



Kum-Kum Bhavnani
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*Chair of the Assembly of the Academic Senate
Faculty Representative to the Regents
University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, California 94607-5200*

July 9, 2020

ACADEMIC SENATE DIVISION CHAIRS

Re: Mitigating Negative COVID-19 Impacts

Dear Colleagues,

The Academic Council has unanimously endorsed the attached twin set of recommendations from the University Committee on Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Equity (UCAADE) and the University Committee on Research Policy (UCORP) for mitigating the negative effects of COVID-19.

UCAADE's letter focuses on the negative effects of COVID-19 on equity, diversity, and inclusion in the UC community. The recommendations discuss inequalities and challenges to diversity as they relate to food and housing insecurity; unequal challenges in participating in coursework and in delivering instruction; interruptions to doctoral student and postdoctoral scholar progress and funding; career-shaping disruptions for faculty that disproportionately impact women, especially those who have very young children; and significant interruptions to the UC's efforts to diversify faculty.

UCORP's letter notes that COVID-19 will have long-term impacts on research productivity and career advancement for some faculty, with a similar focus on disproportionate impacts on early career and women faculty. The committee recommends giving faculty the option of removing the COVID period from CAP evaluations, to base evaluations on the normal period minus the COVID duration. This "pro-rating" of the tenure standard would take into account lost time, productivity, and economic capacity.

I thank you for all that you are doing during this pandemic, and thank the UC faculty and graduate students who are working hard to develop educational and research strategies that support everyone during this crisis. The murder of George Floyd has affected many of us very deeply as well. These are troubled times.

I ask Senate Division Chairs to route the documents to their respective Committees on Diversity, Academic Personnel, and Research. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Warm wishes,



Kum-Kum Bhavnani, Chair
Academic Council

cc: President Napolitano
Provost Brown
Vice Provost Gullatt
Academic Council
UCAADE
UCORP
Senate Directors



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, DIVERSITY,
AND EQUITY (UCAADE)
Mona Lynch, Chair
lynchm@uci.edu

ACADEMIC SENATE
University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
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June 16, 2020

**KUM-KUM BHAVNANI
CHAIR, ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

RE: COVID-19 Impacts

Dear Kum-Kum:

I am writing on behalf of the University Committee on Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Equity (UCAADE) to share our concerns about how COVID-19 is differentially affecting members of the UC community in ways that negatively impact equity, diversity, and inclusion. We raise a number of issues and make some recommendations that aim to mitigate these impacts. We seek Academic Council endorsement of our recommendations.

- 1) *Food and housing insecurity among our undergraduate and graduate students.* These challenges have become greater under the current pandemic response, and they have become more difficult to address with campuses largely shut down and students dispersed away from campus. We are hearing from students whose families have been hit very hard with job losses that the struggles are fundamentally about basic survival. The adverse impact of the economic downturn is particularly acute for students who are themselves undocumented or DACA, and/or who have undocumented family members who are not eligible for federal relief. We strongly recommend that the UC systemically address the profound inequalities that have been exacerbated by COVID-19, including by developing an accessible system of meeting the basic needs of our students in the absence of full housing and food service options (including campus pantries) on campus, as we move into an extended period of remote university business.
- 2) *Unequal challenges in participating in coursework and in delivering instruction.* Our students' basic needs challenges have both primary and secondary negative impacts on their learning experience, including the inability to perform due to lack of internet access and/or appropriate hardware or software that is required to access and participate in remote classes, as well as the lack of study space that facilitates learning and participating in classes. Survey data from a recent systemwide survey of UC undergraduates (the Spring 2020 UCUES data) indicates that 32% of undergraduates are concerned or very concerned about having adequate internet access for their remote courses, with an

additional 33% being somewhat concerned. The majority (60%) of student respondents were concerned or very concerned about having appropriate study space under the COVID-related remote conditions, and only 20% of undergraduates expressed no concerns about this. The basic needs resource challenges also produce profound anxiety and other psychological traumas for our students that are more difficult to address with campus closures. In preparation for a remote Fall 2020 term, the campuses need to address the profound inequality in the learning environment that has attended remote instruction, including, at minimum, providing access to basic equipment and adequate internet access needed to participate in coursework. This can be done through a specific financial aid subsidy to pay for these basic necessities required to participate in classes. These technological challenges extend to teaching assistants and adjunct instructors who may not have the resources to pay for adequate internet access and equipment to provide instruction to students. Therefore, it is imperative that all who are responsible for instruction are provided the necessary tools for its delivery.

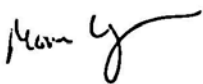
- 3) *Interruptions to doctoral student and postdoctoral scholar progress and funding.* Many early career scholars are experiencing research interruptions at a critical stage of data collection that necessarily sets back their timeline to completion and/or their ability to compete on the academic job market. However, given the budget situation that is emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing doctoral support for students beyond funding guarantees will be even more difficult. Postdoctoral scholars face a similar challenge, as their term-limited appointments may mean loss of funding without completing the requisite research to make them competitive on the job market. This will have significant career-trajectory impacts on doctoral students and postdoctoral scholars, especially those without other means of support, so will exacerbate inequities in the “pipeline” of future faculty. Campuses should be encouraged to think creatively about how to extend funding for current doctoral students, including increasing training opportunities that will enhance the competitiveness of our students in the challenging academic job market. They should also address the problem of how widespread research shut-down impacts postdoctoral scholars, both in the immediate term and in regard to its impact on career trajectories. This might include developing or expanding undergraduate teaching opportunities for advanced students and postdocs who are otherwise unfunded; increased internal fellowship opportunities for dissertation completion; and funded summer research opportunities. In regard to the challenges for current graduate students, one possible funding source could be through reduced doctoral admissions during the ensuing budget crisis, wherein some saving can be directed to provide extended support to current students whose trajectories are impacted by COVID-19.
- 4) *Career-shaping disruptions for faculty that disproportionately impact women, especially those who have very young children.* There are numerous anecdotes and emerging data indicating that women, who are disproportionately primary or sole caregivers, are disproportionately experiencing disruption of their research, given the current conditions of work and demands to home school, care take, and teach. This issue especially impacts

