

Report of a Working Group of



An Equity-Minded Framework for Faculty and Staff Employment Decisions in a Time of Financial Challenge

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ABOUT THE ASHE RESEARCH TO PRACTICE PROJECT

The ASHE 2020 annual conference was scheduled to take place in New Orleans, Louisiana in November 2020. As part of the conference, ASHE President KerryAnn O'Meara launched the Research to Practice Project, a collaboration between ASHE and higher education associations and funding agencies. The goal of the project was to partner with New Orleans and Louisiana higher education institutions and organizations to address issues of local concern.

As the pandemic unfolded, the Research to Practice advisory board identified key issues of concern for Louisiana higher education stakeholders. Among these key issues were equity in decision-making related to faculty and staff employment decisions. A call for participation went to ASHE members, and a team of practitioners and researchers (the authors of this report) with interest in staff and faculty issues was convened. This group consulted with members of the ASHE Advisory Board and the liaison to the Louisiana Board of Regents as they created this report.

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Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted academic life in every way imaginable, with significant impacts on the financial future of postsecondary education. Many institutions and state systems have already announced salary freezes, furloughs, and/or employment reductions, with more likely to come as the financial fallout of COVID-19 continues. One of the key areas of concern for institutional stakeholders is the impact of staff and faculty reductions on equity. Reductions in staff and faculty capacity have the potential to widen existing equity gaps between students of different racial groups. Furthermore, furloughs and employment reductions will not be felt equally by all staff and faculty, with differences based upon individual identity, professional role, and institutional/system affiliation. Thus, higher education leaders must balance the need to address real financial challenges while trying to make equity-minded employment decisions fairly and in ways that do not exacerbate inequities.

In Louisiana, public postsecondary institutions have yet to make employment reductions, although the economic impact of the coronavirus downturn has been widespread. However, across the country, many types of institutions have already taken actions to reduce their workforces. Some large public universities and university systems are using tiered reduction models to mitigate the impacts of furloughs on the lowest paid employees, but those models are not being used consistently. Smaller institutions are announcing more drastic cuts such as permanent layoffs and even financial exigency. Given the likelihood of an extended economic impact due to COVID-19, equity-minded employment practices are crucial to institutional wellbeing.

Equity refers to the condition wherein individuals of all groups have what they need to thrive, even those needs differ across groups (Witham et al., 2015). There are several key equity issues that may arise as a result of potential employment reductions within the state of Louisiana:

- **By Institution/System:** Employment reductions could more drastically impact the ability of institutions within the Southern University System, Louisiana Community and Technical College System, and institutions with higher percentage of Black and low-income students to meet their student success goals.
- **By Social Identity:** Employment reductions could exacerbate existing workload inequities for faculty and staff, especially women and employees from historically minoritized racial groups; Staff and faculty in caregiving roles, who are unable to perform duties remotely, or who have pre-existing health conditions may be more vulnerable to reduction; Positive trends in hiring/recruitment of Black faculty may be stagnated.
- **By Professional Role:** Contingent faculty, who are more likely to be women and from historically minoritized racial groups, are more vulnerable to reduction and may be negatively impacted by the transition to online learning; Staff and faculty involved in diversity, equity, and inclusion work may face barriers in delivering educational content; Staff and contingent faculty are often not represented in shared governance structures.
- **By Location:** Staff and faculty employed in urban areas may be at higher risk for illness and thus more vulnerable to reduction.

In response to these equity issues, this report discusses eight key strategies that Louisiana's higher education decision-makers, including the LA Board of Regents, system heads, and institutions, can use to center equity while making difficult employment decisions during the COVID-19 economic downturn. The strategies draw from the framework of equity-mindedness (Bensimon et al., 2016; Malcolm-Piqueux, 2017), a mode of thinking that emphasizes the complex, structural nature of inequities and importantly,

shifts the onus of action and blame for inequities from students, faculty, and staff and instead towards policies, practices, and decision-makers. The eight strategies are:

- **Assume Responsibility:** Take action to support and put in place policies that support equitable outcomes for staff and faculty.
- **Acknowledge Past Disenfranchisement and Exclusion:** Analyze and recognize structural inequities (e.g., patterns of funding, salary inequities) that perpetuate outcome gaps.
- **Use Data:** Proactively collect and/or analyze key quantitative and qualitative data on staff and faculty demographics in categories like race, gender, age, employment status, and income; Identify campus units that critically contribute to university, system, and state equity goals.
- **Engage Stakeholders:** Leverage existing campus governance structures to solicit feedback from staff and faculty; Create state-wide feedback mechanisms; Share data and information with staff and faculty.
- **Foster Clarity and Transparency:** Clearly communicate decision-making logics and processes; Establish central communications hubs and provide regular updates to stakeholders.
- **Accommodate Differences in Contexts:** Consider modified or part-time work schedules; Create tiered furlough and/or salary reduction processes; Provide flexibility in the ways furloughs are implemented.
- **Scaffold Resources:** Coordinate resources across state systems to provide support to those most impacted by furloughs or employment reductions.
- **Monitor Impact and Ask Questions:** Establish structures for monitoring the impact of employee reductions on key outcomes, such as productivity, performance, campus diversity, student recruitment/retention/completion.

We hope that the issues and strategies identified in this report help the LA Board of Regents, systems, and institutional leaders develop equity-minded employment decisions as the economic consequences of the pandemic unfold in the near and short-term.

Introduction



The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted academic life in every way imaginable. Financially, institutions across the country face drops in enrollment, the loss of revenue from on-campus operations, and reductions in state funding, with many institutions resorting to layoffs, furloughs, and other financial interventions to make up for the shortfall. Analysis from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* indicated that at least 55,000 faculty and staff across the country had already been laid-off or furloughed by May 2020 (Chronicle Staff, 2020), with institutions announcing larger cuts as Fall 2020 instructional plans have unfolded (Whitford, 2020). Indeed, recent national analysis indicates that the higher education workforce has shrunk at least 7% since the start of the pandemic, with nearly 337,000 fewer jobs in August compared to February 2020 (Bauman, 2020).

The pandemic and protests for racial justice across the country have also exposed the persistent inequities that plague American society. Higher education is no exception, with persistent disparate outcomes for Black, Latino, and Indigenous students compared to white students and low faculty racial and gender diversity across institutions and disciplines (Espinosa & Mitchell, 2020; Finkelstein et al., 2016; Stewart, 2020). Faculty and staff reductions due to the pandemic recession have the potential to exacerbate these inequities. For instance, staff and faculty reductions may reduce access to higher education and the provision of high quality academic programs to students from historically underrepresented groups (Blankenberger & Williams 2020); the overrepresentation of faculty of color in contingent faculty roles may exacerbate income inequality (Gonzales & Griffin, 2020; Malisch, et al., 2020); and growths in

faculty workload after reductions may intensify the service and teaching demands for already marginalized faculty and staff members (Gonzales & Griffin, 2020; Malisch, et al. 2020).

