

July 6, 2020

Chancellor Gene Block
Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Emily Carter
Cc: Vice Chancellor Michael Levine, Interim Vice Chancellor of Equity, Diversity, and
Inclusion Carole Goldberg
(by email)

Dear Chancellor Block and EVC Carter:

On March 10, 2020, UCLA suspended all in-person classes, as well as all on-campus meetings and events, in response to the novel coronavirus pandemic. The university, however, was declared an essential service, and some of its employees were declared essential workers. As instructors and members of academic departments, we were informed that all of our work--teaching, advising, committee, and other service work--would continue remotely, and that the university expected to proceed with business as usual, even in these disrupted circumstances.

At the same time, both public and private schools as well as childcare facilities, including UCLA's own, shuttered. Private childcare and other forms of dependent care became unavailable, as the circumstances of quarantine dictated that individual households would need to remain isolated from one another.

Academic personnel with dependents are thus left in an impossible situation: we are working full-time for UCLA, and we are also providing full-time care to our dependents.

Every day, newspaper headlines declare a "childcare crisis" and, by extension, a career crisis for those workers who have been statistically shown to bear a much larger percentage of the burden of caregiving: women, people of color, and those who earn a lower wage in their household (see, for just one example, "[Pandemic Could Scar a Generation of Working Mothers](#)," New York Times, June 3, 2020). Although the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Personnel (in an email sent to faculty on May 13, 2020) has encouraged "deans and departments to keep in mind, as they appraise faculty performance in the coming years, the disparate burdens caused by COVID-19," especially given that "there is good reason to believe that women bear more household burdens than men in terms of [dependent care]," and although adjustments have been made to the structure of fourth-year appraisals and other types of review, these measures are insufficient for the following reasons:

1. They do not compensate academic personnel for their role in keeping the university running while they were--and are--also providing full-time care to their dependents;
2. They do not make provisions for academic personnel should childcare, schooling, and other forms of dependent care remain unavailable;
3. They eschew real policy, instead asking academic personnel to rely on the good will of their department chairs and deans, in a way that leaves individual faculty members and instructors vulnerable to implicit bias, including sexism, racism, ableism, and class-based prejudice.

The undersigned express concern that there remains no coherent policy with regard to remedying the above. Conventionally, faculty are tasked with individually approaching their Chairs and Deans with their particular situations, hoping for a sympathetic ear, and negotiating an individualized solution. While in some cases this approach is helpful, it also can lead to intensifying disparities and greatly depends on there being no unconscious biases on the part of Chairs and Deans.

We urge the ramping up of a UCLA COVID childcare support program, the mission of which is to address, through a variety of creative and diverse solutions, the array of work-related impacts to caregiving faculty, graduate students, and staff as a result of closures of care facilities due to public health (COVID) directives. The target group whom the UCLA COVID childcare support program would serve are faculty, graduate students, and staff who, as a result of reductions in caregiver support as a function of COVID-related closures and safety concerns, have an increased and at least 50% caretaking responsibility¹ for

- one or more children under the age of 12
- children of any age with a disability or illness
- an adult dependent with impairment and/or illness.

Oversight of the support program would be delegated to a nimble task force comprised of 3-5 people drawn from the Academic Senate Committee on Childcare/Faculty Welfare, a representative (with caregiving experience) from a staff assembly body, such as the Staff Assembly or Administrative Management Group, and/or representatives from other gender-equity focused bodies on campus. We further urge that the following actions take place immediately, so as to mitigate the tangible ways in which unmet childcare needs have already impacted research productivity and teaching capacity of caregiving faculty, students, and staff on campus.

- I. That a minimum of \$1 million of funds raised in the Centennial Campaign be made available as current-use monies to provide
 - Direct reimbursement to faculty for out-of-pocket support for TAs and readers already expended (Spring 2020) or needed across AY 2020-21 to support teaching duties impacted by COVID-related caregiving demands;

¹ Since the program's aim is to enhance research and teaching obligations of university employees and to mitigate historical inequities, the qualification of at least 50% caretaking might be modified to include this additional caveat: where there is not another spousal partner in the home whose career is that of a stay-at-home caretaker.

