

Dear Colleagues:

I write again on behalf of UIC United Faculty. Once more, we appreciate your collective labor as we all figure out the best ways to proceed with classes in the fall. And once more, we ask that you all do your best to move toward the union having an official role at your table.

Today's message comes from one of our loyal union members who cares very, very deeply about students. Our colleague speaks with great power, insight, and authority on behalf of anyone who is concerned with combining caretaking and our work as teachers, researchers, and citizens at this university. Their words remind us of why faculty are the thoughtful and beating heart of UIC.

I am concerned about the added faculty responsibilities this summer, while we are not contracted to work, and the potential plans for the fall. I am already well behind on my research projects because of the spring transition to remote teaching while at home caring for my two young children. I have outstanding revise-and-resubmits and new projects to advance that I have had no time to touch since this transition. I usually use the summer to advance my research projects. I also have existing service commitments that take up considerable time in the summer (mentoring graduate students, committee service for academic organizations, reviews of manuscripts/conference proposals, etc.). Completing these tasks this summer already seemed uncertain because K-12 schools and summer camps have been cancelled, and I will be the primary childcare provider for my kids. The idea of taking on an additional 4-8 hours per week this summer of unplanned (required?) work is overwhelming and may not be feasible.

Additionally, with the uncertainty about whether K-12 schools will be held fully remotely again or in some type of hybrid (part-day shifts, alternating days of the week, etc.) this fall, I am uncertain of who would watch my children if I am required to teach on-campus. Will UIC be providing childcare for workers deemed essential for on-campus teaching if k-12 schools and daycares are not open? Finally, I am deeply concerned about the disproportionately negative impact of these plans on women faculty members and faculty from underrepresented groups who disproportionately bear the brunt of the invisible labor of family care responsibilities (a condition exacerbated by the current pandemic), while also facing structural barriers in the workplace to professional advancement.

Some important related articles:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/21/early-journal-submission-data-suggest-covid-19-tanking-womens-research-productivity>

<https://www.thenation.com/article/society/coronavirus-parenting-photos/>

<https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/05/08/added-challenges-dealing-race-and-gender-issues-during-pandemic-opinion>

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/voices/scientist-mothers-face-extra-challenges-in-the-face-of-covid-19/>

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01135-9>

With best wishes,

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