Even so, enhancing equity remains an important goal of higher education, including for the LA Board of Regents, leaders of the four Louisiana public systems, colleges and universities, state policymakers, and political leadership (see Section 1). By equity, we refer to the condition wherein individuals of all groups have what they need to thrive, even though those needs differ across groups (Witham et al., 2015). We specifically draw from the principles of equity-mindedness (Bensimon et al., 2016; Malcolm-Piqueux, 2017), which emphasizes the complex, structural nature of inequities and importantly, shifts the onus of action and



Recent national analysis indicates that the higher education workforce has shrunk at least 7% since the start of the pandemic, with nearly 337,000 fewer jobs in August compared to February 2020.”

Source: Bauman, 2020

blame for inequities from students, faculty, and staff and instead towards policies, practices, and decision-makers.

Thus, institutional leaders—in Louisiana and across the country—are left to consider how they can balance their stark economic realities with their equally important equity goals. With this challenge in mind, the goal of this report is to give institutional decision-makers strategies for embedding equity into faculty and staff employment decisions in both the near and long-term. We acknowledge that many institutions have already implemented furloughs, layoffs, salary reductions, and hiring freezes (among other financial interventions) and that decisions are ongoing. Although the recommendations we make in this report are more directly aimed at COVID-19 related employment decision-making in Louisiana, we hope our recommendations will be salient for administrators and leaders across the country and in other, non-pandemic related financial contexts.

We have organized this report into three sections:

- In Section 1, we provide an overview of employment actions in higher education, including examples of some recent actions and notes on legal consideration. We add

to that a review of recent commitments by Louisiana institutions (including the Board of Regents) to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and challenge those institutions to uphold those commitments even in a time of financial crisis.

- In Section 2, we lay out a number of ways in which different types of institutions and individuals in different situations might be impacted by various employment actions.
- In Section 3, we consider how institutional decision-makers can embed equity considerations into faculty and staff employment decisions. We draw from principles of equity-mindedness, a mode of thinking that calls attention to patterns of educational disparities (Bensimon et al., 2016). We discuss equity-minded strategies and provide recommendations for how equity can be preserved and enhanced, despite the financial hardship institutions face. A key component of equity-minded decision making is the understanding of personal, professional, and institutional accountability toward recognition and efforts of change.

SECTION 1.

Higher Education Employment Actions and the Commitment to Equity in Louisiana Postsecondary Education



As a result of the economic downturn resulting from measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education institutions in Louisiana and across the country face substantial financial challenges. At the same time, working families are struggling to cope with economic uncertainty and protests against racial injustice have once again rightly captured the national spotlight. Higher education institutions have joined a wide range of other organizations in proclaiming a renewed and strengthened commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The challenge for public institutions is to balance that commitment with fiscal responsibility during a time of economic crisis. In this section, we summarize the employment actions postsecondary institutions have taken in the wake of the pandemic, consider the impact of past economic downturns on higher education equity, and discuss why equity matters in Louisiana higher education.

AN OVERVIEW OF EMPLOYMENT ACTIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Across the higher education industry in the United States, there were significant decreases in employment in the early months of 2020. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics stated that 19,200 jobs were lost in higher education from February to March 2020 (Chronicle of Higher Education Staff, 2020). More recent estimates indicate that the higher education workforce has lost nearly 337,000 jobs by August 2020 (Bauman, 2020). By the beginning of July, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* had received notices of 224 institutions furloughing, laying off, or not renewing contracts for over 51,000 employees. While the only Louisiana institution noted in the list was a private university, Loyola, which is

outside the LA Board of Regents' purview, this list likely omits contract non-renewals, hiring freezes, and other fiscal interventions that were not as visible to those outside the organization.

Table 1 (see right) provides just a few examples of recent employment actions taken by colleges and universities.

LINGERING IMPACT OF THE GREAT RECESSION

Any funding reductions in the wake of COVID-19 will only add to the cumulative budget cuts of the past two decades (i.e., the Great Recession, Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane

TABLE 1. Employment Actions Taken by Selected Colleges and Universities, 2020

STATE	INSTITUTION	ACTION TAKEN	SOURCE
Systems			
Georgia	University System of Georgia	Tiered furloughs across 26 institutions. Highest paid employees take 16 furlough days during FY21 (6.2% pay cut). Lowest paid workers take no furlough days. Most employees take 4-8 furlough days.	Link
Wisconsin	University of Wisconsin System	Furloughs/layoffs for up to 600 administrative employees; senior administrators taking one furlough day	Link
Community Colleges			
Florida	Broward College	Permanent layoffs of faculty counselors	Link
Florida	Seminole State College	Reduction of hours for some PT employees and layoffs for others, esp. those who could not perform duties remotely.	Link
Public Research Universities			
Arizona	University of Arizona	Tiered mandatory furlough plan for all employees, based on salary range, taken during 2020-21 academic year. Employees retain benefits.	Link
Arkansas	University of Arkansas-Little Rock	Permanent layoffs of 13 faculty in "low enrollment" programs; elimination of some academic programs	Link
Massachusetts	University of Massachusetts-Amherst	Indefinite furloughs of 850 dining hall and residence hall operations staff. Decision in consultation with the union. Workers retain benefits and qualify for unemployment.	Link
Missouri	University of Missouri	Layoffs, furloughs, salary reductions (voluntary and mandatory), contract non-renewals	Link
South Carolina	Clemson University	Tiered mandatory furlough plan for all employees based on salary; must be taken during fall 2020. Employees paid under \$49,999 are not furloughed; those paid \$400,000 or more are furloughed 12 days. Contract employees take pay reductions. Employees retain benefits and will be credited for state employee service time.	Link
Public Comprehensive Universities			
South Carolina	Coastal Carolina University	Tiered mandatory furlough plan for all employees (including faculty and staff) with anyone making over \$35,751 required to take 20 furlough days during the 2020-2021 fiscal year.	Link
South Carolina	Winthrop University	Tiered mandatory furlough plan for most faculty and staff, with those making under \$26,200 taking max of 2 furlough days and those making over \$50,000 taking max of 20. Employees retain benefits and may be eligible for unemployment in some cases.	Link
Washington	Eastern Washington University	Approximately 400 faculty and staff warned of potential layoffs and furloughs.	Link
Minority-Serving Institutions			
Alabama	Miles College	Limited layoffs, temporary furloughs.	Link
Georgia	Morehouse College	13 layoffs, 54 two-month furloughs, 194 pay cuts	Link
Missouri	Lincoln University	Declared financial exigency	Link



As educators, it is our moral obligation and responsibility to promote and encourage inclusivity and diversity and to denounce discrimination and acts that impede social justice to which each of us is entitled.”

Source: Louisiana Community and Technical College System

Rita). The impacts of the 2008 recession still reverberate in higher education, particularly in Louisiana. Many universities and colleges reduced numbers of both faculty and staff in the years following the Great Recession (Gordon, 2012). As Gordon (2012) from the Brookings Institution summarized, “between fiscal years 2008-09 and 2010-11, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reports that 34 states reduced expenditures on K-12 education, 43 cut college and university expenditures, 31 lowered health care expenditures, 29 cut services to the elderly and disabled, and 44 reduced employee compensation” (para. 20).

