or CTL/LTC?	
○	What are the key student services and their contact information if a student needs help? <i>Key services: students with disability services, library, technology support, bookstore, tutoring, enrollment services, personal counseling, veteran's services, career counseling, academic advising, Dean of Students office</i>	
○	What opportunities do I have for connecting and participating in a community with other faculty members in my department?	

Checklist note: This reflection checklist was inspired by this study's findings and previous playbooks (i.e., [Optimizing High-Quality Digital Learning Experiences: A Playbook for Faculty](#); [Caring for Students Playbook: Six Recommendations](#), as well as the [OLC Quality Scorecard Suite](#). Visit these resources and our course design (i.e., [OSCQR](#), [QCTIP](#)), program design (i.e., [Administration of Online Programs](#)), and [student support](#) scorecards for more specific and in-depth design, facilitation, and student support ideas!

Designing Learning Experiences

✓	AREAS OF PREPARATION <i>Key questions for reflection</i>	NOTES <i>As you design the learning experience, use this space to take notes</i>
○	How can I support students in understanding the connections amongst our learning outcomes, their assignments, and our content?	
○	How am I actively centering students in creating an equitable and inclusive collaborative community that fosters deep interaction and content opportunities to enhance the learning experience?	
○	How can I create a logical and consistent layout to my LMS's course site and learning materials to ensure accessibility and ease of navigation?	
○	How can I solicit feedback from students to make changes to the course if I have the opportunity to teach it again?	

Facilitating Learning Experiences

✓	AREAS OF PREPARATION <i>Key questions for reflection</i>	NOTES <i>As you facilitate the learning experience, use this space to take notes</i>
○	How can I engage my students early in the semester to build community and to acclimate them to the course topics and tools?	
○	How can I establish presence (teaching, social, and cognitive) in a way that humanizes both design and facilitation?	
○	As I interact with students both privately and publicly during the semester, how can I model effective and inclusive communication, be responsive to their needs, and address critical questions to promote student learning?	
○	How can I set students up for success by providing clear grading policies, transparent assignments , appropriate and prompt feedback, and an up-to-date grade book?	