

CAREGIVING TASK FORCE PROGRESS REPORT, FALL 2021

COMPILED BY AN INDEPENDENT TASK FORCE COMPOSED OF UW SYSTEM FACULTY, STAFF,
AND INSTRUCTORS



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Beginning in August 2020, a [systemwide task force dedicated to caregiving and COVID-19](#) has worked closely with many campuses across the UW System to develop communications, implement guidelines, and coordinate resources to support caregivers at all student and employee classification levels. [Local news outlets](#), [student newspapers](#), [Inside Higher Ed](#), the National Women's Studies Association, and other nationwide networks have recognized this UW System network for its dual focus on immediate, actionable steps and long-term sustainability initiatives.

The task force consists of [faculty, instructors, academic staff, and university staff](#) from all campuses. In addition to defining caregiving as a [gender equity issue](#), we've joined a [broader national conversation](#) underscoring how caregiving is an [intersectional issue](#) with [varying impacts](#) for people of all identity positions and employee classification levels within higher ed. Our work also defines caregiving to include a range of scenarios including eldercare, virtual schooling for children of all ages, support for family members and children with disabilities, and mental health concerns.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

In fall of 2020, the caregiving task force released a progress report, providing updates on our task force recommendations with specific examples from participating campuses. You can read it [here](#). This year's report offers updates on the progress across UW System since the release of the fall 2020 report.

1. **Systemwide Caregiving Survey.** 995 participants across UW System participated in a caregiving survey facilitated and analyzed by the caregiving task force. You can read the results [here](#), including [detailed recommendations](#) and [next steps](#).

Where else can I find examples of this work?

- See the comprehensive results from the UW-La Crosse survey entitled "[COVID-19 Impacts for Faculty and Staff](#)."
- UW-Milwaukee included caregiving questions as part of a campus wide survey entitled "Coping with the Pandemic Employee Survey."

2. **Campus Specific Caregiving Committees.** One of the central recommendations of the task force was the creation of campus specific committees developed to address caregiving on each campus.

Where can I find examples of this work?

- UW-LaCrosse has dedicated attention to equity issues through the formation of the Ad-Hoc Task Force on Work Life Issues, which is charged with following up on the Caregiving Taskforce recommendations and to propose bylaws and structure for a permanent group on campus in the future.
- UW-Madison received support from Chancellor Blank to form an ad hoc caregiving committee charged with providing a report on campus caregiving needs in the fall of 2021.

- The Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies program at UW-Eau Claire has formed an ad hoc caregiving committee. Members of the caregiving task force will also participate in the chancellor's cabinet committee on Staff Wellbeing.
- UW-Stout will integrate caregiving into current EDI initiatives.
- The [UW Oshkosh Gender Equity Council \(GEC\)](#), which reports directly to the Chancellor, has taken lead on implementing recommendations from the survey. In 2021-2022, the GEC plans to compare and contrast the caregiving survey data with other campus data sources (e.g., 2019 Emotional Labor Survey facilitated by the GEC), develop and sponsor a campus lactation policy, facilitate an equity review of all bathrooms on all three campuses, and host their Biennial Gender Equity Leadership Workshop in March 2022 with a focus on caregiving.

3. Increased Resources and Communications Dedicated to Caregiving. Clear and specific communication on caregiving is a critical step in reducing uneven access to flexibility and implicit bias.

Where can I find examples of this work?

- UW-LaCrosse's Human Resources created a [Childcare and Caregiver Support](#) page on their website and has been providing updates on leave and remote work options. The Provost's office and Faculty Senate created a webpage with information on the [impact of the pandemic on faculty](#) outlining COVID impact statements and evaluation of teaching, scholarship, and service.
- UW-Madison's Office of Human Resources published a [new resource](#) that provides an overview of options available to employees who experience sudden disruptions due to family caregiving issues. This resource is available on [OHR's Family Caregiving website](#).
- UW-Green Bay developed the [Phoenix Childcare Support Program](#).
- Administrative leadership at UW-Madison sent messages to department chairs, center directors, managers, supervisors, and employees addressing flexibility for caregivers and outlining the options and resources available to caregivers.
- The UW Oshkosh Women's Center hired a graduate student employee to serve as a Student Parent Support Coordinator. The student is a single mother who started her

undergraduate career at UW Fox Valley (now UWO Fox Cities) and finished her undergraduate degree at UWO in the online Human Services Leadership program. Currently she is working on building a caregiver resources page modeled after the University of Oregon, gathering sample lactation policies from within higher education, increasing campus awareness of CCAMPIS funds, preparing to lead UWO through Endicott College's Family Friendly Campus Toolkit and building community amongst parenting/caregiving students.

4. **Research Support to Offset the Impacts of the Pandemic.** Faculty and staff reported a variety of significant career setbacks as result of caregiving and COVID-19. Research suggests that the impacts of COVID will last 5-8 years and the toughest impacts will be felt by women and people of color, resulting in a reduction of leadership roles and professional advancement in these groups.

Where can I find examples of this work?

- Research support was made available through [COVID-Disruption Grants](#) at UW-LaCrosse. Start-up funds for second-year faculty were also extended an additional year to support the travel and budget interruptions that may have impacted their use by faculty at the beginning of the pandemic.
- UW-Madison also offered a **Dissertation Completion Fellowship** ([details here](#)). This fellowship provided one semester of funding for students who originally planned to defend by January 2021 but were delayed due to covid.
- UW-Madison also offered **PARCI** (Pandemic Affected Research Continuation Initiative) funding ([details here](#)). PARCI was specifically directed at "projects for which expenditures were compelled to continue although certain research activities were stalled, such that the project now faces a shortage of funds to complete those activities. Support for research travel, face-to-face human subjects research, graduate students whose graduation has been unavoidably delayed, and postdocs will be considered."
- UW-Madison extended the expiration on all start-up funds and professorship/campus award funds by one year (sometimes more, upon request).

