



ADVANCE BU

Advancing and Maintaining Equity

December 2023

Monthly Newsletter

Navigating Burnout

Over the course of this difficult semester, I've lost track of the number of colleagues who've told me that they can't sleep, can't focus, can't find joy or passion for their teaching, research, or creative production; that they feel disempowered, devalued and demoralized. These are perfectly understandable responses to these stressful times. They are also classic symptoms of workplace burnout. The World Health Organization describes burnout as a combination of exhaustion, detachment and feelings of diminished professional efficacy resulting from chronic workplace stress. If left unchecked, burnout can have significant physical, psychological and social effects, impairing our health, our problem-solving skills, our creativity, our working memory and attention, and our ability to connect with others. While burnout can hit workers in any field, it is particularly prevalent in the caring professions, like healthcare, social work and education, fields that are often considered not just a job but a "calling." Because so many of us in higher education feel called to explore, invent, create and open our students' minds to the vast possibilities of a brighter future, our work is never done. We can always give more; and sometimes more is too much. It is important to remember that burnout is not an individual failure, but rather an institutional failure. Workers are more likely to experience burnout when faced with unmanageable workloads; unfair or unequal treatment; lack of role clarity; lack of resources, rewards or job security; and lack of meaningful communication with leaders. ADVANCE BU is committed to addressing these issues on our campus, and we invite you to join us in those efforts. We wish you all a peaceful and restorative winter break and we look forward to connecting with you at the Spring Forum and at our Spring 2024 events.

Source:

[Pope-Ruark \(2022\) *Unraveling Faculty Burnout; Burnout and the Brain; You've Burned Out. Now What?; Don't Blame the Pandemic for Worker Discontent*](#)

Equity Quick Takes:

What Can Individuals and Universities Do to Combat Burnout?

Diagnosis:

Universities must take a hard look at: workloads, equity, role guidelines, communication between leaders and the rank-and-file, resources needed to perform jobs well and rewards for a job well done. Identify problems and make the necessary changes. Remember that employee burnout is costly to institutions, resulting in lower productivity and higher levels of turnover. Individuals, should consider completing the Maslach Burnout Inventory (or a shorter, free version at [MindTools](#)) to assess their risk of burnout.

Values:

Examine and reclaim personal and institutional values. Universities ask: Who are we? Who do we want to be? How do we get there? Individuals ask: What am I really excited about? What professional legacies do I want to actively work toward? Many of us have built policies into our courses to help students be successful and feel respected and valued; now we need to ask, "What can I change to extend that same care to myself?"

Balance:

Recognize that there are limits to the number of hours people can work while still maintaining healthy bodies, minds and relationships. Institutions, embrace policies that support efforts to maintain healthy limits and boundaries on work commitments. For instance flexible work policies and managed inboxes. Individuals, give yourself and others permission and support to set those limits. Ask, "What can I say no to?" Try changing your self-talk (from "I should be doing X" to "After I've taken a break, I can do X" or "If I do X, I can do Y."). Remember that, as Hersey (2022) argues, "**rest is resistance**".

Connection:

Universities, foster a culture of connection, creating times, spaces and incentives for employees to meaningfully connect with each other and with students. Individuals, take opportunities to connect with others, particularly with those who share common experiences or identities. Finally, consider joining an [ADVANCE BU group or workshop](#) to connect with others who are working toward creating a fair, balanced and inclusive workplace.

Upcoming Events: *Advocates and Allies Workshops*

Advocates and Allies is an award-winning workshop focused on practical and evidence-based ways to promote gender equity in the workplace. Research indicates that the best results come from participation in single-gender training groups, but we have multiple time slots available to include people of all genders.

Dates & Times:

Wednesday, Jan. 24

- 9–11:30 a.m. | Westlake 012 (*Men and non-binary faculty and staff*)
- 9–11:30 a.m. | Westlake 014 (*Women and non-binary faculty and staff*)
- 2:30–5 p.m. | Westlake 010A (*Men and non-binary faculty and staff*)
- 2:30–5 p.m. | Westlake 116 (*Women and non-binary faculty and staff*)

Thursday, Jan. 25

- 9–11:30 a.m. | Westlake 014 (*All-Gender*)

ADVANCE BU Spotlight: Bradley Professors Advancing Equity in STEM

Every month, we feature faculty and programs that work to advance equity at Bradley University. This month, we spotlight three professors who have been working on increasing equity and inclusion in the STEM fields for more than two decades, Professors Kalyani Nair, Kelly McConnaughay, and Sherri Morris.