The University of Louisiana System went further by simplifying its employment procedures to make it easier and faster to lay off both tenured and untenured faculty (Jaschik, 2011). With higher education budgets from the state level decreasing in the intervening years, colleges and universities across the country have fewer full-time and more part-time employees than in the past (Hussar et al., 2020). Louisiana currently has the second lowest level of combined education appropriations and net tuition revenue per FTE in the United States, and while these numbers have been increasing recently, they remain more than 30% below pre-2008 recession levels (Laderman & Weeden, 2020). As Blankenberger and Williams (2020) observed, “Even after rebounding from the Great Recession, state spending on public higher education in 2017 was still \$9 billion, well behind 2008 levels. State higher education appropriations per full time equivalent student (FTE) were approximately \$1,000 below 2008 levels and about \$2,000 below 2001 levels. Unsurprisingly, higher unemployment and reduced state revenues are associated with reduced state support for higher education” (p. 5-6).

To sum, Ed Burmila (2020) wrote in the Chronicle of Higher Education, “One chilling lesson—among many—from the 2008 financial crisis was that the worst impacts on state budgets were not felt until two to three years into

the ensuing recession, in the period from 2010-12. If that pattern repeats itself—and with Congress showing no inclination to backstop state and local governments, it very likely will—then the dismal reality is that higher education is in for a world of hurt: The worst of the economic storm is yet to come. State legislatures will seek more cuts in public systems, including higher education” (para. 5).

WHY EQUITY-MINDED DECISION-MAKING MATTERS IN LOUISIANA

Recent national analysis indicates Louisiana faces some of the most pronounced postsecondary equity gaps in the country. Louisiana has the lowest degree attainment rate for Black adults in the country (Howard Nichols et al., 2019). Disparate outcomes also exist in terms of Black student enrollment (for men and women), completion rates, and Black student-to-Black faculty ratios (Harper & Simmons, 2019). Less attention has been paid to diversity and equity within staff and faculty in Louisiana’s postsecondary institutions, though faculty and staff diversity remains relatively low, particularly within the Louisiana State University System and the University of Louisiana System (Louisiana Board of Regents, 2020). Although having diverse faculty and staff has been linked to enhanced educational outcomes for historically minoritized students (Stout et al., 2018; Strayhorn, 2018; Tinto, 2017), there is evidence that diversity also increases productivity, quality of science and innovation (Post et al., 2009; Sparber, 2009), and improves decision-making (Antonio et al., 2004).

The Louisiana Master Plan for Higher Education (2019) prioritizes erasing equity gaps as an important strategic goal of the state. The Master Plan notes that “Louisiana postsecondary education is being successfully delivered to too few and unevenly, leaving entire segments behind” (p. 11). The plan sets the ambitious goal of increasing the percent-

age of working-aged adults who attain a postsecondary credential to 60% and acknowledges that to achieve these goals, greater resources are needed to engage underserved populations, understand barriers, and implement strategies to promote equity-based success. Furthermore, Louisiana

institutions of higher education have signaled their intent to follow these directives in a number of public statements. (See Appendix 2). Thus, in order for Louisiana to fulfill its strategic goals, equity-minded decision-making must be prioritized.

NOTES ON THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR EMPLOYMENT DECISIONS¹

While colleges and universities will undoubtedly have legal counsel to rely on during the implementation of any employment actions, it is useful for the lay reader to bear in mind certain aspects of the federal and state laws when considering these situations.

As a preliminary to any employment action, it is necessary to clearly define terms being used such as furlough, layoff, reduction in force (RIF), salary or hiring freeze, salary or time reduction, and others. The federal government does not provide definitions of these terms, and while some states do, Louisiana is not among them. To prevent misunderstandings in both legal and community settings, it is wise to have a diverse and equitably defined group of stakeholders come to consensus on meanings before moving forward. The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) provides some definitions on its [website](#) as a useful starting point. Once the definitions are agreed upon, pertinent federal and state laws can be considered.

From an equity stance, the most important laws to be considered are the Federal Equal Employment Opportunities laws. These laws work in concert to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex (found in Title VII), pregnancy/childbirth (Title VII amendment), age (ADEA), genetic information (GINA), and disability (ADA) as well as prohibiting retaliation against employees who previously filed complaints against the employer.² As of June 2020, the United States Supreme Court interpreted the word “sex” in Title VII to include both sexual orientation and transgender status. Furthermore, Louisiana labor laws also prohibit employment discrimination based on sickle cell trait and medical conditions related

to pregnancy and childbirth.³ Prior to taking an employment action, the institution must determine if the proposed action could impact any of these groups disproportionately. If it could, the proposed action must be modified to remove the disproportionate effect.

A wide variety of contracts and contract laws must be reviewed during an employment action. Faculty and unionized staff often have contracts that limit the circumstances under which their employment can be modified. Vendors’ contracts may contain limitations on whether impacted employees can engage with them. In particular, since many employees receive health care benefits through their employer, the institution will need to review any restrictions on health insurance for impacted employees, which could have outsized effects on some protected groups.

Once a layoff proposal has been legally defined and made equitable, institutions need to consider how to notify the impacted employees. The federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act requires employers to notify employees of impending layoffs 60 days in advance if either 500 workers at a single site will be laid off within 30 days or 50-499 workers will be laid off and this constitutes more than 33% of the employer’s workforce at that site.⁴ While some states have their own versions of the WARN Act that are more strict than the federal law, Louisiana does not.

Finally, many institutions choose to provide general guidance on unemployment insurance that is available to eligible employees who meet the federal and state criteria. However, state laws prohibit direct screening of employees for unemployment insurance eligibility by the employer.

¹ Disclaimer: The information provided here does not constitute legal advice. All institutions are advised to consult their own attorneys before embarking on any employment changes.

² See <https://www.eeoc.gov/statutes/laws-enforced-eeoc> for details.

³ See <https://gov.louisiana.gov/page/lchr>.

⁴ See https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/Layoff/pdfs/_EmployerWARN2003.pdf.

SECTION 2.

Areas for Disparate Impact and Key Equity Concerns



Although it appears that no Louisiana public colleges or universities have announced furloughs or layoffs as of this writing, we understand that public postsecondary institutions have already been subject to a reduction in state funding for fiscal year 2021. In Louisiana, most of that reduction was offset by CARES Act funds. The state's four public university systems have received \$113 million in response effort; however, budgeted state funds show the higher education systems getting \$22 million dollars fewer than the past budgeted year.

Historically, after economic downturns, such as the one experienced after Hurricane Katrina, institutions within specific geographic areas are most significantly impacted (e.g., universities in New Orleans disproportionately experienced suspension of operations, property damage, displacement and relocation, financial exigency). This suggests that decision-makers are often unprepared to consider the lasting impact of recessions on key equity issues across different institutions.

