





University of Dayton Women's Center

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ABOUT THIS SURVEY

The University of Dayton's Women's Center conducted a survey to evaluate the caregiving and remote work experiences of faculty, staff, and administrators amidst the pandemic. The survey, "Changing Conditions: Caretaking and On-Campus/Remote Work During the COVID-19 Pandemic," was open from mid-December 2020 until early March 2021. Modeled after a number of national and regional studies of the impacts of the pandemic on working caregivers, the purpose of this survey was to gain information about the caregiving responsibilities of faculty and staff at the University, explore challenges and opportunities related to remote work, and make recommendations to University leadership based on the results.

The survey link was distributed via the Women's Center employee listserv, the UD Men for Gender Equity Newsletter and the University's Campus News Digest. Responses to the survey were anonymous and the study was IRB-approved. The survey consisted of 40 open-ended and forced-choice questions; 183 people responded to the survey. General demographic data such as respondents' gender, age, race, role at UD, and caregiving responsibilities were recorded. Identifying information was removed from the responses presented in this report.

AT A GLANCE: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

- Total Responses: 183
- The majority of respondents to the survey self-identified as women (91%) and white (84%)
- Most respondents fell in the 35-44 age bracket (40%)
- The majority (63%) of respondents identified as staff; of those, 50% or 91 identified as exempt (salaried) staff and 13% or 23 identified as non-exempt (hourly) employees
- Faculty comprised 33% of respondents (42 identified as tenured or tenure-track and 19 identified as non-tenure track faculty). Seven respondents (4%) identified as administrators and one survey respondent identified as a graduate student
- The majority (87%) were working either more than half the work week remotely or exclusively remotely
- Of those with children, the majority (37%) of respondents had children under the age of 17; of those, respondents had an average of two children in their primary care
- Some respondents reported multiple caretaking responsibilities, including partner care (19%) and elder care (16%)

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS



Majority of respondents (81%) agreed/strongly
agreed that as a result of the pandemic, they have
greater flexibility over their work schedule/work
location

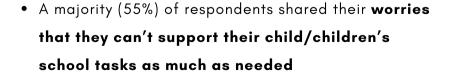


Majority strongly agreed/agreed (73%) that their
 workload has gone up since the pandemic began





- Only a small percentage of respondents (20%)
 strongly agreed or agreed they have control over
 boundaries between home and work-life. The vast
 majority reported a lack of work-life balance
- The majority of respondents (88%) agreed (28%) or strongly agreed (60%) that their stress has increased as a result of caretaking responsibilities





 About 44% of respondents indicated that they are concerned about their job security

FLEXIBILITY, WORKLOAD AND PRODUCTIVITY

As a result of the pandemic, a majority (81%) of respondents agreed they had greater flexibility over their work schedules and/or their work locations. The vast majority (85%) also indicated that their supervisor or chair was more flexible with their work arrangements during this period. At the same time, **the** majority of respondents (73%) reported that their workload has increased substantially since the pandemic began, including more (virtual)

meetings, more email communications, adoption of time consuming new processes at the University, recalibrating classes and programs to online and/or hybrid models, additional responsibilities due to furloughs and/or layoffs in their unit, and increased student needs to which they felt obligated to attend.

"My workload has easily been 3 times the usual in preparing for class. I have also had to create significantly more time to respond to student questions and concerns. I feel that I have been productive in these added work demands, but at significant cost to my work-life balance and stress level."

- Woman non-tenure track faculty member

While the increased workload necessitated increased productivity – bucking national trends that show declining output among workers throughout the course of the pandemic – many described these as unsustainable work levels that came at a cost to their mental health, ability to manage caretaking demands, and difficulty staying motivated and focused. Faculty respondents noted significant declines in research productivity. Many respondents indicated the volume of work has increased dramatically at a time when they were attending to increased caretaking demands. They also had to navigate the realities of living through a pandemic: attending to family members who were ill; the loss of family members who had passed away; their own emotional well-being; social isolation; and deepening national social unrest.

BENEFITS AND UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

In an open-ended question concerning productivity amidst the pandemic, respondents noted some of the benefits of remote work, including no commute time and less 'office chatter,' which allowed additional time to complete tasks. They also mentioned the benefits of having more flexibility in the workday, including the ability to complete tasks during non-typical hours in order to attend to remote schooling needs for their children or manage other caretaking or household demands.

