



**DEPARTMENT-BASED ADJUNCT  
MENTORING & SUPPORT**

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: ADJUNCT MENTORING & SUPPORT**

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PRESENTED BY  
CO-CHAIRS OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE ADJUNCT COMMITTEE  
SANTA MONICA COLLEGE | SPRING 2019

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## A. INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Our departmental colleagues – tenured and probationary full-time faculty, veteran adjuncts, and newer part-time instructors -- represent a range of backgrounds, talents and experiences, but share the common goal of serving our students.

In working towards that goal, however, part-time instructors face some specific challenges.

Typically, adjuncts are short on time and workspace, and therefore they may be somewhat isolated from their fellow faculty, particularly in larger departments.

Some implications to consider:

- Most may not be able to attend department meetings with regularity, and therefore are not attuned to important department conversations about matters of potential interest to them.
- Teaching part time makes it hard to cultivate the sort of professional relationships that enable instructors to compare notes, exchange ideas, share successful classroom strategies, voice concerns, collaborate on teaching materials, and draw support from having a community of colleagues.
- Adjuncts have limited opportunities to develop institutional knowledge. They may be unaware of resources that are available to them, not know how to reserve space or equipment, and unable to navigate the institution efficiently for support or answers to the range of questions – large and small -- that come up in a given semester.

A survey of current literature on the subject, and a look at programs already in place point to the benefits to both faculty and students when there is a thoughtful, organized approach to supporting adjunct faculty.

In the past few years, with encouragement from a number of chairs, the Academic Senate's Adjunct Committee began to research how best to assist Department Chairs in developing and implementing a customizable, responsive mentoring program. We surveyed adjunct faculty about their concerns and interests, surveyed Department Chairs about their challenges, preferences and priorities, reviewed relevant literature, and examined effective approaches on our own campus and at other institutions.

Enclosed is the summary of our findings.

It is beyond the purview of our committee to implement such programs ourselves, but we offer this report as a useful starting point. We hope it will encourage chairs to establish mentoring programs tailored to their respective departments and to find creative, meaningful ways to integrate adjuncts more closely into their faculty communities.

If mentoring and support is offered to adjuncts in a thoughtfully organized fashion, the result, we believe, will be a productive flow of information and ideas, improved faculty confidence, and ultimately, a better student learning experience.

**REPORT OBJECTIVES:**

1. Introduce and encourage consideration of one-on-one department-based mentoring
2. Introduce and encourage consideration of the multiple ways departments may offer increased support to adjuncts, including easier access to resources, greater collegiality, opportunities for collaboration and leadership, and more.
3. Suggest the range of options, features, and degree of flexibility available when devising a department-based program
4. Support Chairs who wish to implement mentoring in their department

**CHARACTERISTICS OF A MENTOR-MENTEE RELATIONSHIP:**

- Focused on professional development and integration into the department
- Manageable in scope and time investment
- Driven by clear, mutually agreed upon objectives, shaped by the mentee's expressed needs, but in concert with departmental objectives
- Outside the hierarchy of management or formal evaluation
- Flexible, informal, responsive
- Confidential

**KEY PRINCIPLES:**

- Faculty mentoring relieves pressure on chairs to be the sole contact for new part-time hires and for adjunct faculty, generally
- Mentoring addresses some of the inequity in professional 'capital' that can be typical of the adjunct experience when part-time instructors teach in relative isolation
- A well-designed and thoughtfully implemented mentoring and support program creates a more tightly-knit department and promotes greater collegiality
- Faculty mentoring encourages the free flow of ideas and best practices
- A well-designed program of mentoring and support employs multiple strategies for integrating adjunct faculty
- Faculty mentoring offers adjuncts opportunities for greater participation, information-sharing, collaboration, and leadership that might not emerge otherwise.
- Faculty mentoring promotes commitment to and investment in department goals
- Mentors, mentees, colleagues, the institution, and students benefit from such programs

