EXAMINING THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON FACULTY RETENTION & EXIT

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HARVARD

GRADUATE SCHOOL of EDUCATION

collaborative on academic careers in higher education

OVERVIEW

Introduction

Introductions and overview of the survey

Presentation of Data

Findings and analysis by Mai H. Vang

Small Groups

Discussion of questions for reflection

Share and Q&A

Audience input and additional questions

TODAY'S PRESENTERS

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Mai H. Vang, MSE, MS, PhD Candidate

-Faculty Exit Survey

-*Four* factors that influenced decision-making

-*Five* consequences of COVID-19

-Recommendations

-Small group discussion

-Share and Q & A

FACULTY EXIT SURVEY

The Survey was administered in fall 2020. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences between March-October 2020. Nine themes emerged organically from 291 open text responses to the following questions:

❖ Q1. To what extent did the global pandemic and its consequences influence your decision to accept an outside offer or to remain at your institution?

❖ Q2. Describe any ways that the consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak influenced your decision to accept an outside offer or to remain at your institution.

❖ Q3. Describe any impact the COVID-19 outbreak had on your transition to your new institution.

SUMMARY

- As higher education leaders plan for post COVID-19 recovery, they must do so bearing in mind the critical lessons unearthed by the pandemic: the extreme integration of personal and professional commitments and the need to respond to the consequences of the pandemic with intersectional and equity focused policies and practices.

- The survey findings revealed *nine* factors that centered around feelings of disconnection from the campus community, disruptions in faculty work-life, and disparate negative impact on faculty from marginalized identities.

- Post-pandemic efforts to improve faculty culture and climate should include faculty voices, especially from marginalized identities, in order to build community, provide support, and fully reflect the broad range of faculty experiences.

- Solutions must also include support for faculty emotional and mental well-being as the consequences of the pandemic shone renewed light on existing inequities and the effects will be felt for a long time.

FOUR FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE DECISION

- Delayed site visits influenced decision

- Family needs remain key in decision-making

- Degree of confidence in home institution influenced decision-making

- Equity challenges emerged (gender and international status)

DELAYED CAMPUS VISIT

- "Even though I know the area, I would have liked to have gone to visit and meet potential colleagues in person, which I could not do due to COVID. It made my decision to stay easier since I did not get to fully experience what the environment would be like if I moved." (Woman)

- "Not being able to do a second visit allowed [home institution] to have more time to provide a more compelling counter-offer." (Latinx)

FAMILY NEEDS

- "The pandemic caused me to reevaluate my unhappiness in my position at [home institution] and how it could affect me professionally in the long term. I also knew that I would need to be present for my teenage [children]." (Woman)

- "I was much less interested in moving my child to a new school when they would be online and she would have little opportunity to make new friends." (Woman)

DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE IN INSTITUTION

- "I did not like the way the university handled the pandemic, nor was I comfortable with the way the [state of home institution] handled the pandemic. I am happy to be going to a state and institution that handles these situations differently." (Black or African American)

- "The other offer was in a system that took a more significant hit financially. There was also talk from their president to downsize the number of colleges offering certain programs which would put the offered position in danger. My position at [home institution] was more secure so I decided to stay." (Woman)

EQUITY CHALLENGES

- "COVID killed my research career at [home institution]. I'm sure lots of people also feel that way...unless they are the male faculty in our College of Science, since they were all allowed to stay in their labs and continue working or take early retirement, leaving me as the only person to do all the administrative work and 2/3rds of the upper level teaching." (Woman)

- "The [COVID] outbreak made me more aware of both the need for strong and proactive support in working toward having visa support and also made proximity to family more appealing." (Black or African American)

FIVE CONSEQUENCES OF COVID-19

- Disconnection and isolation in new location due to working remote

- Anxiety and frustration regarding housing in new location

- Women faculty reported delayed research

- Lack of closure at home institution caused stress and delayed transition of duties

- Equity challenges (women and BIPOC faculty)

DISCONNECTION AND ISOLATION

- "I have struggled to figure out how to navigate the culture at the new institution. It has also made the move (and my long-distance marriage) much more complicated." (Woman)

- "My transition into my new position has been challenging since everyone is working remotely. I've adapted but miss having a sense of community. Relationship building is just different or perhaps delayed in this context." (Woman)

ANXIETY AND HOUSING IN NEW LOCATION

- "It has made it MUCH more difficult. We have had a lot of additional expenses associated with moving, and complications/difficulties/increased financial issues related to both selling our house and buying a new house. It has also made onboarding and meeting new colleagues very difficult. (Woman)

- "Finding a house was extremely hectic, as the real estate market in [city of offering institution] was closed. This meant we could not physically walk through potential homes before making an offer. We ended up making an offer "sight unseen" (although we did have a Zoom walk-through, this did not allow for us to get a "feeling" of what the house and area were like)." (White)

WOMEN FACULTY AND DELAYED RESEARCH

- "The consequences from the pandemic delayed my ability to relocated from the [home institution] to [international location of offering institution], so I did not physically move to my new institution until 3 months after my start date. Restrictions on in -person research at my new institution has resulted in a delay in starting up both my [discipline] research program, and [discipline] research. I anticipate a 6 month delay on starting my research lab." (Woman)

- "Research shutdown severely impacted the move, causing a 3 month postponement." (Asian or Asian American Woman)

- "It has slowed down some processes including setting up the lab, ordering supplies and transferring funds." (Woman)

LACK OF CLOSURE AT HOME INSTITUTION

- "[COVID-19] [g]reatly impacted--I had to transition to remote-only work my very last month at [home institution] and was unable to transition all of my duties." (Woman)

- "It made it difficult because I could not pack up my office at [home institution] or really end things- I just went home after Spring break and taught on line and never came back." (Woman)

EQUITY CHALLENGES

- "It has impacted my promotion packet and my plan of work. I had to transition from teaching in person to entirely online for the 2020/2021 academic year. It has been very challenging." (Woman)

- "Actually, my dept. head and dean could've been more understanding about when I planned to submit my letter of resignation and assisted in allowing me to negotiate other terms of departure given the pandemic. I felt pressured to submit my letter of resignation despite communicating transparently with my dept. head that I was waiting until I received the final notification of my tenure & promotion at the new institution, which was delayed due to the pandemic. These are ways that [home institution] could've better assisted with my transition. I was discouraged to consider a leave of absence or something else that might have made me reconsider my decision." (Black or African American Woman)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create opportunities for new faculty to **connect** with campus and social communities. Solicit input from faculty candidates early in the recruiting and hiring processes on ways to connect them with communities at new institution. Offer both formal professional networks and inform social groups.

- Provide flexibility and support as faculty navigate family needs and responsibilities during and post COVID-19. Include faculty voices in creating policies and practices around work-life balance.

- Acknowledge and **address** the disparate negative impact that COVID-19 has on women and Faculty of Color. Apply an intersectional and race-conscious mindset when developing policies and practices for improving faculty culture and climate.

- Provide flexibility and **support** during the offboarding process by practicing an ethic of care for faculty. Recognize the extreme integration of personal and professional lives as a result of the pandemic.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- To what extent have you experienced these issues at your institution?

- Are there new observations now that we are 18 months into COVID-19?

- What responses has your institution made to these challenges?

- What obstacles have you seen with respect to implementing solutions?

- What would you need in order to implement solutions?

SHARE

What have you learned about how to support faculty during COVID-19 that will apply beyond the pandemic?

CONNECT WITH COACHE

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Interested in setting up a discussion to learn more about participating in the Faculty Retention & Exit Survey?

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