While respondents reported feeling grateful that they had greater flexibility over when and where they worked, they also reported a lack of separation between home and work life, and only 20% strongly agreed or agreed that they have clear boundaries between work and personal life as a result of the pandemic. Some reported that it was difficult to stay motivated and focused in their homes, while others noted they experienced technology challenges due to lack of adequate equipment. Mental health suffered significantly due to the ongoing pandemic. Childcare responsibilities exacerbated those challenges for faculty and staff, particularly those with young children and/or without support in their homes to assist in managing household, caretaking and professional demands, including single parents and those with a partner whose job did not allow for flexibility. However, even those without caretaking responsibilities still faced significant challenges brought on by the pandemic itself.

"Working from home doesn't allow for breaks from anything - if not doing 'work,' I'm cleaning, cooking, caring for others. The days are one long string of work, just different types of work all day long with no pauses and shifts which is exhausting. I like to say that the 'self-actualization' that is required of deep thinking, writing, the work of the mind that is the hallmark of being a faculty member is difficult when we're worried about the lowest levels of living - basic survival of ourselves and our programs. Thus, producing thoughtful research under these conditions is not happening."

IMPACT OF FURLOUGHS

The survey instrument included an open-ended question concerning the impact of university furloughs and layoffs during Spring/Summer 2020 as a result of the financial challenges brought on by the pandemic (Q21 "In what ways, if any, have the furloughs and layoffs at the University impacted your work?"). Responses revealed deep and pronounced impacts. Respondents addressed both the direct and indirect ways in which they were personally and professionally affected and the subsequent stress, fear, and ongoing turmoil those employment actions had amidst myriad challenges connected to the pandemic. The combination of layoffs and furloughs, as well as contract delays for non-tenure track faculty, added a layer of complexity to employees' experiences over the past year and deeply impacted morale and overall mental health.

Responses (n=142) were coded and two primary themes emerged: decreased morale, deep hurt, and loss of trust; and taking on additional work due to colleagues who were furloughed or due to fears about themselves being furloughed (again). Some respondents (n=24) indicated they were not directly impacted nor workloads affected.

DECREASED MORALE, DEEP HURT AND LOSS OF TRUST

- "I was one of the lecturers who didn't get my renewal in May, and we waited through the summer. Normally during that time I would have been getting familiar with my new text book and planning, but instead I was depressed, fearful of losing my job, and completely isolated all day long. At the same time I felt immense guilt because others had already been laid off and I was just in limbo. So it impacted my mindset about work, planning, and honestly made me reevaluate the way the University values or does not value my work." **Woman non-tenure track faculty member**
- "I was furloughed and that has significantly impacted my sense of job security. I now know that my job is considered dispensable by the University. It adds a layer of stress to do my job extremely diligently with the feeling that I will never be able to do enough to secure my position. As the primary breadwinner for the family, this is significant. I have seen a bias in place that men are seen as the primary breadwinner and thus should be kept on instead of laid-off, or given higher salaries. I don't feel like anyone has my back ..." Woman exempt staff member
- "To be honest, the furlough really messed with my sense of being valued. When half the staff remained and the other half was furloughed, the message it sent was that my work was not as important. I worked very hard on self care throughout the furlough. In coming back, it has impacted my work in that sense that I am 'all business.' Knowing you can be let go at any time puts you in a place of not getting too attached." Woman exempt staff member
- "It was awful. I am middle management and was thus the person making the actual furlough and layoff phone calls in my area. Hours and days were spent on planning all of that (it all had to happen in one morning ahead of the DDN announcement, etc.). We were provided with minimal training on how to do it sensitively and kindly. I had advocated against any layoffs in my area and failed, which was difficult for me (much more difficult for the person who lost their job, of course!). Productivity in my unit suffered and the rest of us were overworked in the following months, having to come in to campus even though we feared exposure. Morale was decimated." Woman faculty member

ADDITIONAL WORKLOAD

- "To help make sure I had enough to do since coming back from furlough (in hopes I wouldn't get furloughed again), my workload was increased significantly with no additional compensation." **Woman exempt staff member**
- "Our department staff was furloughed during the summer and it was a nightmare ... we couldn't do a lot of basic tasks because we didn't have the appropriate person or did not want to add workload to people who were already taxed (i.e. our department chair). We are still feeling the effects of many of these issues." Woman tenure-track faculty member
- "Both furloughs and layoffs have meant a greater workload (on top of the additional work of reconfiguring during the pandemic) in a time where the administration says 'less with less' out one side of their mouth and 'here's more things we expect of you and less support and resources' out the other side." Man tenure-track faculty member
- "Luckily, my area was not directly impacted by furloughs/layoffs, but my larger division was hard-hit. There was a lot of shuffling of responsibilities. There was a lot of stress on everyone and worry that there would be more furloughs/layoffs. I felt a strong need to remain productive and not take too much time off in hopes that would help me survive another round."
 - Woman non-exempt staff member

CARETAKING CHALLENGES

88%

of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that their stress has increased as a result of changed caretaking responsibilities stemming from the pandemic.