- UW-Milwaukee offered research assistance funds for a variety of purposes ([details here](#)).
- UW-Milwaukee offered an [emergency time clock accommodation](#) for graduate students.
- UW Oshkosh offered postponements or suspensions for one year available for any faculty who wished to stop their tenure clock or post-tenure review clock.

5. Training for Supervisors and Department Chairs. A need for cultural shifts and long-term support for caregivers is a simple and long-term institutional support mechanism. Training is needed to ensure all supervisors understand the equity issues related to caregiving and appropriate institutional supports.

Where can I find examples of this work?

- The Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program at UW-Eau Claire organized a forum on annual reviews, caregiving, and EDI during covid and beyond for the Arts and Sciences College entitled "New Normal and Caregiving."
- EDI consultants at UW-Green Bay (including some systemwide caregiving task force members) are actively addressing student parent needs. In early November, one consultant hosted a panel of student parents (attended by faculty and academic staff) on the challenges facing student parents in the classrooms and accessing high impact practices (HIPs).

6. Ongoing Flexibilities. At the beginning of the fall semester, the caregiving task force [encouraged ongoing flexibility](#) and accommodations as children under the age of 12 remained unvaccinated. Despite the recent release of a vaccine for children ages 5-12, quarantines are still a regular occurrence at school and daycare settings, and children under 5 cannot yet get vaccinated.

Where can I find examples of flexible policies?

- UW-Green Bay and other campuses took advantage of the changed UW System Intermittent Telecommuting policy to offer increased flexibility specifically for a school closure or child quarantine. You can scroll down to see UW-Green Bay's interpretation of SYS 1228 [here](#).
- Some campuses included caregiving as an excused absence for students. See [this example](#) from UW-River Falls. Other campuses are working through shared governance groups to include this provision as an approved policy.
- UW-Madison updated the Addendum to the [Sick Leave Policy](#) to remove the requirement that an employee exhaust all accrued vacation and personal holiday leave before using sick leave to care for an individual who is quarantining or isolating or to care for a child whose school is closed or participating in virtual or hybrid instruction or whose childcare facility is unavailable. This policy aligns with the UW System policy [Interim: Sick Leave for Care of Minor Children](#) (listed below).

7. UW System Policy Changes. Many survey respondents cited UW System policy changes as critical for providing institutional support on their campuses. Two critical policy changes supported caregivers during the 2021-22 academic year.

- **Interim sick leave policy: Sick leave for care of minor children** This [interim policy](#) temporarily amends [UW System Administrative Policy 1212, Sick Leave](#) and specifically authorizes the use of sick leave to care for a minor child whose school or daycare has been closed due to COVID-19 or where a minor child has been required to quarantine as a result of COVID-19 exposure.
- Intermittent Telecommuting: [SYS 1228](#) allows for increased flexibilities for all employee classification levels. Many campuses developed procedures for offering remote options for employees based on this policy.

8. Other Innovations and Caregiving Projects

- Dr. Teresa Sanislo and Dr. Cheryl Jimenez-Frei have started a UW-Eau Claire campus caregiving and covid oral history project. Dr. Sanislo is an affiliate of WGSS and a historian of European gender history. She leads the UWEC Caregiving Task Force. Dr. Jimenez-Frei is a public historian and an affiliate of the LAS program. Dr. Jimenez-Frei won a Wisconsin Historical Society Award for her work with the UWEC archivist Greg

Kocken setting up the Western Wisconsin Covid Digital Archive. Sanislo and Jimenez-Frei are adding a caregiving category to the Western Wisconsin Digital Archive and the Wisconsin submissions to the Journal of the Plague Year Digital Archive. They are currently training and mentoring students in a public history class as they conduct oral history interviews of student caregivers on the UWEC-Barron campuses as well as the staff at the UWEC childcare center.

- The systemwide caregiving task force is developing a subcommittee composed of faculty, staff, and students to address issues specific to student caregivers.

ONGOING CHALLENGES

Caregiving is a complicated issue requiring a variety of short and long-term solutions to fully assess and address the impacts experienced by faculty, staff, and [students](#) who have delayed research, professional development opportunities, publication, and career advancement opportunities due to caregiving responsibilities. The systemwide task force offers many resources and guidelines to support campuses, and strong institutional support on each campus is needed to comprehensively address this issue.

All Campuses Should Consider the Following Steps:

1. **Clear directives and institutional support for caregiving are an important first step.** Members of the caregiving task force regularly conduct presentations and discussions with human resource teams, shared governance groups, and administrative leadership. We also hosted a caregiving forum in the spring of 2021 you can watch [here](#). You can contact Dr. Stephanie Rytlahti (srrytlahti@wisc.edu) to schedule a meeting for your campus or UW System committee.
2. **Data is needed on the impact of COVID.** Clear mechanisms are needed to track the disruption to research, publication, and retention of faculty, staff, and students on each campus.
3. **Campus Specific Caregiving Committees.** The most impactful work is responsive to the needs of each campus and its existing resources.
4. **Ongoing Flexibilities.** Flexibility and agile work options are a critical support mechanism for caregivers and many other employees.

5. **Supervisor Training on Caregiving Support and Managing Employees with Remote and Flexible Work Options.**
6. **Ongoing Support for Employee Wellness and Mental Health.**

****Submitted by the Systemwide Caregiving Task Force****