



Maximizing Impact Pilot Program Report

Navigating Uncertainty and Complexity in the time of COVID-19

Program Lead:

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Program Sponsors:

- Dr. Andrew Szeri, Provost, UBC Vancouver
- Dr. Moura Quayle, Vice-Provost, Academic Affairs, UBC Vancouver

Program Support:

- Asmin Chen, Project Manager, Equity and Inclusion Office, UBC Vancouver

Background:

In June 2020, the UBCV Provost's Office conducted a survey of UBCV faculty members to understand the impact of COVID-19. The preliminary survey results revealed that many faculty members reported an increase in teaching and service workloads with parallel decreases in research outputs and an overall reduction in their ability to work since March 2020. This was particularly evident for women and junior faculty members.

The survey results and qualitative feedback also indicated that non-tenured women and gender-diverse faculty members at the Assistant Professor level in particular, were under tremendous physical, mental and emotional stress and had significant concerns about their academic progress given the current setbacks due to the pandemic.

Based on these results, a committee, led by the Senior Advisor to the Provost on Women and Gender Diverse Faculty, proposed the development of a pilot program - *Maximizing Impact in the time of COVID-19* to engage women and gender-diverse Assistant Professors in maximizing impact in their academic endeavours particularly during this unusual year. Senior faculty were invited as speakers to discuss strategies to navigate the complexities associated with continuing research, managing teaching and how best to manage graduate students during the lock down and the implications for junior faculty for the future.

Request for ongoing funding:

The findings from the pilot program (below) suggest that the program was very successful. A second cohort is now underway with over 26 early career researchers and junior faculty (all genders) from a wide range of departments and faculties across UBCV. The program is clearly



filling an important need for new faculty. We are requesting ongoing funding for this program. A budget is attached (yearly budget = \$136,000.00). The concerns voiced by the second cohort (2021-2022) is also attached.

Pre-program key findings from the intake survey 2021:

The pre-program survey covered four areas in order to inform programming details: Top challenges, key interests, logistic details, and participant demographics

- Top challenges:
 - Balancing competing demands
 - Manage (increased) stress and anxiety
 - Connect with others who are in similar situation
 - Strategies and advice on how to balance personal life and career
- Topics that the cohort was most interested were:
 - Career progression
 - Continuing research/research productivity

Program components:

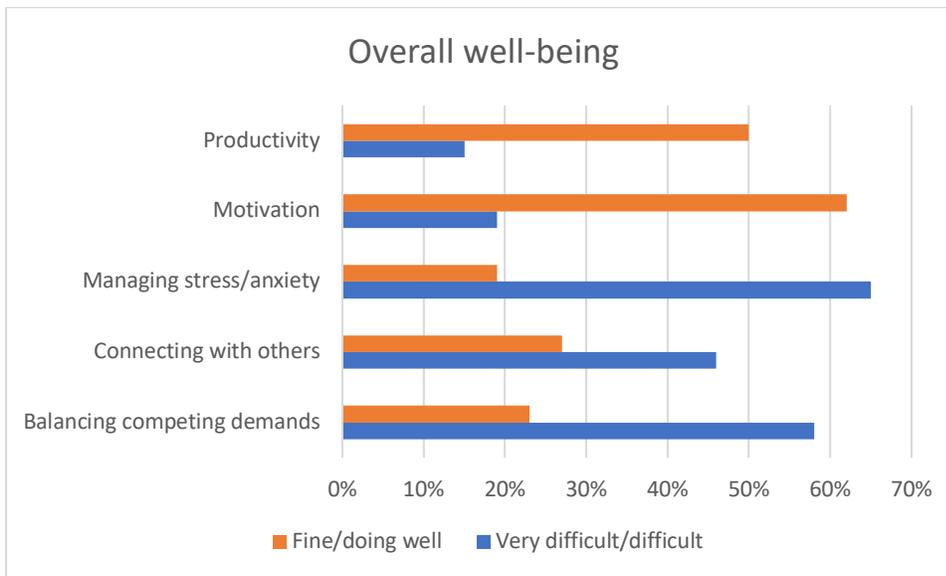
- **Lunch and Learn Speaker series:** 5 sessions in total, 13 speakers, average 24 attendees per session. Topics covered:
 - Women's leadership programme
 - Speaker: Shaheena Janjuha Jivraj, FRSA
 - Starting and maintaining a vibrant research program/lab, motivating graduate students while in lockdown and post-lockdown
 - Speakers: Sophia Frangou, Karen Cheung, Gina Ogilvie
 - Managing family responsibilities with demands of academia
 - Speakers: Shernaz Bamji, Liisa Galea, Renisa Mawani
 - Teaching during COVID – successes, challenges, and learning from each other
 - Speakers: Janice Stewart, Christina Hendricks, Jaclyn Stewart
 - What does “excellence” mean at UBC? What does individual success look like/Discussion of tenure process
 - Speakers: Marion Pearson, Lara Boyd, Anita Palepu
- **Leadership Coaching program:** Collaboration with Coaching Services at UBC Human Resources, the pilot program offered 20 participants one-on-one coaching for 3 to 6 sessions per person