In this section, we summarize areas in which staff and faculty employment decisions might have disparate impacts and discuss the key equity issues that emerge in each area. In Table 2, we present demographic data on undergraduate, faculty, and staff within Louisiana's public postsecondary institutions (in the aggregate and disaggregated across systems), drawn from the LA Board of Regents State Higher Education Factbook (2020). We weave these data throughout this section to highlight areas of concern. Then,

in Table 3, we summarize areas for disparate impact and the key equity concerns associated with them. Implicit in this argument is a call for the LA Board of Regents to work proactively to mitigate the introduction of greater inequities during this critical time.

DISPARATE IMPACT BY INSTITUTION

The impacts of cuts in state funding will vary in part because institutions and systems serve different student populations. Within Louisiana, Black and African American students are more likely to attend institutions within the Southern University System and the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (Table 2). Thus, funding cuts to these systems will likely have a dramatic effect on the production of college degrees among Black and African Americans in the state:

TABLE 2. Louisiana Student, Faculty, and Staff Demographics (FY 2019)

	LA Public Higher Education (All Public Institutions)	Louisiana State University System	Southern University System	University of Louisiana System	Louisiana Community and Technical College System
Undergraduate Students					
White	53%	63%	5%	60%	41%
Black or African American	29%	15%	86%	23%	38%
Hispanic	5%	6%	1%	5%	6%
All Others	13%	15%	8%	12%	16%
Men	40%	42%	33%	40%	40%
Women	60%	58%	67%	61%	61%
Instructional Faculty					
White	70%	72%	14%	78%	72%
Black or African American	18%	6%	76%	9%	24%
Hispanic	2%	3%	1%	2%	1%
All Others	15%	18%	8%	10%	4%
Men	49%	56%	45%	48%	46%
Women	51%	44%	55%	52%	54%
Exec./Management Staff					
White	67%	74%	3%	76%	66%
Black or African American	25%	15%	93%	17%	30%
Hispanic	4%	6%	1%	3%	1%
All Others	4%	5%	3%	4%	2%
Men	46%	46%	40%	48%	43%
Women	54%	54%	60%	52%	57%
Other Professional Staff					
White	62%	68%	5%	67%	55%
Black or African American	29%	17%	92%	26%	41%
Hispanic	2%	3%	0%	2%	2%
All Others	7%	12%	2%	5%	2%
Men	38%	40%	33%	40%	28%
Women	62%	60%	67%	60%	72%

Note: Data derived from LA Board of Regents (2020).

- Weissman (2020), writing for *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, noted that many diversity, equity, and inclusion experts had raised concerns about the extent to which diversity initiatives would be maintained during the pandemic recession. For example, Dr. David Kwabena Wilson, the president of Morgan State University, argued that investment in historically Black colleges and universities would be critical for ensuring that diverse talent is “available for the nation” (Weissman, 2020, para 18).

Likewise, economist Dick Startz (2020) provided an early analysis of the financial situation across higher education, stating:

- The overall picture suggests there are very few students whose universities do not face significant financial risk. Universities in the bachelor’s and master’s categories are even worse off than doctoral universities and the HBCUs. ... the sources of risk do vary across categories:

For example, bachelor's- and master's-level institutions are typically less vulnerable to drop offs in out-of-state students than are doctoral institutions and HBCUs, but bachelor's and master's-level universities face greater risk from overall enrollment declines and are somewhat greater risk from state budget cuts...nearly every school is at least at some risk of significant financial losses... these risks are incredibly different at different schools. Many schools face difficulties. If things turn out really bad, some schools face closures” (para. 16-18).

Students from different backgrounds are being impacted in different ways by the shift to online instruction:

- Extant literature reveals that “online courses have 10–40 percent greater dropout rates compared to traditional instruction. Some studies indicated that there are differences in these outcomes by group. Large-scale studies of community college students have shown worse outcomes in fully online courses, but students with lower GPAs, males, and African American students suffered even steeper declines. Others have found that demographic factors like age and gender are not significantly related to low course completion rates, but student factors, such as academic background, abilities, and online experience, are related to successful completion of online courses” (Blankenberger & Williams, 2020, p. 412).

DISPARATE IMPACT ON INDIVIDUALS

Blankenberger and Williams (2020) summarized the ways financial cuts may have disparate impact on individuals, arguing, “Funding cuts can lead to diminished access to higher education, with consequences for social equity. Declining budgets have already led higher education institutions to cut expenses, increase tuition, recruit students more aggressively, and experiment with new delivery modalities. The added pressure after COVID-19 will only magnify this trend of budget cutting. This could have serious ramifications for social equity. Universities are significant contributors to social equity in that they provide a conduit for social mobility. All higher education employees, from academic leaders and faculty to student affairs and enrollment personnel, play a critical role in fostering such social equity. However, this avenue for mobility is contingent on access to higher education and success therein. If budget shortfalls weaken that access because of increasing costs, diminished scholarships, reduced academic supports, this could have serious ramifications for social equity” (p. 408-409).

Intersectionality is the relationship of social categorizations such as race, socio-economic class, gender, and education that apply to any given individual or group, creating an overlapping and interdependent system of bias, discrimination, or disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality provides a framework to critically understand, evaluate, and potentially challenge existing practices in higher education decision making. Higher education decision-makers should be inclusive when approaching the complexities of marginalized identities and the retention and promotion of faculty and leadership. While all faculty and staff are affected by changing circumstances and contexts, this section addresses the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on women, marginalized racial identities, LBGTQ, people with health concerns and pre-existing health conditions, and those at the intersections of these identities employed in higher education (Byrd, 2018; Malisch et al., 2020; Ray, 2018; Russ et al., 2010).

By Social Identities

- While there is much data collection and analysis to be done, including gathering information on Louisiana-specific impacts, there is evidence that COVID-19 will have adverse effects on marginalized populations. It is important to address the uneven distribution of labor and service commitments that are likely to affect tenure, promotion, productivity, and job performance for faculty and staff during budget reductions and the disruptions related to COVID-19 (Gonzales & Griffin, 2020; Kantamneni, 2020; Malisch et al., 2020).
- Across state higher education institutions, there are substantial numbers of women in executive/management staff, professional staff, and faculty roles (Table 2), which means that furloughs and layoffs in higher education will disproportionately impact women, magnifying trends observed in the greater economy (Hegewisch & Childers, 2020; Kalev, 2020).
- The percentage of Black and African American faculty across the state rose slightly between FY2011 and FY2019, from 15.5% to 17.6% (Louisiana Board of Regents, 2020). This positive trend could be threatened with layoffs, furloughs, and stagnated hiring.
- COVID-19 and long-term quarantine mandates have amplified caregiving pressures and highlighted current inequitable practices. These amplified caregiving pressures and societal biases have a disproportionate impact on women (Gonzales & Griffin, 2020; Malisch et al., 2020), a key factor in gender equality advancements.

