Stanford | The Clayman Institute for Gender Research

Inequality and Returning to the Stanford Campus
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Data being collected around the country strongly suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic, and its economic fallout, have exacerbated all measurable forms of inequality. This includes a mass exodus of women of all races and ethnicities from the workforce. Child/elder care and domestic duties have remained the burden of women, resulting in a loss of wages. One study found that teleworking mothers were about twice as likely as fathers to report they had a lot of child care duties while working. Another study found that mothers are three times as likely as fathers to have lost their jobs during the pandemic. Those women who have remained employed during the pandemic have lost wages, as the already substantial wage gap between men and women has grown. While COVID-19 has worsened gender inequalities generally, women of color and those with disabilities have been hit the hardest, with high rates of job loss. In addition, those who are gender non-conforming may be particularly vulnerable. Due to insufficient safety nets and community support, many professional women are finding the situation untenable, whether it be that they see the writing on the wall that they won't get a promotion or retain their job, or are having to choose between their family and work.

The academy is unfortunately not impervious to these inequalities. There is, however, reason to suspect that the processes observed in other sectors will unfold more gradually at the university over the next few years. Simply put, the unequal distribution of time, resources, and opportunities now will almost certainly lead to inequalities in hiring, retention, and promotion in future years – unless concrete steps are taken to intervene. Emerging data indicate that journal and grant submission rates, and also publication rates, are reflecting the broader trends of women falling behind men in their careers. At Stanford, a study by the department of medicine found men's grant and funding proposal submission rates increased during the pandemic whereas women's slightly decreased. The pandemic has exacerbated the existing inequalities that have been well-documented within academia. Sticking to business as usual in hiring and promotion in the next few years will almost certainly enshrine these inequalities for decades to come.

Coming from a research institute, we are keenly aware of the importance of gathering data and analyzing inequalities in order to inform interventions and institutional change. In the case of the pandemic, however, there is a methodological conundrum. The concrete way to understand COVID-19's impact on faculty advancement is by measuring article and book publishing. However, since in many disciplines publications are 2-3 years away, we won't actually be able to measure disparities until it is far too late. While we don't have those data yet, all the data so far suggest inequalities are worsening, and there are no data to suggest

otherwise. And if the lessons of the 2008 worldwide financial crisis are any guide, former Stanford Vice President Harry Elam laid out in detail how the fiscal retrenchment seemed to undo previous gains in faculty diversity. But he was able to demonstrate that only in the late 2010s. The slowness of academic hiring and publishing, the fact that tenure and promotion are designed to reward actions that occur sometimes a half-decade or more in the past, mean that waiting for more data means waiting until it is too late.

We appreciate the steps that the university has already taken to address disparities in the tenure clock, and the many ways the university is meeting this challenging moment. We understand that Stanford leadership wishes to create a post-COVID-19 workplace that is fair and equitable. We believe that there is room for improvement in ensuring the university does not replicate the inequities we are seeing evidence of in other industries.

We predict that the magnitude of the inequality generated by COVID-19 will be staggering. We ask that the university be even more proactive to ensure that in 3-5 years Stanford is an institution with a diverse professoriate.

Here we present some questions that you might consider in order to mitigate or get ahead of these disparities. We have grouped these questions into three subheadings: data gathering, technological measures, and policy adjustments.

Data gathering – these measures would ensure that the university is aware of what is happening, and is not surprised by misdistributions when they arise.

1.) Are there any signs that might reveal the gender and racial dimensions of attrition rates, such as in the tenure and promotion process? How might we gather data about these signs before it is too late? How may we communicate relevant information to schools and committees?

2.) Are there any immediately measurable metrics available by department or school that might paint a picture of the gendered and racial impacts of the pandemic on the professoriate? Are there particular data points that could be gathered on this topic for those with disabilities? Perhaps grant or publication submissions, or in-person vs. zoom attendance in the lab or at meetings that may result in differential visibility and promotion opportunities?

3.) Could there be funding opportunities available for research specifically about the differential impacts of COVID-19 in academic settings, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary and intersectional research? Or additional research funding available for those who have borne the brunt of the pandemic, in order to mitigate the inevitable inequities?

Tech – technology has arguably saved the university during the chaos of the pandemic. But we have probably not reckoned as a campus with the way seemingly egalitarian technologies can help reinforce and even heighten preexisting inequalities.

1.) As "we" return to campus, there will be inevitable cracks in this "we." "We" will not all return the same way, to the same things, or even return at all. One of the most obvious divisions will be between those who are (by choice or necessity) on campus, and those who work (by choice or by necessity) off-site, from the home-office, or otherwise remotely. The question is: how do we ensure that this doesn't result in a two-tier system, in which those in-person are seen as somehow "more" engaged, essential, and/or part of the team?

2.) How can we get managers/chairs to be aware that coming into the office cannot become an implicit sign of commitment, even if it is not required? How can we be more attuned to gender and racial disparities of office/lab attendance?

3.) Can we ensure our tech usage allows attendees to participate equally? Can we establish thoughtful norms/protocols during hybrid meetings so that the conversation isn't dominated by in-person attendees? Can we create a system of an anchor day (all employees in a work group come to campus on the same day, at least once a week) so that networking does not become a privilege of those community members who are on campus?

4.) How do our norms and expectations of our co-workers need to change during this transition back to in-person work, and beyond? For instance, there may be a value in discouraging the use of apps such as Slack that are designed to make users be always on. Are there ways new norms and customs can be established around email, about the use of text messaging?

Policy – these measures would likely require a campus-wide effort and may involve a wholesale reconceptualization of how we do business at Stanford.

1.) Given the well-documented gender disparities in care work and its impact on productivity, are there any additional resources or policies available to mitigate the impact of this on women's advancement? Can we strengthen parental and other leave policies as well as increase support for childcare and other care? Because we will likely never return to life the way it was pre-COVID-19, is it time to adjust productivity expectations?

2.) Is there a way to induce departments to remain cognizant of the differential impact of COVID-19 in hiring, tenure, retention, and promotion criteria in the next 3-5 years? This could be as simple as distributing research on the differential impacts of COVID-19 to members of search committees, in hopes that they will take those impacts into account. It could be as involved as a collective rethinking of the way teaching, research, service

and publications should be weighted in such decisions, both at the departmental and the school level. Regardless of how simple or involved the plans are, we recommend each department consider the COVID-19 data on inequality supplied here along with promotion files to offset any concern that the "goal posts" are shifting. This will ensure departments have all the information they need to make each decision with fairness and equity.

3.) Are there ways to recognize service in more formal ways? While the data are still outstanding, we are all familiar with the established pattern in academia that winners of teaching awards frequently don't get tenure. This is a longstanding problem, but one likely to be exacerbated by a pandemic that placed immense burdens for advising, care and service on faculty – if they accepted those burdens. Are there ways to recognize those burdens, and account for them in promotion and retention, beyond what we have in place at the moment?

4.) Harassment has flourished in online settings during COVID-19, and online and offline harassment and bias continues in this hybrid work environment. Can this be explicitly addressed by leadership, as there is robust evidence that leaders of organizations have significant power in shaping narratives about sexual harassment and gender-based violence within their organizations?