



**The Impact of COVID-19 on Faculty, Staff, and Students:
Using Research to Help Higher Education Heal through the Pandemic and
Beyond**

Authored by Association for the Study of Higher Education COVID-19 Impact Statement

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Executive Summary

In March of 2020, many colleges and universities across the country closed. Students packed up and moved out of residence halls. Faculty vacated classrooms and shifted courses online with minimal training (Kyaw, 2021). Labs, internships, and field experiences came to a screeching halt. The programs and events that staff had been planning for months were canceled. Campuses that once saw thousands of students walking paths and congregating on lawns each day went silent. Few of us working in and studying higher education have seen or experienced anything like it. This pivot point, we would soon learn, was just the beginning of a very long two and a half years spent navigating the dangers, traumas, and complexities of a global pandemic.

The effects of COVID-19 are partially captured in staggering statistics of people infected, people lost, and people grieving (Yong, 2022). And the toll of the virus continues as people attempt to keep themselves and loved ones healthy, stay afloat amidst disruptions to child and elder care, and, for some, seek relief from the symptoms of long COVID (Bach, 2022). There are also ripple effects across virtually every domain of life, and many people are exhausted, stretched too thin, and hurting. Although many campuses are once again bustling, these effects will not simply disappear. College leaders have responded to the crisis through a variety of new policies and procedures, but questions remain about the impact of the pandemic and how to best support faculty, staff, and students. This is especially the case given that the pandemic has further exposed and exacerbated disparities and inequities already present in policies and procedures.

Against this backdrop, the president of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), Joy Gaston Gayles, convened a group of the association's scholar-leaders to bring their expertise and our field's scholarship to bear on these unresolved questions. The group set out to summarize emerging research on how COVID-19 has affected the lives of faculty, staff, and students and to share effective practices to mitigate the challenges of the pandemic and support these three constituencies. The resulting research brief elevates existing scholarship and the work of many ASHE

members who have studied, presented, and written about these topics prior to and during the pandemic. Our hope is that the brief serves as a resource and call to action for leaders of departments, colleges, and universities to rethink and re-imagine campus cultures to better care for faculty, staff, and students as they progress through their studies and work after a devastating time and in a changed world. Such a call to action has the potential to stimulate conversation about how policies and practices can be changed to be more humane, equitable, and inclusive. We invite ASHE members to share this work with institutional leaders and to use the insights and recommendations for research in efforts to support students, staff, and faculty, as well as in annual evaluations or reviews for tenure and promotion.

The brief is divided into three sections, with the first focused on students, followed by staff and faculty. Each section begins with a review of the literature before offering recommendations for practice on ways to continue to support each of these groups throughout and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Effects and Support for Students

The decision to close campuses, which happened in the middle of the academic year for many students, resulted in the abrupt shift to online courses and the disruption of internships, field placements, and study abroad experiences. It also led to reduced access to campus dining, libraries, labs, and other university facilities, a rapid end to athletic seasons, and changes to campus events including commencements. As campuses closed, some students' living arrangements changed dramatically and they were asked to return to their home communities for their safety. For some, moving home was comforting and created a sense of safety during a fear filled and ambiguous time. Yet some students did not have the luxury of a welcoming family to return to, and others, such as international students, were unable to return home if they lived outside of the U.S. due to pandemic restrictions (Lederer et al., 2021; Sustarsic & Zhang, 2021). During this time of disruption, some students experienced isolation and were also forced to reinvent college friendships, relationships, and communities and reorient their learning within virtual spaces. As one participant in a recent study said, "I hate it

[COVID], it's ruining my life" (Madrigal & Blevins, 2002, p. 325). Many students made their way through online classes and, for some, socially distanced in-person courses, with the idea that eventually we would return to "normal" within a few months.

Now, more than two years later, campuses have reopened but uncertainty remains since people and the world are now fundamentally different than they were in March 2020. As we collectively move forward, we need to adjust how we engage with students knowing that they and we are not the same. Accordingly, we review the literature that has examined some effects of the pandemic on undergraduate and graduate students. In particular, we highlight how the pandemic has heightened existing inequalities in higher education (e.g., Cornett & Fletcher, 2022; Davis et al., 2021), disrupted learning and degree plans (e.g., Gonzalez-Ramirez et al., 2021; Ogilvie et al., 2020), affected students' abilities to create and sustain relationships (e.g., Hagedorn et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2022), and ultimately affected their health and well-being (e.g., Liu et al., 2020; Soria et al., 2022). In the spirit of imagining new futures together, we provide recommendations for policy and practice that center students' varied needs.

Amplifying Existing Inequalities in Higher Education

While the COVID-19 pandemic affected all students, it created or exacerbated issues for the most vulnerable people, as marginalized populations were pushed farther to the edges of higher education and society. For example, the pandemic had a significant impact on students who struggle to meet their basic needs, such as food, shelter, transportation, and medical care, which were challenges for many college students prior to the start of the pandemic (Fernandez et al., 2019). After the onset of the pandemic and the transition to online learning environments, many students saw an increase in basic needs-related stresses (Lederer, et al., 2021; Madrigal & Blevins, 2022; Santa-Ramirez et al., 2022; Soria et al., 2022). Some college students (e.g., former foster youth, LGBT students, international students, unhoused students) were particularly vulnerable to housing insecurity, losing their only stable living arrangements when residence halls closed (Lederer et al., 2021; Pérez Lugo et al., 2020). Similarly, food insecurity remained a significant concern for college students throughout the pandemic,

particularly for those who are low-income (American College Health Association, 2020; Madrigal & Blevins, 2022; Soldavini et al., 2021; Soria et al., 2022), with 45% of students identifying food insecurity as a challenge given limited use of campus meal plans and access to food banks (Lederer et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated economic inequalities that may have implications for students' retention and degree completion. Soria et al. (2022) found that students with minoritized identities had higher odds of experiencing financial hardships (i.e., losing a job, reduced wages, unexpected living and technology expenses, loss/reduction in financial aid, food insecurity, housing insecurity) than their peers with privileged identities. For example, LGBT, Black, and Multiracial students had greater odds of losing wages than their peers, and Hispanic/Latinx students and caregivers had higher odds of experiencing loss/reduction of a family member's income. Financial hardships were especially heightened for low-income, poor, and working class students, students who were caregivers, first-generation students, and disabled students (Soria et al., 2022). Similarly, Porter et al. (2022) found that Black women graduate students experienced increased debt loads, additional caregiving responsibilities, and decreased financial support. West (2021) reported that many Native students had family responsibilities, such as helping financially and caring for siblings and grandparents, that affected their college plans.

