

# Report of the Task Force on Equity in Faculty Evaluation

Submitted to Provost Robin Morgan and the Faculty Senate

October 5, 2020

## Preamble

The COVID-19 pandemic has had immediate and largely deleterious effects on the ability of faculty members to pursue their work in all areas of achievement. These effects are not felt equally by all faculty members. Almost immediately, both hard data and anecdotal evidence has shown that women and underrepresented minorities have experienced the most adverse impacts on their work. And given the dynamic nature of the pandemic, there is no way to know when normal university operations will resume, but we can be certain that the impacts on faculty achievement will be long-term and, therefore, will require long-term responses. The coincidence of the pandemic and the national awakening to the facts of systemic racism make it all the more imperative that the University reevaluate its policies and processes regarding faculty evaluation, both in terms of appraisals of current faculty and the hiring of new faculty.

In August, 2020, Provost Robin Morgan formed a Task Force on Equity in Faculty Evaluations, charged with developing policies and other recommendations for consideration by the Provost and the Faculty Senate. Task force members included:

1. Martha Buell, Contract Maintenance Officer, UD-AAUP
2. Gary Henry, Dean, College of Education and Human Development
3. Matt Kinservik, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs (Chair)
4. Chandra Reedy, Chair, Faculty Senate Committee on Promotion and Tenure
5. Kami Silk, Chair, Department of Communication
6. Sunaina Soares, Assistant Provost for Faculty Affairs and Human Resources
7. Dana Veron, Provost Faculty Fellow (UD Faculty Achievement Program)
8. Shawna Vican, UD-ADVANCE

The task force set to work, guided by the following principles:

- Concern for the health and safety of faculty members
- Commitment to academic continuity and excellence
- Promotion of supportive and flexible responses to the current challenges
- Belief in informed decision-making as a collective responsibility, especially concerning effective mentoring to promote faculty career progression
- Commitment to diversity and inclusion

We offer this report as a contribution to the important, ongoing work being carried out by the Faculty Senate Committees Diversity & Inclusion and Promotions & Tenure, UD-ADVANCE, the UD Anti-Racism Initiative, the UD Faculty Achievement Program, and the Office of the Provost, as well as all the important work being done in the academic departments and colleges.

At the heart of this report are four new policy statements that we recommend for inclusion in the Faculty Handbook, aimed at ensuring that faculty members will receive fair and thoughtful reviews that properly account for the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to these, we offer a list of recommended actions for campus administrators as we navigate the ongoing uncertainties of the pandemic, and we call for regular training workshops for faculty candidates and reviewers to promote equity in faculty evaluations. There are also three appendices containing important information supplemental to the recommendations.

## **Faculty Handbook Policy Recommendations**

We recommend for approval by the Provost and the Faculty Senate the following policy statements to be included in the Faculty Handbook, section 4.3 (Workload and Evaluation) and section 4.4 (Promotion and Tenure). In addition, the “COVID Impact Statement” should be added to section 4.4.11 (Promotion Dossiers) as part of the outline of the promotion dossier.

### ***Recommendation #1: Contract/Tenure Clock Extension***

***In response to the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, a one-year extension to the tenure/contract clock is granted to all TT faculty and CT faculty.*** This extension will affect the timing of peer reviews for contract renewal, promotion and tenure reviews, and post-tenure peer reviews. In the fall of 2020, each faculty member will receive a written notification, indicating when their next review is scheduled to occur. Faculty members can elect to opt out of this extension and undergo peer review and apply for promotion & tenure on their original contract schedule. To opt out, a faculty member must notify the department chair, in writing and before the next scheduled review, that they wish to continue on their original clock. This universal extension does not affect a faculty member’s eligibility to exercise “Stop-the-Clock” options; rather, it is in addition to those.

