



Mesa College Flex Survey Report

2008

Prepared by:
San Diego Mesa College
Office of Instructional Services,
Resource Development, and
Research

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INTRODUCTION

The 2008 Flex Survey was conducted for Spring 2008 and Fall 2008 flexible calendar activities in accordance with Title 5, which mandates that flex professional development activities be evaluated.

The academic calendar includes Instructional Improvement (flex) days for all classroom faculty. Flex is defined in Title 5 as "in lieu of instruction." It is designed for faculty to conduct staff, student, and instructional improvement activities. These hours must be monitored for state apportionment.

All faculty (contract, adjunct, prorata) who have a 16-week classroom assignment are required to meet their flex obligation. There is no flex obligation for short-term (less than 16 weeks) or long-term (more than 16 weeks) assignments.

The 2008 Flex Survey constitutes the third annual administration of the survey at Mesa College. The survey report, which was requested by the Mesa Flex Subcommittee, will be incorporated in the Flexible Calendar Program Review.

METHODOLOGY

In Fall 2008, the survey instrument used in 2006 and 2007 was refined and used to collect feedback from adjunct, contract, and prorata faculty at Mesa College regarding their perceptions of the Spring 2008 and Fall 2008 flexible calendar activities.

The survey was administered via the Internet, and an email invitation to participate in the survey, including a hyperlink to the survey site, was sent on October 13, 2008 to all faculty on the Mesa distribution lists. Two reminder emails were sent out and the survey closed on October 29, 2008, resulting in a two and one-half week survey administration time period.

Of the 826 faculty who were invited (597 adjunct faculty and 229 contract faculty), 278 responded to the survey, yielding an overall participation rate of 34%. The first survey item regarding faculty status elicited 275 responses as three faculty declined to respond to the question. Of those that responded, 141 were adjunct faculty and 134 were contract faculty, yielding participation rates of 24% and 59% for adjuncts and contracts, respectively (see Table 1 in Appendix A).

HIGHLIGHT OF THE FINDINGS

Flex Activities: Workshops and Independent Projects

Of the 141 adjunct respondents, 59% attended workshops only, 21% submitted independent projects only, and 21% did both. Of the 134 contract respondents, 41% attended workshops only, 10% submitted independent projects only, and 49% did both (see Table 2).

For the adjunct faculty who indicated the types of workshops they attended, the most frequently attended type of workshop was School/Department/Group/College-Wide (38% of workshop enrollments), followed by Curriculum/Instruction (19%) and then Personal and Cultural Enrichment (16%). For the contract faculty who responded to the same question, the most frequently attended type of workshop was School/Department/Group/College-Wide (27% of workshop enrollments), followed by Curriculum/Instruction and Committee Participation (14% for each). The workshops that attracted the lowest numbers of adjunct respondents were Accreditation (0%) and Committee Participation and Program Review (1% for each) (see Table 3). Although Committee Participation and Program Review are generally limited to appointed faculty, the Accreditation workshops were open to all faculty.

For the adjunct faculty who indicated the types of independent projects they submitted, the most frequently submitted type of project was Curriculum and Instruction (39% of independent projects submitted), followed by Meetings and Committees (17%) and then Professional Organization (11%). For the contract faculty who responded to the same question, again, the most frequently submitted type of project was Curriculum & Instruction (35% of independent projects submitted), followed by Meetings and Committees (19%) and then Professional Organization (13%) (see Table 4). The largest difference in percentage between 2007 and 2008 Flex was seen in the submission of Meetings and Committees independent projects for adjunct faculty respondents, which went from 10% to 17%.

Evaluation of Flex Activities

The survey asked respondents to rate the workshops if they attended workshops only, their independent projects if they submitted independent projects only, or both workshops and independent projects if they indicated that they participated in both. This was done using the skipping/branching feature of the survey software.

Workshops

The survey had three Likert-scale items regarding workshops:

1. *I learned what I had hoped to learn from the workshops I attended.*
2. *I will be able to incorporate the information I learned from the workshops into my teaching.*
3. *Overall, I was satisfied with the workshops I attended.*

For both adjunct and contract faculty, the majority of respondents (50% or more) positively agreed that they had learned what they had hoped to learn from the workshops, they will be able to incorporate the information they learned from the workshops into their teaching, and they were satisfied overall with the workshops they attended. Between 30% and 37% strongly agreed, very few or none disagreed, and those who strongly disagreed were few and far between. For all three items, there was more neutrality among adjunct respondents, who tended to neither agree nor disagree more often than did the contract respondents (see Table 5).

