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Community Despite Contingency: Working Together, Achieving Together

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Challenges

Introduction

For a variety of reasons, especially of an economic nature, institutions of higher education are increasingly relying on adjunct/part-time faculty to teach courses.

“Adjunct, contingent faculty members now make up over 1 million of the 1.5 million people teaching in American colleges and universities.” (Bérubé, 2012)

Challenges adjunct faculty face:

- notoriously low wages
- a lack of job security
- dissatisfaction with the support offered by institutions (Hoyt, et al., 2008).
- insufficient administrator assistance to fully integrate into the institution; may not even have standards for the position (Hainline, et al, 2010).
- minimal research on the diverse adjunct faculty group
- increased workload for all faculty
- increased focus on accountability and outputs

Potential of Faculty Learning Communities

- Help to develop a culture
- Reinvigorate scholarship of teaching
- Encourage the complexity of teaching/learning
- Promote multidisciplinary thinking (Cox,2004)

Elements of F.L.C.

Types: (Cox,2004)
 Cohort-based F.L.C- meet the needs of a particular group
 Topic-based F.L.C- opportunity to collaborate on a project

Action:
 “Working together in intentional community to learn and apply perceived solutions to problems.” (Lenning, et al. p.25, 2013).

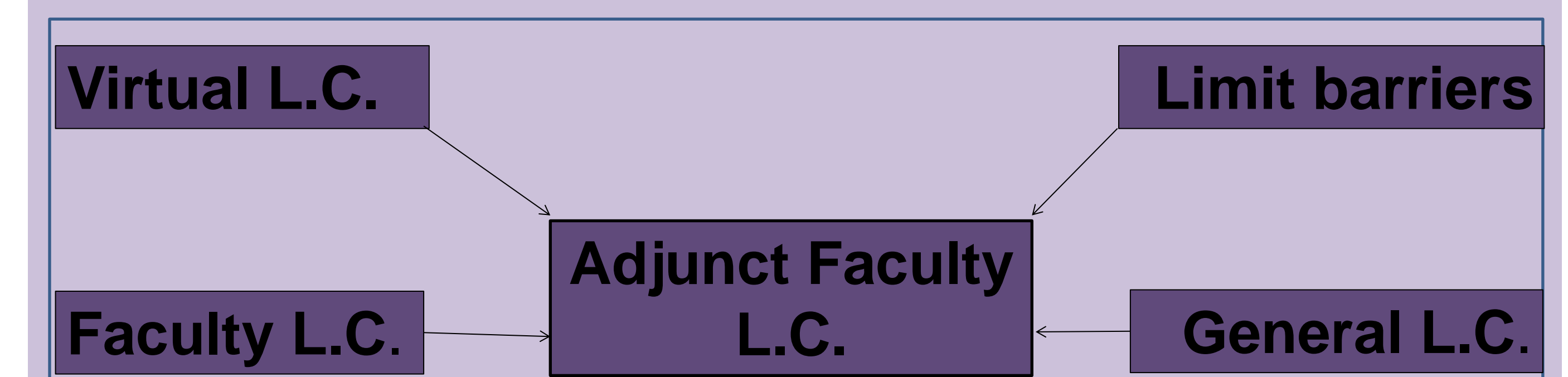
Activities should “enhance autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which in turn contribute to strong intrinsic motivation to grow and develop as a faculty member.” (Daly, p. 11, 2011).

Possible Barriers

- Pseudo Community (Fallon & Barnett, 2009)
- Competition among faculty members
- Institutional structures
- Adjunct faculty schedules

Recommendations

- Use components of F.L.C. to harness the potential opportunities and goals.
- General L.C. literature provides important concepts:
 - members are not strictly independent or dependent
 - a space needs to be established
 - create a supportive and engaging environment
 - integrate academic and also social experiences
 - knowledge and concepts are not discipline specific
 - encourage complex thinking
 - evaluate process and outcomes (Strange & Banning p. 173-174, 2001)
- Attempt to limit barriers. For example: two barriers, institutional structures and schedules, could be addressed using literature on online learning communities, which describe individual, group, technology, and facilitator roles to encourage collaboration. “Collaboration supports the creation of community and community supports the ability to collaborate.” (Palloff, R.M & Pratt, K.)
- Additional elements of virtual/online communities can account for the decreased time and physical space of adjunct faculty.



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