

TO: Dr. Robert Shorty, Vice President of People, Equity, and Culture

FROM: AP Executive Committee

DATE: March 31, 2026

SUBJECT: Adjunct AP Classification Recommendations

Since Fall 2024, the AP Executive Committee has worked to better understand the structure of the adjunct AP role and the experiences of individuals serving in these positions. Our efforts have included listening sessions with current and former adjunct APs, a review of demographic reporting, a survey of current adjuncts, and meeting with PEC leadership to clarify distinctions between adjunct AP and regular AP roles.

Through this process, we identified several concerns that we believe are resolvable:

1. **Alignment with Board of Trustees Definition:** Some adjunct AP positions appear to exist outside the scope of the Board of Trustees definition (BOT 4.5.0), which states:

*“Adjunct Executive, Administrative, and Professional Staff (Adjunct EAP), are staff members appointed to part-time or full-time non-teaching positions created for **temporary purposes** such as working on grants or contracts, filling in for regular staff members who may be absent, completing specific projects, augmenting regular staff, and for other similar purposes. Most Adjunct EAP staff are exempt from federal and state overtime provisions” [emphasis added].*

We have identified several cases in which adjunct AP roles have continued for extended periods—four to ten years in some instances. The use of adjunct appointments for roles that function as sustained, operational positions appears inconsistent with the definition’s emphasis on temporary purposes.

2. **Inconsistent Search Processes:** Hiring practices vary by department and manager, particularly when positions are converted from adjunct to regular AP roles, resulting in inconsistent processes.
3. **Performance Review and Renewal Timelines:** Variability in performance review schedules and contract renewal lead times creates uncertainty for individuals in adjunct AP roles.
4. **Terminology Confusion:** The term “adjunct” is not widely understood, leading to confusion among applicants about the classification and nature of the role.

To resolve these issues, we offer two sets of recommendations: those we believe to be achievable in the short-term and those that represent longer-term goals.

Short-Term Recommendations:

1. **Job Posting Disclosure:** Add a clear explanation of the adjunct AP classification to job postings to ensure applicants understand the temporary nature of the role.
2. **Supervisor Best Practices Guide:** Develop guidance for supervisors that includes expectations such as conducting full searches for adjunct AP positions, providing yearly performance reviews, and outlining a structured contract renewal process. The renewal guidance should clarify what factors must be evaluated (i.e., performance, departmental need, budget considerations, and potential salary adjustments), when the renewal process should begin, required approval steps, and expectations for timely, transparent communication with the employee throughout the decision-making process.

Medium- to Long-Term Recommendations:

1. **Time Limitation:** Cap new adjunct AP appointments at three years, with an option for appointing officers to extend for one additional year. If positions prove to be needed beyond three to four years, we recommend converting them to regular AP positions. Additionally, we recommend reviewing existing adjunct AP appointments of 4+ years for first conversion to regular employee status.
2. **Position Request Form:** Require a formal request form for creating adjunct AP positions, including a justification demonstrating alignment with the Board of Trustees definition.
3. **Search Waiver Option:** If a role is converted to regular AP status, give appointing officers the option to waive a search after two years of successful performance reviews. This, paired with conducting full searches for adjunct APs, would align with the university's inclusion efforts in addition to smoothing transitions for both departments and adjunct APs.
4. **Title Revision:** For roles with defined timeframes of one to three years, consider renaming "adjunct AP" positions to "visiting AP" to provide greater clarity regarding the temporary nature of the appointment.

We offer these recommendations to improve clarity, consistency, and alignment with policy while supporting the needs of both the institution and our colleagues serving in adjunct AP roles. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further.

Attachments: Statements from current and former Adjunct APs

Impact Statement #1:

“I enjoy the work I do and having an estimated end date in mind helps me prepare for future steps in my career (enables me to prepare for what is best for me professionally, as well as my family down the road). When I didn't know an end date, that meant that each year's renewal was stressful not having at least an idea of what to expect (I understand things could change and get cut at any time due to our grant and state funded status). I also did not know that adjunct AP positions sometimes become permanent, so if that is an option, I think people in these positions would love to know how.

Knowing up front that it is a temporary position wouldn't have deterred me from taking the job because I was excited to do this work and join GVSU. I just wanted to share that.