**PLANNING & BEST PRACTICES:**

- **MAINTAIN A MANAGEABLE SCOPE**  
Focus on goals that are manageable in scope and ambition and suited to your department
- **EXPLORE OFFERING COMPENSATION**  
Flex credit or stipends for mentors and/or mentees are two possibilities. Work with the Faculty Association and Human Resources to ensure any compensation strategy is in keeping with the current contract and consistent across the college
- **DESIGN BACKWARD**  
Be clear about what you want the program to achieve. What tools and strategies will help you meet these objectives?
- **DEFINE MENTOR/MENTEE ELIGIBILITY**  
Are veteran adjuncts eligible as mentees? Mentors? Both?
- **CHOOSE MENTORS CAREFULLY**  
Recruit mentors who express a willingness and enthusiasm for mentoring their peers.
- **SET CLEAR PARAMETERS FOR TIME INVESTED/ PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS**  
Determine the required minimum hours of mentor-mentee activity over the course of a semester and decide if there are any tasks to complete at the close of the time period
- **INCORPORATE EVALUATION / PROGRAM REVIEW**  
Have mentors and mentees sign a basic agreement for their semester plan together (see templates included later in this report). Consider requiring a culminating summary or written reflection to inform the program going forward
- **BE MINDFUL OF THE CONTRACT**  
Work with the Faculty Association to ensure that all activities and compensation agreements are in line with the current contract and negotiated effectively.
- **OFFER RECOGNITION TO MENTORS AND MENTEES**  
Add recognition activities into department meetings and professional development events to promote the program and acknowledge its participants
- **SUPPORT FOR MENTORS**  
Consider informal mentor training, support, and idea-sharing opportunities for mentors
- **LET MENTEES LEAD**  
Maintain flexibility, informality, and autonomy – critical to a successful mentoring program. Let mentors and mentees define their specific areas of focus
- **MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY**  
Mentoring relies on trust and privacy
- **NO EVALUATION**  
Keep mentoring relationships entirely separate from formal evaluation processes such as required teaching observations

## **A SAMPLE SEMESTER TIMELINE**

1. Working with FA and HR, determine compensation
2. "X number of weeks prior to the start of a semester, applications are due for interested mentors and mentees, allowing the department chair sufficient time to match pairs according to priorities, schedules, availability, and so on.
3. Mentors and mentees matched by leadership (e.g. Dept. Chair or delegate).
4. Training session for mentors, followed by whole-group meeting
5. Mentors and mentees meet 3 or 4 times in a semester – on or off campus -- to discuss the mentee's goals, work through challenges, exchange ideas, and so on.
6. Near the close of the semester, mentees write a short reflective report on their experience using a report template provided. Mentors also write a short, narrative wrap-up of the experience.
7. Mentors and mentees recognized at departmental event
8. If relevant, compensation is awarded.

## **A CASE STUDY:**

### **LAURA MANSON AND ECE | DEPT-BASED MENTORING IN PLACE AT SMC**

#### **Report from the Academic Senate Adjunct Committee:**

Findings from March 2017 Interview with Chair of Early Childhood Education

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#### **OVERVIEW:**

This was an hour-long videoconference with Laura Manson-Weingarten, Department Chair for Early Childhood Education.

At the time of this interview, Laura had 23 adjunct instructors and was already using some thoughtfully considered and successful strategies for mentoring and supporting part-time faculty, thereby knitting them successfully into the collective efforts, goals and culture of her department.