- Partial offset of newly increased, temporary childcare fees consequent upon social distancing requirements in university-sponsored or other private and public childcare;
 - Technological equipment and support for a staff or GSR coordinator to facilitate the establishment of privately sited childcare pods² among UCLA faculty, staff, and students;
 - Other unanticipated expenses approved by the oversight task force in relation to the implementing of child- and elder-care solutions for faculty, students, and staff, as conditions change on the ground;
 - After the above expenses are tallied for the period running from March 2020 until the reopening of regular child- and elder-care hours, a reimbursement of departments for expenses related to hiring substitute lecturers to replace faculty assigned Active Service Modified Duties (ASDM) (see item III below)
- II. A buy-out equivalent of 50% temporary staff or GSR time for AY 2020-21 to support survey coordination and other task force needs in order to set up privately sited childcare pods; fielding of unanticipated and unique child- and elder-care needs due to the pandemic; mediating communications among impacted caregiving parties on campus, Senate oversight body, and upper administration; scheduling time-sensitive meetings and/or town halls to proactively support and buffer caregivers in these times of continuous policy changes; and tracking budgetary outlay for quarterly auditing by the oversight body
- III. A Directive sent to Department Chairs and Deans by VC Levine that if an affected faculty member fails to secure alternative child- and/or elder-care arrangements, they be granted one to two quarters of ASMD³ for AY 2021-22, be offered the option to extend for up to a year the timing of their next personnel review, and have a waiver on all non-essential service (such as curriculum reform, attendance at non-essential faculty meetings) until child- and elder-care issues can be resolved
- IV. A Directive sent from Graduate` Division to Department Chairs offering caregiving graduate students an extension of an additional one year on any time-to-degree

² Childcare pods refer to privately contracted (sometimes informal) ‘babysitting’ arrangements that help households share expenses and pool resources of space, money, and time to have several children watched over safely. Entering into a pod means essentially sharing a quarantine bubble with the family members of the children in the pod. These pods will likely be small-- three to five children--depending on numbers of siblings in these groups. Standard medical forms and waivers of liability (used for arranging carpools, e.g.) can be modified to assist in these arrangements.

³ The form of leave described by active service modified duties exists to acknowledge that it is impossible to be a full-time faculty member and a full-time caregiver. This is the situation in which many faculty now find themselves. We are therefore asking the university to expand the policy covered by ASMD leave or to introduce and implement a comparable leave policy that would materially counterbalance the inequities that have been exacerbated not just by COVID-19, but also by the university’s decision to maintain business continuity throughout the pandemic.

criteria in eligibility for housing, awards, grants, TA/GSR assignments, and the like; priority consideration for awarding of ongoing GSR appointments; and an extra year on the guarantees of funding and tuition waivers indicated in their acceptance letters

- V. An allowance for asynchronous teaching modes or work-from-home policies relating to childcare and caregiving responsibilities of any sort. This should include a broad policy that would allow these choices to be made without fear of repercussion in terms of promotion and eligibility for GSR or TA assignments and graduate fellowships
- VI. A continued effort across AY 2020-21 and beyond to identify essential strategies of caring. This includes support systems within departments but also across the university for parents, children, and volunteer or paid childcare workers. It could include a sick-day bank for staff to donate sick days to other staff who need them to stay home and care for children and elders.

In drawing up these concrete suggestions, we have consulted research on gender and labor in higher education compiled by the Center for the Study of Women in Society at the University of Oregon (<https://csws.uoregon.edu/labor-inequities-covid-19/>) and the Women's and Gender Studies Consortium of the University of Wisconsin System (<https://uwosh.edu/was/>), and expanded upon their forward-thinking requests. We would note that the latter organization places the childcare crisis in academia in the context of recently won diversification aims in STEM fields.

Sincerely,

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