Racist rhetoric related to the origins of COVID-19 intensified anti-Asian discrimination and xenophobia. For example, Asian international students and Asian American students suffered heightened discrimination and xenophobia due to the lack of knowledge on COVID-19 (Chen et al., 2021; Maleku et al., 2021). In addition to the fear of contracting the virus and navigating a world in flux, students of Asian descent regularly described experiencing discrimination or fearing for their safety based on their identity, which affected their sense of safety and mental health (Chen et al., 2021; Maleku et al., 2021).

Disruptions in Learning and Degree Plans COVID-19 had a significant impact on students' curricular experiences and degree plans. While students transitioned back to their home environments, faculty and administrators scrambled to provide them with educational opportunities and development in online venues. Many institutions closed their doors in the middle of the academic year, leaving faculty with limited resources to support student learning (Lederer et al., 2021). As a result, many faculty members were unable to adequately prepare for this transition, which unquestionably impacted the quality of education as faculty and students had to quickly learn how to advise, teach, and support student learning in virtual spaces (Ford et al., 2021) with varied success (Hagedorn et al., 2022; Madrigal & Blevins, 2022).

The shift to online education was easy for some, and incredibly difficult for others. For example, one international survey of higher education professionals found that students with disabilities experienced more difficulties in the transition to remote learning than nondisabled students, including challenges with isolation, expenses for new technology, and feeling unsupported (Scott & Aquino, 2020; Soria et al., 2020). Institutions assumed that returning home would afford students with the space and resources they needed to engage in their courses. However, scholars have found that the biggest impediments to online education for students were Wi-Fi quality, finding a quiet place to study, and the financial burdens of survival and household responsibilities (Gonzalez-Ramirez, 2021; Lederer et al., 2021; Soria et al., 2022). Moreover, returning home from college also meant additional responsibilities for students who faced economic challenges, such as caring for younger siblings, caring for aging relatives, and providing additional assistance to individuals at home which limited their ability to fully engage in courses (Hagedorn et al., 2022; Institute for Women's Policy Research [IWPR], 2022). The challenges of learning from home affected some students' academic performance which may in turn impact their degree progress.

While some courses were easier to move online, others were more challenging. Students who had laboratory courses and field placements (e.g., student nurses, student teachers) found it difficult to make progress when their access to their

educational environments were limited (Hagedorn et al., 2022; Ogilvie et al., 2020). Accordingly, Ogilvie et al. (2020) found that 30% of graduate students experienced delays with their research and 25% thought it would take them longer to complete their degree than planned. Some graduate students in helping professions (e.g., nursing, student affairs) were essential workers and did not have the luxury of working from home during the pandemic. While their degree plans may not have been elongated, they expressed fear of contracting COVID-19 and experienced fatigue and burnout from providing support to others during the pandemic (Hernández et al., 2021; Nodine et al., 2021; Thompson, 2020). Ultimately, the COVID-19 pandemic upended the teaching learning process and for many students, their pathway to their degree.

Struggles to (Re)create Community and Sustain Relationships

The COVID-19 pandemic also altered how we engage with each other. Throughout the pandemic, students have been forced to make choices about the extent to which they would interact with people face-to-face, potentially exposing themselves to the virus (Madrigal & Blevins, 2022; Smith et al., 2022). Although college is often thought of as time to expand one's network, Smith et al. (2022) found students made the choice to shrink their social circles as a means to keep themselves and others safe. Specifically, students tended to relinquish ties to coworkers and classmates, maintaining a smaller network of close friends and family members. For many students, the lack of face-to-face interaction led to them feeling isolated and less connected to their campus community (Hagedorn et al., 2022; Hernández et al., 2021; Madrigal & Blevins, 2022). While campuses made efforts to facilitate connections through online meetings and events, many students expressed feeling screen fatigue and others were concerned that they "lost a lot of [their] social skills" (Madrigal & Blevins, 2022, p. 329).

Although campuses have reopened, students continue to make difficult choices about their interactions with others given varied concerns about contracting or spreading COVID-19. After two years of limited in person interactions, it has been difficult to reestablish relationships with others given loss or shifts in communication and interpersonal skills and uncertainty of others' safety needs. Students may no longer be

physically distanced, but they may be challenged to (re)establish relationships and build community in our current reality.

Mental Health and Well-Being

As COVID-19 became more prevalent in U.S. society, it had a significant impact on Black, Latinx, Native, and Pacific Islander communities due to social inequalities such as access to and quality of health care, as well as living and working situations (Hooper et al., 2020; Reyes, 2020; West, 2021). One study found that over 40% of college students at one university had been infected with COVID-19 between January and March of 2021 (Ebell et al., 2022). Although COVID and its impacts continue to evolve, some who were infected may experience a variety of long-term symptoms that will impact their day-to-day existence (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2022). Furthermore, COVID-19 is acknowledged globally as a threat to mental health (Cao et al., 2020) and has increased the number of people seeking mental health support (Pierce et al., 2020). These complications are further amplified for college students, who were navigating rapid change and balancing additional roles and responsibilities within their personal lives (Kee, 2021; Madrigal & Blevins, 2022; Hagedorn et al., 2022).

