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January 26, 2021

**MICHAEL DRAKE, PRESIDENT**  
**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**

**Re: Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts on Faculty**

Dear President Drake,

The Academic Council has endorsed the attached letter from the University Committee on Faculty Welfare (UCFW) and the University Committee on Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Equity (UCAADE), with recommendations for mitigating COVID-19 impacts on faculty advancement, morale, work-life balance, and dependent care responsibilities. The recommendations outline both immediate actions the University can take to support faculty, and also longer-term systemic changes to better support equity, inclusion, recruitment, and retention.

Council strongly endorses the expressions of concern presented in the letter, and its focus on junior colleagues, those with caregiver responsibilities, and those from underrepresented groups who may be most likely to be negatively affected by the pandemic. Council also emphasizes the need for the University to track the pandemic's effects on faculty research productivity, which may persist for several years.

In addition, the Council recognizes that these mitigation strategies carry costs that will be difficult for some campuses to manage without additional resources, especially given how difficult it is to accommodate teaching and service reductions equitably in a department. There is also concern that granting COVID-related leaves to faculty could burden others who would have to pick up the teaching workload. Thus, we are sensitive to the possibility of an unfunded mandate to campuses at a time when dramatic budget cuts are being considered. We expect the University may be asked to provide funding to departments to help prevent these unintended consequences. In any event, it is clear that any systemwide actions requiring additional investment will need further discussion. We look forward to working with you on these next steps.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,



Mary Gauvain, Chair  
Academic Council

Cc: Provost Brown  
Vice Provost Carlson  
UCFW Chair Halpain  
UCAADE Chair Arsuaga  
Academic Council  
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Encl.



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON FACULTY WELFARE (UCFW)  
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December 21, 2020

**MARY GAUVAIN, CHAIR  
ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**RE: Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts on Faculty**

Dear Mary,

The University Committee on Faculty Welfare (UCFW) and the University Committee on Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Equity (UCAADE) have discussed in-depth the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on faculty, particularly the impacts to academic advancement and to work-life balance and the provision of dependent care. We recognize and appreciate the interim measures taken so far, but they are inadequate to address identified needs. Below, we discuss both short-term, immediate consequences and remedies, as well as longer-term, more systemic concerns underscored by the pandemic and strategies to address them.

The global pandemic is affecting nearly every faculty member in some manner. However, there are large disparities in the magnitude of negative impacts to teaching, service, and research productivity across divisions, departments, and among individual faculty members. In addition to the impact of mandatory campus closures, there are major impacts to faculty who have substantial at-home dependent care responsibilities, particularly those with infants and preschool age children, and those in regions where school openings are restricted, necessitating at-home support of K-12 children attending school online. Access to day care and in-home paid assistance is limited, or unaffordable.

*Responses by UC must consider both the acute and the long-lasting impacts on faculty career advancement and success.* There are immediate, acute effects on faculty productivity, not only because of dependent care issues but also due to the increased time demands of remote teaching, and the increased needs of students who require mentoring during this stressful time. In addition, creative and research activities are impacted variably due to COVID-related campus closures, lack of access to human research subjects, delays in supply and equipment availability, and a lack of direct access to collegial interactions that drive research and creative endeavors. Importantly, impacts to productivity may have ripple effects that last for several years, potentially compounded by as yet unknown factors, including potential reductions in research funding stemming from economic impacts of the pandemic. Lost research and scholarship opportunities may thus become exacerbated and result in irretrievable reductions in research success.

UCFW/UCAADE note that, while impacts vary greatly across individuals, all these impacts combined are *disproportionately affecting historically marginalized faculty as a whole, particularly women and members of historically underrepresented groups. Women of color are especially impacted. A recent report by McKinsey has documented these race and gender disparities since the pandemic, illustrating the alarming potential for significant workplace attrition at all career tiers, even (and especially) at upper levels of career attainment* <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace#> . (NOTE: While this survey focused on the corporate setting, the findings seem likely to apply in large measure to faculty in academia as well.)

We have divided our comments and recommendations, below, into two parts to emphasize the need for (a) urgent and immediate action (in the time frame ranging from this month through the next two to five years); and (b) to initiate discussion on how the University of California may address critical, systemic challenges in order to create a University environment that values a diverse faculty and fosters equity and inclusion throughout its mission.

