Measures to Address Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on Faculty Career Progress

March 23, 2020

The Office of Academic Affairs offers the following guidance to address the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on faculty evaluation and career progress.

Faculty are to be applauded for their rapid response to changing conditions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Those responses and the broader conditions are anticipated to have variable disruptive effects on faculty productivity in the areas of teaching, scholarship and creative activity, extension, and service/outreach.

The following policy provisions and additional considerations are offered in response to such possible disruption.

- **AY 19-20 Reappointment, Tenure, Fixed-Term, and Promotion Reviews.** The final stage of review (i.e., reviews by the University Reappointment, Tenure and Promotion [URTP] Committee, Provost and President) will continue using Zoom technology. The URTP Committee will meet remotely on April 6-8, 2020.

- **Tenure Clock:** The COVID-19 pandemic will impact each faculty member’s productivity differently. Pre-tenured and pre-fixed-term faculty may request an extension to their tenure clock in accordance with the Office of Academic Affairs Policy on Stopping the Tenure or Extended Term Clock, which allows for a possible increase to the length of the probationary period from that specified in the offer letter. In extenuating circumstances, a clock stop postpones, by one year, (1) the next scheduled reappointment review and (2) the latest date for the tenure or extended (fixed)-term decision. (For more information, see [http://www.uwyo.edu/acadaffairs/_files/docs/clock_stops.pdf](http://www.uwyo.edu/acadaffairs/_files/docs/clock_stops.pdf)).

The scope, duration, and intensity of the global pandemic are very significant and might affect a faculty member in ways that warrant a tenure clock extension. To request an extension, faculty are advised to follow the procedure outlined in policy.

Before requesting an extension related to the COVID-19 pandemic, a faculty member is strongly encouraged to speak with their unit head about the pros and cons of an extension, particularly in light of the considerations listed below.
• **Review of future promotion cases; 2020 annual performance evaluations**: Deans, Unit Heads and other decision makers shall hold faculty members harmless relative to reduced activities and productivity directly attributable to pandemic conditions. Examples include, but not limited to, canceled events (conferences, exhibitions, or performances), delayed research activity, and unanticipated teaching expectations (also see below). This principle applies to 2020 annual performance evaluation, progress to tenure and fixed-term, and promotional review. It is incumbent on the faculty member and supervisor to document and describe any productivity disruptions experienced in enough detail to allow future reviewers to make informed and appropriate judgments within the evaluative context at hand.

• **Student Course Evaluations**: Course evaluations will be conducted for Spring 2020 courses as scheduled. All faculty are expected to provide quality instruction. However, faculty members, regardless of rank, should be shielded from the immediate impacts of negative teaching evaluations attributable to pandemic conditions and their consequences. Faculty will be given the option to include or exclude their student course evaluations from Spring 2020 in future performance evaluations (including tenure and promotion processes).

If a faculty member chooses to exclude those evaluations, they are expected to produce a document that reflects on the challenges and opportunities of the altered teaching environment. For example, they might write a narrative explaining how the move online was accomplished, how student expectations changed, and what new skills or other insights regarding pedagogy were gained as a result. This document would stand in place of the evaluations in any subsequent review where the evaluations would appear.

• **Sabbatical and Professional Development Leave**: Faculty with approved sabbatical and professional development leaves planned for the 2020-21 academic year, including semester-long leaves, may request a deferral, if the pandemic has introduced factors that problematize the proposed work. To request a deferral, faculty are advised to provide explanation for request to their academic unit head and dean. The dean shall forward the deferral requests to Aneesa McDonald (AneesaMc@uwyo.edu).