TABLE 3. Summary of Areas of Disparate Impact and Key Equity Concerns in Louisiana Higher Education

Areas of Disparate Impact	Key Equity Concerns
By Institution/System	Reduced capacity of the Southern University System and the LCTC System has the potential to reduce the enrollment and completion of Black and African American students and the overall diversity of faculty and staff across the state.
By Social Identities	<p>Uneven distribution of faculty and staff labor may be exacerbated by reductions with implications for promotion, tenure, productivity, and job performance, especially for women and employees from historically minoritized racial groups.</p> <p>The high percentage of women employed in the state’s postsecondary institutions indicates employment reductions will disproportionately impact women.</p> <p>Small positive trend in the hiring of Black and African American faculty could be stagnated by employment reductions.</p> <p>Faculty and staff who are caregivers and older than 60 may be more vulnerable to challenges related to productivity and may be concerned about returning to in-person work.</p>
By Professional Role	<p>Staff who unable to perform duties remotely may be more vulnerable to furloughs and layoffs.</p> <p>Contingent faculty members, who are more likely to be women and from historically minoritized racial groups, are more vulnerable to reductions.</p> <p>Contingent faculty may be negatively impacted by the transition to online teaching as a result of teaching evaluations and a lack of access to internet and other resources.</p> <p>Staff and faculty involved in diversity, equity, and inclusion work may face unique challenges in the online learning environment.</p> <p>Staff and contingent faculty typically lack access to formal institution and system governance structures.</p>
By Location	Staff and faculty employed in urban locations may face higher risk for illness due to pollution.

- Fear of contracting (or spreading) COVID-19 virus by coming in contact with students and employees if and when there is a physical return to campus highlights health inequities among employees and students. There will be differential impact depending on an employee’s age and health conditions that would not otherwise constitute a disability, as well as family and/or household status (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020; Flaherty, 2020b).

By Professional Role

- Staff who are unable to perform their duties remotely may be more vulnerable to furloughs and/or layoffs (Whitford, 2020) for several reasons (e.g., inability to access facilities, lack of quality internet, and/or workplace flexibility) (Gould & Wilson, 2020). Given the large percentage of Black staff, and especially Black women, in these professional roles (Table 2) this group may be particularly susceptible to employment reductions, as has been the case nationally (Gould & Wilson, 2020).



Universities need to research the degree to which COVID-19 will impact the productivity of women and other minoritized faculty. We then encourage the university to respond to this impact by developing a strategic action plan, which includes metrics and accountability for dealing with changes in faculty productivity because of COVID-19.”

Source: Malisch et al. (2020), *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*

- Women and historically minoritized faculty members are more likely to hold positions as lecturers, adjuncts, and/or part-time instructors (Finkelstein et al., 2016). For instance, at Louisiana State University, women comprise 31% of tenured and tenure-track faculty but 56% of non-tenure eligible faculty, while Black, African American, and Hispanic faculty compose 6% of tenured and tenure-track faculty but 11% of non-tenure eligible faculty (NCES, 2018). Historically, these positions are more likely to be eliminated or furloughed when institutions make budgetary cuts (Flaherty, 2020a).
- There are multiple ways the transition to online teaching and virtual learning may impact equity. The transition to online education may negatively impact course evaluations for contingent faculty, who are more likely to be women and especially women of color (Finkelstein et al., 2016). Women are more likely than their male counterparts to have a heavier teaching load which may impact the number of courses that needed to transition to the online environment (Malisch et al., 2020). This creates a heavier burden of workload for women. Contingent faculty may be unable to provide quality teaching in a remote or hybrid environment because of insufficient training, equipment, or time to develop their courses (Flaherty, 2020b; Kaiser Health News, 2020), all of which may influence teaching evaluations. Decisions regarding which faculty will teach online or in hybrids formats has been largely haphazard (Flaherty, 2020b; Kaiser Health News, 2020), with relatively little consideration for experience or effectiveness in online teaching. Gonzales and Griffin (2020) note that contingent faculty’s employment is often based on teaching evaluations, highlighting equity concerns in this current context.
- The transition to virtual learning may create new challenges for faculty and staff engaged in critical diversity,

equity, and inclusion work. For instance, faculty and staff may need to put forth greater effort to enhance security, moderate discussions, and revise assessment procedures to ensure learning effectiveness in the online environment (Blankenberger & Williams, 2020).

- Staff and contingent faculty are less likely to have formalized roles in campus shared governance structures (Kezar & Sam, 2014; Skallerup Bessette, 2020), meaning that their voices are not represented in academic decision-making.

By Location

- Recent studies also indicate that the COVID-19 death rate is higher in geographic areas with high rates of air pollution (Wu et al., 2020). Air quality in the state of Louisiana has eroded in recent decades (Younes, 2019), with disproportionate impact on urban communities of color (Perron & Gross, 2010; Younes, 2019).

SUMMARY

The inequities discussed in this section will be felt by faculty and staff alike, with serious repercussions for student learning, completion, and success (Kezar et al., 2019), as well as equity with faculty and staff employment. As Kezar et al. (2019) argue, “the majority of all non-management university workers, academic and nonacademic, are employed on a part-time, temporary, or contingent basis...The pervasive insecurity foisted on most college employees, regardless of the particular job duties they perform, is a key strategy used to regulate the postsecondary workforce at large” (p.16). Thus, equity-minded strategies are needed to make employment decisions fairly and transparently.

SECTION 3.

Strategies for Equity in Faculty and Staff Employment Decisions



Louisiana’s higher education institutions no doubt face substantial challenges in the short and long-term. Yet, staff and faculty employment decisions made without a mind towards equity have the potential to exacerbate existing inequalities and undermine the achievement of key state, system, and institutional goals. Although the Board may view its typical role as limited to apportioning state funding, including reductions in that funding, to the four state systems and institutions, we suggest that these are anything but typical times.

This section offers key strategies for how state, system, and institutional decision-makers can embed equity into staff and faculty employment decisions, specifically as related to furloughs or employment reductions. We draw specifically from the principles of equity-mindedness, which refers to an approach to educational reform that “foregrounds the policies and practices contributing to disparities in educational achievement” (Bensimon et al., 2016, p. 1; Malcolm-Piqueux, 2017). (See Appendix 1 for further discussion of equity-mindedness in higher education.). We identify the following eight key strategies:

- Assume Responsibility
- Acknowledge Past Disenfranchisement and Exclusion
- Use Data
- Engage Stakeholders
- Foster Clarity and Transparency
- Accommodate Differences in Contexts
- Scaffold Resources
- Monitor Impact and Ask Questions

Within each strategy, we identify specific practices that the LA Board of Regents, systems, and institutions could use and we identify, where relevant, examples of each practice from universities across the country.

KEY STRATEGIES

Assume Responsibility

- As the central body coordinating higher education for the state, the LA Board of Regents, working with system and institutional leadership, should take an active role to continue the work of dismantling educational inequities (Bensimon et al., 2016; Malcolm-Piqueux, 2017), even in times of financial challenge. For instance, the LA Board of Regents and system and institutional leaders can take action by supporting policies that address the needs of economically vulnerable students⁵, who are more likely to be from historically minoritized groups.

