



**COVID-19 in the Long Haul:
Recognizing the Long-Term Impacts of COVID-19
on Faculty Careers**

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I. General Guidance on Supporting Faculty Impacted by COVID-19

Recognition

The small percentage of faculty who continued to be productive with their research during the pandemic are likely to be recognized and rewarded in traditional ways (i.e. additional publications, higher merit raises, research award nominations, etc.) The department should find ways to recognize and reward faculty who made significant efforts with teaching and/or service during the pandemic. Consider finding creative ways to recognize and reward faculty who made remarkable and selfless contributions in the areas of teaching and service during the pandemic.

- Acknowledge their contributions in a public way (i.e. departmental newsletter, social media posts, recognition event, etc.)
- Nominate them for existing teaching and service awards, if relevant.

Resources

Faculty may need additional resources to recover from special disruptions that they might have experienced during the pandemic.

- Consider setting aside funds normally used for faculty travel and/or research to provide an equitable way to provide some resources to faculty whose research was financially impacted by the pandemic.
 - For example, a faculty member may have expended grant funds for an experiment that couldn't be completed because of the disruption to lab-based research.
 - For example, a faculty member may have had to cancel plans indefinitely to conduct research in a foreign country due to travel restrictions and now needs funds to explore the feasibility of conducting research on a new project.
- Funds could be used to cover student research assistance, research travel, research equipment and supplies, etc.
- To ensure shared governance, an ad hoc committee could be formed to review applications for this special department fund.

Networking/Mentoring

During the pandemic, faculty have had fewer opportunities to attend conferences and to present their research at other universities. In addition, faculty have not had as many opportunities to have casual conversations with their colleagues in the hallway, before/after in person meetings, etc. These missed opportunities are likely to accumulate and may have costly impacts for tenure-track faculty, in particular, who need to get valuable feedback on their research and need to develop a professional network (for potential research collaborations and/or external letter writers).

- Encourage faculty serving as faculty mentors to reach out to their mentees to schedule a mentoring meeting, whether in-person or via Zoom. Here is a place where formal mentoring plans with mechanisms to account for regular communication are helpful.
- If you don't regularly meet with junior faculty in your department, consider scheduling a group meeting with them to address concerns they might have regarding annual, midterm, and promotion evaluations.
- Consider scheduling a similar meeting with the APT faculty in your department to address their concerns about teaching challenges, APT promotion evaluations, contract renewal process, etc.
- Think of other ways to help junior faculty, in particular, make up for lost networking opportunities during the pandemic. For example, you may want to prioritize funds typically designated for invited speakers for external speakers who would benefit your junior faculty.
- To help junior scholars (in general), consider inviting recent PhD graduates and postdoctoral scholars from other universities to give Zoom-based lectures in your department.

Tenure Clock Extensions/Promotion & Tenure Guidelines

The majority of colleges and universities around the country have offered tenure-track faculty the opportunity to extend their tenure clock. Some universities have used an "opt-out" mechanism - all faculty receive a clock extension, and they may opt to decline. Other universities such as Texas A&M have offered an "opt-in" clock extension. At Texas A&M, faculty had a deadline for deciding whether or not to extend their tenure clock due to COVID-19.

- Tenure clock extensions can help relieve anxiety for tenure-track faculty whose research has been disrupted by the pandemic.
- Clock extensions, however, should not be regarded as the perfect solution for addressing the concerns of tenure-track faculty. Studies on clock extensions find that clock extensions can be disadvantageous to women (relative to men).

- Men who take clock extensions tend to remain more productive than women so the clock extension is more likely to strengthen their promotion dossiers.
 - Faculty reviewing promotion cases are not always trained on how to adjust their review for faculty members who have received an extension.
 - Clock extensions also have the disadvantage of delaying a promotion raise, thus leading to gender inequities in salary given that women on average are more likely to request clock extensions than men due to societal expectations on caregiving roles.
- Some tenure-track faculty who have experienced significant disruptions to research may be contemplating whether or not they need a second tenure clock extension. For the reasons stated above, it may not be in their best interest to have multiple clock extensions. As an alternative, departments may want to look carefully at their promotion and tenure guidelines, and consider adding language that offers some flexibility in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. (See sample statements below in Section V.)

Lessons Learned from the Pandemic

We have all been forced to adapt to constant change in the past two years. The pandemic provided some opportunities to gain new perspectives and adopt new practices during these challenging circumstances. Some of these things should not be lost as we move forward.

