covid 19 & academic labor

AN ACTION DECK FOR CAMPUS WORKERS

Based on recommendations from
the Modern Language Association
[March 2020 | June 2020]

https://visionary-futures-collective.github.io/

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, twenty-nine scholarly societies released a collective statement about the humanities in a time of crisis.

This statement offered specific directives on actions that individuals, departments, and institutions of higher education can take to protect students, workers, and the profession.

The contents of this deck is based on that guidance, as well as additional statements released in the summer of 2020 by the Modern Language Association

The time for action is now.

Instructors must not be required to return to unsafe classrooms.

Keeping everyone safe

Working in hazardous conditions puts faculty, staff, students, and community members at greater risk of COVID-19.

Ensuring equity

BIPOC and disabled staff, as well as under or uninsured campus workers, are at a higher risk of harm from COVID-19.

Investing in the safety of BIPOC students and staff

Putting staff in hazardous conditions contradicts commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion on campus.

Institutions must take caregiving into account.

Investing in gender equity

Until caregiving facilities reopen, women face a disproportionate burden of responsibility that may harm their work.

Increasing excellence

Excellence in teaching and learning is disrupted by caregiving responsibilities when these are not addressed.

Redistributing labor

Building a supportive work community means redistributing teaching obligations, canceling course evaluations, and delaying tenure timelines.

This crisis is not an opportunity to cut funding to humanities programs.

Valuing the humanities

In times of crisis, literature and the humanities are more vital than ever. Joy, creativity, and the human spirit will help us weather the crisis and rebuild our communities when it has passed.

Rebuilding democracy

Training in representation, communication, ethics, and the reading of culture is essential to rebuilding our democracy.

When it's safe to do so, we must return to campus.

Minimizing inequity

Access to a safe, quiet learning space and the technology necessary for online learning is too high a barrier to higher education.

Increasing excellence

Excellence in teaching and learning requires investment in community and physical infrastructure, including classrooms and in-person education.

Support international students and staff

Institutions must provide **legal** and **financial** support to international community members.

Community of care

Colleges and universities must not abandon members of their professional community, regardless of their citizenship.

Investing in the future

Maintaining our global status as centers of higher education requires investing in our global community now.

Sustain access to health care

Institutions must extend or subsidize health care, housing, and other benefits to all employees.

Community of care

Institutions must ensure that employees have basic protections during a time of crisis.

Ensuring equity

Refusing basic protections disproportionately impacts vulnerable community members, including those with dependents, BIPOC, and disabled staff.

Extend term-limited contracts

Institutions must extend term-limited contracts for post-graduate workers.

A changing economy

Post-graduate contracts must be modified to respond to diminishing economic opportunities.

Ensuring equity

Extending contracts supports those without generational wealth as well as those with dependents or with caregiving obligations.

Fund the transition to remote learning and working

Institutions must provide training and reimburse costs related to virtual teaching and working.

Sustaining excellence

High-quality equipment and infrastructure is essential to providing an excellent learning environment for students.

Ensuring equity

Inequitable access to technology and other equipment disproportionately harms those without personal wealth.

Fund the extension of degree and tenure timelines

Institutions must fund students and faculty on extended timelines for research and learning.

Sustaining excellence

Universities must invest in excellence even under crisis conditions.

Ensuring equity

The ability to produce high-quality work during the pandemic is shaped by race, gender, and health. Extending timelines gives everyone the opportunity to succeed.

Eliminate student and peer evaluations

Institutions must not take evaluations into account when considering tenure and promotion.

Sustaining excellence

Dependence on evaluations during a time of crisis puts undue pressure on performance and limits effective teaching and labor.

Ensuring equity

Remote learning exacerbates the conditions that lead to inaccurate evaluations of minoritized individuals.

PROVE IT

Sustaining Excellence

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Williams June, Audrey. "The Unequal Costs of the Digital Divide." *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* October 5, 2020.

Building Equity

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Kramer, Jillian. "The Virus Moved Female Faculty to the Brink. Will Universities Help?" *The New York Times.* October 6, 2020.

Community of Care

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DESIGNED BY THE VISIONARY FUTURES COLLECTIVE

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