It is no surprise that the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected students' health and well-being. More than 70% of undergraduate and graduate students reported increased stress and anxiety due to the pandemic, with nearly 40% attributing this increase to their academic responsibilities (Wang et al., 2020). Similarly, Ogilvie et al. (2020) found that 67% of graduate students reported low levels of well-being, with 32% reporting symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder, 33% manifesting moderate or high anxiety, and 34% displaying moderate or high-levels of depression. Students' stress and anxiety were further amplified by feelings of loneliness, the absence of social supports, and concerns of contracting or spreading COVID-19, and loss of control (Besser et al., 2020; Kee, 2021; Madrigal & Blevins, 2022; Palgi et al., 2020). Sustarsic and Zhang (2021) found that international graduate students were coping with additional stress and anxiety due to isolation, loss of support groups, and

uncertainty about immigration policies and institutional support for graduate students. Additionally, some students reported feeling unmotivated or struggling to concentrate (Madrigal & Blevins, 2022; Wang et al., 2020) or using alcohol or other drugs to cope with the stress of the pandemic (Charles et al., 2021; Daniel et al., 2022).

For some students, the racial-, identity- and class-based inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic increased their likelihood of experiencing illness or the loss of a close one. Particularly early in the pandemic, Black, Native, and Pacific Islander Americans had the highest mortality rates in many states, which can be attributed to less access to healthcare, unequal distribution of testing supplies, and working in jobs at higher risk of exposure (Gawthrop, 2022; Reyes, 2020). As racially minoritized students hold space for their loss, they may also be experiencing additional trauma and grief because of racial injustice and police brutality (Chen et al., 2021; Ford & Propst, 2021; Lederer et al., 2021). Soria et al. (2022) also found disparities in mental health outcomes for first-generation students, of which 40% experienced symptoms of major depressive disorder and 44% demonstrated clinically significant symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder due to a confluence of personal, academic, social, and financial stressors. Similarly, Gonzales et al. (2020) found that 60% of LGBT students experienced psychological distress, anxiety, and depression during the pandemic since many had families who did not know or support their LGBT identity. According to a survey by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, nearly a quarter of students at Tribal Colleges and Universities reported they cannot adequately address their mental health needs (AIHEC, 2021). Native students also reported the highest rates of basic needs insecurity during the pandemic (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020). While the need for student mental health services has increased, providing these services to students, particularly the most vulnerable, has grown more difficult and students regularly report difficulty accessing adequate mental health support (Daniel et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2020). Early access to mental health, especially for minority youth of color, during the pandemic was a clear case of mental health shortages (Roulston et al., 2022). Coupled with the growing need to assist students coping with long COVID, campuses will continue to be pressed to adequately support students' health and well-being.

Recommendations

We offer the following recommendations and considerations as faculty, staff, and institutional leaders look to support students in a trauma informed manner (CDC, 2020). Some of these recommendations were implemented on a temporary basis, but they need to be sustained in the long-term. We also urge leaders to consider short- and long-term approaches to addressing the effects of COVID.

Addressing Existing Inequalities in Higher Education

- Explore methods to identify and center the needs of the most affected populations. Provide additional resources for students who experienced financial hardships (e.g., loss of wages, food insecurity, housing insecurity) including financial counseling, payment plans, and emergency relief for those in need.
- Identify local and regional resources to assist families and caregivers find access to services for children, such as affordable childcare, food assistance, and affordable housing options.
- Acknowledge and actively work to address racial injustice on campuses that add to the harm created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Maintain or initiate curricular and extracurricular programming that encourages inter-racial dialogue and understanding and couple it with trained professionals who can provide counseling to students facing or attempting to overcome collective trauma.

Disruptions in Educational and Degree Plans

- Provide access to additional funding for students whose timeline to degrees were affected by the pandemic. Leverage existing funding sources for currently enrolled students and identify new funding sources to support at least the next three cohorts of new students.
- For graduate students, consider adjusting programmatic milestone timelines to acknowledge the disruption to courses and research plans.

- Acknowledge that students' career plans may have changed during the pandemic and provide supported opportunities to adjust plans or explore new opportunities.

Facilitating the (Re)creation of Community and Relationships

- Recognize that students' readiness to reconnect with others varies based on their needs and vulnerabilities to COVID-19 as connection with others was non-existent, lacking or vastly different during the pandemic.
- Provide both virtual and physical spaces for students to interact with peers, faculty, and staff at their level of comfort. Institutions should provide multiple opportunities for students to connect with others as some students may be anxious or unsure of their interpersonal skills.
- Encourage faculty and university front-service providers to be intentional about community building and in multiple settings. For example, academic, campus life and student engagement creates opportunities to revive old traditions and create new ones.

Supporting Students' Mental Health and Well-Being

- Invest in additional mental health support provided on college campuses and increase access to off-campus counseling supports.
- Educate faculty and staff about the effects of trauma, grief, and prolonged stress that may manifest among students (e.g., emotional outbursts, becoming withdrawn), create systems for supporting students, and include faculty and staff as part of these systems to they can provide appropriate support and to make referrals.
- Develop policies, procedures, and practices to support students who are affected by long-term COVID-19 implications, including loss of loved ones, financial difficulties, and lingering health effects from the virus.

Effects and Support for Staff

Staff played a crucial yet often underappreciated role in institutions' responses to the pandemic (Bettencourt et al., 2022; Cho & Brassfield, 2022; Harper, 2020; Walton, 2022). The roles that staff assumed as institutions navigated the crisis varied. Some were considered "essential workers" and expected to be physically present on campus, even as case counts peaked. Some became "first responders" and supported students through fear, sickness, and quarantine. Still others were responsible for operationalizing the dozens of daily decisions and pivoting plans at a moment's notice. Some staff took on all three of these roles and more.