## **PART I: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTIONS**

We are relieved that the UC Office of the President and the Chancellors of all ten UC Campuses recognize the profound, negative impacts that the global pandemic is having on the career success and advancement of most faculty. We are grateful for the measures that have been implemented by UC President Drake and the UC Provost to temporarily expand leave options during the pandemic. However, such measures still far short of what will be needed to mitigate the fallout from the COVID-era. We therefore propose the following actions be taken by every campus, strongly supported wherever needed by UCOP, to minimize the deleterious effects of the COVID-era on individual faculty members and the potential attrition that may otherwise result.

1. Establish a campus-level COVID-era Faculty Career Support Committee (CFCSC) – or an alternatively named equivalent -- to oversee implementation of equity measures to mitigate COVID-era impacts to faculty in a clear & transparent manner. This committee should include both Senate & Administrative representatives to endow it with policy-making and fiscal support authority. We note that direct collaboration between entities such as Academic Personnel and Senate committee representatives provide the best opportunity to effectively address the serious impacts on faculty success arising from the pandemic.
2. Implement accommodations to teaching and service duties when requested by individual faculty members; the above Committee should recommend, monitor, and, as needed, mediate such accommodations. We note that the 17 September, 2020 memo from UC Provost Michael Brown granting campuses flexibility to adopt COVID-related Dependent Care Modified Duties programs, modeled after Active Service Modified Duties programs, is an excellent first step in implementing such accommodations. However, additional support and accommodations may be needed for individual faculty, and the ability of departments to offer such support may vary widely. There are significant concerns about equity in the implementation of teaching and service accommodations, as detailed below. In addition to creating new programs and policies to support faculty during the COVID-era, UCFW/UCAADE strongly supports a mechanism, such as the proposal to *award additional sabbatical credit*, to acknowledge the significant time and effort the

faculty have provided in maintaining educational and research excellence during this unprecedented time.

3. Establish campus-level funding to support teaching accommodations whenever departmental resources fall short of providing needed COVID-related teaching relief.
4. Adjust expectations for promotions & merit advances to conform to *Achievement Relative to Opportunities (ARO) principles*. ARO 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. This can be initiated by inviting faculty to include in their file of review a "COVID impact statement." We note, however, that such impacts may not be limited to the COVID-era *per se*: Many faculty members were impacted, for example, by the devastating fires and power outages throughout California in recent years. Campus Committees on Academic Personnel (CAP) should create and disseminate guidelines for implementing these ARO adjustments. *System-wide CAP should first establish standards and guidelines to promote uniformity and equity across campuses*. UCFW/UCAADE would be pleased to collaborate with UCAP to develop such guidelines. (Please see as example the Questionnaire <https://www.pnas.org/content/suppl/2020/06/17/2010636117.DCSupplemental> from the accompanying article in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* by Malisch et al 2020 <https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/117/27/15378.full.pdf> ). *UCFW/UCAADE notes that this does not imply that standards of excellence should be lowered*. Rather, the UC should respond to the reality of lost opportunities due to the COVID era, recognizing that they are myriad, diverse, and potentially long-lasting for many faculty.
5. If "COVID impact statements" are to be encouraged and used during merit and promotion review, then faculty should not feel pressured to divulge personal details or circumstances in their files. It is strongly preferred that "COVID impact statements" provide merely a detailed accounting of lost opportunities in the professional domain (e.g., weeks of lost productivity due to campus closures, grants not submitted, manuscript submissions delayed; students not graduated; performances cancelled, etc.), rather than a description of personal impacts. In other words, *faculty should not be required to describe personal details and circumstances, such as family or personal illnesses or demands of dependent care duties, etc., in their files*). Excluding such personal details could help mitigate concerns over implicit bias, but may not eliminate them completely.
6. Encourage campus administration, tenure and promotion committees, and other Senate committees to be proactive in promoting equity in the wake of COVID-era impacts. Campuses should provide and require anti-bias training for all members of promotion committees, from the department level on up, that specifically addresses the highly variable need for ARO considerations among individual faculty. Responses to mitigate negative COVID-era career impacts should not be "one-size-fits all." Just as the research, service, and teaching dossiers will be unique to each faculty member, *so too will be each individual's impact from the pandemic*. It has been noted that some faculty's productivity may even increase as a result of the changes imposed by the pandemic.

