

MSCA
Division of Graduate and Continuing Education
Member Survey/Focus Group Report

As part of the upcoming Division of Graduate and Continuing Education (DGCE) bargaining the MSCA bargaining committee constructed a number of opportunities to hear from our members. This work is essential to better understand the working conditions, issues, and needs of members across all our nine campuses and to ensure that our bargaining platform works for our members.

The following offers a summary of responses from the survey and focus groups that were conducted.

- 312 Survey Respondents
 - Approximately 1600 faculty teach in DGCE across the 9 campuses
 - Nearly 40% of survey respondents were from Bridgewater State; Framingham State and Worcester State each represent approximately 14-15% of respondents; Salem State represents about 12%.
- 28 Members attended Listening Sessions/Focus Groups over three days, representing all of the campuses
- Vast majority of respondents were FT faculty who work in the Day Contract
 - Some of these respondents have loads that incorporate DGCE service (particularly programs with 4+1 programs or licensures)
 - There were approximately 69 respondents who indicated they were entirely part-time faculty.
 - Of those 69, 29 were PT during the Day contract, 28 had FT work outside higher education, 9 had no other employment, and 3 were PT at non-MSCA institutions.
- More than anything, the survey demonstrates how DGCE is a complicated unit of MSCA, which manifests in a variety of ways across the 9 campuses
- Within DGCE, there is a clear division between graduate instruction, undergraduate/continuing education instruction, and a mix of both

Main issues

Based on the survey and listening sessions several key issues emerged as concerns of members regarding DGCE work.

- Pay
- Structural Issues/Resources
- Communication
- Instruction versus “other” duties

Pay

- Pay is very clearly the top issue confronting DGCE faculty
- Parity with the day contract is very important to respondents—equal pay for equal work

- Frustration also exists surrounding how stipends for chairs, coordinators, and advisors are calculated
- Courses that run for less than a full stipend (course by arrangement) were also discussed as a concern of members

Based on open-ended comments as well as listening sessions, pay was the major reason for teaching in DGCE. It serves as extra supplemental pay for FT faculty and allows PT faculty to teach more courses at any one institution.

In the category of pay, the issue of parity was mentioned often. Many members discussed the issue of being paid less for the exact same work. In addition, concerns were raised about the lack of clarity and transparency regarding how stipends are calculated for DGCE chairs, coordinators, advisors, etc. These disparities can even exist within the same department on the same campus.

Members also addressed concerns about course-by-arrangement, where under-enrolled courses are paid by head rather than receiving a full-credit stipend. This concern was exacerbated by the fact that institutions use different numbers to determine course minimum for full pay (ranging from 6 to at least 10). While some faculty appreciate the choice to ensure that a course will run (providing some income rather than none and ensuring students have what they need to move through their programs), overall members felt this practice meant already underpaid courses were even further underpaid and a disruption to their ability to plan for the semester and the future.

Structure and Resources

- DGCE programs are often viewed as extensions of the Day program despite differences in student population and student needs
- Questions related to how courses are scheduled and who has control over programs were also central
- Resources available to DGCE faculty vary widely, ranging from access to tangibles like desk space, printing capabilities, and necessary software, to intangibles like technology support and administrative assistance

Members voiced concerns with a lack of transparency and consistency in the structure of continuing education programs even at the same institution. These inconsistencies related to course scheduling, the relationship between day, continuing education, and graduate programs, and governance oversight of these programs. For FT faculty who work during the day, DGCE work is viewed as “outside” their work, but at times it is part of their load. This is especially true for graduate faculty. The “buffet” approach to DGCE instruction, particularly by management, makes working in DGCE difficult. For faculty who serve as leaders in DGCE (supervisors, advisors, or coordinators) DGCE work is hard to staff in part because of pay differentials.

Across institutions additional complications arise in the inconsistencies of labeling courses as continuing education or day. Some campuses categorize all online courses as continuing

education. Some do not. Some think about DGCE as “night courses.” Many faculty expressed concerns with how DGCE programs are run, the problems with staffing and managing these programs in relation to also meeting accreditation and other state requirements, and limited attention to the specific needs of students who may be different than traditional day students.

Access to resources was another concern raised by members and where inconsistencies arose. Members noted that many graduate and continuing education offices are closed at times that faculty may be teaching and working, limiting access to printing, technology, support, and even office space. In addition, members noted that specialized software and professional development, items necessary to meet student needs and professional responsibilities, were rarely provided, particularly to those who were not FT faculty in the Day division.

Contracts & Courses

- Untimeliness of contracts and the ability to plan for future semesters
- Lack of clarity around course minimums and maximums
- General lack of information and clarity on DGCE programs

The timeliness of contracts was a major concern of respondents and attendees at listening sessions. Earlier contracts would allow for better preparation and planning. The loss of courses due to low enrollment was particularly troublesome for faculty teaching only PT in the day. This was one area where course-by-arrangement provided some modicum of security. However, it must be noted that the opportunity of exploitation in a structure where faculty must choose to completely lose all compensation for a course they have already prepared or receive only a percentage of their pay, is abundant.

Additionally, the issue of over-enrollment was also mentioned. Unlike course-by-arrangement that pays per-head for low enrolled courses, faculty are not paid for additional students or increases in course maximums. An increasing number of institutions are partnering with outside, private organizations who are paid to manage such enrollments. Such partnerships increase the opacity of the programs and limit faculty voice in important matters such as the number of students for a quality learning experience.

Overall, members raised concerns about a general lack of clarity and communication about DGCE programs and resources (for both faculty and students).

Instruction versus “other” duties

- DGCE faculty report having to fill a lot of different roles, often un- or undercompensated
- “Other” duties continue to pile on, resulting in ever-expanding work requirements

Many members who run DGCE programs (coordinators, supervisors, managers, directors) reported significant concerns with this work. Ever-increasing workloads, insufficient stipends, lack of dedicated work time, and significant inconsistencies among all of these areas in the same institutions, were all mentioned. In addition, those faculty advising graduate and/or continuing education students received limited, if any, compensation for this work. Members

noted that Recruitment and marketing for programs, in addition to orientation events, has also been increasingly expected for DGCE coordinators, chairs, and faculty. Compensation for this work is inconsistent and unclear.