On Sep 1, 2020, at 1:04 PM, Eva Cherniavsky, president of UW AAUP chapter, <ec22@uw.edu> wrote on our faculty list server:

At the Faculty Senate Town Hall today, it was noted that UW-AAUP is preparing recommendations on the situation of faculty care-givers, action-steps that are needed, and the principles which should inform all policy on this issue.  I write to share what we sent yesterday evening to UW leadership and to the members of the UW Covid 19 Caregiver Task Force.

best, ec

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Dear Colleagues,

As COVID-19 is poised to dramatically affect the lives of faculty, staff, and students at UW throughout the coming year, AAUP reiterates its [earlier call](http://depts.washington.edu/uwaaup/wordpress/) for the university to urgently address the needs of caregivers in its community. As UW faculty, staff, and students [attest](https://medium.com/%40uwcaregiverstories), caregiving responsibilities impact all parts of our community--from students’ learning, to our teaching excellence, to long-term research output. [It is estimated](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/19/upshot/coronavirus-home-school-parents.html) that only 1 in 7 US parents will have kids in full-time school this year, and only 1 in 5 will have access to in-person help from relatives, nannies, or tutors. But it is not only parents of young children who are struggling. Many in our community also care for disabled or elderly family members whose routine caregiving has been interrupted by COVID-19.

***UW can only continue to ensure excellence in teaching, research, service, and community partnerships if it provides sustainable, safe, and accessible assistance to caregiving faculty.  We recognize that similar forms of assistance to caregiving staff and students are essential, but we focus here on faculty, because the crisis for caregiving faculty has particular implications for the university’s teaching and research missions.  The assumption that UW faculty are individually responsible for navigating a systemic breakdown in childcare and elder care services is not simply unrealistic, but damaging; it results in corrosive levels of stress and exhaustion for faculty care-givers, at the very moment when all faculty are called upon to help address escalating levels of student stress and precarity.*** ***We call for the following principles and action steps in achieving this goal.***

**Principles:**

* **Equity is essential:**The caregiving crisis will exacerbate numerous, intersecting inequalities in academia; thus any solutions must center equity and seek to limit the additional harms COVID-19 may cause across axes of race, gender, sexuality, age, ability, class, professional rank, to name only a few.
* **Creativity is our strength:**UW should draw on the expertise, creativity, and innovation that it is known for to create solutions to this crisis, in partnership with students, faculty, and staff.
* **Policies alone are not enough:**Faculty, staff, and students are facing a material crisis; [policies to pause timelines, postpone reviews, or bar discrimination will only exacerbate inequities](https://www.pnas.org/content/early/2020/06/16/2010636117)without meaningful resource support to help them continue to do their jobs.
* **Lead from the top:**Financial support must be provided through policies at a university-wide level, not decentralized to units where support may be subject to budgetary shortfalls, personal appeals, or the goodwill of colleagues - all of which [contributes to inequity](https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/08/11/faculty-parents-are-once-again-being-asked-perform-miracle).
* **Flexibility is key:**We cannot rely on one-size-fits-all solutions, and must recognize the wide variety of caregiving needs of our faculty. Inclusive solutions must be flexible to fit diverse needs.

**Action steps:**

* **Create a fund to support faculty care-givers.**This fund would provide  supplemental monthly stipends to faculty whose income is not sufficient to meet urgent caregiving needs during this crisis.  Flexible care stipends will allow caregivers to choose care supports appropriate to their needs, and similar UW programs (such as in the [UW Bothell Childcare Assistance Program](https://www.uwb.edu/financial-aid/child-care-assistance-program)) have shown the effectiveness of this model.
* **Expand innovative care options:**Create a platform to facilitate connections between student workers struggling to find employment and faculty caregivers seeking in-home child and elder-care and (or) qualified tutors.
* **Ensure faculty can access fully-paid leave.**[Expanded Family and Medical Leave](https://ap.washington.edu/ahr/policies/leaves/leave-under-the-families-first-coronavirus-response-act/) is only available at 2/3 pay for caregiving faculty members. Given already low salaries, especially for junior and contingent faculty, this is not an affordable option. EFMLA should be supplemented to ensure faculty do not take a pay cut during this economic crisis. Consider adopting strategies similar to those taken at many large Seattle-area[employers](https://www.cnet.com/news/google-extends-family-leave-for-employees-during-coronavirus/) and allow faculty with caregiving needs to take flexible, fully-paid caregiving leave that reduces their workloads during the duration of the pandemic.
* **Ensure faculty can take leave when they need it.**Sick leave or FMLA is inaccessible to teaching faculty if they do not have others in their department who can cover their teaching responsibilities. Departments who normally cover these requests with voluntary substitutions from other faculty are likely to be inundated with leave requests this year. Mandate that departments / units create teaching support plans, and *provide resources for departments to sufficiently staff these plans* without relying solely on uncompensated or voluntary labor. Equally important, non-tenure-line faculty on term appointments must have assurance that use of FMLA will not imperil reappointment.
* **Allow faculty to choose their teaching modality:** All faculty should be given choices about whether they teach any in-person or hybrid courses, or whether they teach online asynchronously or synchronously; such a policy is essential for caregiving faculty, in particular, in order to accommodate both teaching and caregiving responsibilities.
* **Suspend “on track” standards for scholarly productivity** Assessment of all faculty must be adjusted to the pandemic conditions, but again, such a policy is essential for caregiving faculty. Teaching should be evaluated with careful attention to how caregiving responsibilities may invite additional biases, and with maximum flexibility, including the option to substitute peer reviews for student evaluations.  **Create funds (or direct existing funds) to provide additional research support for faculty researchers with care-giving obligations.** These research stipends could be used to hire undergraduate or graduate student research assistants, thereby (in one stroke) helping faculty keep research agendas on track and providing additional funding and a valuable professional opportunity for un- or under-employed students.  Prioritize allocation of bridge funding to caregiving faculty who may have lost opportunities to compete for grants this year.
* **Reduce service:**Substantially pare back unremunerated service responsibilities for caregiving faculty, as requested. Encourage departments to use creative strategies to reduce service overall, such as reducing the size of committees, implementing shorter meeting times, and sharing representation across units.
* **Non-discrimination and norm-setting:**Leadership and meaningful policy must be implemented from the top to reduce discrimination and micro-aggressions against caregiving faculty.
* **Measure impact:**It is difficult to predict the long-term impacts this crisis may have for faculty. To ensure equity, address inequities, and better support faculty in the future, UW should implement 3 and 5 year independent evaluations of how COVID-19 impacted faculty equity, productivity, and well-being, and to inform how the UW can build more sustainable caregiver support for its community going forward.

Respectfully,

The UW-AAUP Executive Board

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