Independent Projects

The survey had three Likert-scale items regarding independent projects:

1. *I learned what I had hoped to learn from the independent projects I submitted.*
2. *I will be able to incorporate the information I learned from my independent projects into my teaching.*
3. *Overall, I was satisfied with the independent projects I submitted.*

In response to these three statements, between 70% and 74% of adjunct respondents strongly agreed, 19% to 23% agreed, 4% to 5% were neutral, none (0%) disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed. Among contract respondents, at least 75% strongly agreed, 22% to 24% agreed, 1% was neutral on the first two statements, and no one disagreed, not moderately nor strongly (see Table 6).

Suggestions for Flex 2009

In response to the question “Do you have any suggestions for how we can improve Flex 2009?” the most frequently cited response theme was “Topic recommendations” (34%), followed by “General praise for flex” (16%), “Scheduling difficulties” (14%), and “Documentation process is problematic/unnecessary” (10%) (see Table 7).

Contributions of Flex 2008 Overall

In response to the directive, “Please indicate the extent to which each of the following was improved through Flex 2008 overall?”, adjunct and contract respondents noted the degree of improvement in five areas: Course Content, Teaching Methodology, Department/School/Campus Communication, Student Support, and Enhancement of Your Personal/Professional Development. These categories were derived from the responses to open-ended items on the 2006 and 2007 Flex Evaluation Surveys.

In the areas of Department/School/Campus Communication, Student Support, and Enhancement of Your Personal/Professional Development, contract faculty noted a greater degree of improvement due to Flex 2008 than did adjunct faculty (see Table 8). Adjunct and contract respondents were in relative agreement with regard to improvement in Course Content and Teaching Methodology.

APPENDIX A. TABLES

Table 1
Faculty status and participation

Faculty Status	N of Respondents	Total N	Participation Rate
Adjunct	141	597	24%
Contract	134	229	59%
All Faculty	278	826	34%

Three (3) individuals did not respond to the item regarding faculty status, but they are included in the total. Adjunct respondents include 6 pro-rata faculty. The total number of pro-rata faculty at Mesa in 2008 was 29 and this figure is included in the total N for adjunct faculty.

Table 2
Types of flex activities engaged in by faculty

Activity	Adjunct		Contract	
	N	%	N	%
I enrolled in and attended workshops only.	83	59%	55	41%
I submitted independent projects only.	29	21%	13	10%
I did both.	29	21%	66	49%
TOTAL	141	100%	134	100%

Adjunct includes 6 pro-rata faculty

Table 3
Themes of workshops attended

Workshop Themes	Adjunct		Contract	
	N	%	N	%
Accreditation	0	0%	20	5%
Assessment and SLOs	16	7%	34	8%
Committee Participation	3	1%	58	14%
Curriculum/Instruction	44	19%	58	14%
Generic Pre-approved Workshops	5	2%	22	5%
Health and Wellness	6	3%	8	2%
Personal and Cultural Enrichment	37	16%	35	8%
Professional Development Online	10	4%	12	3%
Program Review	3	1%	28	7%
School/Department/Group/College-wide	90	38%	113	27%
Technology	23	10%	25	6%
Total Number of Workshops Attended	237	100%	413	100%

Adjunct includes 5 pro-rata faculty. Faculty may attend multiple workshops.

Table 4
Types of independent projects submitted

Independent Projects	Adjunct		Contract	
	N	%	N	%
Campus Activities	3	4%	9	8%
Community Outreach	4	6%	6	5%
Curriculum and Instruction	28	39%	41	35%
Meetings and Committees	12	17%	22	19%
Professional Organization	8	11%	15	13%
Research / Writing	4	6%	9	8%
Self-Improvement / Wellness	6	8%	10	9%
Technology	7	10%	5	4%
Total Number of Independent Projects Submitted	72	100%	117	100%

Adjunct includes 2 pro-rata faculty. Faculty may submit multiple independent projects.

