

REPLY TO ARORA ET AL.:

Concerns and considerations about using the CV as an equity tool

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As increasing evidence emerges concerning the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women academics (1, 2), we hope our work continues to prompt institutions and departments to advance gender equity in tenure and promotion (3). For example, Arora et al. (4) have developed a department-specific rubric to assess COVID-19's impact on a case-by-case basis. This rubric is in the form of a curriculum vitae (CV) addendum matrix, which notes COVID-19 related challenges and contributions. They also encourage adding caregiving responsibilities to the matrix.

Concerns

Although this matrix is a possible effective tool for individuals, we have concerns that this matrix does not address gender-based inequities that have increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This matrix also diminishes the significance of gender-biased caregiving and service responsibilities by placing them alongside other pandemic-related contributions and challenges, effectively presenting them as equivalent. However, if researchers are able to make contributions during the pandemic, they may be academics who are also likely to have more resources and not have heavy service and caregiving responsibilities. Thus, the inclusion of universal contributions and challenges in this matrix unintentionally widens the gender gap for tenure and promotion.

Notably, the proposed matrix may elicit unconscious biases against women and other minoritized groups (5). Previous studies have shown that, when identical CVs suggested the candidate was a woman or an individual from a minoritized group instead of a white man, the applicant was rated lower (6), despite the reviewers' intention to actively increase gender and racial diversity. While mothers receive harsher evaluations and are offered lower salaries than nonmothers with similar success records, men are acknowledged and applauded for performing similar parental duties (7, 8). Women and other minoritized groups also take on additional mentoring and advising activities, which are generally not viewed as equivalent to research pursuits (3). Therefore, we caution against the use of the proposed matrix as a blanket solution, particularly when used outside of the scope of suggested Pandemic Merit Committee (3).

Considerations

Certain COVID-19–related items can be more readily included in a CV, cover letter, and/or narrative. For example, if productivity was slowed due to a laboratory shutdown, all faculty would benefit from describing, within their narrative or cover letter, how this issue specifically impacted their research. Similarly, if an academic shifts their efforts to support COVID-19 responses, those contributions can be included in a

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service section of their CV. However, we do not advocate listing caregiving responsibilities or other personal matters in standard application materials, based on the aforementioned concerns.

Centering efforts on challenges currently faced by women by addressing inequities should be a goal of institutions. This goal will require transparent actions that directly mitigate sources of bias and discrimination already ingrained in academia and create

flexible solutions that work for individual circumstances (9). Without an equity-focused process, suggested methods (10) for faculty to communicate personal circumstances to tenure and promotion or search committees are likely to exacerbate bias and discrimination. Using our aforementioned solutions (3, 11) can help promote equity in tenure and promotion processes that lead to improved equality in academia.

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