- We became more aware of the intersection between personal lives and work lives, as we witnessed the differences between those with and without increased caregiving responsibilities. We learned (or rediscovered) that we need to be understanding when it comes to faculty with care-giving responsibilities at home. This includes being considerate of scheduling meeting times.
- We became more aware of racism experienced by members of historically underrepresented and systemically minoritized groups, as the pandemic exacerbated inequities and racial tensions within our society. Within academia, we learned that we still need to address structural inequities in academia as we strive to create a more inclusive workplace.
- We became more aware of mental health issues, as the pandemic led to increased mental health challenges for faculty, staff, and students within our community (i.e. increased anxiety, depression, loneliness). We learned that it is important to check in on others and to provide resources for help if needed.
- We learned that Zoom meetings can be efficient and can offer flexibility for faculty. We learned that it might make sense to have some meetings in Zoom going forward.

II. Guidance for COVID-19 Impact Statements

Many colleges and universities are **EITHER requiring OR recommending** that faculty write a COVID-19 Impact Statement. At Texas A&M, COVID-19 Impact Statements are currently optional. As a Department Head, you may encourage faculty to provide COVID-19 Impact Statements, especially if they will be coming up for promotion within the next 5 years.

What is a COVID-19 Impact Statement?

A COVID-19 Impact Statement is a 1-2 page document that describes the effects that the pandemic has had on research, teaching, service, and/or other job responsibilities, as well as, professional opportunities. Impact statements are typically one or two pages. A faculty member may focus on impacts in any or all categories of review.

Why Can Faculty Write an Impact Statement?

The objective of these statements is to provide documentation of the impacts when it is still fresh in a person's memory. Many faculty increased their workload during a particularly challenging time for all of us. The impacts, however, can vary quite a bit from one individual to the next. Many faculty have been impacted in other more personal ways. Such documentation can be used to contextualize individual experiences.

What Information Should Be Included?

COVID-19 Impact Statements should include information that would be useful to contextualize a faculty member's record of research, teaching, and/or service. The impact statement should include a description of normal workload and planned activities, in order to contextualize the impacts. The impact statements should also include disruptions to their normal workload, and new/unexpected workload in response to the crisis.

Examples of Things that a Faculty Member May Want to Document for Research

- Less time for research due to teaching/service workload increase
- Lack of access to research (labs, archives, human subjects, field site, etc.)
- Loss of longitudinal research projects due to disruptions
- Loss of resources spent on parts of a project that can't be used
- Additional costs for conducting research (i.e. purchasing PPE for a lab, inflated prices for supplies, etc.)
- Time spent pivoting research agenda to a feasible project during the pandemic
- Travel/visa restrictions affecting collaborative projects
- Disruptions to Faculty Development Leave, or other forms of leave
- Longer waits for manuscript reviews
- Inability to present research at conferences
- Fewer opportunities to meet with mentors

Examples of Things that a Faculty Member May Want to Document for Teaching

- Time spent converting a course to online/hybrid/remote, learning new technologies, attending trainings, etc.
- Teaching challenges that required creative problem-solving (such as converting internship or clinical learning experience to new circumstances)
- Additional hours per week focused on mentoring and advising students

Examples of Things that a Faculty Member May Want to Document for Service

- Meetings attended or led that would not have regularly occurred (such as meetings that provided information about the university's response to the pandemic)
- Time and effort spent moving meetings or events online
- Contributions to pandemic or racial justice initiatives for the department, the university, the discipline, and/or the local community

What Information Can Be Excluded?

In order to limit the chance that the impact statement will activate caregiver or disability bias, the COVID-19 Impact Statements do not need to include personal information, such as information about increased caregiving responsibilities, personal health issues/health risks, health issues/health risks of household members, loss of loved ones, etc. Some faculty may feel comfortable sharing this information, and may want such information to be known by those who will be evaluating their record. Such private information, however, does not need to be shared with department or university committees reviewing a faculty member's record. Instead of providing details, a faculty member can simply indicate that they had "additional family responsibilities" due to the pandemic.

What Can Department Heads Do with the Impact Statements?

COVID-19 Impact Statements can be used in a variety of ways:

- To recognize the contributions that faculty made during this challenging time. Information from the pandemic statement may be useful as you consider ways to recognize and reward your faculty.
- To offer empathy to faculty who have experienced more than the average share of challenges during the pandemic. You may not be aware of these challenges unless you ask.
- To provide a context for evaluating how and why a faculty member's research, teaching, and service record during the pandemic may differ from previous years.