My contract renewal occurred at the one year mark without hiccup. However, I do have a member of my team who has had her contract renewed 2 times since joining and BOTH times they did not renew the contract until after the old one expired. This caused challenges for our team because there were gaps where she was between contracts and therefore not working. Nothing had been communicated to her to indicate if she would or wouldn't be renewed so she was just waiting. My team had to figure out how to cover her work during these unexpected breaks. Personally, these experiences also made her feel disrespected and disposable for these contracts to be issued late and to have no communication to let her know what was going on. I think it made all of us aware of our temporary status and less secure in our jobs than we had felt previously. I hope that isn't reflective of the experience of others but I also wanted to share for your consideration.”

Impact Statement #2:

“I am an Adjunct Admission Recruiter in the Office of Admissions & Recruitment and it is my understanding that this role has existed in the Office of Admissions for several years. I perform the same daily functions, pursue the same goals, and operate under the same expectations as our on-campus colleagues. Additionally, my territory generally includes more schools and more students than many other regions. This broader scope often translates into an equal or higher workload and wider geographic coverage. Moreover, as an adjunct, I do not receive retirement benefits, equal paid time off, or job security that a full-time role would provide. I would also like to include that in my region approximately 95 colleges and universities also have Regional Representatives, and most if not, all are considered full-time employees of the institution they represent.”

Impact Statement #3:

“Working as an adjunct at GVSU presented unique challenges that fundamentally undermined my capacity to thrive professionally. I was appointed (not hired through a search) to fulfill a one-year pilot role with one renewal option, explicitly framed as a pathway to a permanent position. This role was developed alongside work I had completed the previous summer in another adjunct position, where I was explicitly told I could build upon that foundation in this next adjunct line. The expectation was clear: innovate, prove value, hire and train students, monitor programs, and report consistently to leadership. I was told my two years of direct experience would be considered unique value-add when the permanent position underwent its required national search.

The reality proved toxic and corrosive. The search began months before my contract ended, initiating a four-month interview process that extended perilously close to my termination date. I advanced through multiple rounds, including a virtual campus visit, only to be rejected thirty days before my contract expired. For six months, I existed in professional limbo, auditioning constantly while simultaneously expected to perform at full capacity.

This arrangement corroded every aspect of my work. Creative grounding and commitment became impossible when my future remained uncertain, yet I was still accountable for innovation and program development. Coworker relationships felt contaminated; every interaction carried the weight of knowing they might be evaluating my application or serving on the search committee. In one instance, I had a colleague recuse themselves from my search process out of concern for bias while participating in other candidates’ interviews. Genuine community integration was impossible when everyone, including myself, understood I was perpetually on trial. I couldn’t invest authentically in long-term projects, build meaningful professional relationships, or contribute to institutional culture with the freedom that permanent colleagues enjoyed.

The conflict became most acute with my direct supervisor. The person tasked with helping me grow, stay aligned with project goals, and develop professionally also served as chair of the search committee for the permanent position. What should have been a mentorship relationship – where my supervisor could advise me on becoming the best candidate to continue this work – transformed into an insurmountable conflict of interest. I could not seek guidance on challenging aspects of the role without potentially signaling inadequacy to the person evaluating my candidacy. My supervisor could not counsel me during those final six



months because doing so would compromise their search committee responsibilities. Professional development ceased entirely when I needed it most.

The instability devastated my four student employees most acutely. They asked regularly for updates about my employment status, explicitly connecting my continued presence to their own decisions to stay. Despite my attempts to shield them, they worried about losing me as their supervisor and about my wellbeing as a person they cared about. Their anxiety and frustration became visible, and their quality of work suffered. When I was ultimately rejected, they felt anger and helplessness after investing two years in our shared project. The institutional decision didn't just terminate my position, it betrayed students who had committed themselves to work they believed mattered under leadership they trusted.

The structure manufactured exactly what it claimed to prevent: isolation, diminished productivity, and fractured community. Being appointed to prove a position's value while simultaneously competing for it through formal channels created an untenable paradox. The message was clear: perform as if you belong while accepting you might not. This wasn't mentorship or professional development, it was institutional dysfunction masquerading as opportunity, with my well-being as collateral damage."