Dr. Kalyani Nair, Professor of Mechanical Engineering, has long worked on issues of diversity and equity at Bradley and beyond. She has served on the University's Faculty Gender Equity Task Force since 2017, and is a member of both the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force of the Business and Engineering Colleges, and Bradley's Institutional Equity Advisory Group. She is the program coordinator of the Biomedical Engineering program which has increased the number of women students in Engineering. "Over my 15 years on the engineering faculty," notes Dr. Nair, "I have experienced and witnessed the many challenges we face in the areas of equity and diversity in our profession, particularly in areas of recruitment, retention and tenure and promotion. I believe these challenges are great opportunities for us to work on to bring about positive changes that will make our workplace fair and equitable." In 2020, Dr. Nair was selected as an NSF ASCEND Fellow, through which she works to address obstacles that impede advancement of mid-career women faculty in STEM, to create more equitable communities, and to foster the retention and advancement of a diverse STEM faculty population.



Dr. Kelly McConnaughay, Professor of Biology, has been actively involved in equity efforts in STEM since 1999, when she helped co-found the Center for STEM Education at Bradley, and served as its founding co-Director. The Center is committed to increasing STEM literacy for all; to preparing STEM educators, administrators and professionals for success; and to recruiting more girls, women and underrepresented minoritized students into STEM fields. The Center supports programming for teachers, undergraduates, and K-12 students through initiatives such as the Building Excellent Scientists for Tomorrow (BEST) program and the 4G (Gadgets, Games, Girls and GENIUS!) summer camp. "Fostering diversity and inclusion in STEM disciplines is critical to ensuring our ability to address the highly complex problems facing society," Dr. McConnaughay observes. "Tackling issues like climate change, emerging

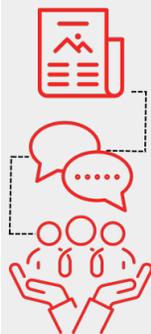
diseases, and lack of sustainable resource use require our collective intellectual, cultural, emotional and civic capacities."

Dr. Sherri Morris, Professor of Biology, served as co-Director of Bradley's Center for STEM Education from 2012-2022. She is a member of the NSF ASCEND network, engaging faculty in understanding DEI issues and empowering them to work as leaders on their own campuses to address these issues. In collaboration with Dr. McConnaughay and other Bradley faculty and staff, Dr. Morris has also co-authored multiple scholarly articles and book chapters on equity and efficacy in STEM education. And in her role as Associate Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Excellence in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, she is currently working to develop policies that will equitably recognize and reward all faculty for the work that they do as members of our campus community. "There is a great deal to be done at BU to ensure that workload is equitably distributed and evaluated," notes Dr. Morris. "It is my hope that we can increase awareness of the inequities of workload that we, as a faculty, condone and perpetuate so that we can better acknowledge and reward the important work that our colleagues are doing."



ADVANCE BU is fortunate to have Professors Nair, McConnaughay, and Morris heading up our Cultural Change, Structural Change and Evaluation initiatives. As Dr. Nair observes, "In order to succeed in today's evolving global environment, it is imperative that we learn, adapt, and teach each other important skill sets. Through the mechanism of NSF ADVANCE grants, I hope that we can bring about the positive systemic changes needed in our workplaces."

Higher Ed Equity In the News:



[Underrepresented Students in STEM Classes Results in Higher Grades for All Students](#)

[Women and Marginalized Faculty Subjected to More Abusive Comments on Teaching Evaluations](#)

[From Diplomas to Doctorates: The Success of Black Women in Higher Education and its Implications for Equal Educational Opportunities for All](#)

[Heteroprofessionalism in the Academy: The Surveillance and Regulation of Queer Faculty in Higher Education](#)



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BRADLEY University

Bradley University Marketing and Communications | 1501 W Bradley Ave, Peoria, IL 61625

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