Staff acutely felt the effects of these new or sometimes intensified roles. They reported additional workload, labor inequities, and stress (Cho & Brassfield, 2022; Harper, 2020; Slocum, 2021). In some cases, the additional labor was added to already lengthy lists of responsibilities, especially for people in offices that were insufficiently staffed or short on personnel due to turnover, illness, or caregiving responsibilities (McClure, 2022; Walton, 2022). Increased work demands magnified concerns about compensation (Hawes & Reynolds, 2022), yet fears about budget cuts and job security propelled staff to rise to the occasion (Cho & Brassfield, 2022). Staff also expressed persistent concerns about the congruence of institutional values and actions, as well as how decisions were made and communicated (McClure, 2021). Staff experiences were not uniform or universally negative—many staff took pride in serving students whose needs had escalated in the pandemic and learning how their work could be done differently (Cho & Brassfield, 2022). However, many also saw myriad reasons to re-evaluate their future in higher education and to call upon leaders to explore workplace changes to stem the flow of people out of the profession (Hawes & Reynolds, 2022; Walton, 2022).

We explore these themes in more detail throughout this section. We draw upon scholarly literature when possible, but given that the pandemic began only a few years ago, we also pulled from available survey data and analyses in popular media to understand the staff experience during the pandemic and identify effective practices to support staff.

An Afterthought on the Front Lines of Crisis Responses

When campuses closed in the spring of 2020, staff were immediately called upon to manage move-out processes from residence halls, answer to students' and parents' demands for refunds, and cancel or reinvent carefully planned programs and events. Summer brought little respite as all energy was focused on planning for fall, with some institutions boldly declaring plans to resume in-person operations (McClure, 2020). When many of these campuses quickly changed plans or pivoted to online instruction and services, staff were again asked to implement the decisions. Mid-level managers were most often responsible for translating senior leaders' decisions into actions and results, and they expressed feelings of exhaustion, stress, and anxiety (Slocum, 2021). Staff of Color highlighted the irony of being deemed an "essential worker," while also feeling like an afterthought in campus efforts to promote wellbeing (Cho & Brassfield, 2022). Staff were expected to organize and implement events and activities during wellness days—as if they, too, did not need wellness days. In the early days of pandemic response, staff of Color also reported that every day felt like an emergency, and it was easy for work to consume them, spilling over into their home life (Cho & Brassfield, 2022). Staff scrambled to adjust, sometimes responding to expectations that they be superhuman in the face of a global tragedy, all while experiencing inadequate support and concern for their wellbeing.

Campus labor—and the risks that staff assumed working during a deadly pandemic—are racialized (Cho & Brassfield, 2022; Harper, 2020). Citing data from the Institute of Education Sciences, Harper noted that in 2018, 46% of higher education employees in hourly service roles were people of Color. The racial stratification of the higher education workplace meant that custodians, food service workers, and maintenance staff were more frequently asked to be on campus, interacting with each other and students. This placed employees of Color and their families at greater risk of contracting COVID-19, and few reopening plans took this disproportionate risk into account, given that most governing board members and senior leaders are white (Harper, 2020). Despite being deemed "essential workers," these same employees were also most vulnerable to budget cuts and layoffs and treated as disposable (Burke, 2020). As

Harper (2020) put it: “‘Essential’ typically means ‘essential to provide a service,’ and when that service is no longer needed, the persons performing it are laid off or terminated” (p. 155). Considering the speed at which some institutions laid off or furloughed some of its hourly workers in the midst of a global pandemic, it is unsurprising that many colleges and universities have struggled to hire enough people to staff dining halls (McClure, 2021). Fear from potential budget cuts mixed with endemic racism were two reasons staff of color in Cho and Brassfield’s (2022) study cited for feeling overlooked in campus wellbeing efforts. The extra work staff of color put into supporting and mentoring students of color at predominantly white institutions already took a toll (Boss & Bravo, 2020), and those responsibilities only increased in the response to COVID-19, contributing to emotional exhaustion (Walton, 2022).

Intensifying Existing Problems with Workload and Workplace Stress

The pandemic injected substantial concern for personal health and safety into staff jobs. This was particularly true for staff jobs that required regular contact with groups of students as well as staff who were immunocompromised or lived with those who were. Nevertheless, many of the problems plaguing staff jobs in higher education pre-date the pandemic (McClure, 2022; Sallee, 2020). Ideal worker norms have long shaped student affairs work, setting a standard expectation that workers are available nonstop without outside responsibilities (Sallee, 2020). Staff have faced enormous pressure to make the increasingly complex needs of students their top priority, at the expense of their own families and wellbeing (Bettencourt et al., 2022). Higher education has a culture of only rewarding staff who are willing and able to go above and beyond (Walton, 2022). The result has been chronic workplace stress leading to burnout or resignation (Bichsel et al., 2022). Many staff have experienced a misalignment of their institutions’ stated values around “community,” “care,” and “family” and how they have been treated. When they have advocated for more support or resources, they received responses that appealed to their passion or commitment to the mission of the institution (Walton, 2022). Some staff have questioned under these conditions whether they are able to enact the values that brought them to higher education work (McClure, 2021). The pandemic did

not create many of these challenges, but it amplified them and compelled staff to reassess their future in higher education.

As we detailed earlier, many staff with minoritized identities navigated additional demands, both before the pandemic (Boss & Bravo, 2020) and during it (Cho & Brassfield, 2022). Additionally, many parents, and particularly mothers, found that they were performing excessive additional labor during the first part of the pandemic as many were caring for children or supervising their children's remote schooling while simultaneously completing their full-time duties (Deryugina et al., 2021; Levine et al., 2021). Echoing the challenges that faculty caregivers faced, staff with caregiving responsibilities experienced more stress and anxiety than those without these responsibilities (Venzke, 2022). These additional responsibilities and stress led many caregivers to experience consequences, ranging from burnout to being penalized by their supervisors for having to navigate children and career (Sallee & McKinnon-Crowley, 2022).