Earnest intentionality and clear strategic planning efforts can align institutional goals and planning with inclusion, diversity, and equity.

- The LA Board of Regents, Commissioner, and Staff can help coordinate among the state’s public postsecondary institutions the sharing of resources, information, and strategies that foster equity in employment decision-making.

Acknowledge Past Disenfranchisement and Exclusion

- Educational inequities persist because of structural inequalities embedded within policy and decision-making processes (Malcolm-Piqueux, 2017). For example, although cuts to higher education within Louisiana have impacted educational opportunities for all students (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, n.d.), cuts have more acutely impacted costs for Black students and families (Mitchell et al., 2019). Furthermore, Louisiana’s public historically black colleges and universities experienced the greatest budget cuts in the state in the 2010s (Boland & Gasman, 2014). For example, HBCU Southern A&M University’s budget was cut 45% between 2008 and 2012, compared to the 25% budget cut at Louisiana State University, a historically white institution (Boland & Gasman, 2014). As (and if) Louisiana systems, institutions, and the LA Board of Regents announce financial interventions in response to the pandemic, they can acknowledge these historical inequities and develop plans of action that will help to mitigate the impact of staff and faculty reductions on pre-existing and future inequities. For instance, should subsequent federal funding become available, institutions that serve higher numbers of Pell eligible and low-income students (in Louisiana, more likely to be in the Southern System and the LCTC) should be prioritized (Ed Trust, 2020).

Use Data

- Institutions, systems, and the LA Board of Regents, Commissioner, and Staff should use institutional data sources to understand the demographics of faculty and staff in categories like gender, race, age, employment status/rank, and income brackets (Bensimon et al., 2016; Pritchard, 2020) and to evaluate pay scale inequities among faculty, staff, and leadership for full consideration of embedded bias (e.g., by race or gender) and in-

equalities (Malisch et al., 2020) at the university, system, and state levels.

- Use qualitative and quantitative data to understand which units play essential roles in enhancing or promoting equity. Not only is it important to look at student satisfaction and utilization but also qualitative data from students and recent alumni to find out where and how they received the most support on campus and what helped them persist to graduation (Washington, 2010). Data should be collected and/or analyzed proactively now, rather than haphazardly or in response to financial emergencies, so that data are easily available for institutional leaders to access should employment reductions become necessary.
- Share data and findings from these analyses, along with financial updates, with staff and faculty (Hass, 2020). Greater transparency on the financial challenges faced by Louisiana’s postsecondary institutions will enhance employees’ ability to provide useful feedback and enhance buy-in to institutional decision-making.

Engage Stakeholders

- Diversity, equity, and inclusion professionals must be given a meaningful role in decision-making about employment decisions from the outset (Weissman, 2020). For example, the LA Board of Regents might consider convening diversity officers from across Louisiana’s four state systems to consider the impact of furloughs and layoffs within specific systems, institutions, and in relation to important equity outcomes for students, faculty, and staff.
- Leverage existing shared governance structures, including faculty and university senates and staff councils where they exist, to include faculty and staff perspectives in financial decision-making (American Association of University Professors, 2020; Hass, 2020; Murray & Miller, 2014; Skallerup Bessette, 2020). If they have not already, institutions should facilitate meetings of staff/faculty senates online (American Association of University Professors, 2020) and should share the data discussed in the previous section through these channels. In the cases where staff do not formally participate in shared governance, institutions should solicit formal feedback from staff (Mathews, personal communication, 2020).

5 The EdTrust’s [Higher Education Equity Agenda in Response to COVID-19](#) offers some concrete, equity-based actions that state agencies can take, mostly on behalf of supporting students.

“Diversity, equity, and inclusion professionals must be given a meaningful role in decision-making about employment decisions from the outset.”

Source: Weissman, 2020

At the state level, the Louisiana Commissioner of Higher Education could create an advisory board of individuals who represent different institutional stakeholders and institution types to the LA Board of Regents. For instance, the statewide faculty senate group could be formalized to serve in an advisory role. This body could provide the Commissioner with perspectives and/strategies that would not otherwise be elevated through the traditional governance structures (Knight, 2020; Tarki et al., 2020; Sucher & Gupta, 2018, 2020).

Foster Clarity and Transparency

- Once decisions have been made regarding employment reductions, decision-makers must clearly articulate why, how, and in what timeframe specific actions will be taken (Hass, 2020; Ramalingam et al., 2020; Sucher & Gupta, 2020; Tarki, 2020). In some cases, there are legal requirements that mandate notifications or negotiations (see “Notes on the Legal Framework for Employment Decisions” above). Within institutions, establishing a single unit that will communicate all employment-related information (e.g., human resources) for all employees to reduce confusion and mitigate the perception that some employee groups (e.g., faculty) are receiving more information than other groups (e.g., staff) (Knight, 2020; Skallerup Bessette, 2020). System and institutional leaders might consider holding regular virtual forums as financial updates become available to facilitate transparency and communication.
- Institutions can create easy-to-read and easy-to-understand guidelines that are located on a central website (e.g., human resources) (Sucher & Gupta, 2020; Thayer, 2020). For instance, the [University of Arizona](#) and [Clemson University](#) have created furlough guidelines in chart and FAQ format that enhance clarity. Guidelines should not only outline who is furloughed/reduced and how many days they are furloughed, but also what activities employees are allowed to engage in during furloughs (e.g., expectations around work, access to email),

what benefits they will and will not be eligible for, and to whom questions can be directed.

Accommodate Differences in Contexts

- Consider modified duties or part-time options before furloughs or layoffs (Tarki et al., 2020). Due to school closures and other caregiving responsibilities, many faculty and staff may consider part-time options a more desired (though still challenging) alternative to providing full-time care and work. Many institutions have offered modified duty arrangements or part-time tenure track options for faculty, which may serve as models for part-time work arrangements during COVID-19 (Drago & Williams, 2000).
- Understand the different experiences of individuals from different social groups, including recognition of intersectional identities (e.g., race and gender) (Bensimon et al., 2016). Tiered furlough strategies or salary reductions based on income help ensure that those employees who are the most economically vulnerable are the least impacted by furloughs and/or layoffs (Kurth, 2020; Tarki et al., 2020; Thayer, 2020). Institutions should also “resist using the current crisis as an opportunity to exploit contingency further by hiring more contingent faculty into precarious positions” (Tenure for the Common Good, 2020).
- Take into account differences in the way furlough arrangements may impact employees at different income levels. Provide flexibility in the way in which furloughs or salary reductions are administered. For instance, [Idaho State University](#) allowed employees to spread their furloughs days throughout the fiscal year, rather than taking consecutive furlough days, which may mitigate *some* of the financial burden on lower paid employees.

Scaffold Resources

- Provide training and resources to faculty and staff who are transitioning programs to the virtual or hybrid

learning environment on a continuing basis (McKenzie, 2020). Many institutions within Louisiana provided virtual learning support to faculty in the spring and summer of 2020. Such resources should be provided on an ongoing basis to all employees involved in student education.

