

Office of the President

TO MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE:

DISCUSSION ITEM

For Meeting of May 18, 2022

BRIEFING ON THE MITIGATING COVID-19 IMPACTS ON FACULTY WORKING GROUP

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2022, the Joint Academic Senate-Administration Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts on Faculty Working Group (MCIF-WG) completed its final report, comprising five recommendations to University leadership on addressing negative COVID-19 impacts on faculty. This item summarizes the impetus for the MCIF-WG, the negative impacts assessed, and identified interventions. The MCIF-WG's highest-priority recommendations focused on how to fairly account for these impacts in the academic advancement process and, important to the University of California's mission, proposed campus approaches to give faculty the resources and time necessary to recover from disruptions to research and scholarship.

BACKGROUND

University of California Provost and Executive Vice President Michael Brown appointed the Joint Senate-Administration Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts on Faculty Working Group in April 2021, with UC Davis Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Mary Croughan and current Academic Council Chair Robert Horwitz of UC San Diego as Co-Chairs. University of California President Michael V. Drake requested its formation in response to a set of 21 recommendations endorsed by the Academic Council in 2021 and forwarded by the Universitywide Committees on Faculty Welfare and on Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Equity. The five MCIF-WG recommendations are informed by this initial set of Academic Council recommendations and propose concrete steps for campuses to take to address them.

The Academic Council noted that the ramifications of COVID-19 could “persist for several years.” From its evaluation over the past year, the MCIF-WG agrees with this assessment and so has asked that campuses implement and sustain recommendations through the end of FY2025-26.

Negative impacts to faculty that led to the formation of the MCIF-WG include stalled research and scholarship, fewer opportunities for collaboration, pivoting to unfamiliar remote instruction, increased administrative coordination to keep departments functioning, lowered morale and increased anxiety due to work-life balance issues, health concerns, and dependent care responsibilities, among others.

All of these impacts have implications on the individual faculty member's advancement in the

academic advancement review process and on the University's collective productivity and excellence. Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic, some faculty have experienced differential COVID-19 impacts based on age, gender, race/ethnicity, caregiving responsibilities, and/or academic level, which, if unaddressed, could negatively affect UC's goals to diversify the faculty and build an institution that is representative of all of the citizens of California. Strategic interventions and direct investment on the part of campuses will be essential to the recovery of both individual faculty members as well as the University's academic mission.

“ACHIEVEMENT RELATIVE TO OPPORTUNITIES” PRINCIPLES

One of the areas the MCIF-WG ranked as highest-priority related to the academic advancement review process. Members were concerned about maintaining UC's standards of excellence while also being fair to faculty who faced unprecedented disruption to their work due to the pandemic. To find a balance between these two factors, the MCIF-WG adopted “Achievement Relative to Opportunities” principles first espoused in the original Academic Council letter to UC President Drake. As described, “Achievement Relative to Opportunities” principles “enable merit and promotion reviews to evaluate candidates fairly based on their individual review-period professional accomplishments by taking into account unexpected or disruptive circumstances during that period that may have curtailed the candidate's normal ability to achieve expected outcomes.”

“Achievement Relative to Opportunities” principles provide a framework through which standards can be upheld, faculty can receive fair treatment given individualized circumstances, and academic advancement review practices can be transparent and equitable across the system. The MCIF-WG's final report includes broad guidance to campuses on how to apply these principles and recognizes the campus need to customize its approach. It asks campuses to encourage faculty submission of academic files on schedule with an expectation that reviewers will incorporate “Achievement Relative to Opportunities” principles in their evaluation.

RESOURCES AND TIME FOR RESEARCH RECOVERY

In addition to ensuring that faculty members' academic files are assessed in light of negative impacts experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the MCIF-WG also views direct campus investment as critical for individual and institutional recovery in research and scholarship. Without appropriate investment from University leadership, the problems stemming from COVID-19 disruptions have the potential to endure well past the end of the pandemic, undermining the progress of individual faculty *and* the University, particularly in the research mission. Investment programs would support faculty whose research was disrupted as well as those faculty called to take on additional administrative or patient care responsibility during the crisis. Campus-established funding mechanisms would provide grants to advance research or scholarship and support COVID-related active service/modified duties programs.