7. Provide expected merit/promotion-related salary increases, even when promotions & advances are delayed due to COVID-era impacts.
8. Use “stop-the-clock” and deferrals as mechanisms to delay file review only when ARO standards are inadequate to accommodate the COVID-era impacts; ensure equity in tenure and advancement for meritorious faculty at all levels.
9. Avoid erosion of leadership opportunities, especially for highly-impacted groups of faculty. Provide assurances that faculty members who ask to be relieved of leadership roles be availed of opportunities to return to their leadership posts as soon as practical and desired by the faculty member.
10. Provide financial support as much as possible to support faculty with caregiving responsibilities to offset hiring of external caregivers when a faculty member’s COVID-era related caregiving directly conflicts with teaching and research-conference attendance, or similar professional activities. We note that re-purposing funds originally designated to support faculty travel might be used, in part, to provide such caregiving support, such as has been done at UC San Diego <https://aps.ucsd.edu/faculty-resources/family/depcaretravelgrants.html>.
11. Extend campus “bridge funding” mechanisms so that they may be used not only to support faculty whose have lost all funding, but also to recover losses in funding for graduate and postdoc support. Faculty have been required to continue salary and benefit support of such trainees even when access to labs and studios have been curtailed due to county health measures for COVID-19 restrictions. Similarly, remove (or extend) expiration dates on start-up or other perishable funds to allow for their extended use.
12. Recognize that the COVID-era has had significant impacts on the networks and networking opportunities that are a cornerstone of scholarly exchange of information and achievement. System-wide UC and campuses should establish mechanisms to help restore such networks and maximize opportunities for faculty, especially junior faculty, to re-engage as quickly and effectively as possible. UCFW/UCAADE is particularly concerned how this loss may impact the solicitation of support letters from colleagues that are used in tenure and promotion evaluation, particularly for junior faculty.
13. Establish a culture of awareness of the disparate impacts of the COVID-era on career success across the academic and university spectrum, including impacts on faculty, students, postdocs/trainees, and staff. This *cultural shift should emanate from top leadership*, beginning at the Office of the President and the Chair of the Academic Senate.
14. Communicate effectively, transparently, and quickly. Because of the rapid changes brought on by the pandemic, and the urgent nature of many required responses, it is easy for lines of communication to be disrupted. It is imperative that faculty be made aware of changes to policy, availability of accommodations, options, and resources, and be provided instruction on how to apply for accommodations and submit “COVID impact statements in a timely manner, lest

windows of opportunity close. The COVID-era Faculty Career Support Committee (CFCSC) could be a *campus-level communication node to ensure effective dissemination of information.*

15. Chairs, Deans, University Administration, and appropriate Senate committees should frequently quantify and evaluate the success of these support measures & make adjustments as needed. Here, again, the campus level COVID-era Faculty Career Support Committee (CFCSC) could be a resource where convergent information and metrics are evaluated and recommendations issued regarding COVID-era impact mitigation. UCFW/UCAADE strongly urges that system-wide Academic Personnel communicate with campus-level CFCSCs, gather data on the policies and programs and outcome measures, including metrics pertaining to gender, race, ethnicity, and LGBTQ identity.

## **PART II: LONG-TERM IMPACTS AND STRENGTHENING UC VALUES**

Despite its many challenges, the COVID-19-era provides an opportunity to strengthen the values of the UC in order to build and maintain an excellent, diverse, and successful faculty, and to make the UC “the employer of choice” for world class academics across disciplines.

For the University of California to remain competitive with top institutions in attracting and retaining top faculty, the University must continue to close the salary gap, and it must retain and strengthen its employee benefits, especially its retirement and health plans. In addition, UCFW/UCAADE recommends the following steps be taken, beginning now, to position the UC to be the new-era leader in academic excellence at a top public institution of research and higher education.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE GOALS AND ACTIONS**

