

Campus Actions to Support Our Faculty During the Pandemic: Guidelines for Faculty and Academic Leaders

I. Introduction

As for so many, the current pandemic has disrupted our faculty members'¹ lives. This has affected their research, creative work, teaching, mentoring, and service work, not to mention their personal situations. Regarding research, scholarly, and creative work, our faculty have faced attenuated publication opportunities; lack of access to fieldwork sites; uneven and inconsistent access to laboratories and studios; ruined research or experiments; lack of access to international sites; visa constraints; lack of access to physical archives, libraries, studios, equipment, and collections; closed exhibition and performance venues; canceled conferences, shows, events, and travel; difficulties with staffing laboratories and other research sites or recruiting student research assistance. Regarding teaching, faculty have, at minimum, faced unprecedented demands from students for advising, mentoring, and support, along with abrupt changes to teaching modalities, curriculum, and pedagogical techniques. Recent research has shown that faculty are busier now than before the pandemic, especially women faculty; in many cases women faculty and faculty of color have long faced disparities in workloads, and now the pandemic has exacerbated these disparities given different experiences with caregiving (i.e., women faculty), blame for the pandemic (i.e., Asian faculty), illness, or death.² Faculty with dis/abilities, age- or health-related vulnerabilities, or chronic health issues may have particular concerns due to the pandemic. In addition, the long-overdue national reckoning about racism and the Black Lives Matter movement often has placed even more expectations on our faculty of color, and our Black faculty in particular.

The complexity of faculty members' individual situations understood within larger social, cultural, and political contexts makes it difficult for the university to develop one-size-fits-all support strategies and solutions. The campus is aware of and concerned about the disparities and inequalities based on gender, race, ethnicity, dis/ability, and other identity categories that have crystallized during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, the campus cannot ask faculty members to disclose any personal circumstances that may have affected their professional and personal lives.

As a campus community, we need to provide more support for our faculty during this time.³ This document describes several actions the campus is taking as well as recommendations for possible actions that primary units can opt to take in support of their faculty.⁴

II. Campus Actions

- **Resources**
 - Buffs Together [Staff & Faculty Emergency Fund](#)
 - [Faculty Affairs COVID Resources](#) webpage
- **Faculty Report on Professional Activities**
 - Pandemic Activity Summary added beginning with 2020 reporting year
 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work module being piloted for 2021 reporting year
- **Training and Education**
 - Ongoing [extended orientation series](#) and Canvas platform for new faculty (i.e., “Thriving at CU”) focused on developing community and sharing resources
 - Additional training for chairs and directors on topics central to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion over beginning in the 2020-2021 academic year
- **Mentoring**



- Ongoing [cross-disciplinary mentoring program](#)
- Remote [early career faculty mentoring and leadership programs](#)
- Remote [programs for academic leaders](#)
- **Flexibility**
 - Ability to postpone sabbatical leaves or take other leaves (e.g., medical parental)
 - Faculty choice about whether to include Fall and Summer 2020 FCQs in their dossiers
- **Tenure Clock Flexibility and Support for Tenure-Track Faculty**
 - Automatic Tenure Clock Stop:
The campus instituted an *automatic*, one-year stop of the tenure clock for all pre-tenured faculty members who began their appointments prior to the 2021-2022 academic year. Faculty can still go up for comprehensive review or tenure review based on the timeline of their previous tenure clock. This clock stop is separate from other kinds of leaves (e.g., medical, parental). We use the “clock stop” language rather than “extension” or “additional/extra year” or “more time” because it is important to avoid stigmatizing those who do not opt out. It is not extra time; it is an acknowledgement that for most faculty, work was changed and severely disrupted by the pandemic, if not stopped altogether.
 - [Optional Tenure Clock Stop](#):
The campus is offering an *opt-in* clock stop.
 - Tenure-track faculty members who began their appointments prior to the 2022-2023 academic year are eligible to request a clock stop due to mitigating circumstances (e.g., caregiving responsibilities, insurmountable challenges, delays, or closures as it relates to their research, scholarly, and creative work).
 - This stop will take place in between the faculty member’s comprehensive review and the tenure review.
 - Process: If a tenure-track faculty member would like to request this optional clock stop, they must inform their chair, director, or dean. The chair/director/dean must then inform the appropriate faculty liaison who administers tenure reviews for the unit; the faculty liaison will assist with the [clock stop request form](#). The faculty liaison must inform the Director of Faculty Personnel in the Office of Faculty Affairs, so the faculty member’s tenure clock dates can be adjusted officially in their personnel file held in the Office of Faculty Affairs.

