

Date: March 26, 2020

Academic Personnel Matters in Response to COVID-19

Dear Faculty,

As we all work through the implications of the COVID-19 crisis, I write to provide some additional guidance regarding a number of matters that impact full-time faculty. The situation continues to evolve on a daily basis, and we appreciate your understanding and patience as we work through the various areas of concern.

Extension of tenure clock and delay of mid-cycle (ie. third year) review. The Provost's Office will grant approval upon request for a one-year extension of the probationary period to applicable tenure-track faculty. A delay of the mid-cycle or three-year review for one additional year will be provided upon request. I have issued a separate Guidance memorandum that addresses how these extensions will occur.

Impact upon future merit, promotion, and contract renewal cases. In the merit, promotion, and contract renewal context, departments should be made aware of any periods of reduced activity due to a COVID-19-related ramp-down in research, lack of teaching evaluations and/or variances due to COVID-19 mandated online instruction, COVID-19-related reduction in professional activities, a faculty member's own COVID-19-related illness or that of a member of his or her household, or any similar delays. Faculty are encouraged to document these matters when they complete their annual reports or include discussion of such reduced activity in the personal statement of the promotion dossier. Schools and departments should confirm that any noted anomalies in the record were due to the COVID-19 prevention measures implemented by the university. Reviewers should be instructed in the chair's memorandum not to draw negative conclusions from evidence of reduced activities and productivity that is solely a direct result of the COVID-19-related measures during a merit or promotion review. Contract renewals will proceed in the normal course and are not impacted by the recently announced "freeze" on new faculty and staff hires. Contract renewal requests are reviewed in accordance with the criteria set forth in the Faculty Code, and are subject to the usual considerations of budget, enrollment and curricular/programmatic need.

Processing of current year merit and promotion cases. Tenure and promotion cases for faculty currently under consideration will continue to be processed in accordance with the schedule set forth in individual appointment letters and in the Faculty Code.

Sabbatical leave deferrals. There may be occasions in which faculty with sabbatical or other research leaves planned for next academic year (2020-21) will request permission to defer the leave due to restrictions of travel or limits of ability to conduct research. Faculty are asked to please submit any request to defer a sabbatical electronically through the department chair and deans office as soon as possible to assist with fall course scheduling.

If you have questions about this guidance or how to handle a particular matter, please contact Chris Bracey, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.

Sincerely,

M. Brian Blake
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs