



Carleton
UNIVERSITY

Canada's Capital University

Department of Law and Legal Studies

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July 14, 2020

To:

André Plourde
Dean
Faculty of Public Affairs
Carleton University

Jerry Tomberlin
Provost
Carleton University

Benoit-Antoine Bacon
President and Vice-Chancellor
Carleton University

RE: Workload and the gendered impacts of COVID-19 on faculty

Dear André, Jerry and Benoit-Antoine,

The Department of Law and Legal Studies writes to raise concerns regarding workload expectations of faculty and the [already-apparent](#) implications for women and caregivers in the academy. It is *critical* and *urgent* that we engage in discussions around workload, expectations of productivity and practical support measures as we look towards an online Fall. Carleton University has stated that it is working to address all forms of inequality on campus, and a gendered inequality crisis is looming in the Fall.

As we can all appreciate, university communities are facing unprecedented pressures due to the ongoing public health crisis and accompanying restrictions. This forced quick decision-making, collaboration and sacrifice on all of our parts as we sprinted to finish the winter term. For many instructors, this sacrifice came at a high emotional and psychological cost as we tried our best to address the anxieties of students, learn to teach remotely and spontaneously innovate academic life online. All the while, we were balancing our own home contexts that for many included increased hours of care work and full-time homeschooling. This pace has continued as we teach in the Summer term and prepare for the Fall.

We want to make clear that this volume of work simply cannot continue. The [health and well-being](#) of our families and ourselves are at stake.

While the sheer volume of work is a problem shared by many identities, the [bulk of the burden is unquestionably gendered](#). Denying this is not an effective, appropriate or tolerable response to the pandemic. We should know better. We do know better.

We are calling on the Carleton administration to take immediate action to remedy the workload expectations and gendered consequences by:

1. Issuing a statement that Carleton recognizes these disparities and is actively working to address them.
2. Issuing a policy that encourages flexibility with due dates, timelines and quantitative expectations in both research and teaching for faculty.
3. Acknowledging that the normal CDI evaluation process is inappropriate in light of the extraordinary and uncertain working conditions that faculty will be facing this year. The university should guarantee that all faculty will be granted their 2021 CDI.
4. Making funds available to cover childcare expenses during the summer months and, if the public schools do not return to full-time status in the fall, childcare expenses for the duration. This action acknowledges the reduced access to childcare services and the rising cost of those services that are available and additionally ensures there are adequate resources available for CIs, instructors and faculty caring for at risk individuals for whom a return to a group care setting or school could be life threatening.
5. Continuing to make funds available for those needing hardware and/or software upgrades in order to teach effectively online at home. The recent Letter of Understanding (LOU) to CUASA regarding one-time deposits to the Personal Expense Reimbursement (PER) Fund is a good start, but is insufficient for many in the Carleton community, and does not cover the many CIs who teach in our unit.
6. Limiting course enrolments or lowering enrollment thresholds for TA support (e.g. 1 TA for every 30 students) particularly for those CIs, instructors, and faculty with care-giving responsibilities over 20 hours/week.
7. Reducing or deferring teaching loads during the pandemic, particularly for those instructors and faculty whose caregiving responsibilities exceed 20 hours/week. If this is not possible for the Fall, a reasonable alternative would be setting up and funding a “career disruption course release” program that people with care responsibilities could apply for in order to restart their research programs post-pandemic.
8. Providing units with greater flexibility for the evaluation of tenure and promotion. In addition to the recent Letter of Understanding (LOU) to CUASA regarding delayed timelines for tenure, promotion and confirmation, the university should provide units with greater flexibility to implement alternative methods of evaluation of promotion and tenure files, methods that reflect and answer the systemic inequalities that contribute to gender-based disparity in the academy. This could include a greater emphasis on graduate supervision and student mentorship as a complement to formal research outputs.

9. Lobbying tri-council funding agencies for ways faculty can indicate the high caregiving responsibilities that may be preventing the successful accomplishment of research at this time or develop emergency alternative methods of assessment in order to fairly account for long-term discrepancies.

We look forward to the ensuing conversations.

Sincerely,

The Faculty of the Department of Law and Legal Studies

References:

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