



ucla center for
the study of women

research that rethinks
1500 Public Affairs Building, Box 957222
Los Angeles, CA 90095-7222
www.csw.ucla.edu

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Anna Spain Bradley, *Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion*
Michael Levine, *Vice Chancellor for Academic Personnel*
Huiying Li, Chair, *Senate Faculty Welfare Committee*
Christine Dunkel Schetter, *Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty Development*
Margaret Shih, *Associate Vice Chancellor for BruinX*
M. Belinda Tucker, *Special Liaison for Faculty Development*

In March 2021, the Center for the Study of Women Advisory Committee (CSWAC) surveyed its faculty members regarding their experiences and observations of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the UCLA community. In particular, we asked about negative impacts that have received insufficient attention by the university and media, and potential strategies for addressing them. CSWAC members are almost overwhelmingly women and about half are people of color. Many members also have professional and research expertise in fields relevant to pandemic impacts, ranging from patient advocacy to social, racial, gender, and labor inequality, to media analysis. A summary of our findings is appended so that they can inform the work that your office or committee is doing to address the pandemic impacts in the coming months and years.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like to further discuss the survey.

Best Regards,

Lieba Faier
CSW Advisory Committee Chair
Associate Professor, Geography
University of California, Los Angeles

Grace Kyungwon Hong
Director, Center for the Study of Women
Professor, Gender Studies and Asian American Studies
University of California, Los Angeles

UCLA CSWAC Covid-19 Impacts Survey Results May 2021

In March 2021, the Center for the Study of Women (CSW) surveyed the faculty members on its advisory committee (CSWAC) regarding their experiences and observations of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the UCLA community. The open-ended survey questions focused on negative impacts that have been given insufficient attention by the University and popular media and potential strategies for addressing these.

CSW received 30 responses from faculty representing a wide range of divisions, schools, and programs across campus. The overwhelming majority of CSWAC faculty members are women, and about half are people of color. Many CSWAC members have professional and research expertise in fields ranging from patient advocacy to social, racial, gender, and labor inequality to media analysis. Some responses drew on and reflect this expertise; others drew on personal observations and experiences. Because the survey questions were open ended, responses are not intended to be representative but to reflect a sampling of what faculty across campus may be experiencing and observing.

A. Impacts

Three overlapping impacts were repeatedly identified:

- 1) Overwork, related to increased demands from both remote teaching and intensified caregiving responsibilities (18 responses)
- 2) Marked decreases in research productivity, related to the above-mentioned increased demands and including challenges in completing and publishing research, conducting research, and utilizing time-limited funding (9 responses).
- 3) Strains on faculty mental health, including increased stress and depression tied to the above-mentioned strains as well as to experiences of personal and professional isolation. (7 responses)

Many faculty noted increased teaching and advising demands on account of the pandemic. They explained that remote teaching requires considerable additional preparation. Moreover, students, struggling with the remote circumstances, have required extra attention and accommodation. On top of these demands, a significant number of faculty members have confronted the added strain of increased caregiving responsibilities. This strain was often attributed to having young children at home whose schools are now remote; however, added caregiving responsibilities for parents was also mentioned. CSW faculty members also observed that many students are facing intertwined issues related to mental health, financial challenges, and challenges meeting course demands (9 responses). These students have increased their requests for accommodations and emotional support. Several faculty (4) also observed that staff have been overworked, and one mentioned that junior faculty are lacking mentorship in dealing with the added strains of the pandemic.

Key Quotations:

Faculty and Staff Overwork

almost everyone i know who is a faculty member in the UC system worked two to three times more than they did prior to the pandemic, this is just work related to academic appointments and ON TOP of hardship in personal and family life.

As faculty we have received no guidance other than "make accommodations". When I ask students what their academic or psychological counselors are advising them to do, they say the counselors are telling them to "ask your professor for accommodation." So say 25 students out of 150 contact me to ask for an extension because of a range of reasons, and I have no way to know who is telling the truth and who isn't. I make 25 accommodations, which creates a huge burden of work, including work that gets turned in after the TAs have finished for the quarter. Keeping track of and doing the necessary grade changes and etc. for 15% of students means such an increased burden.

I've also witnessed the university implementing rather large changes in terms of how things are done, how faculty are paid, how departments will get funding, how we do personnel, etc. Each of these changes means a tremendous amount of work, especially for staff, who are already overburdened.

Caregiving demands:

For junior faculty who are women and are the primary caregivers to children, we have witnessed the complete unraveling of the carefully orchestrated support systems we have built in order to perform our jobs as academics and mothers. There is a lack of recognition to how difficult it was to carry on our work while supervising small children suddenly at home full-time with no caregiving support, and expect to function and carry on productivity as normal. The stress, worry, and sleep deprivation from this juggling act will continue once the pandemic is over.

the near-impossibility of doing deep scholarship when homeschooling elementary school-age children.

