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**ACADEMIC SENATE MEMBERS  
ACADEMIC FEDERATION MEMBERS**

Dear Members of the UC Davis Academic Community,

We are writing to provide guidance and reassurance to our campus about advancement actions and related instructional issues that will be occurring in 2020-2021, as well as in future years. Late in the prior academic year communications from the [Academic Senate](#) and [Provost and the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs](#) provided guidance and reassurance to our campus about how upcoming advancement actions will be viewed with understanding and compassion, under the principle that faculty should neither be held responsible nor penalized for exigent events such as those related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the wildfires, and other unusual circumstances. Written at the cusp of spring quarter, there was admittedly some optimism that university functions would largely return to normal by fall quarter. We now know that much of the responsiveness and adaptation that we drew upon with little advance warning in the spring will again be needed. Nevertheless, the sentiments expressed in those communications remain as relevant today and in the coming years as they were several months ago.

Although the pandemic has impacted all of us, it has not done so equitably. Our colleagues with children whose preschools and schools remain shuttered, or who are primary caregivers, or who have been prohibited from accessing critical university facilities are among those hardest hit. In their advancement action, whether in this year or in the next two, three, or four years (depending on rank and step), faculty who are new or have been progressing successfully in normative (or greater) time should continue to do so. This does not imply any diminution of academic standards, but rather the acknowledgement that a balanced record inherently requires the judicious weighting of all criteria of evaluation per APM 210-1d:

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.

**To help reviewers and review committees negotiate such a holistic evaluation of an academic record, we strongly emphasize that candidates, department chairs, and deans highlight and fully explain the circumstances that have affected the faculty member. Personal details need not be disclosed, but information on causes (e.g., COVID-19, California wildfire events, caring for a sick family member, illness, loss of a home) that contextualize the circumstances will be helpful (e.g., reduced time available for writing manuscripts, limited access to research facilities, emergency conversion to remote learning due to campus closure, etc.).** In particular, candidates should provide a comparison to previous records of

publication, teaching, and/or service so that reviewing bodies can concretely understand how they have been impacted. Candidates, department chairs, and deans are encouraged to use this comparative information to provide context for reviewers.

We now address specific topics that will be integral to advancements in the 2020-2021 academic year.

### **Advice from Academic Affairs' Work Life Advisors**

A document on "[Family Friendly Recommendations for Academic Departments](#)" was developed last spring by our Faculty Work Life Advisors. Although prompted by the pandemic, these recommendations are universally valuable in guiding chairs and departments to help their faculty who are caring for children or other family members. Of particular relevance to fall 2020 is the appeal for chairs, who have responsibility for assigning teaching, to exercise great flexibility in accommodating faculty who are particularly impacted by the closure of schools and daycare facilities:

When scheduling courses, consider giving priority whenever possible to faculty members who are pregnant or are in the process of adopting or foster placement, have babies/very young children, or have family care obligations so that they can indicate their preference for times that work for them. Do your best not to obligate them to submit choices outside of prime instructional hours if they cannot be available then for family-related reasons ... we encourage you to check in with your colleagues with small children or those caring for other family members when they return to work to learn what their needs are. Even if you cannot solve problems such as daycare for sick children, it is helpful for them to know that they have a sympathetic leader or colleague who not only cares that they succeed academically, but is also invested in their wellbeing, and that there may be additional helpful resources available to them that they may have not been aware of.

A corollary to this is that faculty will not be penalized if some of their teaching is temporarily reassigned to someone else who does not have competing family-related obligations. Such collegiality should be encouraged, welcomed, and documented in the Department letter for advancement.

### **Advice from Academic Federation Personnel Committees**

The Academic Federation has three personnel committees, each of which has issued a statement on advancement in the coming year. What binds these three statements together is an appeal from each committee for information from the Candidate, the Department Chair, and/or the Dean to understand the adjustments made in response to the pandemic, and a detailed recitation of changes in practice that may have affected productivity as they pertain to the traditional areas of review of the respective academic title series. The committees requested that such impact of the pandemic be discussed explicitly in the Candidate's Statement, Department Chair's letter, and/or Dean's letter. Their messages are undeniably clear: the committees want to be fair and understanding in their evaluations and are reaching out for guidance in accomplishing this.

### **Appraisals**

Appraisals provided during this disruptive time should consider extenuating circumstances, especially if junior faculty have experienced severe research setbacks. Although it is important to

remain on schedule for appraisals in order to provide feedback one or more years before seeking promotion (typically during the fourth year at the assistant rank), extensions on eight-year clock may alter this timeline. The campus will therefore allow a second appraisal if two years go by since the original appraisal, but not in the year immediately prior to the final year of eligibility to promote.

### **Cancelled professional meetings**

Many professional meetings that academics were due to participate in on-site were cancelled after schedules were already established. Academics are advised to nevertheless list scheduled lectures, presentations, gallery events, etc. in MyInfoVault (MIV), including meeting name, date, and location, and then indicate in the text field that the event was cancelled due to COVID-19 (e.g., use parentheses to indicate “Cancelled due to COVID-19”) or held virtually (e.g., use parentheses to indicate “Held virtually due to COVID-19”).

### **Deferral of academic actions**

Tenured faculty have the option to defer their merit or promotion file, although all faculty must still be reviewed at least every five years.