## INTERVIEW OBJECTIVES:

- Learn what strategies and protocols are in place in an SMC Department that already mentors and supports adjuncts with a degree of depth and consistency.
- Compare department's best practices with the conclusions we've drawn about mentoring programs through our committee's research, interviews and surveys
- Get chair's thoughts about the success of her current practices, future needs of her department and the prospect of an easy-to-integrate campus-wide SMC mentoring program

*Below, a summary of the key points from our discussion about Laura's department:*

## KEY DEPT. PRACTICES - ADJUNCT MENTORING, INCLUSION & SUPPORT:

### 1. AT THE START OF EACH SEMESTER, ADJUNCTS ARE MATCHED UP WITH FULL-TIMERS, ACCORDING TO COURSE ASSIGNMENT

From the outset, adjuncts and full-timers arrange and expect ongoing mentoring-focused conversations through an informal matching system based on shared course assignments. Adjuncts who teach a course already being taught by a full-timer are directed to meet with the veteran at the start of the semester for guidance, idea-sharing, etc., (or, if there are multiple veterans, the adjunct is given a list of full-timers teaching that course who they are free to contact in order to meet). The adjunct is always given at least one full-timer's syllabus for the course they've been assigned to teach. If an adjunct is hired to teach a course that no one is currently teaching, then the chair works with them, as does a volunteer full-timer.

### 2. ADJUNCTS COMPLETE A 'COURSE OBJECTIVES WORKSHEET,' WHICH PROMOTES ACCOUNTABILITY, DEPARTMENTAL GOALS, COLLEGIALITY, AND TEACHING CONVERSATIONS

Laura has developed a 'Course Objectives Worksheet' for every course in her department, and she distributes it to adjunct instructors for each course they're assigned to teach. The left-hand column of the document lists the objectives for a given course. The right-hand column is blank, and the adjunct's responsibility is to fill it in with descriptions of activities, tasks and assignments they will use to meet each objective.

Laura explains that this is not a solitary assignment; it's more of a 'hive-mind' activity, in which the adjunct is encouraged to network within the department, exchange ideas with others, seek mentoring advice and get feedback from full-timers once the right-hand column is completely filled out. Adjuncts think the process is "great," she said, because "their voice is valued and heard." She considers the worksheet a useful "reminder of our relationship with and obligation to the State of California," that makes instructors mindful of that accountability. However, she said, "It doesn't mean you can't improvise or be creative."

### 3. A DEDICATED CANVAS SITE IS USED AS DEPARTMENT'S ONLINE HEADQUARTERS

The chair set up a Canvas page for the department in the form of a 'course.' She sends the link to all full- and part-time faculty for them to self-enroll and access it. Chair is open to expanding the ways her department's Canvas site could be used. At present, the site contains:

- **SYLLABI:** The syllabi are posted on Canvas, and department's administrative assistant has syllabi from all faculty; adjuncts can and do request copies of them, and not only for courses they themselves teach. There is a free-flow of documents.
- **FORMS:** Specifically, required forms students need -- immunization forms, Life Scan, etc. Instead of posting or emailing repeated reminders, they're posted for download.
- **TEACHING SCHEDULES:** The class schedule for every full and part-time faculty member in a given semester is posted. As Laura explains, it facilitates easier meetings and networking between instructors. If someone "wants to do a collaboration with another teacher, [they] can see when she is free."
- **FACULTY MINUTES & AGENDAS:** Regularly posted on the department's site. All faculty, Laura said, "are encouraged to read them and know what's going on, and 90% of our adjuncts do read them and ask questions."
- **TEACHING REQUEST FORMS:** To handle teaching requests for upcoming semesters, the chair sends an email directing adjuncts to the appropriate page of the Canvas site.
- **ACCREDITATION PROCESS UPDATES:** Undergoing that process now. They have six "key assessments" which are required in some courses and not in others – information about the process is posted and updated on Canvas.
- **COMMON ASSIGNMENTS BY COURSE, TIED TO SLOs:** Instructors in discussion to develop common assignments for each course, which they will post on the Canvas site after coming to some agreements. Everyone in the department will have access to them.
- **EXPANDING THE USE OF THE ONLINE DEPARTMENT SITE:** We briefly discussed additional ways Chairs could use and add on to a Canvas site – posting assignment ideas and examples (grouped by course), shared video material, announcements for 'brown bag' meetings, FAQs, etc. – all suggestions in which Laura expressed interest.