It is well documented that female scholars and academics bear a disproportional childcare role relative to their male colleagues.

I've observed issues around eldercare and the way this is not treated seemingly on par with child care during the pandemic.

The stresses of the pandemic are more nebulous than can be identified and quantified for purposes of student performance or personnel performance reviews. The support work including emotional support that faculty (particularly women and LGBTQ faculty) must provide to students experiencing a range of difficulties is not sufficiently acknowledged as a workload issue for example. This tends to burden these faculty members more than others, yet again.

I also think the gendered effects of the pandemic need to be more fully evaluated. Although I am not a parent, I can't imagine how difficult it would be to parent and take care of my teaching and research responsibilities at the same time. I don't think the university has really taking this seriously. The university just wants us as faculty to continue as 'normal' despite how unusual our lives are right now.

Effect on research productivity:

I don't think enough attention has been given to the long-term implications of research productivity. My research will be disrupted for the next few years and getting journal articles accepted and reviewed in a timely manner has been much harder. While the university has said that faculty going up for tenure can delay their tenure review, this will just make the disparity in pay and rank between those who were able to go up on time (disproportionately male and childless) vs. those who were not able to go up on time, even worse.

Another thing I've observed: feminist, women, and women of color faculty are carrying a million loads, as we all know, and it's RESEARCH that is suffering. People are working so hard to support students, teach well, and do all the things... and research is squeezed out. What can we do about that, about the things that are both structural and about habitus/orientation/practice in each of us?

A tenure clock extension has been given, but no further attention to the fact that delayed research and labs and publications/presses (my book lost a year, and everyone at the press shrugs and says, yeah, everything slowed down this year and leaves it at that) will mean exponential loss of income and advancement over the coming years.

I am concerned that the University is not sufficiently aware of how much of a hit some faculty's research productivity is taking, and particularly that this is especially affecting those with children/caregiving responsibilities at home. I would appreciate an optional year "off clock" without penalty for those who want to apply for this even if we are tenured.

That the changes created by COVID for women academics will not be quickly resolved when we are more in person or can collect data in more settings. The changes are going to have lasting impact. UCLA seems to be operating as if a year extension of one's tenure clock - or other advancements will suffice.

the increase in administrative and emotional labor (students in crisis, the need to revise policies), has meant a complete halt to my research and writing.

The other major significant issue is those of us who are junior faculty on career development or K awards. My K award working with highly under-resourced populations--who were at significant risk of COVID-19--in the field continued running and will end this year. Although research grounded to a sudden halt for people in the field in March 2020 with considerable time and resources spent adapting our research programs during the pandemic. Without mechanisms to support junior faculty transitioning off career development awards and who have delayed research data from studies being conducted in the pandemic, thus impacting the ability to secure future NIH R level funding, I fear there will be an exodus of junior faculty women during this precarious time. For junior faculty who are also clinicians and clinical need of our patients increased, this also impacted the time to conduct research.

Mental health:

I would say that mental health issues for faculty have not fully been addressed. I know I have had experiences with managing different forms of depression and anxiety.

Having to be in constant contact (endless Zoom meetings, having to respond to emails immediately) have made me feel held hostage by work and have taken a toll on my physical and mental health.

Single, senior women, always forgotten, are even more sidelined in this situation. We have to fend for ourselves--care, maintenance, and well-being.

Faculty mentoring:

The biggest issue I've experienced as not being addressed (and has had impact on me) has been limited attention placed on junior faculty mentoring during this odd, pandemic world. I essentially have had no

contact with senior faculty/mentors over the past year (pertaining to mentoring, academic development, plans for tenure, etc.) and this has been unsettling and worrisome.

Strains on students:

Many students in my department have had to take on more work hours to support families in which parents have lost their jobs. They and their families have been very sick. They have been losing loved ones, as well. The university seems to know, but also does not provide sufficient support. The same is true for staff. And in asking for compassion, doesn't actually make it easy to benefit from new possibilities.

I'm particularly concerned that not enough support and attention is being given to students whose parents work low-income jobs but have been unemployed because of the pandemic. I know of a number of cases in which students have had to take on full time jobs or drop out of school to help support their families because their parents lost their jobs when the pandemic hit. The students that I know of are also first generation students. Is there some way to offer more financial support to these students because of the extenuating circumstances to help them stay in school? At the very least, I think we need to be sure that the University (or bodies/units on campus) reaches out to these students to help them strategize around staying enrolled or coming back to campus once it is financially feasible for their families. I feel like these students need to be on the University's radar and efforts need to be made to retain them.

profound challenges to students' motivation, mental health, ability to meet deadlines, 20-30% spike in asking for accommodations/extensions etc over previous non-pandemic years

I also think the impact on students (undergrad and grad) in terms of loss of family, income, housing, etc. has been massive and has not been well addressed by the university.

