MEMORANDUM

To:  Deans Kunkel, [Sandheinrich](https://www.uwlax.edu/profile/msandheinrich), Wycoff-Horn, and Interim Dean Brooks

From: UW-L Promotion, Tenure, and Salary Committee; Brad Seebach, Faculty Senate Chair

Date:  Oct. 14, 2020

Subject:  Impact of COVID on faculty

The Promotion, Tenure, and Salary Committee has been charged with providing guidance to Departments and JPC with respect to the impact of the pandemic conditions on faculty promotion and tenure decisions. While our work on this has only just begun, our background research, including peer-reviewed, popular press, and higher education (e.g., *Inside Higher education*) publications,

suggests that the pandemic is having a negative impact on many faculty, but especially female and faculty of color, amplifying and exacerbating the inequities that already exist.

Results of a recent survey that we sent to UW-L department chairs also indicates concern regarding the impact of the pandemic on faculty performance and reviews. Salient findings from the survey include:

* About 65% of our respondents (N = 37) rated the impact of the pandemic on faculty promotion/tenure/post-tenure review as either *moderate*(30%), *a lot* (16%), or *a great deal* (19%).
* Among the three areas of faculty responsibilities, scholarship was rated as the most negatively impacted by the pandemic, followed by teaching, and service.
* Among the respondents who rated the negative effects as *a lot* (n = 10) or *a great*deal (n = 24)*,*92%identified work/life balance as the area that was the most seriously disrupted.
* In response to the question, *If inequities might exist, what do you perceive these inequities will stem from?* 46% of all department chairs explicitly noted the differential impact of the pandemic on women, faculty of color, and others with caregiving responsibilities. Representative statements reflecting this concern are attached in the Appendix.

Although our report is not yet finalized, these results were sufficiently alarming that we thought it important they be shared with upper-level administrators who will soon be evaluating faculty portfolios. We encourage the deans to review the referenced resources and to read the attached statements of our department chairs. In addition, we are recommending that chairs and/or dean’s letters of support for faculty going up for promotion and/or tenure include, if warranted, a statement contextualizing for JPC the impact that the pandemic has had on the particular faculty member under consideration. For example, it might be appropriate to include a statement such as, “The faculty member’s research was impacted due to the inaccessibility of their lab space and unavailability of their student research assistants when the university shut down.”

As can be seen from the department chair statements and the preliminary results of our survey, the pandemic has affected faculty productivity and well-being in myriad ways. Further, as the pandemic grinds on and these difficulties continue, we expect the effects to compound and result in disruptions to productivity in the immediate years to come. We hope that you will take the concerns of our faculty and department chairs into consideration as you evaluate the portfolios of those coming up for tenure and promotion this semester.

**Appendix**

**Publications**

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-020-0921-y>

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02183-x>

[https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(20)31412-4.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736%2820%2931412-4.pdf)

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/women-in-science-may-suffer-lasting-career-damage-from-covid-19/>

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/18/health/coronavirus-research-gender-bias-scn/index.html>

**Selected Department Chair Statements (related to inequities)**

*Women and BIPOC will be impacted to a greater extent as they either have 1) traditionally have higher commitments to household tasks and child rearing, which have been greatly exacerbated by COVID-19 due to online schooling and loss of childcare services. 2) Individuals in one or both groups often come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and have to support not only themselves, but often extended families and/or groups. If given a choice to delay tenure by a year, these groups will likely have a higher rate of taking the extension compared to their peers. This will delay career advancement and have economic impact on these individuals/groups in perpetuity as the loss of income from promotion/tenure will be compounded throughout their careers. This is simply not equitable or acceptable to the university commitment to inclusive excellence*

*People with children in school, I think are facing more pressures than those without children, which could impact their research and possibly teaching quality. At the same time older folks might be facing more anxiety and potential health concerns so they are impacted too. And, simply being away from the office creates a disconnect and influences organization and routine, which can be unsettling as well.*

*Faculty with family obligations (children, parents, partner) will be disproportionately impacted. Their responsibilities have been extended way beyond their commitments to the university.*

*The pandemic has disproportionately affected women and people of color in terms of workload and childcare issues.*

*I think COVID has exacerbated pre-existing gender inequities. Women in our department do a lot of the administrative work, leaving men to focus on scholarship. Although it appears to be a subtle inequity, it shows up in P/T conversations.*

*Having caregiving responsibilities versus not having caregiving responsibilities makes all the difference in people's ability to get work done during a pandemic--especially research. Within my own department, these inequities exist (not related to any department culture inequities, just the reality of people's lives and the larger society) and will break down on gender lines, to the possible detriment of a female faculty member with caregiving responsibilities. This is the reality of these folks' lives, but it connects to the well-known research that women do, on average, more caregiving work than men, and also face more (sometimes related) barriers to promotion.*

*The amount of time devoted to instructional (re)design and student advising has more than tripled since COVID, leaving less time for research / service - and that was BEFORE we lost a position. Student demands for faculty time (particularly for women faculty, faculty of color) are at an all-time high. The # of presentation opportunities has diminished greatly as conferences were cancelled, and timelines for some of our field's publications have an even greater backlog.*

*I will add a bit of scientific data that addresses the "parent trap" as related to research scientists, caring giving responsibilities, and gender. Female faculty appear to have been and continue to be disproportionally affected by the pandemic. Nature Human Behavior published July 15, 2020 entitled "Unequal effects of the COVID-19 pandemic" (https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-020-0921-y). Survey participants provided pre- and post-COVID responses related to workload. As noted in the article, work allotment of female faculty, with childcare responsibilities, were most negatively affected from a scholarship perspective. This is only one study and included a narrow segment of scientists, but I have witnessed some of the same impacts on all of our faculty. The pandemic has affected everyone differently, which makes providing assistance so challenging.*