faculty struggle to provide the same quality of instruction as full-time faculty and that this has had an impact on retention, particularly among those at two-year institutions or in four-year gateway introductory courses. The report goes on to note that “faculty on contingent appointments frequently pay for their own computers, phones, and office supplies, and dip into their own wallets for journal subscriptions and travel to conferences to stay current in their fields, while struggling to preserve academic freedom. However heroic, these individual acts are no substitute for professional working conditions.” The students are not the only ones who suffer in this educational environment. Recent research has shown that job insecurity in higher education harms the mental well-being of non-tenure-track faculty. A substantial number report feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression associated with their position.

It seems clear that established institutions of higher education are attempting to compete with educational disruptors by hiring increasing numbers of part-time faculty. However, the question remains: are established institutions actually reducing their instructional costs as a result of these savings? Certainly, one would expect that shifting instructional costs from full-time tenured faculty to part-time contingent faculty would result in substantial savings to the institution in the form of lower instructional salary costs.

Figure 5 presents the year-over-year change in public institution compensation and nonsalaried expenditure as a percentage of the total instructional expenditure, a good proxy for how money is being spent in the instructional area, often on things like lab supplies and equipment dedicated to fulfilling an institution’s instructional mission. Although full-time faculty saw an average compensation increase of 1.39 percent unadjusted for inflation, there was a 5.49 percent increase in nonsalaried instructional expenditure during the most recent five-year period. While the ranks of full-time faculty were declining, it appears that the majority of the increased nonsalaried instructional spending occurred in the 2009–10 academic year. More recent years have seen low to flat increases in nonsalaried instruction, never exceeding a 2 percent year-over-year increase. This finding seems contrary to a higher education strategy of defending the instructional market from disruptive innovators. If established institutions were trying to compete with the disruptors who overwhelmingly rely on part-time faculty, one would expect significant nonsalaried instructional budget expansion as public institutions retrain and retool faculty.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS Data Center (all GASB institutions), http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/.