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# Professional Development for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty at Valencia College

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✓ Part-Time Faculty Work Team

✓ Certificate Program

✓ Faculty Mentoring

✓ New Faculty Orientation

Valencia College is a public 2-year, multi-campus institution in central Florida. Enrolling about 75,000 students annually, it has been designated a Hispanic Serving Institution; about 65% of students are from racially minoritized backgrounds. Valencia was recognized as the inaugural winner of the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence in 2011, which is awarded based on excellence in four areas: teaching and learning, certificate and degree completion, workforce success, and equitable outcomes for students of color and low-income students. About 40% of course sections are taught by part-time faculty (adjuncts); in total, Valencia employs 2,222 part-time faculty and 623 full-time faculty.

As a learning-focused institution, Valencia offers a robust, competency-based faculty development program, including a number of opportunities that have been designed specifically for adjuncts. Over the past twenty years, the academic community of deans and faculty at Valencia have defined and refine seven essential competencies that promote student learning: assessment as a tool for learning, inclusion and diversity, learning-centered teaching practices, LifeMap (enhancing life skills through disciplinary learning), outcomes-based practice, professional commitment (demonstrating a commitment to ongoing professional development), and scholarship of teaching and learning (contributing to knowledge of teaching and learning). These competencies guide professional development offerings as well as faculty evaluation practices.

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## Assessing the Needs of Adjunct Faculty

Valencia emphasizes a collaborative shared governance system. As part of the shared governance model, a number of cross-functional teams have been formed to shape college policies, processes, and practices. The part-time faculty engagement work team, which is led by representatives from human resources and academic affairs, focuses on the accessibility and relevance of professional development initiatives for adjuncts, with the goal of increasing the retention of high-quality part-time faculty in order to support student learning and success. Specific to Valencia's most recent strategic plan, this work team focused on engaging adjuncts more directly with the seven essential competencies; improving policies related to on-boarding, compensation, and evaluation; and facilitating better opportunities for adjuncts to engage with students outside of the classroom.

The work team employed a variety of methods to assess the needs of adjuncts, including analyzing quantitative data from faculty annual evaluations and student evaluations of teaching, as well as gathering qualitative data through focus groups, professional development, and shared governance. The work team also partners with deans and department leaders in order to learn about the specific needs of different adjuncts and to share what they have learned.

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## Professional Development Initiatives for NTTF

Professional development offerings include individual consultations, reading circles, workshops, longer courses, and a number of certification programs. We highlight two initiatives that demonstrate Valencia's commitment to part-time faculty: the Associate Faculty Certificate Program and the New Faculty Institute.

### Certificate Program

The Associate Faculty Certificate program has been designed specifically for adjuncts, offering these faculty the opportunity to engage in sustained professional development. Faculty can earn this certificate by engaging in 60 hours of professional development. The first thirty hours are spent in a required course called "Teaching in our Learning College." This course is taught through a combination of in-person and online modalities and uses scenario-based activities to familiarize adjuncts with practices associated with each of the essential competencies. As part of the course, faculty also create an individualized learning plan and develop learner-centered course materials.

For the other thirty hours, faculty can choose from among the wide variety of professional development courses offered by Valencia; they are encouraged to plan these courses in collaboration with their dean based on individual needs identified through the evaluation process. Faculty who successfully complete requirements earn the title of Associate faculty, along with a pay increase of about 6% per credit hour taught. To maintain their certification, adjuncts must engage in 20 additional hours each subsequent year.

### New Faculty Orientation

The New Faculty Institute, which has recently been redesigned, provides an integrated on-boarding experience that familiarizes new faculty with the culture and practices of Valencia College. It is required of all new faculty, who spend about 20 hours completing it over a two-week period; faculty are compensated for completing it. The Institute is designed as an online course that is held twice yearly, with scheduling occurring about a month before each academic semester begins. As part of the experience, all faculty are assigned an individual instructional designer who proactively reaches out, first during the Institute and again during the academic semester to ensure that instructors have the support they need to facilitate student success in their first semester teaching.

Related to the onboarding process, leaders at Valencia are working on a new initiative that strengthens the partnership between division leadership and human resources, in order to improve the recruitment and selection processes, especially by establishing an earlier hiring timeline so that faculty have more time to prepare before they begin teaching.

### Faculty Mentoring

Valencia is also in the process of scaling up a division-based peer mentoring program for faculty, with a focus on adjuncts. The mentoring program helps faculty members, particularly adjuncts, develop a sense of belonging by establishing a connection to another faculty member who is in a discipline that is similar to their own. To improve the effectiveness of

mentoring relationships, Valencia offers a faculty development course that provides an overview of mentoring processes and offers resources and strategies to help faculty mentors be successful.

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## Best Practices for Inclusivity of NTTF and Adjuncts

Valencia College demonstrates a number of best practices for facilitating the professional development of adjuncts and NTTF. We begin by discussing how they situate professional development organizationally in order to engage faculty and then discuss specific professional development initiatives.