junior faculty and may have career-shaping consequences for achievement of tenure, and well as the advancement trajectory. This issue is not limited to early-career faculty, however. Caregiving obligations for elderly and infirm family members, a challenge exacerbated by the pandemic, also disproportionately fall to women, and may stall advancement. While the UC has responded with some policies that recognize these challenges, at least in the short-term, the effects will be longer-lasting and will chart trajectories that likely will exacerbate gender-based inequities in the merit and promotion system. While the COVID-19 related Stop-the-Clock extension and deferral options that have been made available on campuses can mitigate some negative impact in the near-term, those policies have also been [shown](#) to be associated with longer-term gender-based inequities in career trajectories. To that end, we support UCAP's recommendation in its 4-21-2020 COVID-19 letter to Council that flexible use of the special steps Assistant Professor V and Associate Professor IV should be encouraged where applicable to mitigate equity gaps in academic step and ladder progress. We also recommend that the UC campuses maintain and make available a robust equity review process that takes into account the differential impact of this unprecedented disruption to research, to ensure that systemic gender inequity in salaries is not produced or exacerbated in the system, as these have been [shown](#) to exist on our campuses.

- 5) *Interruption to the UC's efforts to diversify faculty.* There is no doubt that hiring is going to significantly slow down over the next few years due to the budget impact of COVID-19, and this will mean our considerable efforts to diversify faculty will also be stalled. One important and straightforward mitigation strategy would be to advocate for continued permanent funding support at current levels for the PFP hiring incentive (as well as continued funding for the President's Postdoctoral Fellowship itself), carving out that exception to any imposed campus hiring freezes. This program's important role in contributing to faculty diversity in the UC cannot be understated and should be promoted to campuses as a hiring mechanism. Moreover, campus leadership should commit to maintaining their Chancellor's postdoctoral fellows programs, which substantially expand the pool of hiring incentive-eligible fellows. Finally, individual campuses are strongly encouraged to maintain existing diversity programs for faculty recruitment and retention, and/or prioritize recruitment in units that explicitly seek to diversify faculty in their searches.

Thank you for keeping these issues on the Academic Senate's agenda as we collectively address the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,



Mona Lynch
Chair, UCAADE



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH POLICY (UCORP)
Andrew Baird, Chair
Email: anbaird@ucsd.edu

University of California
Academic Senate
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Fl.
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July 8, 2020

**KUM-KUM BHAVNANI
CHAIR, ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

RE: Covid-19 Impacts on Researchers

Dear Kum-Kum,

The UC system is known for its dedication to equity and diversity, and it is a reputation of which we are justly proud. During the current Covid-19 epidemic, it has become clear that some groups of faculty have been disproportionately impacted as far as research productivity. In particular, women have often carried the primary burden of child care and elder care during this time. Recent preprints¹ estimate the loss of productivity, measured in article submission rates, at 16-23%, with early career researchers particularly affected. We also recognize that it is not only women faculty affected, although the data suggest that is where the impact is largest.

We appreciate that UC administrators and Committees on Academic Personnel will be taking Covid-19 circumstances into account, and that personnel actions may be postponed and receive special considerations.^{2,3} We would like to emphasize that these actions may not fully ameliorate the very real, long-term impacts on some faculty careers. Simply moving the tenure clock by one year may bring more challenges, especially in the context of a health and economic crisis of unparalleled proportions. Stopping the clock may add more pressure (including economic pressure) on some people, especially junior faculty, and campuses should be strongly encouraged to develop alternative evaluation approaches for advancement and promotion. It is not reasonable to ask researchers to find another year of funding in a climate where there will undoubtedly be less funding, especially after many faculty have spent the resources they did have during the pandemic supporting their group. Given these circumstances the university should take into account that faculty may not be readily able to bring their research programs back to pre-pandemic levels even after the lockdown is fully lifted. In other words, time alone may not be sufficient to make up for this period's impact on productivity.

¹ See, for example: "COVID-19 medical papers have fewer women first authors than expected":
<https://arxiv.org/abs/2005.06303>

² Proposed guidelines from the University Committee on Academic Personnel (UCAP) for policy and communications on merit reviews, teaching evaluations, and tenure and promotion processes in light of the COVID-19 crisis: <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/files/reports/kkb-senate-divisions-ucap-guidelines-reviewing-agencies-covid-19.pdf>

³ Letter of May 27, 2020, from UC Provost Michael Brown to divisional EVCs and Provosts on extending stop-clock provisions.

In treating merit and promotion reviews compassionately, UCORP would like to suggest that faculty are given the option of removing the Covid-19 period from their merit and promotion cases – to base evaluations on the normal period minus the Covid-19 duration. This “pro-rating” of the standard for tenure would take into account lost time, productivity and economic capacity. UCORP also encourages UC’s administrators and faculty leaders to consider real, tangible action to help particularly affected faculty make up for this lost time, such as releases from teaching, service, or clinical responsibilities. For graduate students and postdocs, it will be necessary to find additional funding to provide some financial relief and in order to safeguard their professional development.

UCORP would also like to express support for the letter and recommendations sent to you by the University Committee on Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Equity (UCAADE) regarding related concerns about how COVID-19 is differentially affecting members of the UC community in ways that negatively impact equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the unprecedented challenges brought by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "A Baird".

Andrew Baird
Chair, University Committee on Research Policy