70%

of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: "I feel a sense of guilt when working because I am not able to attend to my caregiving responsibilities." 53%

of respondents indicated they had to provide additional caretaking support for seniors during the pandemic.

HOUSEHOLD CHANGES

The pandemic ushered in significant household changes and challenges for those with caretaking responsibilities. Employees described complex care arrangements, including adult children returning home, relocating elderly parents from nursing homes to their homes due to safety concerns, assisting grandchildren with school tasks to provide support while their parents worked, supporting the mental health needs of children and other family members, and losing loved ones due to COVID-19. About 33% of employees were managing multiple caretaking needs, including care for their own children plus adult children and/or partners, elderly parents, extended family or neighbors; these needs were in addition to managing their work responsibilities and household tasks.

Employees also reported that increased social isolation and taxation on their mental health, the inability to see extended family, friends and coworkers to avoid the risk of exposure to COVID-19 – either due to their own medical needs or because high-risk individuals were in their care – contributed to the stress.

Caring for others and limiting risk also meant no longer being able to rely on household conveniences, such as housecleaning services, which resulted in additional duties at home. Similarly, 60% of working parents went from having, on average, 5 days of before and/or afterschool care to 0 days. Respondents indicated inability to rely on childcare provided by family members, particularly at-risk grandparents, or not wanting to assume additional risks by hiring an outside nanny or babysitter; others reported the inability to find or pay for reliable care. A number of respondents also indicted their partners were unable to help support caretaking and/or household duties due to their jobs requiring in-person work.

STUDENT CARETAKING

About 49% of respondents indicated that they had to attend to student needs and issues more than before the pandemic began. The qualitative data indicates that providing increased support for students – both emotional/social support and academic assistance – has affected research productivity among faculty and contributed to work-life *in*balance for both faculty and staff.

"Caregiving for a cancer patient means I cannot take a chance on exposing myself to COVID, which has greatly impacted my social/support system. I have never felt more isolated." "Spouse works in healthcare but I am primary caretaker for parent and grandchild. This means more strain and stress within the home as we work to keep everyone safe from COVID-19 exposure."

CARING FOR YOUNG AND SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

50%

of respondents indicated their child or children's daycare and K-12 school was half day or hybrid in-person/remote (29%), or fully remote (21%) during the 2020-21 school year. Seven percent said their child's school had reopened, but they were homeschooling.

33%

of respondents shifted their work schedules to evenings or weekends to ensure they could perform both their job responsibilities and attend to caretaking needs while their children were learning remotely.



SCHOOL CLOSURES AND REMOTE LEARNING CREATED NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE CHOICES

At various intervals throughout the pandemic, daycare centers and schools closed and/or went fully remote or experienced some other change in modality. Parents and other caregivers described these changes and closures as "untenable" as they attempted to balance caregiving responsibilities with work duties. This was particularly pronounced for those with daycare-age children who needed constant supervision.

As of mid-spring 2021, only 24% of survey respondents had children whose school or childcare center was fully in-person; 12% had multiple children with multiple learning modalities, adding a layer of complexity as multiple children were learning both at school or at home while one or both parents/guardians were also working. Fifty percent of caregivers were managing half-day or hybrid in-person remote or fully remote schooling. Parents/guardians also described the challenges of unpredictable disruptions to childcare and school arrangements due to exposure to COVID, quarantine protocols, and shifting schoolwide protocols following outbreaks.

Parents of young and school-age children described the difficult choices they were asked to make throughout the pandemic when it came to

managing caretaking and work demands. In addition to the strain managing remote learning or caretaking was creating, many chose to continue homeschooling due to safety concerns. For others, the choice to send their child(ren) back to school was about balancing their own and their children's academic and social-emotional needs but also putting them in a position of physical risk.