Students have been experiencing trauma/difficulties ranging from political polarization that s(p)lit their families, friends, communities apart, to illness, grief over loss of loved ones, to financial difficulties. Some of my students this Winter quarter experienced food and housing instability.

B) Steps for addressing pandemic impacts:

CSWAC members expressed concern that faculty, lecturers, and staff are being expected to make personal sacrifices to accommodate increased work demands and students needs rather than the University adjusting to pandemic realities. In addition to recognizing the additional burdens that some have been shouldering, CSWAC members suggested that the University could take a number of steps to help alleviate the added strain and burden shouldered over the past year.

These steps included:

For faculty:

- 1) Offering course releases or banked course credit to compensate for extra time spent on remote classes or caregiving demands
- 2) Offering bridge funding or extensions for career grants and other time-limited funding.
- 3) Providing mental health resources

For students:

- 1) Offering PhD students extensions and flexibility in time-to-degree deadlines
- 2) Providing special tie-over funds or loans to students confronting financial strains
- 3) Providing formal guidelines for student accommodations

Key Quotations:

For faculty who have had to shoulder additional teaching and caregiving responsibilities:

Maybe a banked course credit that could be cashed in at some point to allow for research/writing time that has been lost to the pandemic. Given the extraordinary work that went into overhauling courses for online teaching, this has been earned. Letting people use it over time could help schools and departments achieve course coverage goals while also acknowledging the extraordinary work that people have been doing.

Extra time on the clock, which has already been introduced is a great start. But I would say that the university should have early on provided more resources for parents and faculty with mental health issues. Perhaps moving forward the university can be more attentive to childcare issues and how it disproportionately affects women, and women of color more specifically.

Funding support to junior faculty who are caregivers (child caregiving support), bridge funding to support women junior faculty whose career development awards/early career grants are ending during the pandemic and are at higher rates of leaving academia, or must take on additional clinical work to provide our salaries, which detracts from the ability to move forward in critical stages of our research careers (bridge funds, pilot grants, "start-up funds," salary supports so further clinical work does not have to be taken on, funding extensions).

there should be dependent care supplements available for every internal grant given at UCLA, for research-related dependent care costs. the blurring of "home" and "work" that feminists so long have analyzed needs to be brought into the ways we interact as scholars, teachers, and citizens of the university. the university needs to find ways to stop just saying thank you to people who are working SO hard and rather to build in mechanisms for reducing their workload (staff and faculty alike).

For faculty promotion reviews:

Setting up a task force made up of staff from each division to concretely address their issues and demands, providing more resources to faculty and staff with children, extending normative review timelines so that faculty have additional time to go up for review if they wish.

programs, funds, etc geared toward increasing positions as the financial crisis passes, research and publication accelerator programs/ideas/course releases/leaves, probably also things geared toward helping parents make up lost time (and/or waivers, fee remissions, etc for schooling and daycare at UCLA?!)

Create documents that guide CAP and departments in their reviews for promotion cases that take into account COVID challenges. Consider the longer term support that will be needed and fund it.

I would like the university to actively state that disruptions and additional stressors due to covid will be taken into account when considering promotion and tenure decisions. thus far the university has said that all faculty will be subject to the same expectations for promotion as pre-covid, except you have more time to get there. This response assumes that after covid we can just pick up where we left off and that we will be able to make up all the losses of the last year. This approach is not realistic.

Rather making us justify what we've been doing and how covid slows down our research, it should be assumed and standards accordingly adjusted, especially for junior faculty who face greater vulnerability.

For junior faculty:

Follow up focused on junior faculty to see if they are connected with senior mentors and/or if they want to be. It would be wonderful if attention was placed on this and efforts were made by the university to help make connections, as needed.

For students:

PhD training programs should build in more flexibility about the timing of things like fieldwork, archival research, performance, and the like

Please establish a university fund that students can access to tie them over or alleviate their financial hardships without asking for justifications and documentation. This would deter many students from seeking help.

C. Additional issues:

Some individual CSWAC members mentioned additional issues that, although not included in the above discussion, deserve mention. These include:

- Insufficient mentoring of junior faculty by senior faculty during the pandemic in some departments
- Challenges and expenses in creating adequate workspace at home (for both faculty and students)
- The differential vulnerability to pandemic impacts based on class, race, gender, age, and rank
- The challenges and stress of evaluating students during a pandemic using usual measures
- The increased vulnerabilities and pressures that domestic violence survivors have experienced
- The intensification of gaps in labor and teaching equity within departments; some faculty have long shouldered these burdens much more than others, and this gap has been widened on account of increased demands of the pandemic
- The added levels of emotional support that faculty of color have been providing to support students of color, who look to them for guidance and have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic
- The unique burdens carried by single, senior women, who must rely on themselves and are often isolated