ACADEMIC SENATE
Resolution 20/21-01
Support for caregivers under COVID conditions

WHEREAS the Senate acknowledges that faculty, staff, and students with family caregiving responsibilities are experiencing considerable difficulty in juggling those responsibilities with their USC duties under COVID pandemic conditions;

WHEREAS the Senate is also concerned that those difficulties fall disproportionately on already disadvantaged groups;

WHEREAS the Senate acknowledges that the University has already taken steps to provide back-up care for the dependents of faculty and staff, and the university has limited resources available during the pandemic and current economic downturn;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Academic Senate hereby urges university leaders at all levels, including the Provost, Deans, and department and program chairs, to make every reasonable effort to provide faculty, staff, and students with the support that they need so that we can continue to deliver excellence in those activities that have highest priority. The list below provides possible options for consideration:

University-level actions

1. Clearly communicate the university’s leave policies for faculty, staff, and graduate students, including how to request leave to care for others. Exempt leave taken during COVID from the 2-year limit allowed for unpaid family leaves.

2. Clarify options available to faculty in the Flexible Spending Account (FSA) dependent care program.

3. Create a mechanism for faculty to connect with other families near their homes so they can form childcare “pods.”

4. Organize online homework/tutoring support for school-age kids, by grade and in small groups, offered at several different time slots. Employ undergraduate students with tutoring experience and pay them work study or university student employment funds.

5. Create an online support group for caregivers, perhaps through the Center for Work and Family Life.

6. Encourage creation of and explore options for university subsidies (akin to Bright Horizon Crisis Care) to allow flexibility in determining the best child care solutions for each individual circumstance.
USC School-level recommendations

1. Modify the faculty member’s workload to reduce any non-essential work (e.g., reduce or eliminate service obligations or non-essential administrative responsibilities), and ensure that this modification of the workload profile will not affect the faculty member’s merit reviews, promotion path, or otherwise harm them, while still allowing them to meet their core responsibilities (for example, focusing on teaching this fall instead of research and service). Such adjustments should be made only by mutual agreement, and with due consideration of equity.

2. Normalize flexibility in the scheduling of courses. Begin a dialogue to establish a stronger norm of long-term flexibility where course scheduling takes into account the caregiving needs of faculty alongside students’ needs.

3. Defer or reduce service tasks or committee work or other meetings that are not time-sensitive or essential.

4. Share instructor course material/facilitate team teaching. If teaching different sections of the same course, faculty should be encouraged to share pre-recorded lectures and presentation slides and assist with specific class meetings.

5. Adjust teaching loads to stretch over subsequent terms, including maymester and summer.

6. Allow faculty to work with graduate TA’s for course support.

7. Actively help faculty and remove penalties for those who find they must cancel a class on short notice due to dependent care emergencies.

8. Allow curriculog to accept curriculum changes on a rolling basis, to promote flexibility and adaptability in course proposals.

Resolution Number: 20/21-01
Motion by: Executive Board
Date: Aug 19, 2020
Action taken: Approved