### ***Recommendation #2: Student Course Feedback***

***Student course feedback, solicited according to normal departmental practices in Spring 2020, will be included in future faculty evaluations only at the discretion of individual faculty members. For the 2020-2021 academic year, including student course feedback is required for the annual appraisal process, but optional for peer reviews and promotion and/or tenure reviews.*** Soliciting student feedback is important for the purpose of formative self-assessment by faculty members, but given the unprecedented circumstances of the rapid move to distance learning in Spring 2020, this material cannot be considered in summative evaluations unless the individual faculty member elects to provide it to reviewers. For the 2020-2021 academic year, nearly all instruction was moved online and numerous constraints were placed on in-person instruction in order to comply with public health guidance. Because of the advanced lead time and university-wide efforts to provide faculty members with support in improving remote teaching skills, the student course feedback for the 2020-2021 academic year must be included in the annual appraisal process. Faculty members will retain the right to withhold this material from subsequent peer reviews and promotion and/or tenure reviews, but must provide reviewers with other forms of evidence of teaching quality.

### ***Recommendation #3: COVID Impact Statements***

The COVID-19 pandemic has had immediate, disparate, and often deleterious effects on the ability of faculty members to pursue their work in all areas of achievement. These effects are not felt equally by all faculty members. Almost immediately, both hard data and anecdotal evidence has shown that women, underrepresented minorities, and faculty with caregiver responsibilities have experienced the most adverse impacts on their work (Goodwin and Mitchneck 2020; Myers et al. 2020). Emerging guidance from national granting agencies and academic associations emphasizes the importance of adapting policy and practice around faculty reviews in order to ensure that reviews will fairly and consistently account for the disruptions of the pandemic (Gonzales and Griffin 2020). To that end, all faculty members are required to prepare a “COVID Impact Statement” for inclusion in their dossiers for peer reviews and promotion and/or tenure reviews. The purpose of the statement is to provide reviewers the information they need to perform a fair, contextual review; faculty members should not feel compelled to divulge personal information that they would prefer to keep private.

The COVID Impact Statement is separate from the required workload statement and the conventional candidate statement. Candidates are encouraged to describe both negative and positive impacts they have experienced as a result of the pandemic. The statement should identify impacts that help reviewers to understand how COVID-19 influenced their work, both in terms of the impacts on their workload, as well as unexpected opportunities and challenges. The ultimate goal is to make visible relevant, but potentially invisible, impacts. If a candidate believes that there was no discernible impact, they can use the statement to indicate that.

The pandemic is expected to amplify preexisting inequities in faculty promotion and tenure processes (Malish et al. 2020). A broad literature documents gender and racial bias across key areas of faculty experience, including grant funding (Ginther et al. 2011), peer review (Tamblyn et al. 2018), student evaluations of teaching (Chavez and Mitchell 2020), teaching and service load (Tierney and Bensimon 1996), and the tenure evaluation processes (Weisshaar 2017). These concerns precede both the pandemic and the national movement to address systemic racism of 2020, which make it all the more essential that we remain attuned to best practices in minimizing bias, promoting transparency, and supporting equity in faculty evaluation.

What follows is a list of examples of some demonstrable impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The list is meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive. There will be disciplinary variations in how individual faculty members are impacted. And not all impacts are equal or discrete. Faculty candidates and reviewers should be mindful of the multiplicative effects of these impacts and the unique stressors and distractions of both the COVID-19 pandemic and the national movement for racial justice.

## **Demonstrable Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic**

### **Teaching**

- Switch to remote instruction in March, 2020, was inhospitable to everyone concerned. Some courses were more negatively impacted than others especially those that involve lab/studio/clinical/field-based pedagogy
- For those who choose to include student evaluations for the 2020 spring semester, the comments and numeric metrics need to be contextualized for the rapid shift in delivery mode.
- Technology challenges altered traditional methods of assigning and assessing student work
- Remote or hybrid instruction continuing into the 2020-2021 academic year required many faculty members to spend a significant amount of time learning new pedagogical methods and technological approaches, and to revise existing courses for new teaching approaches
- Student care activities went up significantly both for coursework and for advising (academic and other)
- Caregiver needs intruded on teaching time
- Additional teaching responsibilities in response to pandemic (e.g., serving as a replacement instructor for a colleague; sudden changes in workload as a response to loss of S-contracts)
- Cancellation of performances and exhibitions
- Cancellation of field courses
- Cancellation of community engaged educational programs
- Interruption of clinical teaching and supervision of internships; the need to revise how those programs are designed and delivered
- Required revisions of research and teaching assistantship activities for undergraduate and graduate students who are under faculty supervision
- Cancellation of conferences related to teaching professional development
- Student feedback potentially more negative
- Collaborators/team teaching members impacted
- Interruption/cancellation of study abroad
- Extension work was interrupted or cancelled
- Sabbatical interruptions, postponements or adjustments