Summary of Pilot Program Results

Pre-program Wellbeing Ratings

Responses: n= 27



The majority of faculty reported that they were able to keep up productivity and motivation but a significant fraction reported they had difficulty managing stress/anxiety, connecting with others and balancing competing demands.

Qualitative feedback: “Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience in the program?” (Excerpts)

- I really appreciate the opportunities to meet and connect with many peers... who share the same challenges and concerns as me. I have also learned useful suggestions and successful examples from the senior faculty members.
- I appreciated the quality of the guest speakers and their willingness/enthusiasm in sharing their experiences and wisdom.
- The coaching was absolutely phenomenal... I simply cannot express what an amazing experience it was. My coach created a safe, fun, productive, environment where I was able to achieve significant insights into my personal and professional life. She was then able to coach me into translating those insights into effective and impactful life changes. These changes have already helped me to make better decisions, improve my performance, and feel more satisfied with my productivity and work-life balance. I can



unreservedly say that my time with my coach was one of the most singularly transformative experiences in my professional life.

- I didn't want it to stop. I wish there had been more time to really build relationships with peers.
- I was reluctant to participate in the one-on-one coaching program, but ended up developing a very strong rapport with my coach and enjoyed the experience. My concern was that this approach would mostly download responsibility for increased productivity on myself as an individual without providing any institutional support. While that mostly remains true, the coaching did help me develop strategies for coping with the added pressure created by the pandemic.

How has participating in this pilot impacted you personally or professionally? (Excerpts)

- I have more confidence in moving forward in my career in a way that works for and inspires me. I feel empowered...
- I have tried to apply what I learned into practice both in my life and at work. The first and immediate impact is that I feel less stressed from the impact of COVID-19...
- It was great to know that I wasn't alone in dealing with a lot of the issues... It was also really nice to hear from successful women who have achieved so much. Truly inspiring.
- Previously I feel like I exhausted... This program provided the space to critically examine what I have accomplished, where I am going, and issues that I am experiencing. I have more insight into my own decision making as well as the types of choices that will promote anxiety or well being. I feel better equipped to move forward in a manner that is productive, sustainable, fulfilling, and enjoyable.
- This was a fantastic program to connect with others and feel that I am not alone in this time of great challenge and uncertainty. I also learned practical advice from other women faculty members...
- I have found it extremely validating to hear about issues and struggles experienced by others. It made me realise that many hurdles I experience are systemic and not due to my own shortcomings. I also found it so valuable to hear from the diverse leaders...
- It was helpful to be able to ask specific questions during breakout sessions... and to learn from others' questions/responses given that many participating were experiencing similar issues.