III. Recommendations for Primary Unit Support Strategies for All Faculty

- **Pandemic Context/Impact Statement:**
 - The purpose of this statement would be to help reviewers understand how the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected the candidate’s work, from the outset of the spring 2020 semester.
 - This optional statement would be included in faculty members’ review dossiers (i.e., annual review, comprehensive review, reappointment review, tenure review, promotion review) and would focus on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the faculty member’s professional life.
 - At the faculty member’s discretion, the statement should explain how their research, scholarly, and creative work, teaching, and service have been affected since early 2020 by the pandemic. Some examples include the following:*
 - Workload shifts and changes in general (both positive and negative)
 - Caregiving responsibilities



- Scope of work during the pandemic and additional hours spent on teaching, mentoring, student support, service, etc.
- Disruptions to scholarly and creative work
- Pivots or changes in research or creative practice (e.g., changes to laboratory capacity to pandemic-related work, productivity changes due to family or other caregiving obligations, personal health, travel restrictions, and effects of changes in teaching or advising conditions)
- Additional time afforded by working from home
- Cancellations of seminars, conferences, performances, shows, and collaboration visits, etc.
- Changes to courses; learning and use of new technologies and new platforms; additional preparation, coordination, student mentoring, and support
- Curriculum and pedagogy redesign and moving courses to remote formats
- Less visible but substantial work supporting students and others
- Additional meetings due to more or different planning needs

**This list is not exhaustive.*

- The statement could be as simple as noting that there is nothing relevant a candidate would like to share at this time; it could focus on what faculty members have done to pivot their teaching or scholarly and creative work during this time; or it could include non-confidential information about pandemic effects (e.g., how they have been challenged, how they have risen to the challenges, what work they could not do because of the pandemic, what opportunities came up due to the pandemic); complexities of establishing laboratories or obtaining specialized equipment or materials; contextual information about work with students such as extra time spent with students who are being given multiple extensions on assignments, the emotional toll of helping students dealing with, for example, physical or mental illnesses, stress, anxiety, oppression, grief, or other support needs; revising course curriculum to more fully engage with anti-racist movements; significant life events; non-confidential personal challenges.
- **Teaching Expectations:**
 - Ensure academic technology resources are made available to support various teaching modalities.
 - Provide Teaching Assistants or Learning Assistants as is possible.
 - Provide teaching flexibility for those with caregiving responsibilities.
 - Stagger future course releases prior to tenure review.
 - Acknowledge differential labor.
 - Formalize course-coverage mechanisms.
 - Take the childcare and other caregiving needs of individual faculty members into account when formulating the fall and spring schedules.
 - Accommodate remote work and remote teaching as well as asynchronous classes, class rescheduling, and/or substitutions as needed and on days when school, childcare, and other caregiving options are not available due to the pandemic.
 - Be sensitive to health privacy and the potential for discrimination in asking faculty members to provide proof of medical status for children, co-parents, or other household members.
 - Support voluntary course substitution by qualified faculty members or the use of teaching assistant funding for last minute course coverage in emergencies.



- ***Service Expectations:***
 - Relieve, reduce, or defer service commitments as appropriate. See Appendix B for a template for faculty discussions about moderating service duties during 2021 and beyond.
 - Units should consider and plan for offering service relief or permitting caregivers to defer service loads.
 - Facilitate meeting attendance by scheduling meetings in advance.
 - Enable a remote participation option for meetings, including committee meetings.
 - As appropriate, record meetings and solicit feedback using asynchronous mechanisms (e.g., email, Qualtrics).
 - Consider additional strategies for making virtual meetings inclusive (e.g., send meeting summary/recap emails; proactively seek out and accommodate needs folks may have, such as technological or technical accommodations and caregiving obligations; establish meeting norms and expectations)
 - Be mindful of relative attendance of caregivers/parents versus non-caregivers, especially at meetings establishing policy or addressing essential governance functions.
- ***Annual Merit Reviews:***
 - Evaluators and reviewers should recognize the contributions faculty members have made in various spheres, while considering each person's specific working conditions, rather than comparing across faculty who may have different working conditions. For example, increased caregiving responsibilities or lack of access to research facilities as a result of the pandemic should not negatively affect assessments of faculty.
 - There should not be any penalties for faculty due to pandemic impacts to faculty members' professional and personal lives. Faculty members with tenure clock stops must not be held to higher standards. While not all faculty may feel comfortable documenting health or caregiving impacts, reviewers should make every effort to consider faculty members' caregiving responsibilities, efforts toward homeschooling children, illness, risk of illness (e.g., pre-existing conditions, partnership with an essential worker), loss of loved ones, or other factors that create disparate impacts due to the pandemic.
 - Primary units could adjust expectations as appropriate given the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Units should consider encouraging faculty members to include documentation of innovative or adaptive work that arose due to the pandemic.
 - Evaluators and reviewers should take into consideration the "Pandemic Activity Summary" in the Faculty Report of Professional Activities.
 - Evaluators and reviewers should take into consideration the work that went into changing and modifying courses to adapt to various teaching modalities, learning and use of new technologies, additional preparation and coordination, less visible but substantial work supporting students and others, etc.
 - Units should acknowledge that a productivity "slow-down" due to the pandemic is to be expected.
 - Units should allow faculty to include in their review dossiers and FRPA: conference papers accepted but not able to be presented; fellowships awarded that could not be accepted; art ready for an exhibition that was canceled; canceled performances; library or museum projects that could not be completed or executed, etc.
- ***Reappointment, Tenure, and Promotion Criteria and Expectations:***