### **Research and Creative Activities**

- Lab closures and/or loss of research material
- Impacts on grant funding, including changes in the priorities of granting agencies, cutbacks in funding available, new grant funding opportunities, and the fact that faculty were encouraged to continue to pay students, postdocs and technicians even if not advancing projects.
- Cancellation of book contracts due to the closure of or cutbacks at university or other presses

- Cancellation of performances and exhibitions
- Cancellation of conferences before or after abstracts/papers accepted
- Inaccessibility of field work sites, human subjects, libraries, archives, and other research collections
- Delays in journal review process and publication schedules
- Delay in arrival of international students/postdocs
- Impact of the need to revise/redefine activities of undergraduate and graduate student research assistants and how those trainees are supervised and mentored
- Cancellation of invited talks
- Cancellation of fellowships, artist/scholar-in-residence appointments
- Caregiver needs intruded on research time
- Other workload priorities intruded on research time
- Collaborators/research team members impacted
- Extension work was interrupted or cancelled
- Sabbatical interruptions, postponements or adjustments

### **Service**

- Pandemic response suspended or curtailed traditional and ad hoc service assignments
- Pandemic response greatly increased service responsibilities for some faculty, especially for those engaged in community outreach, governance, curriculum or mentoring.
- Pandemic complicated external service responsibilities such as journal editorships, chairing of academic conference sessions, professional organization service, and other integrated scholarly service
- Service to community-based institutions was halted and then altered in significant ways; as were public presentations
- Caregiver needs intruded on service time
- Other workload priorities intruded on service time
- Collaborators/service & engagement team members impacted
- Sabbatical interruptions, postponements or adjustments

## Guidance for Writing Your COVID Statement

The goal of the COVID statement is to give faculty members an opportunity to formally contextualize the impact of the pandemic on their work productivity across the areas of research, teaching, and service. This statement is not meant to replace language that discusses your accomplishments as references to COVID may make sense as you write-up other parts of your dossier. Consider this statement as a strategy to account for interruptions, delays, opportunities, and atypical circumstances that have impacted your “normal” and expected productivity. It is expected that COVID statements may range from no impacts to substantial impacts, both negative and positive. However, the purpose of providing this opportunity is to particularly account for any negative impacts on faculty who are experiencing issues with productivity or disparities due to circumstances created by the pandemic. We encourage you to be as concise as possible in describing how the pandemic has affected your workload and productivity. Below are some prompts to consider in writing your COVID statement. These prompts are not prescriptive; you can consider them or not.

- Provide details of how your work was impacted, steps you have taken or need to take to address the impacts, and any outcomes that have resulted from those actions.
- Was your program of research specifically impacted? If so, how? [lab closings, access to populations, team challenges, increased workload in another area, decreased attention to it due to caregiver responsibilities, new data etc.]
- What specific challenges, if any, did you encounter in shifting your courses to online delivery?
- Have you experienced increases/decreases in service load and/or ability to effectively meet current service obligations?
- Has your actual and/or assigned workload changed?

## References

Chávez, Kerry, and Kristina M. W. Mitchell. 2020. “Exploring Bias in Student Evaluations: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 53(2):270–74.

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Tierney, William G., and Estela Mara Bensimon. 1996. *Promotion and Tenure: Community and Socialization in Academe*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Weisshaar, Katherine. 2017. "Publish and Perish? An Assessment of Gender Gaps in Promotion to Tenure in Academia." *Social Forces* 96(2):529–60.