- Consider launching a cross-state talent share program that connects employees who are unable to complete their work remotely (and who may be most vulnerable to reductions) with units who are in need of short-term assistance. Institutions such as the [University of Maryland College Park](#), [Purdue University](#), and the [University of Florida](#), among others, offer potential examples. If possible, provide hot-spot internet access to facilitate participation in such a program for those who may lack access to a stable internet connection.
- Assist employees with transitioning out of their roles if necessary (Knight, 2020; Sucher & Gupta, 2020). Provide information on how to access unemployment benefits, when they can expect to receive pay, and what will happen to retirement savings or other benefits.
- Create cross-state/system/institution job boards or websites by which furloughed or laid off employees can apply and interview for jobs as they become available (Sucher & Gupta, 2020).

Monitor Impact and Ask Questions

- Institutions should establish and make public the desired outcomes of equity-based employment decisions (Hass, 2020). If furloughs or salary reductions are being considered, consult with diversity officers, system leaders, and LA Board of Regents Commission staff leaders to gain insight into best practices or unintended consequences.
- Put in place systems and structures for monitoring the impact at the institution, system, and state level (Ben-simon et al., 2016). Employee reductions may have important consequences for campus diversity, retention, completion, productivity, and performance. Impact may be felt at multiple levels. For instance, at the student level, reducing the number of student life staff members may affect institutional enrollment (e.g., retention and completion), especially for students from underrepresented populations who look up to these staff members as mentors and second parents (“othermothering”) (Hirt et al., 2008). Likewise, reductions in academic support staff or instructional faculty may reduce faculty research productivity (Gonzales & Griffin, 2020; Malisch et al., 2020). Annually analyzing institutional/federal data sources (e.g., faculty activity reports, IPEDs data) at the institution, system, and state level will help leaders evaluate where resources are more or less needed and understand the unanticipated impacts of COVID-19 employment decisions.

MORE RESOURCES ON SUPPORTING FACULTY AND STAFF

Although the focus of this report was to consider how institutions, systems, and the LA Board of Regents might foster equity in employment decisions related to the COVID-19 financial downturn, we recommend the following articles, reports, and resources for additional guidance on how faculty and staff can be supported and equity maintained during the pandemic. We summarize some of these key recommendations in Appendix 3.

Reports & Articles

- Gonzales, L. & Griffin, K.A. (2020). *Supporting faculty during and after COVID-19: Don't let go of equity*. ASPIRE Alliance.
- Malisch, J. L., Harris, B. N., Sherrer, S. M., Lewis, K. A., Shepherd, S. L., McCarthy, P. C., ... & Ramalingam, L. (2020). Opinion: In the wake of COVID-19, academia needs new solutions to ensure gender equity. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 117(27), 15378-15381.

Websites

- [ASPIRE Alliance's COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [Continuing the Conversation on Gender Equity during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Conclusion



In this report, we summarized the landscape of employment decisions made by state systems and institutions in the wake of the COVID-19 financial downturn. We discussed areas for disparate impact and key equity issues that emerge related to faculty and staff employment decisions, particularly furloughs and layoffs. We then made recommendations and provided examples on how the LA Board of Regents, in coordination with Louisiana’s four state systems of public higher education, institutional leaders, and policymakers, can make equity-minded employment decisions.

As Kim Hunter Reed, Commissioner of the LA Board of Higher Education, argues, “equity gaps have existed for too long” (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2020). To address inequities, and prevent them from widening in the wake of the pandemic, higher education leaders must consider how equity can be built into not only short-term re-opening and employment plans, but into long-term institutional strategy (Weissman, 2020). We hope that these strategies discussed serve as a launch point for the LA Board of Regents and Board staff, systems, institutions, and policymakers to support existing and create new resources that help support equity for staff and faculty across the state, even during times of extreme financial crisis.

“To address inequities, and prevent them from widening in the wake of the pandemic, higher education leaders must consider how equity can be built into not only short-term re-opening and employment plans, but into long-term institutional strategy.”

Source: Weissman, 2020

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APPENDIX 1.

Equity-Minded Decision-Making in Higher Education

Equity refers to the condition wherein all groups and individuals have the resources that they need to succeed, even those resources differ across groups (Witham et al., 2015). Equity moves beyond considering who has access to higher education and instead considers *who benefits* from higher education by looking at outcomes (Washington, 2010). Within this framing, equity-mindedness is defined as an approach to educational reform that “foregrounds the policies and practices contributing to disparities in educational achievement” (Bensimon et al., 2016, p. 1). Bensimon and colleagues developed the concept of equity-mindedness primarily as a framework for enhancing racial equity within higher education for undergraduate students (Bensimon et al., 2016).

The lessons and insights from this work have been applied across contexts in higher education, for example, to understanding how to improve equity in faculty supports during COVID-19 (Gonzales & Griffin, 2020), faculty teaching (Castillo-Montoya, 2020), faculty workload (O’Meara et al., 2019, 2020), and as a lens for increasing the agency of student affairs practitioners in increasing educational outcomes for certain groups of students (Felix et al., 2015). Thus, in reviewing the literature and considering our goal of creating a set of recommendations for how institutions and

state systems might make employment decisions with equity in mind, we found the principles of equity-mindedness to be useful for our endeavor.

Equity-mindedness foremost requires anti-deficit thinking, moving the onus of responsibility and action away from students, faculty, and staff who may experience lower outcomes, and instead asking decision-makers to consider the structural elements of policy and practice that shape differential outcomes (Bensimon et al., 2016; Malcolm-Piqueux, 2017). Equity-mindedness is “color-conscious,” in that it acknowledges pervasive patterns of differential outcomes based on race (Bensimon et al., 2016). Equity-mindedness further assumes that decisions made “neutrally,” without equity in mind, will implicitly disadvantage historically minoritized groups. Equity-mindedness centers the notion of understanding differences in contexts as essential for making equity-minded decisions (Bensimon et al., 2016; O’Meara et al., 2020). That is, equity is not achieved when all individuals or institutions are treated equally (“horizontal equity”), but rather, when resources are allocated such that outcomes are achieved equally (“vertical equity”) (Bensimon et al., 2016). This means that institutions and individuals from certain groups may be allocated greater resources or different accommodations based on need.

KEY RESOURCES ON EQUITY-MINDEDNESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Reports & Articles

- Bensimon, E.M., Dowd, A.C., & Witham, K. (2016). Five principles for enacting equity by design. *Diversity and Democracy*, 19(1), 1-8.
- Witham, K., Malcolm-Piqueux, L.E., Dowd, A.C., & Bensimon E.M. (2015, January). America’s unmet promise: The imperative for equity in higher Education. *Association of American Colleges & Universities*. <https://www.aacu.org/publications/unmet-promise>

Websites

- Center for Urban Education’s Racial Equity Tools: <https://www.cue-tools.usc.edu/>
- USC Race and Equity Center: <https://race.usc.edu/research/>

APPENDIX 2.

