

## Abusing part-timers

By CHARLES HAMMER, Special to The Star

*The Kansas City Star*, Opinion 2-17-2002

Most taxpayers and students believe the major duty of universities is to educate students. Based on their actions, most university administrators sharply disagree.

Full-time professors teach 18 credit hours a year and perform research duties. They get decent pay, full benefits and sabbatical leaves. Mary gets no benefits.

Nowhere does this show more clearly than in their abuse of part-time instructors, comprising about 43 percent of American higher education faculties. I deal here mainly with the University of Missouri-Kansas City, where I taught for 21 years. But nearly all universities abuse the people they call part-timers.

Let's picture the worst-case situation for a UMKC part-timer. Call her Mary. With a master's degree and much experience, in a year Mary could teach 10 classes, or 30 credit hours at the standard \$600 per credit, and earn \$18,000 a year. Her last pay raise came in 1994.

The University of Missouri cleverly crafts rules to shut her out.

One actual UMKC part-timer teaches 15 credit hours each semester plus six every summer. That's double the load of full-timers.

Sixteen credit hours for a single semester would make her 75 percent full time and eligible for benefits, but to receive benefits the hours must all be in the same semester. Her six summer hours don't count-Catch 22. Spending a life in the classroom and grading papers, Mary earns about \$6.50 hourly.

Alas, we have no money to pay this poor teacher, or so the administrators tell us. But they know Mary is a money machine, earning tuition dollars they can spend on projects they consider more vital than education.

Let's say 20 students enroll in each of the 10 three-credit classes she teaches annually. That's three credit hours times 200 students times the \$164.66 tuition and fees they paid per credit hour last fall. It totals \$98,796. Subtracting Mary's \$18,000 salary leaves a gross profit of \$80,796.

But that's not the half of it. Tuition and student-fee payments for UMKC will total \$75.2 million in the fiscal year ending June 30. Another \$86.6 million will flow in from Missouri state appropriations plus other payments that plump up the school's operating budget to \$178.2 million.

UMKC administrators spend this money lavishly for development.

In the 1980s they spent millions bulldozing many blocks of homes north of Brush Creek to create a Research Park. Despite promised 75-year tax breaks, not one business was brought into the park, which failed utterly.

UMKC boosted its lively National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics sports to expensive Division I status in the National Collegiate Athletic Association. Students are still shelling out much of the \$13 million cost of the gym for a program that pays only 18 percent of its costs through ticket sales. A basketball coach gave up his job several years ago, but UMKC paid his \$150,000 salary for another year.

In the mid-1980s, UMKC added a big room to the chancellor's home. In 1999 university officials spent \$400,000 renovating it. Soon they will create a new \$6 million art museum on a campus that already has a gallery. And let's not forget that UMKC is only a few blocks from the great Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and within a half-mile of two other galleries.

UMKC has been on a real estate binge, purchasing dozens of homes near campus for future development and several buildings, including the Twin Oaks Apartments. Not that the university needs the space for skyrocketing enrollment - which, because of skyrocketing tuition, has stagnated through the 1980s and '90s.

With generally low teacher salaries, both part-time and full-time, UMKC in 1999 was paying an elite of 58 people more than \$100,000, the scale topping out at \$245,000. Kansas City, with a budget four times larger than UMKC's, paid only 22 such salaries.

Not to let other universities off entirely, we can mention the University of Missouri-Columbia golf course and amenities enjoyed by the University of Kansas chancellor, who gets a \$219,420 salary, a free house and a free Chrysler. Available to the KU chancellor at the Lawrence airport, and to certain others for university or state-related business, are two aircraft, a King-Air C-90 twin engine, which cost \$735,000, and a Cessna Citation Bravo executive twin jet, cost unspecified by the university.

KU keeps four full-time pilots on staff with salaries totaling \$189,000 annually.

But we must offer high salaries and amenities to get good people.

Do we really?

*The Kansas City Star* reported in 1995, when the current KU chancellor was hired, that 102 people had applied. They included 41 current or former chancellors or presidents of universities, 24 provosts, vice presidents or vice chancellors, 10 deans, and five former CEOs of corporations.

Good people are not that scarce. Based on supply and demand, part-timer Mary would be far harder to replace than the chancellor. Still, few would begrudge the leaders their fat salaries if they did not starve out their teachers.

Universities have become huge Rube Goldberg devices with executive jets, sports teams by the dozens, scholarship athletes by the hundreds, golf courses, luxury autos, real estate schemes, public relations offices, development programs—the gears and wheels all grinding away.

