Lecturer Survey Comments

Fall 2012

Note: The following comments are extracted verbatim from the Lecturer Survey with the exception that all individual names and references to particular departments have been deleted to protect confidentiality. Typos and minor punctuation edits have been made. The responses have been grouped in broad categories to improve narrative flow. In a few instances individual responses have been divided into more than one category.

Compensation

As a senior university lecturer and after teaching for 14 years the salary is not commensurate with the work performed. It needs to be adjusted so that it more fully reflects the time and effort put into the teaching of the courses.

Not so good: 1. As I switched from research professor found it very difficult administratively and financially to continue sponsored research. Dropped it after first year. 2. Pay could be bigger for the load. I teach large UG classes - quality work requires a lot of time investment.

I actually like teaching at NJIT but I would feel a lot better about the job if my salary was somewhat higher.

I am financially independent and teach mainly because I like to interact with students. Would probably be willing to teach without a salary although I would then probably only teach one course per year. I need a good reason to get out of bed in the morning. I actually have a friend who flies his private plane up from Florida one day a week to teach at Drew University as an adjunct. His pay doesn’t even cover his fuel expense.

I enjoy the position but would like to know the expectations for advancement consideration (Senior Lecturer).

Despite the fact that I have over 20 years of successful university level teaching, am an active researcher/writer, have developed three courses that are regularly fully enrolled and over-enrolled, have received a teaching award and been nominated for one more than once, and have been awarded an NEH grant to improve a course my salary is at least $20000 lower than the AAUP stated AVERAGE NJIT salary for my position. Since lecturer positions require neither research nor large research grant acquisition there is no reason for the lack of parity with the other schools at this institution. It has been made clear that I have no chance of moving to a tenure-track position which is a step I thought I could easily take in my department.

My teaching experience at NJIT has been extremely satisfying as regards the department, the program, colleagues and the students. The only unfair aspect has been financial. I went 10 years without a raise and when it came it was a total sum of $28/year as I was put on the nearest step to my current level. During the ten years I brought in several grants including at least $400,000 in grant money from the state of New Jersey. At least $80,000 of the money went to the Department. I am not aware of any other grants brought into the department during these years.
Satisfied with my treatment by the department. My salary is low for my credentials and for the amount of time I spend advising graduate students.

The university lecturers whether special or senior do most of the teaching at NJIT and it has been a long haul to even arrive (after decades of teaching) at the starting salary of for example a Newark (or other Essex County) elementary or high school teacher. That has been a bit demoralizing since I have been teaching since 1972. Of course as one of those Flower Children of the 1960’s money has never been at the forefront of my life. However now as I age I can see why people scrambled for the best paying jobs. They can retire on $90,000 per year while I will have to work until I am 90! (smile). As long as I keep working, don’t get hungry and can go for 30 more years I am going to be fine.  LOL. Thanks for listening.

**Working Conditions**

Often the faculty committee voted down my courses. Since I have no vote the committee voted to eliminate a course without ever even giving me the opportunity to present [my position]. To this day the students’ evaluations are very good about what they are learning in the course.

Committee work: over the semester maybe 6 hours. Pay: ok but I thought I could make a better living as a lecturer. Don’t publish: as a lecturer with our volume of labor-intensive papers and home life it’s just too difficult.

I am required to teach 4 courses per year and the rest of my time is spent as the undergraduate coordinator for my department advising students maintaining the curriculum, building the schedule, serving on UCRC and First Year Adviser Committees etc. There is no specific conversion between how much teaching I do and how much administrative work my department has me do. As a result of this my department keeps increasing the number of things they ask me to do and they even tried to force me to teach at overload this coming spring all without any intention of increasing my pay or making sure that they were not overloading me with administrative responsibilities. I have tried to find out if there is a way to reconcile how my teaching and administrative loads add up to make sure I am not being overloaded but it seems that although several people within the university have said that such a conversion table exists no one seems to be able to find it. Additionally I serve a 9 month position and I am not supposed to work in the summer. However my department expects me to work in the summer but has not committed to if or how much they will pay me to do my administrative work during the summer. If I am to be expected to work during the summer the university needs to figure out how to make sure I am fairly compensated or my department needs to be told that they need to do without their academic adviser for the summer which is how things seem to work in several other departments since I do not see most other advisers around in the summer.

I am very happy with my position within my department, less satisfied with the position of lecturers in the university overall.

I have no control over the class size even of courses I have developed as senior seminars which require extensive reading, writing, discussion and attention to students outside of class which impacts on the quality of the course delivery.
I have no idea what is expected of my position within the university. I was given an incomplete picture of this when I was hired which indicated no service component. I would like very much to have some understanding of what is expected of university lecturers and what paths we have to advance within the institution. And I think this survey is a great idea. Please continue to issue them so we can provide feedback.