Note: This section of the handout is modified from the following sources: (1) Sergio Breñam Ethel Mickey, and Joya Misra, "Writing Pandemic Impact Statements (AFR)," University of Massachusetts-Amherst ADVANCE Program. Powerpoint Slide Presentation; and (2) James Allan & Joya Misra, "Evaluation & Pandemic Impact Statements" University of Massachusetts-Amherst ADVANCE Program. Powerpoint Slide Presentation.

III. Guidance on Faculty Hiring

The COVID-19 pandemic has already changed the way we CONDUCT interviews. The pandemic will affect the RECORDS of our job candidates for years to come. It is important to recognize that the impacts on candidate records will vary from one candidate to the next (just as it does within our departments).

Evaluating Applicants

If we do not take the impacts of the pandemic on scholarly productivity into account when we review candidates for our jobs, we are likely to contribute to a “leaky” pipeline for women in STEM disciplines and scholars of color in all disciplines, as these groups (and faculty at the intersection of these two identities) have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

- Recognize that your job candidates are unlikely to have records that look like your job candidates from several years ago.
 - Candidates may have had to cancel or postpone planned research travel, human subjects research, and/or lab-based experiments.
 - Recent graduates may have had to reformulate their dissertation project if original projects were no longer feasible during the pandemic. The new projects may not look like projects typically do in your field. For example, candidates in anthropology are unlikely to conduct overseas fieldwork in 2020 or 2021, and this should not be held against them.
 - Candidates who were teaching during the pandemic may not have had sufficient time to also work on pre-defense publications as they struggled to adapt their teaching responsibilities to remote environment.
 - Candidates are unlikely to have as many conference presentations, or invited presentations.
 - Junior candidates will be less likely to have references from institutions other than their PhD-granting institution.
- At the same time, job candidates may have new skills and experiences that they can bring to your department.
 - They are likely to have more experience with online and remote teaching.
 - They are likely to have learned how to use other technologies that they can incorporate into their teaching.
 - Many of your candidates may have learned to adapt to challenging circumstances, and may have experienced personal growth as a result.
- In order to contextualize the impacts of the pandemic, you may want to ask your candidates to provide a COVID-19 impact statement with their application materials. Candidates can be asked to detail their original research, teaching, and/or service plans

for the past 2-3 years, and then describe how those plans were impacted by the pandemic.

- Search committees are already used to evaluating candidates who are at different stages of their career. For example, for a tenure-track position in social science disciplines, recent PhD graduates may be competing with candidates who are already in a tenure-track position and have an additional 2-3 years of experience. Evaluation rubrics that emphasize specific skills and knowledge for the position, and separate “accomplishments” and “potential,” can help create a more level playing field for recent graduates who have strong records of accomplishment and meet the job criteria. In the current context, the same idea can be applied in developing evaluation rubrics that will be less likely to disadvantage candidates who experienced severe disruptions due to the pandemic.

Conducting Interviews

There continues to be a lot of uncertainty with the pandemic, so any guidance on how to interview during a pandemic is going to shift accordingly.

- **Consider the equity implications of having candidates travel to participate in interviews.** Scheduling on-campus interviews can introduce an equity issue. Not all job candidates may be able to participate in on-campus interviews due to travel restrictions at their home locations (i.e. international candidates). Further, not all job candidates will feel comfortable traveling during an ongoing pandemic. This has the potential to create an inequitable interview experience (if some candidates interview in person, and others do not).
- **Consider other downsides to having candidates travel to participate in an interview.** Asking candidates to travel during the middle of a pandemic (when people have different comfort levels with face-to-face meetings) might send the wrong signal to candidates about the work environment at Texas A&M University. Even if candidates do visit campus, they will not have the same experience that they would have during a normal year as faculty participation might be limited to faculty who feel comfortable meeting in person.
- **Retain essential aspects of the finalist interviews, but factor in Zoom fatigue and work-life balance issues when scheduling Zoom alternatives for campus visits.** Job candidates typically have fully packed schedules for campus visits. This is less practical for a Zoom alternative for a campus visit, as job candidates are likely to have home responsibilities that they need to balance with the interview (including child care). In addition, participating in one Zoom meeting after another is likely to be more tiring than a typical campus visit.

Note: This section is modified from Texas A&M University's current STRIDE Handbook.

IV. Guidance for External Letter Solicitation Language

Many colleges and universities are adding language to the solicitation letters that are sent to external reviewers. This is something that Texas A&M University is likely to add in the near future.