#### **4. 'OPEN-DOOR' CLASS VISITS ARE COMMON IN ALL DIRECTIONS AND PROMOTE IDEA-SHARING**

Laura described arranged classroom visits as a popular practice in her department. Significantly, visits are not limited to instances when adjuncts sit in to observe full-timers, but rather happen in all directions – adjunct-to-adjunct, full-timer-to-adjunct, full-timer-to-full-timer, and chair-to-everyone. One explanation for this is that the reasons to visit a class have been broadened beyond the idea of it being a way for a new instructor to receive guidance from watching a more seasoned teacher. It is also encouraged as a way to share ideas, new approaches, and lesson plans and to get feedback. Laura said that “at some point, everyone takes an interest in sitting in. Everyone does it. Sometimes people will just say, ‘I’m going to do a great lesson,’ and they invite a colleague or the chair to come see, just because they’re excited about it.”

#### **5. ONLINE FACULTY (FT & PT) HAVE THEIR OWN SPACE FOR MENTORING, NETWORKING, AND SUPPORT**

Laura: Those who “teach exclusively online are also buddied up to share best practices for their online teaching.” They are given their own section on the Canvas site, where materials like the following are posted:

- OEl best practices
- Home page ideas
- Teaching strategies

#### **6. INCLUSIVENESS IN DEPARTMENT MEETINGS AND DEPARTMENT AGENDA**

- **ADJUNCT ATTENDANCE AT DEPT MEETINGS:** Department is on Bundy, where ‘activity hour’ is not a factor and doesn’t impede adjunct attendance/participation at meetings. Laura looks at the totality of the schedule and determines the most likely time slot and dates that will maximize attendance. (Meetings as of now are always Mondays at 3 pm). She estimates that somewhere between one quarter and one third of adjuncts regularly attend.
- **REMOTE ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION VIA ZOOM:** Laura recently added Zoom as the online component to these meetings. Those who are present use iPads to communicate with remote participants, who log on to Zoom to attend. An estimated  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of adjuncts attend and participate remotely in dept. meetings.
- **ANNUAL ADVISORY MEETING:** All faculty in the department are included, asked questions, and participate in a survey, whether they could attend the advisory meeting or not.

**CHAIR'S ASSESSMENT:**

- "Our strength is our culture. We are a team."
- "Everyone in the department is significant. Everyone has a role to play and a voice. It's not adjunct vs. fulltime."
- "Students are in our adjuncts' classrooms, benefitting from their expertise and their enthusiasm. These adjuncts add another layer of experience, and we want their voices and diversity of opinions . . . Many of them are directly working in the field, unlike our full-timers."
- "There is no one in this department who doesn't know anybody."

**SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS:**

Laura Manson-Weingarten's department represents one end of the spectrum at SMC in that it already has in place some well-established and ongoing mechanisms for orienting, mentoring, and supporting adjuncts.

Her department is distinguished by the culture she has established. She emphasizes teamwork, transparency and inclusiveness.

There is a high degree of informal mentoring, and easy collaboration between full-timers and adjuncts. Even the newest adjuncts establish working relationships with colleagues quickly and become integrated meaningfully into the department.

While a degree of the department's success is attributable to Laura personally – her energy, people skills, and ability to model the values she wants guiding her department – the strategies and protocols she has put in place are easy to replicate, scalable, and would work in the contexts of other departments (including those that support the objectives of mentoring but do not yet have the practices in place to meet them), and with other styles of leadership.

The practices and strategies that characterize Laura's approach in the Early Childhood Ed Department mirror our research findings, and dovetail with the main mechanisms for mentoring and networking that we have settled on as the key components of a successful approach:

1. A system for one-on-one mentoring/sharing, (matched/organized by course)
2. A rich online component, where ideas, materials, objectives and logistical info is shared
3. Classroom visits/observations in all directions
4. Collaboration, small group idea-sharing, clear paths to greater participation

(Sample) **MENTEE APPLICATION**

**Yes**, I would like to be matched with a department mentor during the following term:

**Fall Semester** | Year: \_\_\_\_\_  **Spring Semester** | Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Dept: \_\_\_\_\_