## **Recommendation #4: Statement to external evaluators about the effects of COVID-19 on faculty development at the University of Delaware**

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected faculty work throughout higher education. *We would appreciate that in evaluating this candidate, you do not consider the number of years since PhD or years in position. Instead, your evaluation should consider the quality of the work and the impact on the field.* We hope you will use an empathic assessment of productivity that acknowledges the vastly different circumstances faculty are operating under and adapting to. We invite you to be mindful that pandemic mitigation efforts such as moving to remote learning, limited access to research spaces and resources, and restricted travel, have and will lead to variation in faculty productivity and career progress. Additionally, COVID-19 is widely expected to have disproportionately strong effects on some faculty, particularly female faculty and members of traditionally underrepresented groups [1,2,3]. UD faculty have been required to document the particular effects of the pandemic on their work and present this documentation as part of their promotion dossiers. More information on the university's COVID-19 response can be found at [insert link here].

It is important to note these procedural adjustments due to the pandemic:

1. All faculty members had their tenure/contract clocks automatically extended by an additional year. Individual faculty members retained the right to opt out of this extension.
2. Faculty are not required to present results from student evaluations of teaching from the Spring 2020 semester or from the 2020-2021 academic year. They are, however, expected to provide evidence of teaching quality from that period.

### References

- (1) Makisch, et al., *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, July 2020, 117 (27) 15378-15381; DOI:10.1073/pnas.2010636117.
- (2) Myers, K.R., et al., "Unequal effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on scientists," *Nat Hum Behav* (2020).
- (3) [www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01294-9](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01294-9)

## **Recommendations Regarding Workload Flexibility and Caregiver Accommodations**

We offer the following recommendations to campus administrators for their consideration. These recommendations encourage flexibility in workload assignments and institutional priorities in order to help the University respond to the unprecedented challenges of both the COVID-19 pandemic and the current national reckoning with systemic racism. They also aim for consistency across campus in supporting faculty members and promoting faculty success.

- Issue a clear directive to deans, chairs, and supervisors, offering uniform guidance on caregiving and work responsibilities. Caregiving and flexibility should be explicitly named and detailed as part of this communication. This guidance should come from the Office of the Provost to ensure uniformity across all academic colleges, departments, and schools.
- Conduct all meetings virtually and continue to offer remote work and online teaching options for all faculty.
- Provide training for department chairs and supervisors underscoring the strains caregivers will face during the 2020-2021 academic year, paying particular attention to how this crisis will be amplified for single parents, people of color, and others at the intersections of marginalized identities.
- Ensure that faculty and staff who contribute to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives are also credited for their time and effort in these areas, and this work is included in considerations of overall workload.
- Utilize HR resources and teacher preparation programs to provide a database of local resources for caregivers and resources for families homeschooling, tutoring, and support for families with children who need additional accommodations. Work with Career Services to post child care employment opportunity ads by faculty, staff, and/or student caregivers.
- Remind faculty members of UD's participation in the Employee Assistance Program [<https://dhr.delaware.gov/benefits/eap/index.shtml>] and UD's Employee Health and Wellbeing services [<https://sites.udel.edu/wellbeing/>] that support faculty as they strive to cope and manage stressors.
- Fully evaluate current service commitments of all faculty. Cancel all non-essential service work and reduce service loads wherever possible. Focus service work on high need and high impact areas.

- Suspend internal and external program reviews as well as any reports or evaluation procedures that can be delayed without substantive impact to students, faculty, or staff members.
- Strive to limit new course preps; reduce variability of assigned courses to allow for multiple sections of the same class; negotiate redistribution of teaching loads across fall, winter, spring, and summer sessions to create manageable loads; and focus on offering essential and high impact courses to ensure timely degree completion.
- Recognize that lack of access to research labs, studios, research/creative materials, human subjects, and team members decreases scholarly output disproportionately for women due to the disruption of working hours and increased care responsibilities.
- Require faculty hiring committees to solicit a COVID-19 Impact Statement from applicants and incorporate discussion of the impacts of the pandemic into search committee training sessions.
- The Center for Teaching and Assessment of Learning should provide annual guidance to faculty members regarding how best to account for the impacts of the pandemic on one's teaching record.
- The Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs should provide annual guidance to reviewers regarding the importance of the COVID Impact Statement and of ensuring that faculty reviews are done fairly and equitably.

