

The Affordable Care Act, Adjuncts, AAUP and Southeastern Oklahoma State University

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Since the [Affordable Care Act](#) was signed into law on March 23, 2010, one of the questions raised in higher education was the effect of the law on contingent faculty. Contingent faculty, by definition, work on a semester-by-semester, course-by-course basis, and as such, are not considered eligible for health care benefits. On February 10, 2014, the Obama Administration released [guidelines](#) on how colleges and universities should calculate the hours of contingent faculty for the purposes of the federal mandate that employers provide health insurance to those who work more than 30 hours a week. According to the guidelines, “the final regulations expressly allow crediting an adjunct faculty member with 2.25 hours of service per week for each hour of teaching or classroom time.”

The response by some colleges and universities to the federal mandate has been to impose [a limit](#) on the number of courses that can be taught by contingent faculty. The decision of these institutions is an effort to avoid providing contingent faculty with health insurance. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has been clear in its position on the equitable treatment of contingent faculty, and specifically addresses the issue of health care in its document [Affordable Care Act and Part-Time Faculty](#). According to the AAUP, “Such actions [reduction in course loads] are reprehensible, penalizing part-time faculty members both by depriving them access to affordable health care as intended by law and reducing their income.”

Rather than following the national trend to reduce the number of courses taught by contingent faculty, [Southeastern Oklahoma State University](#) (SE), under the leadership of [President Sean Burrage](#), has made the decision to insure those adjuncts who teach 75% Full-Time Equivalent or more. In September of 2014, adjuncts who met that criterion in the previous year were notified that they would be able to enroll for health coverage, effective January 1, 2015. The [SE Chapter of the AAUP](#) applauds the actions of Southeastern and President Burrage, and believes that by choosing to follow the spirit of the law, as well as the letter of the law, it marks an important step in recognizing the contributions of adjunct faculty, and serves as a tangible confirmation that adjunct faculty are a valuable asset to the university and to the students they serve.