Pushed off to one side is that little wire squirrel wheel, the classroom, where teachers and students learn from each other and power the machine by supplying its central meaning.

Charles Hammer is a former reporter for *The Kansas City Star* and a retired journalism instructor at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

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## **Committed to fairness**

By STEVEN BALLARD, Special to The Star

Part-time teachers, scholars and artists make up an essential segment of the public higher-education work force in the United States. They render valuable services and give colleges and universities the flexibility they need to deal with overflow enrollments, meet special curricular needs, respond to financial shortfalls and substitute for full-time faculty on leave or special assignment.

Part-time faculty members help fulfill three of the instructional goals of the University of Missouri-Kansas City:

- To ensure the highest quality of instruction that funding permits and that the taxpayers of Missouri will support.
- To match the qualities of all faculty and instructors with the needs of the academic programs and institutional priorities.
- To compensate all faculty fairly based on performance and market conditions.

Over the past 30 years, the increased use of part-time faculty parallels the frequent, often drastic, reductions in financial support for public higher education. In 1970, part-time employees filled approximately 22 percent of all faculty positions. The American Association of University Professors currently reports that part-time teachers account for 43 percent of faculty positions nationwide.

According to a report by the National Education Association's Higher Education Research Center, faculty members who have deliberately chosen part-time teaching achieve a high level of satisfaction. Those who teach part-time because they are unable to find full-time positions are somewhat less satisfied. But what's surprising is that in both instances, the satisfaction level of part-time teachers is higher on average than that of full-time faculty members.

The salaries of part-time teachers are often low, especially in the arts and humanities. However, salaries for adjunct faculty in the sciences and professional fields are often comparable to full-time salaries.

At UMKC, compensation ranges from poor to good depending on the field. Determined to meet the AAUP recommendations on professional standards for the employment of part-time faculty, UMKC has set as a goal for 2006 to adjust the salaries of the part-time faculty to be comparable with similar urban institutions.

The NEA Higher Education Research Center reports that 79 percent of part-time faculty also work outside the institutions in which they teach. The average total compensation (part-time faculty salary plus outside income) for those reporting outside work compares favorably with the average total compensation of full-time faculty.

Pay for part-time faculty members is determined by the academic units that hire them. UMKC's goal is to employ part-time faculty who are well-qualified for the duties they're assigned. To fill course needs, deans and department chairs select part-time teachers on the basis of credentials, experience and academic strengths. Students and faculty colleagues regularly evaluate the performance of these part-time teachers.

Practicing professionals in the community are a rich resource of knowledge. As part-time teachers, they share the expertise and the practical wisdom they have earned through experience in the workplace. This is an important element of UMKC's dedication to community engagement -- utilizing the wealth of intellectual assets and artistic capital that resides in greater Kansas City.

UMKC is committed to fairness for part-time faculty. The university is already in compliance with most of AAUP's recommendations on part-time and nontenure track faculty.

Ordinarily, the duties of part-time teachers are limited to instruction and related interactions with students and faculty colleagues. However, UMKC plans to provide written descriptions of any additional duties that may be required of part-time faculty.

UMKC agrees with the AAUP that all faculty members should have adequate support services, and the university is addressing those needs as financial resources permit. In compliance with AAUP guidelines and federal statutes, UMKC gives fair consideration to part-time faculty when full-time positions become available.

A highly qualified part-time faculty makes it possible for UMKC to offer a rich and varied array of educational opportunities to the Kansas City community. UMKC recognizes and values the contributions that these teachers, scholars, and artists make to the institution's educational mission, and it is committed to their development and the improvement of the conditions of their employment.

Steven Ballard is the provost at UMKC.

### **Underpaid faculty**

I would like to thank Charles Hammer for speaking the truth in his column on the exploitive economics of replacing tenured professors with part-time adjuncts at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (2/17, Sunday Opinion).

I must also mention that I have not seen such a self-serving argument for abusing workers (Steven Ballard's column on the same page) since the apologists for slavery in the antebellum South.

I spent three years as an overworked, underpaid adjunct until I realized I could easily make more money at a fast-food joint and get benefits, too. My nephew once walked in to a fast-food restaurant and found his freshman composition professor working behind the counter to supplement her meager academic pay. For the rest of the semester, she had to endure her cruel students saying, "You want fries with that?" when they turned in assignments.

By the way, what do you think happens to academic standards when you turn education over to the lowest bidders and replace independent scholars with insecure migrant labor?

Elizabeth Petroske (KC Star, March 3, 2002, Letters)