Concerns about Budget Cuts and Compensation

The pandemic brought with it significant financial consequences for colleges and universities. In spring 2020, many campuses gave refunds to students for the remainder of their housing contracts (Fishman et al., 2020). In the subsequent academic years, campuses saw a drop in enrollment as some students preferred to defer or suspend enrollment until campuses returned to in-person instruction (National Student Clearinghouse, 2021). This decline in enrollment and revenue led college and university presidents to worry about the financial state of their institutions; 44% of institutional leaders were concerned about having to lay off faculty and staff in April 2020 while 20% noted similar concerns in November 2020 (Turk et al., 2020a, 2020b). For their part, staff also noted concerns about budget cuts and their job security (Cho & Brassfield, 2022). On some campuses, student affairs staff were furloughed without pay as a result of institutional financial precarity, leading some to experience their own individual financial precarity as well (Sallee & McKinnon-Crowley, 2022). Although enrollment at some institutions has rebounded, some institutions' financial positions have not, leading

some staff to continue to worry about the safety of their positions (Cho & Brassfield, 2022; Kelchen et al., 2021).

Although many staff positions in higher education have long been undercompensated, leading to employee attrition (Marshall et al., 2016; Sallee, 2019; Silver & Jakeman, 2014), the pandemic led many staff to re-evaluate their priorities and seek employment elsewhere. According to a 2022 survey of 3800 higher education staff members, 55% were considering leaving their positions in the coming year. Seventy-six percent of respondents said that concerns about salary were driving their concerns for departure (Bichsel et al., 2022). A recent study of student affairs professionals navigating parenting during the pandemic also found that many participants had contemplated leaving their institution after seeing their colleagues depart for positions that not only offered pay at two to three times what higher education could offer, but offered more flexible work arrangements and less demanding hours (Sallee & McKinnon-Crowley, 2022). Although low compensation is not new, the pandemic seems to have pushed many staff to a breaking point in re-evaluating their priorities.

The Need for Better Leaders and Flexibility

An employee's day-to-day experience is shaped primarily by their supervisor, but also by the policies enacted by institutional leaders. Direct supervisors, in particular, play a role in shaping employee satisfaction (Frank, 2013; Jo, 2008; Marshall et al., 2016; Warzel & Petersen, 2021). Many staff reported that their supervisors played critical roles in helping them navigate the impact of the pandemic; supportive supervisors who advocated for employees or simply created informal arrangements that accommodated employees' life demands during the pandemic were noted as sources of support. On the flipside, some staff members also have noted that micromanaging supervisors drive staff dissatisfaction and departure (Sallee & McKinnon-Crowley, 2022).

Respondents to a recent global survey of those who quit their jobs in the last year found that 34% left their positions because of "uncaring and uninspiring" leaders (DeSmet et al., 2022). These leaders include both direct supervisors and also presidents and provosts, who shape the direction for the institution. Institutional leaders emerged with a

variety of responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some issued statements that indicated care and concern for staff and faculty while others seemed to place additional demands on staff, without acknowledging the pandemic's impact on them (McClure, 2020). Failing to read shifts in employee attitudes and failing to support employees may lead staff to look for work elsewhere.

Remote Work

Due to health and safety guidelines at the beginning of the pandemic, many people in staff roles pivoted to remote work. However, not all necessarily were given permission to work at home, simply because the nature of their jobs did not allow it. Staff in residence life across campuses continued to work on-campus and many returned to full-time on-campus work long before their colleagues in other areas did the same (Sallee & McKinnon-Crowley, 2022). Yet, many staff found that they could effectively perform their jobs remotely, including those in student-facing roles. Some campuses have allowed staff to adopt a hybrid schedule, wherein staff work on campus a set number of days per week and remotely the others. Despite the success of remote work initiatives, many campuses have pushed to end these arrangements, arguing that allowing faculty and staff to work remotely was at odds with the “residential campus experience” (Future of Work@Iowa, 2022).

However, 43% of staff respondents to one survey indicated that they are likely to look for new employment out of a desire to work remotely (Bichsel et al., 2022). Additionally, 71% of respondents reported that most of their job duties can be done remotely while only 14% of respondents have jobs that are completely remote with another 23% in hybrid arrangements. These statistics suggest a gross mismatch between employee desires and employer expectations. Given the effectiveness of remote arrangements during the first part of the pandemic, many staff understandably want to continue to adopt remote work and are willing to seek new positions to allow them to do so.

Recommendations

Given the effects of the pandemic on staff, we recommend that campus leaders and supervisors consider the following recommendations to humanely support staff through the remainder of the pandemic and in the years of recovery to come.

An Afterthought on the Front Lines of Crisis Responses

- Recognize and honor staff sacrifices during the pandemic and talk honestly about challenges. Not all communication needs to be imbued with team spirit or toxic positivity.
- Understand the racial stratification of staff roles and how policies and practices differentially affect marginalized groups. Additionally, consider how risk varies based on full-time or part-time employment, benefits, and other factors.

Intensifying Existing Problems with Workload and Workplace Stress

- Acknowledge that staff have expertise, developed through practical experience and advanced study, and ensure they have voice in decision-making processes.
- Invest in processes to regularly evaluate staff workload for inequities and understaffing. Moreover, resources should be identified to correct workload and staffing issues that arise through regular self-studies.
- Collect, analyze, and act on data related to staff employment experiences. This could include regular climate, culture, or engagement surveys, as well as focus groups, pulse surveys, and exit interviews with departing staff. Publish publicly available reports about the staff employment experience.
- Establish guardrails around staff workload by shortening the work week, encouraging flexible schedules, and examining meeting and email practices.

