

More than just child care: policies for working parents navigating Covid-19 and beyond

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected us all in unimaginable ways, causing immense loss of life and disruption to the simplest of everyday activities. On campus, faculty turned on a dime from in-class to emergency virtual instruction and research has been severely disrupted. We have revamped our lives on every front at a pace that is simply not sustainable. Now as we plan for the fall and its continuing uncertainty, the Women Faculty Forum has collected soundings from faculty around strategies that would make work most feasible and effective.

In this report, we focus on the needs of working parents, though many of these points apply broadly. Conducting research and teaching courses are ultimately predicated on the availability of child care and a regular and predictable window of work time. **During a public health crisis, child care is no longer a privatized burden but should be a collective concern.** Although Yale does not keep statistics on the number of faculty parents, this number could be up to two-thirds.¹ Faculty without children are also adversely affected when coauthors, colleagues, technicians and managers lack access to safe and affordable child care. At Yale, both right now and for the foreseeable future, few are without childcare concerns, whether they are graduate students, post-docs, fellow faculty, or staff. Among faculty, instructional faculty are more likely to be younger (and, therefore, have younger children) and to have higher teaching loads.² **Reopening campus and resuming research and teaching hinges on safe and equal access to child care.**

In discussions held over the week of May 11-15, 2020, the WFF gathered information and suggestions from approximately 70 faculty, of all ranks and genders. From these discussions, four points emerged in addition to access to child care. We emphasize that because of the high likelihood of continued disruptions to child care providers and schools, as well as different degrees of accessibility of group care (due, for example, to health concerns), supporting working parents **must** look beyond simple child care provision. The points are

1. A need to recognize the complexities of parenting during COVID-19, for example by adapting and expanding Teaching Relief for Child Rearing (TRC);
2. Temporarily restructuring or reducing teaching loads to recognize the unusual demands around student mentoring;
3. A need for increased technical (e.g. lecture filming, online course design), educational, research, and administrative support for faculty; and
4. An urgent need for developing policies around long-term implications for tenure-clocks and faculty promotions in recognition of how the nature of our jobs has shifted in the last three months.

¹ See the [WFF's website](#) and weekly newsletter for information about this estimate.

² "Full-time instructional faculty members spend about 80 percent of their time on teaching and 20 percent on service, or all their time teaching, whereas tenure-track faculty members spend about 40 percent on teaching, 40 percent on research and 20 percent on service," according to Paul S. Merrit, "Needed: Equitable Roles for Full-Time Instructors," *Inside Higher Ed*, January 10, 2019. Moreover, instructional and/or part-time faculty are disproportionately women, according to a [study from the TIAA Institute](#), reported in [Colleen Flaherty, "More Faculty Diversity, Not on Tenure Track," Inside Higher Ed, August 22, 2016](#). At Yale, there is approximate gender parity in instructional faculty, whereas less than one quarter of full professors are women [see WFF's report [The View](#)].

This is an issue of equity. Following the 2008 financial crisis, progress in gender equity among faculty hiring stagnated and was only now starting to recover. The pandemic has already produced rapidly deepening inequalities that will not be quickly re-balanced.³ This inequality is not limited to publication; the most recent CESOF report in FAS showed that women contributed more service work at all ranks. Similar skews are exhibited for mentoring.⁴ The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the nature of faculty work itself, as less visible but time-intensive mentoring, class preparation, and service have all become more complex. In the remainder of this document we offer some additional examples of how these four points might be implemented.

First, the TRC is already a mechanism designed to support parents in their integrating of parental roles with their commitments to research and teaching. The pandemic is another case where child care has become complex and children of all ages need more support, in both their education and general wellbeing, that (due to isolation) only parents can provide in person. **We strongly recommend that the TRC be adapted and expanded to provide immediate relief to faculty parents of all ranks, but particularly to untenured and instructional faculty.** One option would be to offer a Fall 2020 TRC to all untenured and contingent faculty members with younger children. Another option would be to offer up to two course releases in the next two years to all faculty whose worktime has been substantially disrupted due to closures, providing maximum flexibility for individuals. We also suggest that while travel is not permitted, that the Anne Coffin Hanson Faculty Support Fund also support short-term research.