- Because it is not “business as usual” and it is unclear how long the COVID-19 impacts on faculty work will last, primary units could add a special clause to their reappointment, tenure, and promotion criteria.
- Regarding scholarly and creative work, the special modification to primary unit criteria could create more flexibility, consider more nuance, require fewer direct peer comparisons, focus on quality over quantity, “count” canceled or postponed conference papers or invited lectures, reconceptualize national/ international visibility, etc.
- Regarding teaching, primary units could downplay the use of student evaluations of teaching for Fall 2020 through Spring 2021 and consider the changes and additional duties faculty had to take on in 2020 and 2021.
- **Tenure and Promotion External Letters:**
 - Primary units should consider sending a statement to external reviewers about the importance of thinking about and considering the context of faculty members’ work, especially as related to the COVID-19 pandemic. (A possible template is available as Appendix A.)
- **Workload Support:**
 - Mentoring Conversations
 - What do faculty need to recover from pandemic setbacks? (e.g., modified teaching load or mode, seed funding for needed research pivots, research assistance, modified service load.)
 - Service Relief
 - Primary units can articulate the difference between “nonessential,” “postponable,” and “essential” service, so that they can suspend nonessential service temporarily.
 - Advance Notice
 - Make sure faculty are given plenty of notice about meetings and other responsibilities so they can plan for caretaking or other personal obligations.
 - Flexibility, Extensions, Rescheduling
 - Modify duties as appropriate
 - Extend deadlines for use of start-up funds
 - Reschedule sabbaticals
 - Meeting Faculty Where They Are Regarding Needs
 - Consider specific circumstances:
 - Discipline-specific effects
 - Teaching needs
 - Wellness



Appendix A

Template: Statement to External Reviewers

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a serious toll on many faculty members' research, scholarly, and creative work, as well as their teaching, mentoring, and service. Research suggests that faculty of color and women faculty may have been disproportionately affected. While each of our faculty members has worked hard to transition to remote learning modalities, support students, and maintain scholarly and creative productivity, we ask that you consider this candidate's professional accomplishments in the context of the disruptive and prolonged COVID-19 pandemic. We ask that you take that into consideration as you review this faculty member's record of scholarly and creative work. We hope you will use a sensitive and nuanced assessment of productivity that acknowledges the vastly different circumstances under which faculty have been operating.

At the University of Colorado Boulder, many pre-tenured faculty members were granted an automatic one-year tenure clock stop, as well as an additional clock stop if needed. Faculty beginning their appointments during the 2021-2022 academic year were offered an optional clock stop if needed. These clock stops should not be treated as "extra time" in that they should not raise tenure or promotion expectations. Rather, the clock stops should be understood as a way to account for the disruptions, delays, and work stoppages resulting from pandemic-related obstacles to scholarly and creative productivity.

Thank you so much for agreeing to conduct this review.



Appendix B

Faculty Discussion of Moderating Service for 2021 (or beyond, as appropriate)

(This is an example of a discussion template that primary academic units can choose to use in a discussion of realistic faculty service expectations during the continuing pandemic.)

Department/Program: _____

School/College: _____

1. Following faculty discussion, what departmental/college/campus service has been defined as essential for 2021?

2. What service has been deemed by the faculty as non-essential for 2021?

3. Are there service activities the faculty has deemed unnecessary even after resumption of more normal functioning post-COVID crisis?

4. Please describe the process for allocating essential service duties to faculty; how are caregiving needs, relevant identity categories, rank, less visible or “informal” labor, and other responsibilities considered?

Endnotes

¹ Herein, the term “faculty members” refers to instructor-track teaching faculty, tenure-track faculty, and research faculty, as appropriate given their different responsibilities. Not every recommended support in these guidelines will apply to every kind of faculty member. For example, tenure clock stops apply only to tenure-track faculty.

² Sources:

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⁴ Please note that these summaries of actions and recommendations are not exhaustive. Other good efforts are going on throughout campus.