

“Regularization” & Applicability

Making the “Vancouver Model” for Part-Time Equity

By Ryan Tripp,
Chair of the FACCC Communications Committee, Part-time Faculty



The Vancouver model is a faculty equity framework that ensures part-time instructors receive pro-rata pay, benefits, seniority-based course assignments, protections from full-timers “bumping down” or replacing section instructors, and automatic “regularization” into stable roles based on experience and load.

In 2024, the Vancouver model for part-time faculty equity was the subject of multiple articles, essays, podcasts, transcribed interviews, and conference panels on its applicability—and, for critics, even relevance—to the California community college system. But the question of transferability to California community college hiring and salary practices has long been debated. Named after the city of provenance, Vancouver in British Columbia, the model for part-time faculty equity at Vancouver Community College (VCC) rests on an eleven-step salary scale for all faculty, based on full-time load. Upon completion of a full-time load for an academic year, or the equivalent for part-time loads, “terms” or “regulars” advance through the steps based on their teaching experience and educational qualifications. Instructors who are regularly assigned part-time loads could conceivably achieve a higher salary step than those regularly assigned full-time loads. The idea of “automatic regularization of the person” ensures that faculty with regularized loads have the right of first refusal before courses are assigned to new hires, following consultation with the department chair.

The Vancouver model prohibits overload and overtime assignments for all faculty. But summer (as well as weekend) loads contribute to “step” advancement. These model tenets preclude department chair appropriation of overtime and overload to advance one faculty member over another. In addition, and perhaps most crucially, “regularization” of faculty course assignments, irrespective of full-time or part-time loads, greatly diminishes the ability of full-timers to “bump down,” or replace, part-timers in preassigned course sections. In the Vancouver model, community college departments decide on the equal and equitable distribution of hours for instruction, class preparation, student meetings outside of the classroom, and additional tasks—the same pro rata for all faculty, in addition to proration of professional development funds, the same seniority accrual per fiscal year after six months of instruction, and full access to healthcare subsidies. Instructors must pass all evaluations over two academic years and must maintain “half-time” status for 19 months. But positive responsibility for administrative notification of “regularization,” as well as four-month notification that a given part-time load contract will not be renewed, rests on community college administrators. Departments assign courses for part-timers based on seniority accrual and median or average load.

>> continued on page 20

Frank Cosco, the former president of the Vancouver Community College Faculty Association (VCCFA) outlined seven preconditional factors that proved pivotal to the success of the Vancouver model. The provincial government of British Columbia offers community colleges half of base funds in a given fiscal year. Tuition, premised on the number of full-time equivalent student spaces, as well as strategic funds, grants, and endowments, constitute the second half. In this regard, the Vancouver model resulted from successful administrative transference of pro rata part-time pay policy for presecondary schools into the administrative apparatus of postsecondary institutions. Schoolteachers appointed to British Columbia ministry cabinets, and contributions by members of political parties on all sides of the aisle, proved important as well.

Despite commensurate increases in the number of part-time faculty across Vancouver and California during the late 1970s and 1980s, VCC staff had to formulate a variety of differential pay and instructional parameters for

full-time and part-time faculty—frequently well after dozens of California community colleges attempted the same. Different pay scales, load expectations, and campus roles were deemed historically “irregular.” In Vancouver, “regularization” became a concept underpinning the Vancouver model, albeit one that resulted from compromises on faculty “severance.”

Cosco referred to a preconditional factor for Vancouver model applicability as the advantageous “beginning as a vocational school model” at a city college with “relatively few part-timers.” In his estimation, this model was “the normal model of work,” which he considered “full-time day work.” The “normal model” resulted in the “historical circumstance” of “pay[ing] the few part-timers on a pro rata basis.” He crucially designated this factor—the first of the seven he identified—as the product of a circumstance peculiar to Vancouver.

