

Faculty Advisors for Work Life

Advice for Managing Instruction While Supporting Family Commitments

Guidance from the
UC Davis Faculty Advisors for Work Life
Issued March 29, 2020

With COVID-19 (Coronavirus), many faculty, especially those with family care commitments, are extremely challenged in meeting the responsibilities of their role since the campus moved to remote instruction. In order to support faculty in meeting their commitments, the UC Davis [Faculty Advisors for Work Life](#)¹ offer the following ideas and recommendations for colleges/schools/departments to consider as ways to support faculty during this time. These are suggestions only and not formal guidance or policy from the administration.

First, consider the circumstances faced in remote teaching that may be a challenge for faculty:

- For families with young children whose schools are closed, teaching from home may be a lot like teaching from a school playground.
- For older faculty, a spare room useful for teaching might otherwise be housing an aging parent, who may need extensive care.
- All faculty are being called to work outside their usual practice.
- Homes with larger families have higher risks of infection.

To meet these challenges, we encourage flexibility in assessing resources and in applying them creatively to enable faculty to provide services deemed essential by UC - delivery of instruction, in addition to healthcare.

Advice for all:

- Be as understanding, as flexible, and as accommodating as possible, whether you are asking for assistance or being asked to assume extra effort.
- Know that you will make a difference by taking on extra effort in support of those in more difficult circumstances.
- Recognize this time of difficulty as an exception to usual practice and an opportunity to show resilience. No one will use these next several months to re-baseline how things are done or how budgets will flow in the future. We will get beyond this time.

For Administrators and the Academic Senate:

- Delay non-essential committee work until next year.

¹ Faculty Advisors for Work Life consists of a group of UC Davis faculty who volunteer their time to support and advocate for the needs of faculty who have families while still thriving as scholars. This group has been in existence since 2007, and represent most of the campus' schools and colleges.

- Support Deans, Chairs, and Faculty in balancing their duties (see below).

For Deans:

- Consider identifying resources for temporary support of instruction.
- Support junior faculty in their need for guidance in managing their varied commitments in this difficult time.
- Delay non-essential committee work until next year.
- Support Chairs and Programs in their requests for exceptions to policy and other matters related to delivering instruction.
- Support Chairs and Faculty in balancing their duties (see below).

For Department Chairs:

- Understand your key role in supporting the faculty in your department.
- Support and advocate for junior faculty in navigating this time while acknowledging their relative lack of familiarity with university processes and guidelines.
 - Engage mid-rank and senior faculty to serve as supportive mentors
- Consider having department meetings at times that are conducive to family needs, e.g., not too early or too late in the day.
- Assume that your faculty understand your key role in ensuring delivery of instruction and will respond to your leadership.
- Assess your resources, and plan for faculty to become unavailable due to their own illness or that of another.
 - Example supportive practices:
 - Create a shared document (e.g., a spreadsheet on Box "Spring Classes Backups") that identifies potential back-up instructors for all classes.
 - Ask faculty to affirm their ability to serve if called.
 - The back-up would be responsible for communicating with students in the course, and delivering instruction if the course cannot be canceled. Back-up instructors should be added to the Canvas course list.
 - Develop a shared document (e.g., a spreadsheet on Box "Problems and Solutions") where faculty list problems they have and solution strategies they find helpful.
 - Develop a shared document listing possible guest lectures that department faculty could easily provide, on a one-time fill-in basis including name, possible topics of the guest lecture, and availability.
- Consider ways to relieve the load on junior faculty, or others who are dealing with their own illness or that of another, who are especially burdened and stressed during this time.

- Revisit plans made before the shelter-at-home order was given to determine whether these plans are still the best course.
- Consider whether junior faculty could teach a more routine course, rather than a course that is new or new to them.
- Example supportive practice: a Dean worked with a department to redistribute faculty in a way that benefitted the needs of both students and faculty. Upper division labs courses (required to graduate) were going to be very challenging to offer on-line in a meaningful way, and the responsible faculty member would have a tremendous workload to make this happen. Thus, Dean Mark Winey of CBS organized an interdisciplinary team of faculty, each of whom will offer 2 weeks of specialized instruction relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. It not only will help students achieve a required lab course to graduate, but it offers back up instructors in case any member becomes unable to participate. The creation of this course also provided reduced workloads for two assistant professors with very young children, which included a senior faculty member stepping in to take over one of the lecture courses.
- Engage mid-rank and senior faculty in teaching newer, larger, or more difficult courses in place of junior faculty or faculty dealing with illness.
- Consider minimizing course offerings, understanding that enrollments in Spring 2020 will likely not be considered in models leading to budget allocations in 2020-2021.
 - Cancel non-essential courses and consider redistributing those students to other courses, if feasible.
 - Join multiple sections of classes and encourage assigned faculty to team teach or reassign faculty who are not needed in the joined sections.
- Support faculty in balancing their duties (see below).

For Faculty:

- Use intermittent leave if needed - UC has instituted paid administrative leave due to COVID-19 issues to support anyone who becomes ill from the virus, needs to care for an ill person, or has to care for a child who is not in school. See [here](#) for specifics on this option. Do your best to support your Chair in delivering instruction if you are unable.
- Consider Pass/No Pass Options – know that students may be able to use updated policies for Pass/No Pass grading and that this may simplify assessments of student learning. See updated guidance from the Academic Senate [here](#).
- All faculty can request postponement of any advancement action. COVID-19 is impacting us all, and this is a valid reason to request postponing advancement. File your request in your department.

- Assistant professors may request extension of the tenure clock as a means to reduce stress and gain lost time, even if that time is not ultimately needed. COVID-19 is impacting us all, and this is a valid reason to use in your request for clock extension. File your request in your department.

In closing, we advise all to refer to current guidance as it develops. Recent guidance includes:

- Advice from Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor Hexter and the Vice Provost Kass on overall academic personnel issues, [here](#).
- The Vice Provost for Academic Affairs is posting updates on [this page](#).
- Guidance on instruction from the Academic Senate is available [here](#).
- The Academic and Staff Assistance Program (ASAP) is a confidential resource available to support all UC Davis employees, with offices in Davis and Sacramento, accessible [here](#).

For questions on any of the above, please reach out to your department, Chair, or any of the following Faculty Advisors for Work Life:

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