

Statement by Sybil Alexandrov at the FAS Senate meeting on October 15, 2020

Instructional Faculty in a “Stronger, More Inclusive Yale”

I agree with my senate colleagues that Yale is in a uniquely advantageous position in these precarious times and should think big, act boldly and move forward on various initiatives. But while Yale scours the world for the best and the brightest, there are other matters that need to be addressed. With regard to instructional faculty, what is most urgent is a careful and honest examination of existing conditions.

To begin, I would like to underscore that instructional faculty at Yale are first-class educators: they are skilled and accomplished; a great number have earned PhDs, engage in research, publish scholarly articles and author books. But first and foremost, instructional faculty are committed to exceptional teaching.

On October 14, in his message “Building a Stronger and More Inclusive Yale” President Salovey stated that:

A diverse faculty and student body – who are fully included in the Yale community – form the foundation for everything we do at Yale. We will work across many fronts to achieve a university environment where everyone belongs and can thrive, so that we can continue to teach and conduct research and scholarship of the highest caliber.

Although the message addresses diversity, it specifically mentions inclusion. Instructional faculty are frequently not fully included in the Yale community. They, like all other members of the community, deserve to belong and to thrive.

The university has recently demonstrated support by equalizing the parenting leave for all faculty. On September 24, Provost Strobel announced that “all full-time faculty and managerial and professional staff earning less than \$85,000 per year will receive a salary adjustment of 1.5%, effective October 1, 2020”. Without question, the gesture is appreciated. In my own case, this translates to an additional \$118 a month for the 9 months it will cover. Since my Yale Health Care contribution is now \$111.00 per month, I am now \$7.00 ahead each month.

To thrive one needs to feel financially secure. Is it possible to make rental or mortgage payments, pay for childcare and cover college tuition for one child or more on a salary of \$75,000? Incidentally, I earn considerably less.

You might wonder how instructional faculty cope. For some, summer teaching is a welcome source of additional income. Many look forward to the experience. But summer teaching is not available to all, which means that it is not an equitable option. And one must consider what happens to those who need to teach one or even two summer terms year after year just to make

ends meet. Not only is it exhausting, it leaves little or no time to reflect on the teaching process, for updating existing courses or creating new ones.

There are problems, but there are also potential solutions.

- Summer salary for instructional faculty. This would mitigate the financial burden, obviate the necessity of summer teaching and encourage instructional faculty to devote focused time to course development and enhancement.
- Salary adjustment. Review and adjust the salaries, particularly those at the lower-end of the spectrum. Is the current salary adequate?
- A nuanced sliding-scale applied to childcare subsidy, college tuition reimbursement and health plan contributions

These measures would make a considerable difference.

To conclude, I would like to return to President Salovey's message: "All the academic investments support the work of our faculty members, who define Yale and are the university's greatest strength."

I look forward to the university's continued and increased support.