For both groups - those who opted to homeschool due to safety concerns or who were forced to support children's remote learning - the stress of managing those responsibilities along with their work was extreme, leading to significant mental health challenges and burnout. Employees reported they worked early mornings, evenings and weekends in order to keep up with their workload so that they were available to supervise their children's school work. While a number of respondents conveyed their supervisors and colleagues were mostly understanding, employees felt guilt about how this was affecting their work, and their concerns about long-term job security abounded. Respondents also described how limited social support had an impact on their households, including partners and children who experienced significant mental health crises and physical health problems as a result of the pandemic.

"The main reason we have sent our children back to daycare was to maintain our own sanity, especially while we are needing to work from home.'

- Man exempt staff member

"The risk of COVID is too great. I am their sole caregiver. One of my children is high-risk. Woman non-exempt staff member feel I can risk her health by sending my daughter back to in person school.'

"My work responsibilities and our family mental health demanded that my kids go back school."

"My [elderly] mother is living with us and I do not

"My kids are in daycare part-time ... it was the happy medium we came to because it was impossible for me to get my job done with a 9month-old and 2-year-old at home. I would like the peace of mind of having them home completely, but this is working right now for my family.

- Woman exempt staff member

BURNOUT, STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

59%

of respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement: "As a result of the pandemic, I am able to control whether I have clear boundaries between my home and personal life."



85%

of respondents reported challenges in caring for themselves during the pandemic, including little to no regular social interaction (28%), inability to see family, friends or coworkers (30%), metal health challenges (21%) and working with chronic health conditions (6%)

IMPACT ON UD EMPLOYEES

Employees reported they experienced significant impacts on their stress levels and mental health as a result the pandemic – affects that were exacerbated by the uncertainty related to the University's financial situation, and national and political strife throughout summer and fall of 2020. Some described very serious mental health challenges that resulted from the pandemic, including the development of anxiety disorders, depression, sleep issues, and eating disorders. Respondents with caregiving responsibilities described impacts on their personal relationships and the mental health challenges experienced by family members, including children. They also stated they were unable to devote time and attention to caring for themselves because of the energy they spent caring for others. Those without caretaking responsibilities also indicated significant challenges due to prolonged social isolation, and the mental toll the pandemic and accompanying social upheaval has taken on their own mental health. Many described reduced productivity and inability to concentrate due to burnout. Those who self-identified as supervisors indicated they were uncertain how to best assist employees who were experiencing extreme stress. While some praised the University's response to the pandemic, there were significant concerns related to the disconnect between communication regarding self-care and the increased workload demands that lead to "pushing ourselves past the breaking point."

"I really appreciate Provost Benson's emails that are supportive of creatively managing employee workloads during the pandemic. I think it is great that someone at the top is advocating for letting some non-essential work go, or try to figure out how to shift priorities right now while things are so difficult. It is essential that all directors take his words into account while managing people and workloads during this time. We have faced many unknowns and are still not out of the pandemic yet. One of my directors is talking like "OK, hard times are over ... let's get back to business as usual," when we are definitely not out of this pandemic yet. More messaging from the top about focusing on the most essential tasks is still needed. We are doing less with less."

 $\hbox{-} Woman non-tenure \ track faculty \ member$

"I'm overworked, underpaid (since I'm taking on extra work to not get furloughed again), and I'm getting burned out fast. It's all too much, to the point where I think about quitting A LOT. I love UD and my job, but I love my family and my sanity more. My health is struggling, and I'm just getting fatter because there is NO time left for me to even go for a walk or do any exercise by the time I take care of everyone else. I regularly think of quitting just so I can have time to take care of myself."

- Woman exempt staff member

CONCERNS ABOUT THE FUTURE

44%

of respondents indicated they were concerned about their job security.



51%

of respondents strongly
agreed/agreed that changed
caretaking responsibilities as a result
of the pandemic will negatively
impact their career.

JOB SECURITY AND ADVANCEMENT CONCERNS

The stress of managing work responsibilities and care arrangements - complicated by school closures, nursing home closures and the like - during the pandemic created significant concern among employees that their future livelihood at the University would be compromised because of the extra responsibilities they were taking on in their personal lives. The effect of furloughs and layoffs and real financial challenges at the University further complicated that belief, and abut 44% of respondents indicated concern about their future job security. More than half (51%) also indicated concern that their increased caretaking responsibilities would negatively affect their short- and long-term career prospects, including concerns over not getting promoted, concerns over not receiving tenure due to decreased research productivity, and fear of future furloughs and layoffs.

While 75% of employees reported increased workloads throughout the pandemic, only about 17% of respondents indicated they were thinking about leaving the University as a result of the changes to their work and/or home life stemming from the pandemic.