Concerns about Budget Cuts and Compensation

- Create a talent management strategy that focuses on attracting and retaining staff and ensure the strategic priorities and offices tasked with implementing them are sufficiently resourced. Create a dedicated fund for staff retention, similar to retention funds for faculty.

- Increase compensation and evaluate the attractiveness of benefits and employee support services. The latter could include support for childcare or other forms of family care, housing affordability programs, opportunities for staff sabbaticals, and providing information and resources regarding elder care, retirement matching, and institution-specific paid family leave (especially if not offered by your state).
- Develop clearer career pathways for staff and recognize their professional growth through compensation and reward structures. The adage that staff must “move out to move up” should be replaced with a culture that values growth and retention.

The Need for Better Leaders and Flexibility

- Trust that the right people have been hired; create the conditions to allow them to be successful in their positions. Avoid micromanaging day-to-day activities.
- Leaders should be accessible to employees and should listen and respond to their concerns.
- Develop internal infrastructure to train people entering management roles and cultivate a pipeline of empathetic leaders.

Remote Work

- Create opportunities for remote work for staff across roles. Develop schedules that ensure office coverage while also allowing employees to adopt a hybrid schedule, if they so desire.

Effects and Support for Faculty

It is now the fall of 2022, and most faculty are returning to campus forever changed by the pandemic (Van Kessel et al., 2021). Many faculty have experienced or witnessed others in their communities become ill with COVID. A great many faculty have lost people in their lives. As of 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that COVID took over six million lives, more than one million in the United States alone. The loss of human life due to COVID-19 has been devastating. When

compounded by the persistent uncertainty and fear that plagued life in the early days of the pandemic, it is no wonder that many people report ongoing mental health concerns (Lonsdorf, 2022). While COVID-19 raged, so did the racial violence in this country, generating distinct fear and fatigue amongst communities of color (Boss et al., 2021).

As a community of higher education scholar-leaders with expertise and concern for the future of our institution, and more specifically, for the faculty charged with teaching, researching, and working with students, this section of the brief gathers, reviews, and synthesizes research concerning the impacts of COVID-19 on faculty career experiences and outcomes. Cognizant of the fact that COVID-19 only exacerbated already deeply entrenched inequities in the academic profession, each part of the section attends to disparate impacts along racial, gender, appointment and institutional types. A secondary goal was to gather, review, synthesize as well as create recommendations for practice and policy.

Impact on Teaching and Advising

The nearly overnight transition to online teaching and advising was a significant burden felt by faculty and instructors across institutions. For caregivers, women, and women of color, who are more likely to be in career-track or contingent faculty positions and whose teaching and advising loads already reflected inequitable distribution, the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and advising was further exacerbated (Malisch et al, 2020; Porter et al., 2022). Overall, the impact of COVID-19 “compounded pre-existing inequities in teaching and learning” for both faculty and students (Day et al., 2021, p. 8).

While some institutions had existing infrastructure in place to support the swift move to online teaching, including established learning management systems, instructional designers, and technology support for students, others did not. For many, it was insufficient time to learn and prepare for differing modalities and insufficient time to prepare students for the transition to online learning (Day et al., 2021). During the early months of the pandemic, Malisch et al. (2020), like many others, highlighted the

increased time that online teaching requires and that those with heavier teaching loads, heavier student advising loads, and larger class sizes would especially feel the burden. Mental exhaustion is prominently noted as a major impact entangled with faculty teaching loads (Tugend, 2020).

In one particular study of six different institutions, faculty were offered equipment (e.g., laptops, cameras, headsets, as needed), but supplemental pay was not offered to faculty to help support the transition to online teaching (Day et al., 2020). Faculty also noted that interacting with students was a challenge, particularly in courses that previously relied on more hands-on activities (Day et al., 2020). Faculty have also expressed discomfort in having to incur expenses for technology equipment and challenges related to increased caregiving responsibilities. Likewise, faculty expressed concerns about the impact of COVID-19 on teaching evaluations and promotion and tenure.

Impact on Research and Scholarship

COVID-19 significantly but unevenly impacted faculty members' abilities to carry out their scholarship. Faculty engaged in research and scholarly activities that involved people or that required access to on-campus facilities needed to quickly figure out how they would continue their studies. With campuses closed due to the national shutdown and subsequent changes via in-person guidelines, some faculty found new spaces to physically continue their research, others had the capacity for remote work, and still some were forced to discontinue that line of inquiry. Consequences of faculty productivity varied, however, based upon funding; access to space, software, and/or personnel; institutional resources; and/or one's ability to conduct research virtually.

Faculty ability to disseminate research decreased. Conferences shifted to a fully or in-part virtual option and still required some form of payment. However, institutional resources and funds to present research were cut due to travel restrictions and/or budget reallocations. COVID-19 shifted what "home life" looked like for some faculty. Faculty needed to rethink how to not only teach from home, but also conduct research from home. For some faculty, this shift to one's home environment was relatively easy,

renovating a bedroom space into an office or setting up a desk in the basement. For others, this shift was less about space and more so about time, emotional wellbeing, and personal health concerns.

Across all disciplines, from academic medicine, to STEM, to the social sciences, faculty with caregiving responsibilities had to figure out how to manage research expectations while caring for family members (Aubry et al., 2021; Matulevicius et al., 2021; Porter et al., 2022). Highlighted by some as the “Pandemic Penalty” (King & Frederickson, 2021), extensive research has clearly demonstrated that women’s research productivity (as measured by publications, including pre-print publications, and grant activities) slowed down, although they reported more service and student-support related activities. Research has also demonstrated that disabled faculty/faculty with disabilities or faculty with serious health concerns also experienced a significant slowdown in productivity (Douglas et al., 2022). How faculty demonstrated COVID-19’s impact on their research and scholarship also varied. Specifically, Langin (2022) named the differences among faculty responses when asked to submit pandemic-related statements (e.g., for promotion and/or tenure, or merit evaluations).