The second point concerns temporarily restructuring or reducing teaching loads to recognize the unusual demands around student mentoring and advising. The fall semester is likely to be unusual in a number of ways, including a potential narrowing of the faculty:student ratio. Faculty teaching loads already vary extensively across the university in recognition of the different configurations around teaching and mentoring. **We recommend that a teaching reduction be considered for all faculty (including instructional faculty) with high teaching and advising loads or whose service loads (such as directors of Undergraduate Study) have suddenly resulted in substantial additional work.** This would allow students to be better supported by faculty in these crucial roles.

Third, we see an immediate need for increased technical, educational, research, and administrative support for faculty.⁵ The faculty task forces are investigating technical and some educational support, which we are glad to see. We would like to see this expanded in other ways. To take just one example, faculty whose work is reliant on external funding are particularly affected:

³ See [Colleen Flaherty, "No Room of One's Own: Early Journal Submission Data Suggest COVID-19 is Tanking Women's Research Productivity..," *Inside Higher Ed*, April 21, 2020](#); also [Caroline Kitchene, "Women Academics Seem to be Submitting Fewer Papers During Coronavirus," *The Lily*, April 24, 2020](#).

⁴ Tenured women tend to devote more time to "teaching, mentoring, and service, and particularly to activities that may be seen as building bridges around the university," [Joya Misra, Jennifer Hickey Lundquist, Elissa Holmes, and Stephanie Agiomavritis, "The Ivory Ceiling of Service Work," *American Association of University Professors*, January, 2011](#). See also Yale's [2016-2018 CESOF report](#), organized with the OIR's assistance.

⁵ Bayview Analytics released [survey results](#) (April 6-19, 2020) of higher education's immediate priorities related to the COVID-19 pandemic, noting the overwhelming need for online teaching resources: 44% of faculty asked for technological assistance to support online education; 57% asked for information on how to support remote students; and 57% also asked for resources about how to transition to online learning.

grant deadlines have not changed. These grants support faculty, students, and staff, and represent a long-term commitment to research excellence. Supporting faculty in applications is a good investment. Such support may also provide employment for students who have graduated into the worst job market since the Great Depression. We note that the current hiring freeze has exacerbated this issue and has prevented some departments from increasing support.

Finally, but no less importantly, **there is an urgent need for developing policies around long-term implications for tenure-clocks and faculty promotions.** We shut down in just over a week, but the effects for some research programs will last years. Research already suggests that the impacts of COVID-19 shutdowns are highly gendered.⁶ The university needs to recognize this and consider the impacts for both individual faculty coming up for promotion in the next few years, but also the larger arc of the university's commitment to diversity and equity.

We emphasize that while this document focuses on faculty, we recognize and acknowledge that staff and students have also undergone very significant disruptions. We doubly emphasize that the implementation of these policies is predicated on appropriate and continued safety measures for all at the university.

Finally, there was an overwhelming concern over the disproportionate impacts of the coronavirus on contingent faculty, faculty in essential roles (or with families in essential roles), and postdoctoral associates and fellows. Recording disparities and collecting data on the gendered effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on Yale's campus should be an integral part of the University's contingency planning and fall re-opening.

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⁶ In addition to reducing research productivity, Covid-19 is adversely affecting women in higher-education in terms of hiring freezes/lay-offs. [Gwen Aviles, "The Coronavirus is Threatening Diversity in Academia," NBC, May 25, 2020.](#) Nationally, the economic fallout brought upon by the coronavirus has exacerbated social and economic inequalities for women. The gendered impact of Covid-19 has been [widely reported in the media.](#)