Start date at SMC? (Semester, year): \_\_\_\_\_ Cell#: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Teaching elsewhere? **Y N**

Please list your SMC teaching schedule for the semester by course title, section #, days/times:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Why are you interested in the program? Briefly comment on your goals and expectations as a mentee, and any specific topics, current challenges, or areas of interest to you:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Schedule Availability:** You'll be expected to arrange four hour-long meetings with your mentor during the semester (or an equivalent configuration of four hours). Which days and times are you available? **The more specific and detailed your response, the easier to arrange a match.**

Mon: \_\_\_\_\_

Tue: \_\_\_\_\_

Wed: \_\_\_\_\_

Thu: \_\_\_\_\_

Fri: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing this application, I agree to meet regularly with my mentor and will attend any formal program meetings (e.g., orientation, mid-semester meeting, end-of-semester celebration breakfast).

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Your signature* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date*

Submit to Dept. Chair **no later than three weeks prior** to the start of semester you intend to participate

## (Sample) MENTOR APPLICATION

**Yes**, I would like to volunteer as a mentor during the following term (check selection):

**Fall Semester** | Year: \_\_\_\_\_  **Spring Semester** | Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Dept: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please comment on your interest in the program, and your goals/expectations as a mentor:

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**Schedule Availability** is key to matching pairs successfully. You'll be expected to arrange four hour-long meetings with your mentee during the semester (or an equivalent configuration of those hours). When are you available? **The more specific and detailed your response, the easier it is to arrange a match.** E.g., indicate you're free Tuesdays 8-10 am **and** 5-6 pm.

Mon: \_\_\_\_\_

Tue: \_\_\_\_\_

Wed: \_\_\_\_\_

Thu: \_\_\_\_\_

Fri: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing this application, I agree to meet regularly with my mentee and, schedule permitting, will attend any formal program meetings (e.g., orientation, mid-semester meeting, end-of-semester celebration breakfast).

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Your signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

Submit to Dept. Chair **no later than three weeks prior** to the start of semester you intend to participate

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## (Sample) Mentee Objectives Checklist

**Mentee / Dept.** \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_

**Mentor** \_\_\_\_\_

During the semester, refer to this list and please check off items once they've been completed, or revise items you've changed. Use the **Comments** section (below) for general remarks, or for a brief explanation of why certain activities were not completed or addressed.

*All aspects of this process are kept confidential.*

**As soon as possible after my mentor was assigned to me, we:**

\_\_\_\_ Exchanged phone numbers, email contact information, generally preferred times to meet, etc.

\_\_\_\_ Arranged our first-person meeting

**First meeting:** Early in the semester we met in person and discussed the following topics:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**In our 1-2 mid-semester meetings:** we discussed/completed the following:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**Final meeting:** Within the last three weeks of the semester:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

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**Additional Comments:**

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*Mentee signature*

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*Date*

## KEY QUOTES | SOURCE MATERIALS | FURTHER READING:

We strongly recommend one text we relied on throughout this process - the anthology, **Best Practices for Supporting Adjunct Faculty**, by Richard E. Lyons (ISBN: 10-1933371277). There are multiple copies available for borrowing in the Academic Senate office. Below are some key quotes (boldface ours) excerpted from Lyons' book. These are from a segment written by Cynthia Zutter, the Faculty Mentoring Program Coordinator at MacEwan College (a 40,000-student institution in Alberta, Canada.)

### ***On the need for, and benefits of a faculty mentor program:***

"Mentoring is a valuable tool for helping adjunct instructors develop their teaching and classroom management skills, as well as their sense of connectedness to their institution. It also provides a valuable resource during challenging times, providing deeper understanding of college policies and procedures, insights into students' paradigms, and tips for preventing or correcting common mistakes. In addition, mentors often provide an advocate for the high-achieving adjunct instructor and introduction to key resources on campus" (77).