Impact on Service

While research productivity significantly declined due to the pandemic, the time and labor required for teaching and service increased dramatically. Women and faculty/staff of color have taken on a disproportionate burden of campus-based service related to COVID-19 and external service in the forms of activism and community action related to racism and race-related violence (Shalaby et al., 2020).

Bird, Litt, and Yang (2020) referred to the “invisible and supportive labor of women to improve the situation of women in the institution” as institutional housekeeping (p. 195). This concept can be applied broadly to reflect the unacknowledged and unrewarded labor of many systemically marginalized faculty and staff in higher education. This labor often takes the shape of monitoring and addressing policy problems, exclusionary practices, and insensitive cultures within the institutional environment (college

committee assignments, strategic planning groups, ad hoc committees, university-wide reports, etc.). Added to an already full plate of normal job duties (teaching, conducting research, and publishing) is the responsibility of transforming the work environment and/or community to make it a more inclusive place to work and study (Boss et al., 2021).

When major life events such as a global health or racial pandemic arise, these same communities of faculty and staff are further tasked with assisting students and colleagues who are experiencing trauma related stress or having navigational and coping issues (Porter et al., 2022; Shalaby et al., 2020). Porter et al. (2022) asserted Black women faculty were regularly expected to take up the labor of DEI related committee service; yet, their service would not be weighted differently or more in their tenure and promotion evaluation process.

In their study of more than 200 faculty members, Shalaby et al. (2020) found that the COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant increase in faculty service loads, with women faculty carrying most of this burden. Sixty-eight percent of women faculty reported increased service compared to 55 percent of men. Women faculty noted spending much of their time doing administrative work, completing institutional forms and processes, offering support to staff, and providing counseling and intervention services to students. Additionally, faculty and staff who were normally tasked with program coordination, advising, admissions processes, and other processes that are time consuming when life is normal were overwhelmed by the weight of shifting processes and procedures, communicating with instructional faculty, and answering students' questions and concerns. Faculty and staff did not simply adjust to new procedures, they were often the ones who developed the new procedures, which requires a significant amount of time. The overwhelming weight of teaching (transitioning all courses) and service (changing institutional procedures, helping students and colleagues navigate the situation) often left little to no time for research and scholarship (Shalaby et al., 2020). It is critical for college and university leaders to recognize the issue of time—particularly the exhaustive amount of hours that were required to transform courses into new modalities and at the

same time, provide genuine and thoughtful counseling and mentoring care for students and colleagues. The human services provided during the pandemic included personal mentoring, counseling and guidance, troubleshooting student issues with housing and food insecurity, and campus-based volunteering when special services were needed to assist students who could not return home. It is also important to note that the need was wide during the pandemic. Professionals were not only providing help, assistance, and care to students and colleagues, but were also pulled to help neighbors and family members as citizens of their local community. Much of this labor is difficult to document as it does not fall into traditional categories of service (i.e., babysitting my neighbors children while they worked or grocery shopping for my elderly neighbor). Pandemic needs related to human services and care work were extremely time-consuming.

Additionally, many of the same faculty and staff who provided pandemic related human services were also actively (and simultaneously) engaged in community-based work and volunteering in response to racial violence. This labor included local activism, DEI training, political advocacy, and assisting neighbors and family members. In the Shalaby et al. (2020) study, faculty noted that the social issues related to racial violence not only increased their physical service labor in the form of activism, but also redirected the focus of their scholarship by shifting the type of publications authored (public facing op-eds, blogs, and so forth versus academically centered, peer-reviewed journal articles). The weight of the moment and the magnitude of the issue caused many academics to lend their intellectual gifts to the cause. Time and effort in service to both our campuses and our society were significant.

Evaluation of Performance

As soon as campuses shut down in March 2020, faculty of all ranks and appointment types not only wondered how they would continue their work, but how they would be evaluated. Many, though not all, institutions acted swiftly. Research universities were among the first to announce immediate “clock extensions” which essentially added one year to a pre-tenure, tenure-track faculty person’s clock. Some universities extended this policy to non-tenure-stream faculty, and added extensions to their contracts. The

logic behind such extensions was simple. It was immediately obvious that faculty members' productivity (however that might be measured) would look radically different for several months, and thus, faculty would likely not be ready for review according to their original time clock.

Consistent with most clock extension policies, the COVID-19 clock extension took one of two forms: 1) *Blanket Policies* applied the clock to any and all eligible faculty in an institution or 2) *Opt-In Policies* required that a faculty member alert a designated university official (usually their department chair or college dean) that they would like to adopt the extension. In one popular brief, Gonzales and Griffin (2020) advocated for blanket policies, arguing that opt-in policies put the onus on faculty. Gonzales and Griffin anticipated that COVID-19 would spark varying impacts on different groups of faculty, and a blanket policy provided a minor relief—one less task to take care of amid a crisis that would run for months. Moreover, prior research argued clock extension policies, especially in connection with parental/family related issues, are gendered in two ways: men are less likely to take the extension and mothers experience a parenthood penalty that fathers do not (Antecol et al., 2018). A blanket policy helps to circumvent these issues because it requires those who do not need nor want the extension to take steps to opt out.

Although clock extensions were one of the initial and most popular responses, critics quickly noted that an extension was insufficient. Institutions were urged to revise evaluative schemas to recognize faculty members' intense and heightening investments in teaching (e.g., moving courses online, reformatting assignments) and mentoring (e.g., providing academic but also emotional support to students) and advising (e.g., helping graduate students redesign research plans in order to graduate). Although the research is still emerging, most reports have established that, in line with prior research, people of color, especially women of color, and white women bore a disproportionate amount of student-related support work, making it even more important to shift conventional evaluative schemas. In their examination of Black women faculty, Porter et al. (2022) questioned how these types of policies were/would be perceived by those reviewing

files. They shared, “we also had a very real fear of being further penalized for taking advantage of policies such as pausing tenure and promotion and forgoing student evaluations” (p. 8). Institutional intent versus the actual impact of actions cannot be ignored; establishing the policies are just as important as training those who sit on committees reviewing the files. As of September 2022, it is unclear if, how, and to what extent institutions shifted their evaluative schemas.