Table 5
Evaluation of workshops—Likert items

		Faculty Status			
		Adjunct		Contract	
		Count	%	Count	%
I learned what I had hoped to learn from the workshops I attended.	Strongly agree	40	36%	45	37%
	Agree	55	50%	70	58%
	Neither agree nor disagree	14	13%	6	5%
	Disagree	1	1%	0	0%
	Strongly disagree	1	1%	0	0%
	TOTAL	111	100%	121	100%
I will be able to incorporate the information I learned from the workshops into my teaching.	Strongly agree	33	30%	41	34%
	Agree	57	51%	64	53%
	Neither agree nor disagree	19	17%	12	10%
	Disagree	0	0%	3	2%
	Strongly disagree	2	2%	1	1%
	TOTAL	111	100%	121	100%
Overall, I was satisfied with the workshops I attended.	Strongly agree	36	32%	43	36%
	Agree	61	55%	68	56%
	Neither agree nor disagree	11	10%	9	7%
	Disagree	2	2%	1	1%
	Strongly disagree	1	1%	0	0%
	TOTAL	111	100%	121	100%

Adjuncts include 5 pro-rata faculty.

Table 6
Evaluation of independent projects—Likert items

		Faculty Status			
		Adjunct		Contract	
		Count	%	Count	%
I learned what I had hoped to learn from the independent project(s) I submitted.	Strongly agree	41	72%	59	76%
	Agree	13	23%	18	23%
	Neither agree nor disagree	2	4%	1	1%
	Disagree	0	0%	0	0%
	Strongly disagree	1	2%	0	0%
	TOTAL	57	100%	78	100%
I will be able to incorporate the information I learned from my independent project(s) into my teaching.	Strongly agree	42	74%	59	75%
	Agree	11	19%	19	24%
	Neither agree nor disagree	3	5%	1	1%
	Disagree	0	0%	0	0%
	Strongly disagree	1	2%	0	0%
	TOTAL	57	100%	79	100%
Overall, I was satisfied with the independent project(s) I submitted.	Strongly agree	39	70%	61	78%
	Agree	13	23%	17	22%
	Neither agree nor disagree	3	5%	0	0%
	Disagree	0	0%	0	0%
	Strongly disagree	1	2%	0	0%
	TOTAL	56	100%	78	100%

Adjuncts include 2 pro-rata faculty.

Table 7
Do you have any suggestions for how we can improve Flex 2009?

Response Themes	N	%
Topic recommendations	17	34%
General praise for flex	8	16%
Scheduling difficulties	7	14%
Documentation process is problematic and/or unnecessary	5	10%
Flex is beneficial	3	6%
Suggestions for improvement	3	6%
Eliminate flex	2	4%
Flex is flexible	2	4%
Preference for independent projects	2	4%
Flex needs a statement of purpose	1	2%
Total	50	100%

Table 8
Contribution of Flex 2008 to improved professional development

		What is your faculty status?			
		Adjunct		Contract	
		Count	%	Count	%
Please indicate the extent to which your COURSE CONTENT was improved through Flex 2008 overall.	Totally improved	13	9%	13	10%
	Very much improved	42	30%	43	32%
	Somewhat improved	47	34%	48	36%
	A little improved	15	11%	18	13%
	Not at all improved	4	3%	2	1%
	N/A	19	14%	10	7%
TOTAL		140	100%	134	100%
Please indicate the extent to which your TEACHING METHODOLOGY was improved through Flex 2008 overall.	Totally improved	8	6%	11	8%
	Very much improved	34	24%	39	29%
	Somewhat improved	54	39%	54	40%
	A little improved	16	12%	20	15%
	Not at all improved	7	5%	2	1%
	N/A	20	14%	8	6%
TOTAL		139	100%	134	100%
Please indicate the extent to which DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL/CAMPUS COMMUNICATION was improved through Flex 2008 overall.	Totally improved	10	7%	15	11%
	Very much improved	45	32%	66	50%
	Somewhat improved	52	37%	28	21%
	A little improved	11	8%	7	5%
	Not at all improved	8	6%	6	5%
	N/A	13	9%	10	8%
TOTAL		139	100%	132	100%
Please indicate the extent to which STUDENT SUPPORT was improved through Flex 2008 overall.	Totally improved	17	12%	16	12%
	Very much improved	30	21%	44	33%
	Somewhat improved	46	33%	41	31%
	A little improved	14	10%	9	7%
	Not at all improved	7	5%	3	2%
	N/A	26	19%	20	15%
TOTAL		140	100%	133	100%
Please indicate the extent to which THE ENHANCEMENT OF YOUR PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT was improved through Flex 2008 overall.	Totally improved	17	12%	24	18%
	Very much improved	47	34%	55	41%
	Somewhat improved	45	33%	29	22%
	A little improved	15	11%	18	13%
	Not at all improved	5	4%	0	0%
	N/A	8	6%	8	6%
TOTAL		137	100%	134	100%

