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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, ARTS, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA 92521-0132

October 23, 2020

TO: Jason Stajich, Chair
Riverside Division

FROM: Lucille Chia, Chair *Lucille Chia*
CHASS Executive Committee

RE: Review of Proposal for Interim COVID-Related Dependent Care Modified Duties

The CHASS Executive Committee's review elicited the following comments, including those from members whose own experience have roused them to some passionate responses, which are worth quoting.

Item 9 in the program as described for UCR includes three kinds of modified duties, but "it immediately says: **Partial or full teaching relief will normally not be approved.** In other words, the thing that would offer the most substantial and real relief is not really an option. The idea that a faculty member would "swap" or simply volunteer to take on my course is laughable. It might work in the sciences, but this is not how the humanities function."

Indeed, "faculty substitution, and swapping of teaching for the benefit of those affected by Covid is not entirely absurd, but it is very limited in its usefulness and unequally so across departments. . . . Departments with large number of majors and large-size classes sizes are likely to benefit from suggestions in the proposal far more than departments with smaller numbers of faculty, majors, and class sizes. In the former case, many courses, especially lower division ones, are taught multiple times a year and the subject matter is so simple and rudimentary that a larger number of faculty members are likely capable of teaching them (unlike upper division courses hewing more closely to research specialties). Likewise, the time at which faculty teach may make a significant difference for faculty juggling heavier familial care responsibilities, but here too this is a rather modest form of relief. Also, larger classes are increasingly difficult to schedule on a campus chronically short of large lecture hall space (not currently an issue obviously), and require more TAs or readers. So the possibility of rearranging scheduling or the consolidation of otherwise multiple offerings of a given class is therefore dependent on having both a larger pool of faculty and a larger graduate program with adequate funding to employ graduate instructors of different types.

Smaller departments with fewer majors and grad students (if they have a grad program) simply cannot take advantage of this newly encouraged flexibility in teaching allocation and scheduling."

As another EC member points out, “the hope/expectation/dream of other faculty stepping up to teach courses for other faculty is ridiculous, especially when everyone’s workload has been exponentially increased under COVID-imposed circumstances. Though there is goodwill and support amongst many CHASS faculty, the notion that one faculty member could simply “substitute” for another is absurd, considering that this is a research university. Even given that several faculty could presumably teach some lower-division, introductory or gateway courses, there remains the problems of how to evaluate the personnel files of those faculty members who use this Modified Duties Program, especially if the service relief is extended beyond one academic quarter. On the other hand, “relief” for those with children or other caretaking responsibilities, the one-quarter release from service and the refusal to reduce teaching load render meaningless the term “modified duties.”

Moreover, we note “that the benefits of this program are likely to be unevenly distributed between CHASS, on the one hand, and CNAS and BCOE (and perhaps SOM), on the other. Faculty in CNASS have a lower teaching load than most CHASS faculty to begin with, so equal benefits across the campus should recognize that more must be done for those who teach more. Rescheduling or swapping teaching may be a major boon to someone on a two-course annual load, reducing the immediate burden by half. It is much less likely to resolve the problems of faculty with a four course load, particularly those who have substantial and unanticipated—and otherwise not ameliorated—dependent care responsibilities.”

As for Item 11 about colleagues helping out, the personal experience of one member is informative: “At a minimum, there should be a public recognition and encouragement (if we’re continuing down the voluntarist route) of the possibility that a faculty member may take over for a colleague, but “bank” a course off for the next year. Last spring, due to a colleague’s very sudden and very serious illness, I took on an additional course—one I’d never taught before but was clearly the best suited to teach, and my chair reduced my teaching load for this year and gave me a bit a money in my research account in appreciation. If this practice was explicitly recognized and endorsed, it at least would alter the incentives somewhat for faculty to step up and help those who are struggling.”

And how does this assumption of greater responsibilities by generous faculty members square with the proposed measures in the Curtailment program?

Finally here is the *cri du coeur* from one committee member:

“This proposal is not parental leave or support. These are empty words. As a mother of two young kids, I am sinking. I have had no childcare or support since MARCH. I have been made to choose between my children's welfare and my job on a daily basis. It is exhausting and unsustainable. The only support: timing instruction and flexibility of courses is not really a "support;" it is a common courtesy that most of the time is respected anyways.

“Is UCR actually going to offer parental leave? Is there an option to simply take an unpaid leave? Even providing a membership to Care.com as UCLA did would be preferable to this farce.”

What is to be done in a time of adversity, including severe budget austerity? We recommend the Senate Budget and Planning Committee take a close and hard look at where the budget is being spent, and where it can be cut with the least damage under the circumstances. One silver-lining from this pandemic is that has clarified the defects and priorities in higher education, for good and for ill.