Recommendations

Our recommendations draw from the literature and speak most directly to department chairs, college deans, and provosts, but may also be relevant to professionals who design faculty professional development.

Impact on Teaching and Advising

- Initiate conversations with review committees about how COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted the teaching, advising, and mentoring responsibilities of women and faculty of color (Boss et al., 2021; Malisch et al., 2020; Porter et al., 2022). Create policies to protect against being penalized for unforeseen challenges.
- Account for the extra time and service dedicated to shifting to online teaching and learning in annual evaluation and promotion and tenure review (Malisch et al., 2020).
- Consider extending promotion clock delays and clearly articulate how such cases should be evaluated.
- Consider removing student evaluations from the early semesters of the pandemic from annual review and/or promotion and tenure review required documents.
- Continue emergency teaching support funds for faculty (and instructors across all levels, including postdocs and graduate students) to help support additional needs for teaching obligations. This includes hiring TAs, purchasing equipment, and working with instructional designers.

- Consider assessing modalities for all courses and allowing faculty to request a teaching format change for those courses that have now gone back in-person, but worked well online.
- Understand the link between enrollment and faculty/staff exhaustion. The conflicting impact of pandemic burnout (Tugend, 2020; Garcia-Rivera et al., 2022) and declining enrollments both before and during the “Great Interruption” (Conley & Massa, 2022), complicates which of these should be given priority. While higher education leaders are grappling with the financial implications of decreased enrollments, they also face the reality that their faculty may not have the capacity to effectively teach large course loads or manage large numbers of students in each class. Pausing to focus on issues of quality, inclusion, engagement, innovation and retention may be critical rather than pressing the gas on recruiting as a reactionary measure (Howells, 2021; Jefe, 2020).

Impact on Research and Scholarship

- Assess tenure and promotion expectations. Specifically, consider placing greater emphasis on teaching, advising, and service responsibilities and reducing emphasis on research productivity, use criteria based evaluation procedures, and reduce/eliminate any candidate comparisons.
- As an example, the University of California, Davis adopted a 5-year “accomplishments relative to opportunity” statement. Borrowing from an idea implemented in Australia, this statement allows professors to discuss how their opportunities shifted in ways that shaped what was possible to achieve. As Monash University officials (2011) described it, “achievement relative to opportunity” is a framework that “assists to ensure that the overall quality and impact of achievements is given more weight than the quantity, rate or breadth of particular achievements relative to their personal, professional and other circumstances” (p. 1).

Impact on Service

- Change how service is viewed at the institution. It has long been documented that service loads tend to be disproportionately high among systematically marginalized groups. This was exacerbated during the dual pandemics. While having a high service load could be a good thing (to labor for the good and assist the institution or community), when it is undervalued and not respected as important work, it can negatively impact the career trajectory of those with high service loads. A solution is to make service matter at your institution. Be vocal about its importance. Publicly acknowledge the work and those who are doing it. Highlight service related work in publications and institutional magazines to mirror the research briefs that are important marketing tools at research-based institutions. Communicate that service is not only important, but expected in order to be successful at your institution.
- Establish an equitable distribution of service. Consider conducting a service audit to determine the state of service at your institution. What is being done? How much is being done? Who is doing it? This will also help the institution in determining if the distribution of service is equitable. The assessment is the first step. The next step is to act. This might mean establishing a structure that re-distributes service loads to ensure that everyone is equally carrying the weight of making the institution better.
- Evaluate how service is documented and assessed. Explore adopting “service dossiers” rather than a simple listing of service activities (Bauer, 2002). These dossiers not only document all service activities, but also the impact on the campus, local, and national/global community. At the campus level, such documentation should speak explicitly to how service activities have contributed to furthering the college or university’s mission.
- Transform how service is rewarded. Communicate through concrete actions that the labor completed to help the institution (students, faculty/staff, campus life and environment, policies and procedures) is important and appreciated. Senior leaders must show up to the programs, events, or meetings developed through such service work. Provide a written formal letter of invitation and thank you for every service activity requested of a faculty or staff member, regardless of how

small it seems. If it requires their time, it matters. Provide an exchange value for service work. Some service work (chairing a strategic planning committee, serving as lead researcher, author for a major institutional status report, coordinating a junior faculty development initiative) requires such significant time and effort, that it might require a commodity exchange like a reduced teaching load, situating the service in the summer and offering summer pay, using service work as a basis for merit increases, or developing major institutional or college level service awards that include a cash stipend.

Evaluation of Performance

- Research on differential use and impact of extensions.
- The financial welfare of faculty and staff must be considered in light of pandemic inflation and rising costs of living. Wages have not kept pace with daily living costs (Conroy, 2022; Spencer 2022). What can be done with raises, bonuses, summer support, or the restructuring of promotion salary increases to retain faculty and staff?

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic will continue to have long-lasting effects on higher education; students, staff, and faculty were all impacted and higher education as an enterprise was as well. Although the pandemic brought many negative impacts to higher education, some silver linings emerged: institutions discovered how to deliver education through new modalities and did so by relying on a workforce operating entirely remotely. Although many colleges and universities are quickly turning back to 2019 ways of operation, higher education is at a crossroads. We can continue operating as we have always done or we can adopt what worked during the pandemic to create forward-looking institutions of higher education that support their students, staff, and faculty in all aspects of their lives.

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