APPENDIX B. OPEN ENDED RESPONSES

All comments in response to the question, Do you have any suggestions for how we can improve Flex 2009?, are listed verbatim and have not been edited except to protect the identity of a specific person or place. Responses are grouped by theme.

Flex is beneficial
[An individual] and I developed Course Websites containing power point lectures, syllabus, course outline and assignments. I believe it is one more learning method for my students which will contribute to their academic success.
I find the ratings in the "improved" section rather hard to use. Overall, I greatly enjoy and benefit from the sessions. It is helpful to meet colleagues and get revved up for the start of the semester. I don't have any complaints.
I think the program is great! [The administrator] does an awesome job!! Very thorough.
Documentation process is problematic and/or unnecessary
We should be able to submit our flex activities at any time during the semester; not just within the limited time frame. The process of getting credit for activities previously completed, but not submitted, is a big pain.
eliminate the need for all verification and documentation of flex. I believe this gives good instructors more work and allows unconcerned ones the opportunity to do the minimum without improving much.
I resent the time taken to document flex activity. I find the whole concept demeaning and paternalistic. I read, because i want to, 6 to 8 new texts per semester in my field. Should I charge 625 hours therefore to flex time? Any full timer who is not intrinsically motivated in keeping up in their discipline should'nt be here anyway. I don't need somme ED.D. aparachik in Sacto or elsewhere to force me to do this.
It would be very helpful to have an alternative way of retrieveing workshop information for people who attend workshops that they did not pre-register for.
Eliminate Flex
Eliminate it. It is a waste of time, or improve what is acceptable to use for flex credit. It is shocking to see what types of activities/meetings are being given for flex credit. Flex takes our focus away from time used to grade, improve lectures, meet with students etc... We are required to do it and so choose based on what fits into our schedule; for this reason I have relied on taking independent projects that can help me improve my teaching skills. It is very difficult for adjuncts that work fulltime already elsewhere to meet at the flex activities that are scheduled since they are held during the day. Your district is not sensitive to adjunct issues regarding flex. This survey is written in such a way that the questions are generic; I don't see how you can obtain useful information out of it. Questions/comments don't really apply to my situation.
Flex should be abolished. It is a waste of time and resources. I can't imagine how much money is going into this that should be put to better use. How in the world is a music teacher benefited by attending a movie on the Iraq war? Cut the waste!
Flex is flexible
Keep flexible flex choices and deadlines.
No,i think you allow a lot of flexibility and being an adjunct i really appreciate that.
Suggestions for improvement
Faculty should not be nervous in front of ten people.
Need more substance in school meetings. Department meetings usually were useful.
Allow simultaneoous professional credit credit for pay steps.
Preference for independent projects
As Chair of a large department and as a faculty with an additional 02.20 FTEF reassigned time, I have a comparatively low-level FLEX obligation. Under other circumstances, I would include a higher level of Independent Project activity in the mix. I also participate on many college committees, which service carries FLEX credit.
I prefer to do independent projects directly related to my discipline.