- ✓ Valencia has established a culture of learning by defining the organization as a “learning-centered institution” which is inclusive not only of students, but also of faculty, staff, and organizational behavior. This framing situates professional development centrally.
- ✓ Leaders have positioned professional development as an integrated part of the employment benefits that adjuncts receive, rather than as something tangential to their role. As such, they have worked to make their offerings easily accessible to adjuncts and designed with their needs in mind.
  - ✓ One practical example of accessibility is that the district team works to align offerings across campuses, creates an annual catalog of courses, and publishes a schedule for all offerings at the beginning of each semester, so that faculty have time to plan to engage in offerings that are meaningful to them rather than choosing courses and workshops based on when they are offered.
- ✓ Faculty roles and titles at Valencia have been very clearly defined, including expectations for student contact inside and outside of the classroom and for service, including participation in shared governances.
  - ✓ Leaders ensure that part-time faculty have part-time loads (12 to 13 contact hours) rather than full-time loads with part-time compensation.
  - ✓ Clear roles also help to create a balance between the inclusion of adjuncts in decision-making and respect for adjuncts’ time, especially in terms of compensation.
- ✓ Compensating faculty for participating in new faculty orientation, regardless of whether they are assigned a class in the next semester, demonstrates value for adjuncts in the present, rather than expecting faculty to invest in a potential future, and also allows for institutional flexibility related to changing enrollment needs.
- ✓ The Associate Faculty Certificate program demonstrates a number of effective practices specific to professional development initiatives.
  - ✓ The program helps faculty build a teaching portfolio and offers a portable qualification, which is beneficial to adjuncts who teach at multiple institutions and those who desire a full-time position.
  - ✓ Adjuncts who complete the program are eligible for a pay increase, demonstrating that efforts to improve instruction are valued by the institution.
  - ✓ The curriculum combines a required course with individually developed plans, which likely increases faculty’s intrinsic motivation and supports deep engagement.

- ✓ The required course has an in-person component in addition to online learning, which can help faculty develop relationships on campus while also offering a good deal of flexibility.
- ✓ Maintaining the certification requires ongoing engagement with instructional improvement.

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## Certificate Program: Design Summary

In this section, the Associate Faculty Certification Program is highlighted, as it successfully demonstrates ongoing support of adjunct NTTF through opportunities for professional development in teaching and community engagement.

**PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES:** The certification program provides a space for community engagement and supports the continuing professional development of adjunct faculty in their efforts to enhance student learning and success.

**PARTICIPANTS:** The program is available only to adjuncts (part-time NTTF).

**DELIVERY MODE:** The certificate uses a hybrid delivery mode through a combination of in-person and online modalities.

**STRUCTURE AND LENGTH:** The entire program is 60 hours and split into two parts. The first course is 30 hours and mandatory. The remaining 30 hours are elective courses, with a list of recommended courses for adjuncts new to Valencia or teaching. To qualify for annual recertification, an additional 20 hours is required each year.

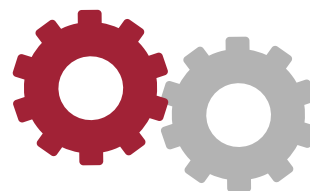
**CONTENT:** The first course, “Teaching in our Learning College,” provides tools and resources for learning-centered instruction, using scenario-based activities to inform adjuncts of best practices for essential competencies. Electives are offered through an assortment of professional development courses, with course recommendations based on an individual needs assessment and evaluation process.

**FACILITATION:** Courses are designed and facilitated by Valencia faculty fellows.

**DELIVERABLES:** In the first course, adjuncts design an individual learning plan and create a learner-centered syllabus. Participants must also provide evidence of learning through assessment artifacts for each of the 7 essential competencies; indicators are typically demonstrated through examples of applied competencies.

**ASSESSMENT:** Valencia’s Office of Faculty and Instructional Development engages in ongoing assessment of certificate course offerings.

**COMPENSATION AND RECOGNITION:** Adjuncts who complete the certification program are promoted to Associate Faculty, which is associated with a pay increase per credit hour taught.



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## Additional Resources

Center for Community College Student Engagement (2014). *Contingent commitments: Bringing part-time faculty into focus (A special report from the Center for Community College Student Engagement)*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Program in Higher Education Leadership. [https://www.ccsse.org/docs/PTF\\_Special\\_Report.pdf](https://www.ccsse.org/docs/PTF_Special_Report.pdf) [p. 18 provides an overview of Valencia's professional development at that time, offering a view of how programs have been updated since this publication].

Valencia College faculty development. <https://valenciacollege.edu/faculty/development/>

Valencia College faculty development Catalog 2020-2021. <https://valenciacollege.edu/faculty/development/documents/catalog-20-21-final-2021.pdf> [provides titles and descriptions for the faculty and instructional development courses offered by the institution].

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Visit *The Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success* for more case studies of professional development that is accessible and welcoming of adjuncts and non-tenure-track faculty and a wide range of resources and toolkits to better support faculty off the tenure track at: [pullias.usc.edu/delphi](https://pullias.usc.edu/delphi).