## Appendix A

### Timeline of COVID-19 Pandemic and Administrative Decisions

We offer this timeline of the pandemic and institutional responses to it as a point of reference for faculty members and reviewers. The timeline will be updated and maintained on the Provost's Web page under the "Faculty Affairs" tab (<https://provost.udel.edu/faculty-affairs/>).

March 6, 2020	Travel restricted; events postponed/canceled.
March 11, 2020	First COVID-19 case confirmed on UD campus. The University works closely with DE Division of Public Health to track students, faculty and staff who were in contact with the individual who tested positive for coronavirus.
March 12, 2020	UD notified of 3 additional COVID-19 cases at the Newark campus.
March 13, 2020	UD owned and/or operated student housing facilities close through the end of the semester.
March 15, 2020	Research personnel at all UD locations begin preparing for restrictions to on-campus research. All UD-sponsored or affiliated travel, including domestic travel, is temporarily suspended until further notice. Work-from-home instituted for faculty and staff except essential personnel. Spring Break is extended for 2 weeks: March 14-29, 2020.
March 20, 2020	Work-from-home extended to April 13, 2020.
March 24, 2020	Work-from-home extended to May 15, 2020. The Provost announces 3 specific adjustments due to the pandemic: an automatic one-year extension of the tenure/contract clock; approval of an additional sabbatical semester for faculty on sabbatical leave during Spring 2020; decision that faculty are not required to present results from regular student evaluations of teaching from the Spring 2020 semester, either for annual appraisals or future tenure and promotion applications.
March 26, 2020	Emergency academic policies instituted effective immediately. Implementation of some fundamental changes in the delivery of academic programs that include modification of the grading policy as well as an extension of the period during which students may withdraw from courses without academic penalty.
March 29, 2020	Spring 2020 semester resumes online. All courses conducted online and via remote learning through the end of the semester.
March 30, 2020	University institutes a COVID-19 Pandemic Pay Protocol, which remain in effect for the remainder of the Spring Semester, from March 30, through May 31, 2020. During this period, all active full-time and part-time employees, including student employees, receive their regular pay.
April 14, 2020	Hiring freeze on all current and future academic and non-academic searches. Limited exceptions with endorsement of the Provost or the Executive Vice President as appropriate, and approval of the President.
May 8, 2020	Work-from-home extended to May 31, 2020.

June 1, 2020	Reactivation of campus operations on a phased-in basis starts with research facilities. This phase is time-sensitive research and some field-based research. Only 10%-15% of UD's research community return to research labs on campus, at partner facilities or field sites during the first phase of research reactivation.
June 23, 2020	Phase 2 research operations open. Phase 2 brings UD's on-site research activity to 33% of the research workforce. Lab-based research gradual ramp-up; all field-based research; limited human subjects work; studio activities: visual, art, design.
August 10, 2020	Phase 3 research operations open. Phase 3 brings UD's on-site research activity to 67% of the research workforce. Further gradual ramp-up, and some in-person human subject research.
September 1, 2020	First day of classes in a blended format (predominantly online, but with limited in-person instruction).

## **Appendix B**

### **FAQs on Contract/Tenure Clock Extension**

**1. Who is eligible for the COVID-19 peer review extensions?**

Per the ratified agreement between the AAUP and the university in July 2020, faculty will have the option to defer for one year all pre-tenure, post-tenure and CT peer reviews and their associated administrative reviews. This extension applies to all current faculty, including those hired in 2020-2021.

**2. How do I as a faculty member elect to take this COVID-19 peer review extension? Who should be notified?**

The peer review extension is automatic. In other words, faculty are automatically opted into the extension. If faculty choose to opt-out of the extension, they should notify their Department Chair.

**3. Can I choose to go up for my peer reviews on my original schedule?**

Yes, faculty can certainly decide to opt out of the extension and remain on their original peer review and/or promotion schedule.

**4. How many times can I as a faculty member use this extension?**

Faculty have the option to use this extension once. The extension applies to their next peer review, including the P&T review. If a faculty member opts out, then they cannot opt-in again.