Here are two examples of the language used by other universities:

George Mason University - Minimum Language for COVID Impacts

Given national conversations, best practices, and mounting concerns over equity, all colleges/schools should include the following minimum language in instructions to external referees. Colleges and schools may choose to add to this language, as appropriate for the discipline/field of study.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, faculty across the academy experienced significant disruptions to teaching and mentoring; research, scholarship, and creative activities; and service. In conjunction with the disruptions experienced on-campus, many faculty members had to navigate additional challenges related to working from home. Candidates who may have used university-approved extensions for any reason should be held to the same standard one expects for a typical probationary period; that is, additional time should not prejudice the review in any way. We suggest that you take these unprecedented events into consideration when evaluating teaching and mentoring; research, scholarship, and creative activities; and service since spring 2020.

Clemson University

The pandemic has affected everyone in higher education since March 2020. You are asked to assess productivity and impact on the field in a manner that acknowledges the continued impact of the pandemic on research and scholarship. In particular, you are asked to consider major changes that occurred March 2020 – present, such as moving to new (mostly remote) teaching and engagement with students and research groups, limited access to research spaces and resources, and restricted travel. Clemson University faculty are required to document the pandemic effects on their work, including how they adapted or created new directions and opportunities through various shifts in their responsibilities and workloads. This statement from the faculty candidate will be used internally to provide context in letters evaluating the candidate for tenure and/or promotion.

V. Guidance for Promotion Evaluations

Most colleges and universities are also establishing guidance for promotion evaluations. Texas A&M University does not yet have any university-level guidance in place, but college or university-level guidance is likely to come in time for the 2022-23 promotion review cycle.

Here are two examples of the language used by other universities:

University of California – Santa Cruz

In evaluating the candidate's qualifications within these areas, the review committee shall exercise reasonable flexibility, balancing when the case requires heavier commitments and responsibilities in one area against lighter commitments and responsibilities in another. The review committee must judge whether the candidate is engaging in a program of work that is both sound and productive. As the University enters new fields of endeavor and refocuses its ongoing activities, cases will arise in which the proper work of faculty members departs markedly from established academic patterns. In such cases, the review committees must take exceptional care to apply the criteria with sufficient flexibility. However, flexibility does not entail a relaxation of high standards.

Purdue University

*Note that you are **not** obliged to include an impact statement in your promotion document. This is not intended to be a burden or an expectation, but rather an optional tool for you to use if you so choose to best feature your professional progress despite the pandemic-related obstacles.*

Provost's statement: The header will be a statement from the Provost, explaining the reason and purpose for the COVID impact statement:

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every aspect of the University's operation and, in turn, every faculty member. We are deeply committed to the well-being and success of our faculty and acknowledge the differential and, in many cases, negative impacts of the pandemic on their work and career development. Therefore, in considering decisions about promotion and tenure, the University must evaluate each candidate's research, teaching, engagement, and service activities within the context of the pandemic. The following Professional COVID-19 Impact Statement was prepared by this candidate, with the guidance and approval of the Provost's office, to help create that context for the committees that will review this case.

VI. Key Resources

Texas A&M ADVANCE Program

ADVANCE Web Page for the COVID-19 Research Project.

<https://advance.tamu.edu/Research/Current-Research-Projects>

ADVANCE Resource Page for COVID-19 and Academia

<https://advance.tamu.edu/Resources/Resources-for-Faculty/COVID-19-and-Academia>

Cynthia Werner, Elizabeth Jenkins and Angelique Nevarez Maes (2021) “Differential Impacts of COVID-19 on Scholars at Texas A&M: Preliminary Findings from the ADVANCE COVID-19 Study.” Public Presentation (via Zoom) at Texas A&M University. May 27, 2021.

[https://advance.tamu.edu/Advance_v2019/media/Assets/PDFs/Covid-19-Public-Forum-Presentation-\(May-27,-2021-Web-Version\).pdf](https://advance.tamu.edu/Advance_v2019/media/Assets/PDFs/Covid-19-Public-Forum-Presentation-(May-27,-2021-Web-Version).pdf)

Heather Wilkinson, Cynthia Werner and Blanca Lupiani (2020)“How to approach faculty evaluation this year: Contemplating the impact of COVID-19.” Department Head Development Series. November 4, 2020. (<https://dof.tamu.edu/dof/media/DOF-Media/Documents/Workshops%20and%20Trainings/2020-11-4-How-to-Approach-Faculty-Evaluation-Contemplating-COVID-19-Impact.pdf>)