The “historical circumstance” warrants more elucidation and critical assessment than extant studies on the topic, even by Cosco. For example, “circumstance” began during the mid-twentieth

century, amid the expansion of elementary schools within the jurisdiction of the Board of Education of School District No. 39 (Vancouver). The Vancouver School Board ordered demolition of an early and outmoded district primary school, Central School. In 1949, the board oversaw construction of the Vancouver Vocational Institute (the VVI) on the demolition site. Early VVI courses had been taught temporarily on the campus of the Vancouver Technical Secondary School, which had completed its own construction process by 1930. Twenty-one years later, instructors and staff at the new VVI campus received Vancouver School Board certification for their Vocational Instructors’ Association (the VIA).

The Vancouver Vocational Institute and Instructors’ Association were important to the evolution of the Vancouver model for connected, yet distinct, reasons. These reasons have not been evaluated for applicability. For instance, the VIA served as a principal advocacy association for faculty and staff for fourteen academic years. Then, between 1965-1970, acting on a proposal by the president of the University of British

Columbia for two-year community colleges, the Vancouver School Board coalesced the VVI with so-called urban night schools, continuing educational institutions, and city schools of art. The result was the umbrella Vancouver City College. Given prior certification, the Vancouver Instructors’ Association transferred to the city college, where it became the advocacy association for faculty and staff. The VIA was ultimately supplanted by the VCCFA.

Administrative staff for School District No. 39 (Vancouver) likewise shaped faculty pay rates at VCC. Accustomed to an array of professionals from the private and public sectors who taught part-time at the VVI, district administrators subsidized instruction (and connected duties) in proportion to the daily workload of full-time teachers within the district. That is, the Vancouver Unified School District and its Board of Trustees, lacking any community college precedent, sustained the VVI prorating of part-time salaries within full-time pay scales.

>> continued on page 22

“ ... the Vancouver Model resulted from successful administrative transference of pro rata part-time pay policy in primary and secondary schools into the administrative apparatus of postsecondary institutions.

In 1974, the Vancouver City College separated from the unified school district as the rechristened Vancouver Community College (VCC). The policy of prorating part-time salaries transferred to the independent college. Rather than solely “beginning as a vocational school model” at a city college with “relatively few part-timers,” the “historical circumstance” of Vancouver higher education derived from successfully transferring the pro rata policy of a unified primary and secondary school district into a separate community college outside of district jurisdiction.

The second and third factors outlined by Cosco encompass the “fundamental right to unionize and act as a union.” Cosco described unionization and collective bargaining as facets of “political and social history” because various “social democrats” in British Columbia had supported unions “for many decades.” As an example, he cited the “early 1970s, when the New Democratic Party won a majority of the seats” in the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

“In 1974, the Vancouver City College separated from the unified school district as the rechristened Vancouver Community College (VCC). The policy of prorating part-time salaries transferred to the independent college.

Public-school instructors in executive cabinets and partisan politics shaped the Vancouver model. As noted by Cosco, the British Columbia New Democratic Party (BCNDP) won a majority of seats in the 1972 Legislative Assembly. Upon closer inspection of this contention, as well as upon the expansion of research underpinning this notation, the minister of education in the executive cabinet more specifically orchestrated the independence of VCC. That same year, David Barrett, a BCNDP member, became provincial premier. Barrett pushed for the British Columbia Department of Education to be reclassified as the Ministry of Education, primarily to appoint his deputy premier, Eileen Dailly, as the first minister of education in the province. It was Dailly, a Vancouver and (neighboring) Burnaby public educator, who prompted the 1974 cabinet order-in-council to grant Vancouver City College independence as Vancouver Community College (VCC). She further endorsed faculty unionization in new community colleges.

This history of partisan politics in British Columbia reconfigures previous applicability contentions, including those advanced by Cosco. The David Barrett Ministry dissolved in 1975 and was replaced by the Bill Bennett Ministry. Bennett and his Minister of Education, Patrick McGeer, were members of the British Columbia Social Credit Party (the Socreds), championing platforms considered “conservative” by both the BCNDP and pundits alike. Although Dailly had authorized the separation of VCC from School District No. 39 (Vancouver), she left office before fully executing the order-in-council. In 1978, legislative passage of the Colleges and Provincial Institutes Act created a ministry of postsecondary education. The jurisdiction of the ministry did not extend to provincial universities. McGeer subsequently engineered another order-in-council to ensure that legislative oversight, accreditation, and funding for British Columbia community colleges fell under the purview of the postsecondary ministry.