"Mentoring...creates increased collegiality and team building among faculty, as well as a sense of renewal and rejuvenation for more seasoned instructors . . . For the mentor, the relationship with a mentee provides a sense of professional pride and accomplishment, ideas for integrating new practices and technology into their teaching, [and collaboration on] special projects..." (77).

### ***On the importance of balance:***

"Some degree of facilitation, orientation and coordination is required if such a mentoring initiative is going to achieve its full potential. At the same time, the coordinator of such a program must be careful not to impose so many guidelines or rules that the process loses its spontaneity and personalized character. [For example, the program at MacEwan College] has sought to balance this **loose/tight dimension**, achieving an environment that is both effective and personally fulfilling to its participants. (77-78).

### ***On positive results and developments:***

"An interesting trend noted [once MacEwan College's program had been underway for a few years was that some of] the mentors were also [veteran] adjunct faculty. As expressed in their final report and summative evaluation of the program, the adjunct faculty members appreciate the benefits that mentoring can provide to their instructional careers" (74).

[The program] creates a collegial bond between adjunct and full-time faculty that is otherwise difficult to facilitate in such a large college community. One-to-one interaction between these instructors allows for dialogue and discussion focused on teaching while building awareness regarding adjunct faculty-specific issues, such as future employment opportunities and professional advancement ...For example, various dyads have co-taught classes, co-presented at professional conferences, and engaged in research together" (74).

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Zutter, Cynthia. "Mentoring Adjunct Instructors: Fostering Bonds that Strengthen Teaching and Learning." *Best Practices for Supporting Adjunct Faculty*, edited by Richard E. Lyons, Anker Publishing, 2007, pp. 69-78.

**LINKS TO MENTORING PROGRAM MATERIALS AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS:**

Estrella Mountain Community College Adjunct Mentoring Program

<https://www.estrellamountain.edu/employees/adjunct-faculty-support/adjfacmentoringprograminformation>

Austin Community College Home Page for Mentoring Program

<http://www.austincc.edu/hr/profdev/mentoring.php>

Austin Community College Mentoring Forms

<http://sites.austincc.edu/facdev/resources/forms/>

Best Community Colleges

<http://www.thebestschools.org/blog/2013/05/28/50-community-colleges-united-states/>

Coastal Carolina Community College Adjunct Mentoring Program

<https://www.coastalcarolina.edu/faculty-staff/professional-development/mentoring/>

Faculty Learning Homepage - Coastal Carolina

<https://www.coastalcarolina.edu/faculty-staff/professional-development/instructional-resources/online-instructors/>

A Model for Continuous Training and Mentoring of Adjunct Business Faculty (Park University)

<http://www.aabri.com/NC2011Manuscripts/NC11066.pdf>

College of the Canyons Professional Development Mentor Program

<https://www.canyons.edu/Offices/PD/Pages/MentorPrograms.aspx>

College of the Canyons Mentor Application Form

<https://www.canyons.edu/Offices/PD/Documents/Application%20for%20Mentors.pdf>

College of the Canyons Mentee Application Form

<https://www.canyons.edu/Offices/PD/Documents/Application%20for%20Mentees.pdf>

Putting it Together: Developing a Faculty Mentoring Program (Charles County Comm. Coll.)

<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED400868.pdf>

**LOOKING AHEAD:**

Over time, a department-based program of adjunct mentoring and support can become an integrated piece of the department culture, as it is for Laura Manson, and an embedded, ongoing resource, in much the way it is at other community colleges where such a program is already in place.

Individual departments may see fit to customize the program, subtracting or adding components to their approach. Ongoing research confirms the potential and flexibility of such a program, one in which multiple strategies and mechanisms can all serve the same unifying, campus-wide objectives. Close pair relationships and small-group workshops organized by topic are two such examples.

Over time, departments may choose to develop an online, supplemental component for adjuncts, one that might contain brief videos and other support materials categorized by course, pedagogical topic, and so on, perhaps gathered in a Canvas course shell. Mentoring efforts also could be expanded and tailored to address the needs of adjuncts that primarily teach online.

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