1. Financial support for home purchases. For the University of California to remain competitive with top institutions in attracting and retaining top faculty, the University must continue to close the salary gap, and it must retain and strengthen its employee benefits, especially its retirement and health plans. UCFW/UCAADE propose that, in addition, the UC must strengthen support for home-ownership. Lack of access to affordable housing has been a growing problem in many areas of California, including within the regions hosting nearly all of the UC campuses. An increasing share of U.S. households with children are headed by single parents, especially single mothers, who can struggle to achieve home ownership. We expect this struggle to be amplified by the financial hardships due to the pandemic and the current economic crisis. Moreover, as the UC strives to recruit and retain more faculty of color, it must recognize that many such potential colleagues come from communities that have traditionally struggled, often as a direct result of systemic racism, to accumulate the personal and generational wealth that puts home ownership within financial reach. We recommend that the Academic Senate and UCOP form a task force to explore options for offering enhanced support, including down-payment assistance, to foster home ownership for faculty who lack adequate means.
2. Childcare. The pandemic has exacerbated significant and long-standing deficiencies in childcare availability on most campuses. We recommend that the Academic Senate and UCOP form a task force to investigate the unmet needs for affordable, strategically located childcare services across

all the UC campuses, and establish metrics and standards for equitable childcare access. The task force should generate recommendations not only for “brick-and-mortar” solutions, but other creative ways to ease the childcare strain on its faculty, staff, and student populations.

3. Financial support for dependent care for faculty travel to scientific conferences and collaborative activities. As noted above, some, but not all, campuses have established funding mechanisms to assist faculty with dependent care responsibilities when traveling to scholarly meetings. UCFW/UCAADE strongly recommend that UCOP establishes a system-wide mechanism for such support, and ensure equity and inclusion in its policy implementation. Moreover, such funding mechanisms should have built-in flexibility so that they could be *quickly revised/repurposed for at-home dependent care during emergencies*, such as the COVID pandemic or the regional wildfires, i.e., whenever there are government-mandated school closures.
4. Use the lessons of the COVID-era to favor family friendly policies. In addition to greatly strengthening on-site childcare support with multiple options, campuses can continue to evaluate means of evolving a family-friendly community. These include, for example, encouraging the options for as-needed online/remote teaching (e.g., for days when home care for sick dependents is required of a faculty member), having “zoom conference” option for campus departmental and committee meetings, etc. UCFW/UCAADE urges that every campus establish a Committee on Family Friendly Policies (or equivalent) that will allow collaboration among administration, faculty, staff, and students to make policy recommendations and monitor their success through appropriate metrics, as well as identify unmet needs. This committee should be separate from and live beyond the COVID-era specific committee proposed in Part I, above.
5. Updating how we define “excellence.” The dramatic impacts we are facing as a UC Faculty can and should be viewed as an opportunity to reassess our values and our system of merit evaluations. In many cases, the benchmarks for evaluating faculty contributions to the scholarship and success of UC are holdovers from a different cultural era, when many fewer women and URG faculty held positions, when there were fewer two-career couples throughout society, when there were fewer single-parent households, when parenting and other dependent care duties were distributed less equitably, and when funding for the research enterprise was structured very differently. We do not advocate that standards that allow the UC to remain a world-premiere institution be lowered. However, we propose that the current inflection point created by the Covid pandemic spark a broader conversation around what constitutes “excellence” at the UC regarding faculty performance.
6. Evaluating our fellow faculty members as “whole persons.” Going forward from here, can we create a culture at the UC that allows all faculty to feel welcome, appreciated, and thrive? Some members propose that we revise our collective view of disrupted productivity. Can we consider each individual faculty member as a whole human being who brings a diverse set of experiences, skills, perspectives, and potential for future success? Should we reject the idea that there is something inherently “wrong” with having periods of reduced productivity? Such unanticipated reductions are usually temporary, and can stem from unplanned “life experiences” that befall most people at some point in their lives. The pandemic is creating negative experiences



impacting productivity for nearly everyone at the UC, thereby revealing gaps in our support safety net and amplifying systemic inequities. However, during any “normal” time there are individuals who experience career disruptions due to personal or family-related medical circumstances, divorce, death and bereavement, wildfire evacuations, home loss etc. Let us consider how we, as the Senate, may promote a culture among our peers where empathy and excellence coexist.

Sincerely,

Shelley Halpain, UCFW Chair

Javier Arsuaga, UCAADE Chair

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UCAADE  
Hilary Baxter, Executive Director, Academic Senate  
Robert Horwitz, Academic Council Vice Chair