Nationally, an exodus of women from the workplace remains an ongoing concern across multiple industries, including higher education. Please see the Women's Center "COVID-19 and Gender: Impacts and Resources" guide for a detailed summary on coronavirus and gender, with a focus on the impact on women in the workplace, both nationally and within the UD context.

RETURNING TO CAMPUS

Among those respondents working primarily remotely throughout the pandemic, most expressed concerns about returning to an on-campus work environment. They articulated the desire to have plans in place with sufficient notice, clear communications, and expectations set forth by University administration and their units. The concerns about returning back to work were primarily grounded in safety concerns, as well as ongoing concerns about the availability of care for children and the unknown learning modality for schoolage children.

Respondents – particularly staff respondents – expressed support for ongoing flexibility moving forward and some ability to work remotely post–pandemic. Many articulated the personal and professional benefits of having a flexible schedule would allow them to continue to offer support to family members and others, as well as the opportunity to continue some aspect of their work remotely in the future.

"For me, I have found that working from home alleviates a lot of stress. I feel that I am better at my job and a better parent. I have realized that it is a priority for me to be able to see my kids each morning and when they get home from school. I sincerely hope that work modality flexibility can be retained post-pandemic. I think it will help retain employees, especially those who have found great benefit in their personal and professional lives to being able to work from home."

- Woman exempt staff member

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the survey, we offer the following recommendations as the institution and varying unit leaders consider ways to ready employees for return to on-campus work in Fall 2021, as well as manage the direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic on employee morale, mental health, and future career trajectories. A return-to-campus strategy that accounts for the challenges employees will continue to face – as well as unresolved challenges from the past 18 months – will result in significantly less stress, greater employee engagement and equitable outcomes.

1

Adopt flexible work policies.

The majority of survey respondents expressed deep concern about the transition back to on-campus work in Fall 2021, and the critical need for flexible work moving forward, particularly given the uncertainty of the trajectory of the pandemic and its impact on caregiving. Respondents indicated an increase in productivity while working remotely, and articulated a desire to continue some aspect of their work remotely in the fall. The anxiety around returning to in-person, on-campus work was prevalent in the responses, particularly among those with children who were too young to be vaccinated. Clear communications and setting expectations for employees will be critical in easing the transition in the fall, as well as offering ongoing flexibility both during and after the pandemic.

3

Focus on trust- and community-building efforts.

The impacts of the furloughs and layoffs on employees are profound, not just on those directly impact but by those indirectly impacted, such as managers who notified affected employees and team members who took on additional duties or had close personal relationships with impacted colleagues . The need to rebuild trust and a renewed sense of community was apparent in the responses, particularly among those who connect their paid work to their internal sense of value. Messaging from university leadership should acknowledge the challenges of the past year and shared campus trauma, as well as work to rebuild trust both within units and as a campus at-large.

2

Re-evaluate promotion processes.

Concerns about the impacts of the pandemic on career growth and advancement were expressed by both faculty and staff. Faculty described crippling efforts on their research productivity during the pandemic, while staff expressed concern about negative performance reviews based on caretaking needs and/or performance standards that didn't take into account the challenges of the pandemic. A robust assessment and analysis of career impacts in both the short and long term will be necessary to understand - and remedy - the impacts on the workforce. Chairs and those evaluating faculty progress toward tenure should consider the detrimental short-term and long-term effects of the pandemic on overall productivity and research activities. Tenure and promotion committees should evaluate faculty accordingly, including ensuring unconscious bias does not factor into decisions, particularly for those opting to stop the clock due to the pandemic and/or maternity leave. Similarly, supervisors and those with administrative oversight should examine their own biases with regard to evaluation of productivity during the pandemic, with attention to gender equity.

4

Invest in robust mental health services.

The pronounced mental health effects experienced by employees and their families necessitate a strategic investment and focus in supporting both employees and their dependents during and beyond the pandemic. Services and outreach efforts should also address high burnout and increased stress experienced by faculty and staff, and by both caretakers and non-caregivers alike.

"I truly, truly wish the University would consider a policy to make remote work a permanent option, at least to some degree (like two days in office, three at home, for example) after the pandemic restrictions subside. The freedom to work remotely is a HUGE benefit and has boosted my morale immeasurably. It has also allowed me to be a better caregiver to those in my family who need support and guidance. I still get my work done, even if it is in the evenings- I get it done."

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