

The Professoriate's Response to COVID-19

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Higher education will be forever changed having faced one of the most impactful set of circumstances that have existed during our times. This marks one of those pivotal moments in history where we see change abound. To survive, institutions of higher education have to be more responsive to students, faculty, and staff; reassess course offerings and programs; address issues of inequities swiftly; embrace innovation in technology; and cut out or reduce the impact of administrative structures that impede responsiveness and growth. In doing so, we have had to brace for a shift in the professoriate. We have witnessed institutions of higher education change teaching modalities, increase/reduce the number of students in sections, eliminate sections, increase teaching loads, examine tenure clock countdown, and the list goes on. As faculty worry about issues related to teaching and learning on their campuses, we are driven to explore critical analysis among scholars and policymakers on issues affecting all college and university faculty in America and abroad. The need for critical scholarly work centering around these issues is needed.

In the wake of COVID-19, faculty not only experienced fundamental changes in their teaching and professional expectations, but also their lives as a whole were also impacted. The pandemic's impact has not been equal. While managing their professional roles, some faculty had to also deal with working from home with their children at home, assist children with their homeschooling, and provide caregiving to family members--all while dealing with quarantining. The disparate impact COVID-19 had on the balance of work and family time presented some faculty with unforeseen circumstances, pressure, and obstacles that could have negatively impacted the state of their mental health and emotional well-being. A consequence of decreased mental well-being due to such unexpected changes can lead to various real-world consequences, such as less concentration, motivation, and productivity. In addition, some faculty will try to meet the emotional and mental health needs of students, who are also struggling although most faculty are not trained to do so. These additional expectations and responsibilities only add to the already high level of expectations and responsibilities faculty face.

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This special issue of the *Journal of the Professoriate* is especially designed to address concerns that have risen during this pandemic as many of us continue to engage in research, teaching, and service. We received approximately 30 manuscripts for consideration. After a blind, peer-reviewed process, nine manuscripts were selected for inclusion in the special issue. These articles provide critical insight into the overall impact of the pandemic on the professoriate (Kirk-Jenkins & Hughey, 2021), graduate student instructors (Gannon et al., 2021), self-care (Boss et al., 2021; Prasath et al., 2021; Sam & Gupton, 2021), faculty development (Baker & Lutz, 2021), and teaching and learning (Mason & Mason-Bennett, 2021; Phelps-Ward et al., 2021; Iturbe-LaGrave et al., 2021). These articles help us begin to grapple with the lasting impact of COVID-19 on the professoriate: the good, the bad, and the ugly.

We began this process in October, 2020 (call for a special issue) and much has changed regarding CDC guidelines, state health requirements and restrictions, school openings, vaccinations, and a lot more. And we want to be cognizant of these changes over time, thus, we welcome continued dialogue around issues addressed for another Special Issue in Spring 2026: five years out. The Special Issue 2026 will specifically address issues related to COVID-19 impact on the professoriate, graduate student instructors, self-care, faculty development, and teaching and learning. Specifically, we will be looking for empirical studies (qualitative and/or quantitative) that add to this dialogue. We anticipate putting out the call in Fall 2024 to receive submission in Spring 2025. Manuscripts will be selected Fall 2025 for a Spring 2026 issue.