

To: Provost Jennifer Cowley  
From: Committee on the Status of Women University of North Texas  
Date: April 28, 2020

The Committee on the Status of Women is committed to minimizing the disproportionate effect on women faculty from the stress and strain of managing the COVID-19 crisis. Our goal with this letter is to acknowledge the particular effects of Covid-19 on women faculty working at UNT and provide some specific recommendations.

There are many reports of COVID-19 disproportionately affecting women at UNT:

- Women are more likely to be struggling due to lack of child-care due to school/day-care closures. The data (both on our campus and nationally) demonstrates that women are more likely to be the primary caregivers for children and elderly/ill parents.
- Women are more likely to have personal health problems.
- Women teach more and do more service (faculty and staff), so they take on a larger share of the burden of getting programs and classes online (as supported anecdotally and documented in the CSW's 2019 report).
- Women are more likely to lose jobs due to staff, adjunct, and instructor layoffs. After possible layoffs, remaining female faculty and staff are more likely to be asked to take on the burden of additional teaching and service since women are more likely to be in non-tenured roles.

Concrete Recommendations and Requests:

- We ask that extra service and teaching responsibilities, as well as needed equipment, be equitably distributed across rank and gender.
- We urge department's and administrative policies to have continued flexibility with staff and faculty who are taking care of children and/or elderly or ill parents, or at higher risk based on age or health concerns. This might mean revisiting service and teaching assignments to accommodate parents on shift schedules. These life/work flows need to be addressed to avoid losing high quality women, especially researchers who help UNT's R1 status.
- Those who are able to cover some of the extra tasks and challenges should have their previous service and teaching assignments adjusted to avoid undue burden on faculty who don't have family obligations.
- We urge decisions about "required" teaching overloads and online vs. on-campus decisions to be mindful of the various unique situations and be made in consultation with faculty. There simply isn't a one size fits all solution for the upcoming challenges that we as a community face.
- Consider a brief "stop the clock" period on research for faculty if the stay at home orders and closures disrupted their ability to conduct their research. Already we are seeing evidence of a disparate impact on women academics.
- Make child care on campus a priority and consider reopening the Child Development Lab once we are back on campus and it is safe to do so.
- Annual evaluation poses a difficult problem. Set new guidelines for PACs and Chairs that take into consideration the disruption caused by the stays and closures, including where those particularly affected women faculty. Consider advising Chairs and PACs to temporarily use a "pass/fail" model of evaluation.
- We urgently request a vehicle for anonymous feedback from faculty. We hear that many of those without tenure are currently keeping quiet on the struggles from moving to and keeping courses online.
- Advise chairs to be sure workload percentages reflect the actual service, teaching, and research occurring 2020–2021. Be sure the workload meetings between chairs and faculty continue to occur and that workload assignments are made after discussions with faculty prior to enactment of any changes.
- Ask departments to revise policies on faculty requirements to ease the burden. For example, the number of office hours required, committee service minimums, or required mentoring/advising.
- Departments should be encouraged to develop policies for faculty who are vulnerable due to health problems. For example, be able to continue mandatory meetings with online options.
- We ask for the formation of an hoc faculty committee to provide input to UNT's restructuring of faculty service, teaching, and research loads.

Respectfully,

Faculty Senate Committee on the Status of Women, University of North Texas  
<https://facultysenate.unt.edu/committee-status-women>

Faculty Senate Committee on the Status of Women, University of North Texas

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