In my experience almost all of us teaching as lecturers at NJIT do it as much for love of the job the students and our colleagues as for the relatively minimal compensation (most of us who teach winter and summer sessions literally cannot afford not to). The greatest irritant we face is the lack of practical respect from tenured Faculty (outside our own departments where most of us get full respect and support) earning twice and more what we do - but not recognizing the value of our contribution or that we DO contribute. The few who seem frightened of allowing the non-Tenure Track providers of academic courses a vote in the formulation of those courses seem more concerned with protecting their personal fiefdoms or incomes than delivering a quality product and don’t realize that almost all Lecturers have virtually identical concerns with theirs (fiefdoms aside) - and more than half of us have at least competitive qualifications. Given the chance most Lecturers would be the strongest allies and support active Tenured Faculty could have. I would be curious to see how many Tenured Faculty plow any noticeable percentage of their salaries back into the University and service to their students the way many lecturers do. I hope it is a higher percentage than I think it is.

My two major complaints are that NJIT does not permit the lecturers to teach more than one overload class and this class must be a night class. I perform a lot better during daytime so the students would benefit more from a lecturer who is not tired due to the time of day. The salary at NJIT is not the highest so in order to meet my financial goals I need to teach more courses. Why do I have to seek additional employment at a different college if I could teach the same overload at NJIT?

Scheduling and classroom assignments should be made to accommodate special needs for individuals

The Banner system of course registration including class scheduling and room assignments is flawed and leads to very grueling schedules and inappropriate room assignments that do not serve the needs of the particular class.

The university/department should always be mindful that many lecturers are publishing research and criticism and engaging in numerous projects and pursuits well beyond the classroom and their immensely overloaded academic obligations.

There are no clear definitions set by department, college or university as far as title role responsibilities and time commitment for Lecturer positions. Far too much is left for the Lecturer to figure out on his/her own. Job description in Provost appointment letter is vague and left up to College head to clarify role of individual. In turn role of Lecturer is either not defined or redefined by College head without prior consultation or agreement by Lecturer.

What makes life most difficult is other lecturers who are getting too much release time or won’t teach night classes or break the rules in other ways. This is coupled with the fact that there is no provision for calling in sick; having to work sick is a serious concern as no one tries to set up a system to handle sick days in large freshman classes - there are no backups available in an emergency. The randomness of the registrar scheduling classes and only 5 minutes between classes instead of 10 like many universities hurts us as well. We are told that tenure-track faculty can request specific days and/or times but we end up with crazy schedules like a night class one night and a 8:30 am class the next day - or 4:30 pm lecture on Friday.
When I was hired the associate dean told me that they were pushing to have a tenure track for lecturers but eventually that was killed by tenure track faculty some (too many) of whom treat us lower than dirt under their shoes.

**Pedagogy**

A mentoring program for new lecturers would be beneficial for NJIT faculty students and department. New lecturers need to have someone to shadow and gain knowledge about the learning environment here at NJIT which varies from other educational institutions. Also having a curriculum building workshop for lecturers outside of the scope of STEM courses (e.g. History Humanities etc.) could assist them in obtaining information about the best practices to develop a course that caters to STEM focused students.

Much of my work was supported by ITMS and I developed a great deal of teaching material for electronic distribution through iTunes and the NJIT YouTube channel.

**To End on a Positive Note**

Good: 1. Full academic freedom in designing course and teaching. 2. Department trust and support in teaching fundamental important courses. 3. Department provides TAs.

I totally enjoy the opportunity to interact with students to share lifelong professional work experiences in an academic setting and to explore developments in my field to meet the needs of teaching especially at the graduate level.

While a senior lecture at NJIT these past eight years: 1) I am a Co PI on two NSF grants that are in excess of 3 million dollars. 2) I developed a research lab. 3) I regularly publish in refereed journals and speak at conferences. 4) I have completed two book chapters. 5) I am authoring a textbook 6) I created a new BS program, one of only a handful in the U.S. and developed and teach 4 new courses in that field. 7) I teach a Masters Project every semester. 8) I have been invited to NSF three times and have participated in committees that evaluated research proposals. In the summer of 2012 I was part of a NSF-NIH committee that evaluated proposals that awarded grants in the 1-5 million dollar range. My teaching evaluations have averaged 3.8/4 during the last 8 years. In that capacity I received the NJIT Saul Fenster NCE teaching and Innovation award.