**5. I am an Assistant Professor who just completed the 2-year peer review in Spring 2020. My contract was subsequently extended to 8/31/2022. I would like to think about the decision to defer my 4-year peer review. Am I required to make the decision now?**

You do not need to decide now. However, you will need to decide before your 4-year review.

**6. I am an Assistant Professor who just completed the 2-year peer review in Spring 2020. Did I unintentionally opt out of the COVID-19 peer review extension?**

No, you did not opt-out because of your Spring 2020 peer review. The extension applies to your next peer review, and you may elect to stay on your original review schedule.

**7. I am an Assistant Professor on the Continuing Track. I am scheduled for a 6-year peer review. If I choose to defer this peer review, will I also defer the salary increment that accompanies this review?**

Faculty on the Continuing Track who defer the 6-year peer review also defer the salary increment. The 6-year salary increment is applied upon the successful completion of the 6-year review. This extension also applies to the 13-year peer review.

**8. I am an Assistant Professor on the Tenure Track with a 4-year review scheduled for the 2020-2021 academic year. If I opt out of the extension now, what happens to the timeline for my promotion and tenure decision?**

Opting out now means that your up-or-out year for promotion and tenure review would come on the normal schedule (i.e., the 2022-2023).

**9. I am an Assistant Professor on the Tenure-Track with a 4-year review scheduled for the 2020-2021 academic year. If I defer the peer review, can I still maintain my original schedule for promotion and tenure?**

If a faculty member defers their next peer review, their pre-tenure period automatically gets extended by a year. However, faculty always have the option of applying for promotion and tenure early.

**10. I am an Assistant Professor who recently invoked a stop-the-tenure clock action which extended my pre-tenure period for a year. Can I still utilize the COVID-19 peer review extension to defer my review for another year?**

The Stop-the-Clock action does not impact a faculty member's ability to utilize the COVID-19 peer review extension. These deferrals are the result of two different events.

**11. Does the peer review deferral affect my ability to take a sabbatical leave or research/scholarship semester for tenure-track assistant professors?**

No, the peer review deferral does not affect a faculty member's ability to take a sabbatical leave or research/scholarship semester for tenure-track assistant professors on their original schedule. However, if a faculty member wishes to request a deferral of a sabbatical due to conditions imposed by the pandemic, the intervening period shall be counted toward the accrued time required for the next sabbatical leave application. Similarly, a tenure-track assistant professor may request a deferral of a research/scholarship semester due to conditions imposed by the pandemic.

**12. How does the extension affect my current contract?**

The extension automatically adds one year to your current contract.

**13. I am a faculty member on a visa. Who should I notify about an extension to my contract?**

Faculty who require visa sponsorship in order to be eligible to work for the University of Delaware are encouraged to visit <http://www1.udel.edu/oiss/scholars/> to receive current information and guidance on how to maintain their visa status. They are also encouraged to contact the Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS) at [oiss-scholars@udel.edu](mailto:oiss-scholars@udel.edu) to discuss their specific needs. Faculty who need an extension of their visa status must forward written confirmation to OISS for visa processing and documentation retention purposes.

**14. Who should I contact if I need additional information about the peer review extensions?**

Faculty members should speak with their chair/director, dean, or the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs at [vpfaculty@udel.edu](mailto:vpfaculty@udel.edu) for additional information or guidance about these peer review extensions.

## **Appendix C**

### **Optional Questions about Students' Experiences in Courses during Fall 2020**

We offer the following optional questions for faculty members to consider adding to their end-of-semester student course feedback instrument. The answers to these questions could provide helpful context for understanding the student feedback a faculty member receives.

*In the next section of this student feedback questionnaire, we would like to know about your experiences with online learning for this class. Please respond strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree or not applicable to each of the items below.*

1. Difficulties with internet access have affected my ability to keep up with my coursework this semester.
2. I can't always find a quiet place to do my coursework when I need it.
3. I have reached out to contact my professor for this class several times this semester.
4. When I contacted my professor for assistance, the responses I received enabled me to stay on track with my coursework.
5. I feel connected to other students in this class.
6. Relative to in-person classes, I feel less supported in online classes.
7. I feel that I belong at the University of Delaware.