McGeer affirmed that policies and bill proposals pertinent to provincial community colleges emanated from the offices of the minister of postsecondary education. In this context, it was a “liberal-turned-conservative Socred,” not just members of Dailly’s BCNDP, who fulfilled “social democrat” goals for the rebirth of VCC and its pro rata part-time pay. Conversely, one historian of higher education in British Columbia has argued that McGeer’s emphasis on the postsecondary education ministry contributed to a “decline” in the role of the minister of education. By extension, funding and legislative support for primary and secondary schooling in the province similarly “declined.”

The fourth factor to consider in Vancouver model applicability was the increase in part-time faculty hires across VCC departments during the late 1970s and 1980s, a cause and consequence of the transition to community college status. The surge corresponded with the same trend in California community college employment during the same period. But the absence of crucial points of comparison belied the applicability arguments advanced by the VCCFA. For example, the VCCFA had not yet established parameters and procedures for VCC “contingent faculty” search committees. In fact, by 1987, educators and legislators widely regarded VCC as an independent (the first) community college in British Columbia. California, in contrast, had a decades-old community college system, replete with substantial regulations for hiring practices.

The fifth and sixth contributing factors were union activism and the VCCFA’s “comprehensive strategy for inclusion.” According to the VCCFA, the VCC “union was able to unite its members behind bargaining agendas that had something for as many groups as possible, especially for nonregulars, and took away from no one.” Following the shift from vocational and city

college designations, a bevy of differences in salaries, class assignments, and campus roles were all deemed “irregular.”

>> continued on page 24



As a result, repeated references to the overriding goal of part-time “regularization” permeated VCCFA records and published analyses, including essays by Cosco. Publications by VCCFA members, beginning in 1987–1988, promoted faculty strikes to, for instance, secure “the first right to automatic regularization of the person after 410 days of half-time or more work over any two-year period.” The aims for month-long strikes between 1990–1992 were the “reduction of [a] regularization accrual requirement to 380 days” and requisite faculty evaluations for “regularization with onus on [the] college to do it.” During the next two years, the VCCFA recorded strike votes for “the right” to “increases in regularization level for part-time regulars.”

“Partial or no severance for part-timers was already “regular” in the history of the vocational school and city college prior to reestablishment as VCC, but the VCCFA could attempt to renegotiate if members mandated a revision.

Frank Cosco described VCC part-time “regularization” as a “concept.” For example, Cosco explained that at least two rounds of “provincial bargaining,” through 2001, heralded a wider application of the “regularization of the person concept ... an increase in release

from teaching time for department heads and coordinators brought increased work opportunities to nonregulars.” His concept of “regularization” applied to both full- and part-time faculty. Equal protection was enshrined by VCCFA demands, between 2007–2010, for the “removal of all arbitrary caps on initial salary scale placement for all terms and regulars.”

The VCCFA emphasis on “regularization” as a “concept,” in the context of a more recent and abrupt engagement with concerns over part-time pay equity, generated a “key compromise” as the last factor for success in implementing the Vancouver model. The compromise “helped cement what is now a twenty-year-old practice of automatic regularization.” The VCCFA consented to the policy that, in addition to a four-month notice and transfer possibilities, a “regularized” faculty member “laid off during the first three years after his or her regularization ... could not collect what would be the severance entitlement.” Partial or no severance for part-timers was already “regular” in the history of the vocational school and city college prior to reestablishment as VCC, but the VCCFA could attempt to renegotiate if members mandated a revision.

This article featured additional research into the history of the Vancouver model, crystallizing the notion that part-time faculty pay proration began under the jurisdiction of a primary and secondary public school district. Former school-teachers appointed to British Columbia ministries, as well as inter-partisan advocates, facilitated the (re)establishment of VCC and its pro rata framework. The article next assessed the VCC as a North American newcomer to intersections and collisions between part-time and full-time faculty salaries. Incongruencies among instructional and administrative expectations did exacerbate faculty association concerns over any “irregular” treatment of part-timers. These apprehensions then became the crucible for the idea of “regularization,” which should be considered in evaluations of Vancouver model applicability in California community colleges. ■