

## **Adjunct Faculty Training, Mentoring and Evaluation at the Department Level**

John Griffith, Ph.D., Department Chair, Mathematics, Physical and Life Sciences

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University – Worldwide Campus

### **Abstract**

The presentation covered how to nurture and grow adjunct faculty from the department level perspective with the goal being to set up adjunct faculty and their students up for success. Results include better performance from adjunct faculty, fewer student complaints and a process to identify and nurture adjunct faculty. US News and World Report rated Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's Worldwide campus #1 for online undergraduate education (2017).

### **Introduction**

The workshop focused on policies and procedures that can be put into place to assure effective training, mentoring and evaluation of adjunct faculty. This is critical not only for student learning but accreditation agencies as well. Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University – Worldwide Campus (ERAU-WW) has approximately 130 campus locations Worldwide with over 23,000 students amounting to 86,000 course registrations annually. The Worldwide campus teaches approximately 85% of courses online. ERAU-WW also teaches classrooms and videosynchronous learning formats. The challenge is how to support adjunct faculty before, during and after they teach using these various formats.

### **Campus Level Training**

ERAU-WW has an onboarding process and series of faculty development courses instructors need to complete before teaching classes. These courses focus on using the learning management system platform, teaching online and using the videosynchronous equipment and software to effectively deliver instruction. Additionally, ERAU-WW has set up a process to evaluate adjunct faculty.

Adjunct faculty are observed teaching at least one per year. They are also evaluated with a more holistic examination to include course monitor and student feedback. Evaluations are used to identify outstanding performers for more frequent teaching opportunities and possible promotion to full time faculty positions. Evaluations also help identify those faculty who need remedial training and support. The goal is to make adjunct faculty perform at the highest level supporting student persistence, retention and success.

### **Department Level Focus**

The Math, Physical and Life Sciences Department supports 150 adjunct faculty through departmental training, course orientations, pre-term and mid-term course checks, teaching observations and annual evaluations. The department has developed a Course Monitor Guide which covers how full time faculty course developers coach adjunct faculty on how to set up the syllabus for and teach courses. A department webpage provides adjuncts with sample syllabi, slides and tips on how to teach courses proficiently. Adjunct faculty are directed to this webpage when constructing the syllabus for their class.

Department Chairs are encouraged to develop similar systems to support their adjunct faculty. The end result is improved delivery of education and smoother departmental operations.

Faculty communication is facilitated with newsletters and virtual meetings at least 5 times per year. Newsletters contain technology and teaching tips as well as acknowledgements of outstanding performance by adjunct faculty. Virtual meetings are held using Adobe Connect (the same platform used for videosynchronous courses) and recorded for later playback. Links to both the newsletters and virtual meetings are updated on the department resource center accessible by all adjunct faculty.

### **Recommendations**

1. Develop overall strategies to maximize effectiveness of adjunct faculty
2. Use tools covered in the presentation to effectively train adjunct faculty to be prepared to teach courses and improve student performance and the learning experience
3. Effectively monitor adjunct faculty “during the term” to acknowledge good work and make adjustments when necessary
4. Effectively evaluate adjunct faculty at least annually and provide feedback on strengths and weaknesses

### **Reference**

U.S. News and World Report. (2017). Best online bachelor’s programs. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/bachelors>