

## Adjuncts at SSU:

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### Qualification for service:

SSU Adjuncts have lengthy service in many cases, and depending on department rules, have experience with curriculum and all department affairs except RPT, excluded by contract. They vote in many departments, as in English, and in some departments can and do serve as department chair (which is the case in Chicano Studies).

Generally, adjuncts hold office hours. Adjuncts can and do serve as sponsors for student clubs. In many departments, meetings are open, and adjuncts can attend and raise—and vote on—issues. Right now, a major concern is the Chancellor's new requirement that GE classes must be 3 units, not 4 as they are at SSU. This greatly raises the workload, in English, making 5 composition classes needed to be full time. This is a concern for all faculty because faculty should be the deciders regarding curriculum.

Adjuncts have designated positions (campus-wide vote) on the Academic Senate and so are familiar with and vote on all campus issues addressed by the Senate. They can also serve at-large and possibly in other posts. They report on Senate issues to the adjunct community, and they bring issues to the Senate floor. One of our senate adjuncts was just elected Teacher of the Year by the faculty.

Under the contract, adjuncts are classified as faculty which is the basis for their rights to health insurance, retirement, and grievance protections. Adjuncts have been active in the union at SSU for over forty years. Our elected current union chair, Erma Jean Sims (School of Education), is an adjunct. An elected union member represents adjuncts on campus and at the state level. Union involvement makes adjuncts very familiar with campus and state-wide issues. Union adjunct and tenured officers advise adjuncts on their rights and regarding grievances (these are settled by university committees but could go to court). They also help with unemployment insurance issues.

### Issue of job protection:

Adjuncts cannot be fired at will; they have union and legal protections. They have to be fired for cause or not rehired for lack of work, just as is the case with tenure-line faculty. The department determines rehiring and if an adjunct has gone through a six-year review, he/she has precedence in hiring and a three-year contract. An adjunct with this protection can choose to teach less for a semester/year, can take a paid sick leave, to the extent leave is acquired, and can still return to full entitlement and request a preferred schedule. Adjuncts who have not worked this long but have been rehired for a second semester still can expect to be rehired according to the date of hire and the number and kind of classes taught if available. Adjuncts without three-year contracts who refuse classes lose entitlement and may not get the same number of classes, or any classes, the following year. Although it has not come up, I assume that an attempt by the administration to harm the job of an adjunct in an important position such as senate chair would be countered by these protections and would be met by strenuous resistance by all the faculty.

### My experience:

I am the only person to have served as senate chair while an adjunct. I was asked by a well-respected tenured faculty member to run; I probably would not have done so without this backing. At that time, and still today, adjuncts could serve as any campus-wide senate officer and also held senate seats reserved for adjuncts. When I decided to run, a tenured faculty member had already announced he would run for chair but was someone who perhaps was not widely regarded as the best candidate at this time for the campus. I was well known as an opponent of President Peter Diamandopoulos (forced to resign in 1983) and as someone with experience as an at-large senator and adjunct senate representative. I had a lot of experience serving in the union (I founded the first state-wide committee for adjuncts, was part of the fight for single-unit collective bargaining rights, and remained very active).

Though President Diamandopoulos was gone because he called a trustee a bad name (our votes of no confidence had done no good), his legacy remained. There had been an interim president, and a new president, David Benson, had just stepped on board. Diamandopoulos had dismissed 11 tenured/tenure-line faculty and sent layoff notices to 24 others (add in-jeopardy notices to another 10), creating much unease on campus among all the faculty. Of course, adjuncts too lost their jobs. His actions had cost SSU the approval of AAUP, and we had been taken off their list of recommended universities.

I have attached the AAUP “Background Facts on Contingent Faculty Positions” and a chart showing the decrease in tenure-line positions and the rise in adjunct positions over time, something we should do all we can to oppose.

<https://www.aaup.org/issues/contingency/background-facts>

Just for the record: Diamandopoulos was subsequently hired by Adelphi University which he nearly destroyed with lavish spending, an immense personal salary, the destruction of faculty rights, and illegal deals with the trustees. All the while tuition soared and enrollment fell over 60% before he was finally forced out. See: Lionel S. Lewis, *When Power Corrupts: Academic Governing Boards in the Shadow of the Adelphi Case*.

I was elected, I believe by a good margin, and began serving as chair-elect; the next year I became chair and approached President Benson with a plan to put us back in AAUP’s good graces by offering to offer reappointment to the faculty who had lost their jobs. Through the efforts of President Benson and a faculty committee, this goal was achieved.

### Conclusion:

The extent to which tenure-line faculty share governance with adjuncts promotes a sense of working together in common cause for academic goals. It is true that these two types of faculty are not treated equally, and this can and does cause a sense of injustice on the part of the adjuncts and can and does cause anxiety over power sharing on the part of the

tenure-line who are greatly outnumbered by the adjuncts. Still the sharing of campus and department decision making, the working together for common good creates a more harmonious campus life.

My conclusion is that, basically, tenure-line faculty who are willing to stand up for faculty rights should do so. Additionally, there are adjunct faculty who can serve effectively and honorably and should be permitted to serve. An election of at least two candidates should be the means of selection, not rules that bar some faculty from running at all.

At SSU, experience has shown that tenure-line/tenured faculty can be at risk as well as adjuncts, and in some cases, adjuncts can have better qualifications to serve. To encourage faculty to run, the senate chairship should not be too lengthy or onerous, or burdened by preconditions (such as senate service) and should be supported by release time.

At SSU, the senate chair is elected for three years of service but the first year is a year spent as a pre-chair preparing for the task ahead, then comes the chairship, then the post-chairship, held by a person who largely assists the chair if requested. The one-year actual chairship is given a 50% release from teaching by Academic Affairs. Any faculty member, full or part time, may run. A one-year chairship helps to limit the effect of unfortunate choices. And the pre-chair can step in if illness, family needs or other causes require the chair to step down. I believe we require that there must be at least two people running for the post and strongly encourage this for all senate positions. Candidates do not need prior senate experience, but they post their credentials in a ballot attachment, so voters can see their service and be guided by that.

Since the three-year SSU model is not something you might want to adopt, I would suggest a senate chairship of one and no more than two years, a position granted 50% or more release time, and one that anyone be eligible to run for in an at least two-person race. A campus-wide pool and some diligence should find two people. A member of the Executive Committee, elected under the same conditions, should be the person to step in if there is a problem with the chair—maybe something like a vice-chair of the Executive Board. This person need not be the next chair; a new election for chair could be called if needed. If no adjunct has been elected to the Executive Committee, an election should be held to add an adjunct member. Our executive committees were fairly large and included one of the senate adjunct representatives.

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the status of adjuncts at SSU and my own experience as senate chair. I know that you are working for fair and appropriate representation for adjuncts at SRJC, something that creates comity and mutual respect among the faculty.