Statements on Equity and Inclusion from LA Higher Education Institutions

In its current [Master Plan for Higher Education](#), the LA Board of Regents (n.d.) recognizes the need to “eliminate persistent and damaging equity gaps” (p. 10) and argues that efforts to close these gaps must take an “equity-minded focus” (p. 21).

The [University of Louisiana System Task Force on Inclusion in the Workplace 2019 report](#) states:

The UL System considers its role imperative in facilitating inclusive excellence practices that result in every individual being valued, respected, and treated with dignity. The intent is to inform continuous efforts to create inclusive campus climates, better understand and address challenges, build, cultivate, and support a diverse student body and workforce, enhance town-gown relations, and prepare community members for active participation in a global world. The UL System is committed to translating that intent into actions that will identify systemic inequities, eliminate barriers, and sustain environments and practices that allow all individuals full access to success. (p. 2)

The [Southern University at New Orleans](#) references inclusion and diversity in their statement of core values: “We will continue to foster inclusion that lead to the diversity of the University community and stakeholders.” Other institutions that are part of the Southern University System include similar language in their vision, mission, and values statements.

The [Louisiana State University System “Diversity & Inclusion Update”](#) states:

In response to the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests and the history of racism in Louisiana and throughout

the country, LSU is intensifying our ongoing work to foster a campus community that is not only inclusive but anti-racist. We will start by listening to and validating the experiences and perspectives of people of color and continue with self-education, fervent action, and transparent humility—until equitable responses to these issues are inherent in each of us.

The Louisiana Community and Technical College System [issued a statement on June 5, 2020](#) “Condemning Racial Inequality, While Establishing an Inclusive and Respectful Environment for America’s Future.” It states, in part:

As a result of George Floyd’s indefensible murder, our nation is forced to look in the mirror and reconcile its past and present inauspicious and discriminatory treatment of African Americans. This reconciliation is honestly long overdue. ... With the full support of our Board of Supervisors, Louisiana’s Community and Technical Colleges stand in solidarity and mourn alongside Mr. Floyd’s family and others who have lost loved ones to police brutality, discrimination, and racism. These behaviors are contrary to the structure and mission on which the Louisiana Community and Technical College System were founded.

As educators, it is our moral obligation and responsibility to promote and encourage inclusivity and diversity and to denounce discrimination and acts that impede social justice to which each of us is entitled. It is also a moral imperative for us in higher education to foster communities where we educate students from all walks of life and structurally change our world. In the current environment, structural change will require action and initiating uncomfortable dialogue, understanding, and a call to action to move forward truly.

APPENDIX 3.

Recommendations for Supporting Faculty and Staff

Higher education scholars Leslie Gonzales and Kimberly Griffin (2020) have provided an important resource in the form of a guide distributed by the ASPIRE Alliance for Inclusive and Diverse STEM Faculty, a national institutional and organizational collaboration supported by the National Science Foundation. Gonzales and Griffin recommend a collaborative approach to addressing questions of productivity during the crisis:

Leaders and faculty must collectively work together to develop policy that acknowledges and does not penalize dips in faculty productivity. This is especially important because if previous research holds, dips in productivity are likely to differ across gender, race, ability, caregiver status, and class, among other identity markers. (p. 4)

Committees must resist comparing and contrasting candidates' relative productivity. Health concerns, care responsibilities, and financial challenges may affect faculty capacity to work. Rewarding high rates of productivity and holding other scholars to the same standard may disadvantage those experiencing the most challenges. (p. 4)

Their guide also provides specific recommendations for evaluating teaching effectiveness, accounting for emotional (invisible) labor, and evaluating prospective faculty hires. The also provides an extensive list of resources for making online learning more inclusive and supporting educators during the crisis.

Malisch et al. (2020), writing in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, likewise examine the ways institutions can support diverse faculty during the pandemic. They focus their recommendations on continuing efforts toward gender equity in academia, but they note that the need to address inequities extends to faculty members who identify in other ways, as well:

Universities need to research the degree to which COVID-19 will impact the productivity of women and other minoritized faculty. We then encourage the university to respond to this impact by developing a strategic

action plan, which includes metrics and accountability for dealing with changes in faculty productivity because of COVID-19. (p. 15380)

They stress the importance of empowering faculty to develop appropriate specific measures for measuring and evaluating faculty work in a time of crisis:

Administration, tenure, and promotion committees should be proactive, not reactive, in their discussion of how to handle the impact of COVID-19. Faculty will need guidelines on how to quantify impacts of COVID-19 on their three academic pillars. Clear metrics, tangible benchmarks, and effective communication are critical for decreasing bias in merit and promotion decisions. ... we specifically ask that administrations empower either faculty governing bodies or designated faculty member(s) (e.g., creating a Pandemic Response Faculty Fellow or PFMC [Pandemic Faculty Merit Committee]) to ensure the implementation of equity metrics and policies at their institutions. (p. 15381)

Based on these articles and reports, we summarize some of the key strategies institutions can use to support faculty and staff during the pandemic.

Modifications to Evaluation Processes

- Proactive modification of promotion and tenure and annual review guidelines that allow faculty to account for and give context to the impact of COVID-19 on their research, teaching, and service (Gonzales & Griffin, 2020; Malisch et al., 2020).
- Implementation of an automatic tenure delay that can be used without career penalty, with consideration of additional tenure delays (Gonzales & Griffin, 2020).
- Written instruction for external letter reviewers regarding the impact of COVID-19 on candidates' research (Gonzales & Griffin, 2020; Malisch et al., 2020).

- Training for promotion and tenure committees and academic leaders⁶ on how to account for and fairly evaluate COVID-19 impacts (Malisch et al., 2020).
- Training and resources offered to new faculty and new faculty mentors regarding changes to evaluation guidelines and how they can document the impact of COVID-19 across research, service, and teaching⁷.
- Modification of teaching evaluation processes to include contextualization of faculty efforts to online teaching, participation in professional development (Gonzales & Griffin, 2020).

Professional Development and Support

- Training and support systems to support faculty and staff that have to transition to online and/or remote schedules (Gonzales & Griffin, 2020).
- Training and development opportunities for faculty and staff about how to promote inclusivity in virtual and hybrid learning environments (Gonzales & Griffin, 2020).

⁶ See examples from [UMass Amherst](#) and [Georgia Tech](#).

⁷ See example from [UMass Amherst](#).

Support for Caregiving

- Flexibility with working remotely and caregiving demands for faculty and staff of all genders. Deans, departments, chairs, and unit heads should enable infrastructures to meet both familial and work obligations.
- A paradigm shift from institutions placing full responsibility for child, family, or eldercare on the employee to offering subsidization and emergency services to support employed families especially during times of global and health crises without career penalties.

As Gonzales and Griffin (2020) argue, institutions can center equity while navigating the immediate challenges of COVID:

This crisis is not over. Institutions will continue to manage complex challenges related to COVID-19 in the coming months. Looking ahead, decision makers must anticipate the kinds of support that faculty may need as they continue to manage the personal and professional implications of COVID-19. Like evaluative processes, support systems require attention to equity. (p. 7)

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