Flex needs a statement of purpose
I'd work on a more "philosophical" narrative to explain exactly how Flex activities serve our professional development. That is, rather than something we HAVE to do (another hoop to jump through), I'd welcome some explanation about how exactly these activities will benefit both us and our students. It might seem simplistic, but it's important information.
Praise for flex
Keep the same improvement and it's so simple and great.
No suggestions. SDCCD has an exceptional FLEX program and I enjoy maximum benefits from the flexibility offered.
No, I have always been well-served by your office
Continue promoting the spectrum of activities that inspire imagination, innovation and creativity.
Cultural events/workshops help us come together and give our students an updated view of the world and new views on critical thinking. I particularly like the workshops that allow interaction among faculty. We are all so busy it is hard to keep up with one another. Nowadays faculty can simply not afford to stay isolated. There needs to be the proper venues for all Faculty to explore interdisciplinary interdepartmental opportunities. I would love to see the day where Faculty are allowed to team teach with Faculty from different departments.
I believe that Mesa does a superlative job with flex.
No, I like the set-up...No changes suggested
None, very good programs.
Scheduling difficulties
I have difficulty attending the Flex activities because they often are in the middle of the day. More evening opportunities would be very helpful. Also, make signing up for the online opportunities easier. I am still trying to contact the person that needs to give me a password.
More Flex options on Fridays
Please keep in mind the time that one workshop ends and the time that the next one starts to allow us time to get to the proper building on time.
Scheduling difficulties (adjunct)
As an adjunct we are not officially part of the decision making. There is dialog and is much appreciated but when you teach one course and have other responsibilities it is sometimes difficult to attend or complete the flex activities.
As an adjunct, I am usually teaching at another campus/district during SDCCD flex week. Multiple offerings of the same workshop (morning, afternoon, evening) would help me get to campus for workshops of interest.
Eliminate it. It is a waste of time, or improve what is acceptable to use for flex credit. It is shocking to see what types of activities/meetings are being given for flex credit. Flex takes our focus away from time used to grade, improve lectures, meet with students etc... We are required to do it and so choose based on what fits into our schedule; for this reason I have relied on taking independent projects that can help me improve my teaching skills. It is very difficult for adjuncts that work fulltime already elsewhere to meet at the flex activities that are scheduled since they are held during the day. Your district is not sensitive to adjunct issues regarding flex. This survey is written in such a way that the questions are generic; I don't see how you can obtain useful information out of it. Questions/comments don't really apply to my situation.
They should have more Flex Activities during the semester in the evenings for adjunct to get together and learn something together. This will give an opportunity for adjunct faculty to interact and gain interest in school activities. In our department I feel full time faculty want to control everything, and give adjuncts very little opportunity to express ourselves. Thanks
Topic recommendations
I attended the film/video, The Devil's Breath, at City College, produced by their professor, Laura Castenada. I hope that this could be a campus wide event for FALL 2009 to commemorate the San Diego fires and lend support to this worthy film of our City colleague and the efforts of local groups like the Desert Angels. It is bold, local, contemporary history. If I can be helpful in bringing this event please contact me.

Add flex activities related to teaching and standards setting.
Add more courses on topics concerning Health awareness and First Aid and Safety .
As I teach a foreign language, I would like to see more workshops which address issues relevant to our field. I think it would also be useful to have a workshop on testing strategies/ creating effective exams (and this could be for all subjects)and a workshop on helping students with mild learning disabilities. Lastly, any workshops on technology is always great!
I recommend that you give leadership to the Flex resource potential aimed at the improvement of collective educational objectives, learning dynamics and student engagement/participation models for faculty teaching practice.
I'd like to see a workshop on student motivation.
Instruction in software programs such as photoshop.
Make workshops in which faculty members present their research/discipline/area of study to community members, i.e., invite the community to come hear our faculty speak.
Monitor the activities. Conduct/provide a Campus -wide training/evaluation resource conference to improve teaching and learning processes and objectives among the faculty.
Offer more technology for the classrooom oriented workshops: there were many more the previous year and some I was not able to attend, so I was hoping to have some this year.
Please add trips such as the Huntington library.
Present an evening for returning adjunct faculty. We were not welcomed this year. I suggest a three hour evening for all adjuncts. One hour for a welcome and two hours for flex workshops such as info for new adjunct, a course on curriculum or teaching methodology, academic technology or something of interest to returning adjuncts. Also confirm the presenters for the flex courses. I made a special trip to campus to attend a workshop and the presenter did not show. This happened with another workshop on that day. In fact I believe that the flex office knew about it because the workshop had been deleted from my registration. An extremely frustrating start to the semester.
The Cultural Enrichment offerings are quite worthwhile. I would also recommend more IT and Computer Application (mini-courses) for curriculum and classroom instruction enhancement for regular "brick and mortar" courses. Thanks.
I met with a programmer from [publishing company]. He explained to me how the company will be using artificial intelligence to develop course material for math, economics, and accounting. It might be a good topic for next year's flex program.
Include basic skills and learning community activities.
More "Best Practice" workshops in which instructors of all disciplines do a 10-20 minute lesson demonstration.
More workshops that prepare our students to be globally aware.