DIFFERENTIAL IMPACTS OF COVID-19

The negative impacts of the pandemic did not fall evenly on all faculty, with differential impacts of COVID-19 based on age, gender, race/ethnicity, caregiving responsibilities, and academic

level with early-career faculty generally feeling greater impact. The UC Office of the President collected data on the use of COVID-related Dependent Care Modified Duties programs, established to accommodate increased dependent care responsibilities necessitated by the pandemic, at eight participating campuses beginning in 2021.¹ Of those faculty who made use of the programs, 63 percent were women. In its May 2021 survey of UC faculty on their experience during the pandemic, the Academic Senate also found that women and newly appointed faculty were most likely to report that their research or scholarship suffered due to remote instruction, citing increased dependent care responsibilities as one of the factors. This is similar to national and international trends.

Both of these findings imply an environment in which early to mid-career women faculty, on average, assumed more dependent care responsibilities when normal childcare services closed and the need for elder care increased. This was at the expense of time that would normally be directed toward academic productivity. At the same time, the Office of the President reported that 19 percent of faculty participating in the COVID-related Dependent Care Modified Duties programs were from under-represented minority populations when they are 13 percent of the faculty population, suggesting that impacts on these faculty members were also disproportionate. Without strategic interventions on the part of the University, such as the introduction of “Achievement Relative to Opportunities” principles or investment to allow for more dedicated time for research and scholarship, disparities in career growth could increase over the long-term. Cumulatively, these disparities could have a detrimental effect on the diversity and composition of UC’s faculty, with subsequent reductions in our ability to recruit and retain diverse faculty.

CAMPUS IMPLEMENTATION

The MCIF-WG final report recommends developing a sustainable implementation plan through FY2025-26 and recommends that the Office of the Provost/Executive Vice Chancellor at each campus work with the campus’ Committees on Faculty Welfare and on Academic Personnel. It asks for the plan to be posted for the campus community no later than October 1, 2022, with notification to the UC Provost and Executive Vice President. The MCIF-WG acknowledges the number of competing priorities that campus administrations are managing, so the final report stresses the importance of designating an implementation lead and establishing clear lines of accountability, so recommendations are enacted effectively. Variations of some of the actions proposed by the MCIF-WG are already in place at some campuses. The final report recommendations should help campuses enhance and sustain these measures.

LONG-TERM VISION

The five MCIF-WG recommendations center on a short-term time horizon of five years, FY2021-22 through FY2025-26. The original 21 Academic Council recommendations also included six long-term recommendations based in longstanding University challenges that were exacerbated due to the pandemic. Due to its interest in advancing its five recommendations, the MCIF-WG decided to put forward its view on these six long-term recommendations without prescribing specific measures for implementation, but the MCIF-

¹ Two campuses had existing policies to manage these circumstances.

WG asks that future engagement with the long term recommendations consider their final report and its recommendations. Two of the long-term issue areas included dependent care and affordable housing.

NEXT STEPS

In the early period following the release of the MCIF-WG final report to campuses, Co-Chairs Mary Croughan and Robert Horwitz will work with the UC Provost to socialize the five recommendations with campus leadership and to discuss and explore commitments to implement and sustain the recommendations through FY2025-26. The goal is to implement a baseline of transparent and equitable principles and practices for addressing negative COVID-19 impacts on faculty.

Following this early period of socialization, the Office of the UC Provost and Executive Vice President will work with campus Executive Vice Chancellors/Provosts to monitor and evaluate the continued implementation of the recommendations across the system.

KEY TO ACRONYMS

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
MCIF-WG	Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts on Faculty Working Group

ATTACHMENTS:

[Attachment 1. Joint Senate-Administration Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts on Faculty Working Group Final Report \(Spring 2022\)](#)