### **Extension of deadline for material submission**

As announced in the 2020-2021 Annual Call, if an advancement action is not recommended or approved (i.e., a 0-step increase) by any reviewer (department or equivalent, FPC, Dean, or CAP), academic members may request an extension due to COVID-19-related reasons to include any new activities and achievements between October 1, 2020 and through December 31, 2020. The dossier will then be returned to the department for a new vote. If advancement is achieved based on the extended deadline, then the line demarcating periods of review in MIV will be drawn below the materials used in the 2020-2021 action.

### **Extension of the eight-year clock**

Academics whose appointment at the assistant rank falls under an eight-year clock are allowed to request a one-year extension for COVID-19-related reasons. The Office of Academic Affairs has created an online form to facilitate this request, and department personnel officers can work with individuals to submit them.

### **Instructor evaluations from winter and spring 2020 quarters**

Faculty have the option to exclude evaluations for winter 2020 and spring 2020, where review policies for represented employees permit.

### **Instructor evaluations included in advancement actions**

Evaluation of teaching will continue, but the process will be modified. First, for spring 2020 and beyond, faculty that had to cancel their courses due to COVID-19-associated safety precautions (courses with laboratory sections and field trips) will not be penalized for having a reduced course load. For courses that were taught, we envision a major and specific emphasis on how courses were adapted to the new reality of COVID-19. This would include more extensive use of syllabi and course materials (typically available on Canvas), with an emphasis on specific changes made for COVID-19. The effort to take a course from a traditional to a remote learning format should be recognized and rewarded, particularly if this was done for the first time. It is further expected that

while student evaluations and comments will still be considered, the context will be different, with a focus on how students perceived the virtual classroom learning experience in general, and what specific practices could be improved to make this type of learning more effective.

Faculty should be strongly encouraged to invest the effort to use their Candidate's Statement to fully explain their teaching record, with less emphasis on teaching evaluation scores already documented in the dossier, and more emphasis on their adaptivity and creativity in meeting the educational needs of their students. UC Davis faculty have always enjoyed the reputation of being excellent instructors and mentors, and we confidently expect that the evidence in advancement dossiers will continue to affirm this.

### **Maintaining confidentiality during department advancement reviews**

We wish to remind our colleagues of the confidentiality always maintained in department reviews of advancement actions. Although this year some or all such actions will be conducted remotely, it is important to reaffirm that confidentiality remains an expectation of all department members. Steps to be taken to assure confidentiality include the agreement not to download, save, or reproduce images of any of the materials in the dossier, not to record remote meetings where advancements are discussed, to participate in such meetings in a private location, and not to disclose or discuss any aspects of the meeting with the candidate under discussion.

### **Peer review of teaching**

Departments should take advantage of the opportunity for remote learning to exercise considerable latitude in how this is conducted, in light of the unprecedented changes in instructional delivery that began in March 2020. While at least one peer reviewer must be a member of the Academic Senate, they may incorporate into their written review guidance and recommendations from non-Academic Senate individuals with particular expertise in educational pedagogy, and who can provide important, independent perspectives, particularly with respect to the effectiveness of remote instruction. Materials that departments may utilize include, but are not limited to:

- syllabi, course materials, and other educational resources uploaded to a Canvas course site,
- observing, either synchronously or asynchronously, on-line lectures,
- evidence of novel or creative approaches to effective course delivery, recognizing that there are different strategies for remote instruction,
- evidence of adaptive mentoring, because it is likely that there were major changes in the lines of communication; e.g., through teleconferencing, text messaging, etc., with efforts developed to support the health and mental well-being of the student, and
- efforts to assure students that adjustments are being made, if necessary, for COVID-19-associated issues (like inability to work in a laboratory), especially for students close to completion.

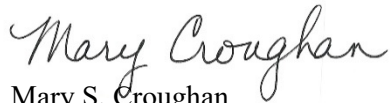
All peer reviewers should recognize that standard approaches to peer review no longer necessarily apply, and that in this transitional phase they should exercise discretion in also considering the experience of the instructor and the complexity of the course. For example, with laboratory-based classes, evaluations that reflect diminished student satisfaction would not be surprising because such courses do not easily lend themselves to passive observation, and would not be a pejorative reflection on the instructor's commitment and efforts.

### **Sabbatical leave cancellations**

Many of the sabbatical leaves already approved for 2020-2021 require travel to domestic or international destinations. Because of imposed travel restrictions, these trips may no longer be possible. Requests to cancel sabbatical leaves for reasons related to travel impacted by COVID-19 and that are supported by deans will be approved. Faculty are still expected to be fully engaged with their university responsibilities to the fullest extent possible. Faculty without teaching assignments due to canceling sabbatical are encouraged to assist others in optimizing the virtual course experience or sharing instructional coverage with faculty impacted by family care needs or COVID-19 administrative leaves. Faculty members who cancelled their sabbatical leave should outline the circumstances, highlight where they were able to provide assistance, and explain where they were not able to participate due to pre-determined teaching assignments, no service opportunities, etc.

In conclusion, we welcome your thoughts as colleagues, partners, and friends in helping us surmount the challenges we collectively face in this unprecedented time, and finish this letter with best wishes and immense gratitude for your extraordinary dedication to our university.

Sincerely,



Mary S. Croughan  
Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor



Richard P. Tucker  
Chair, Davis Division of the Academic Senate

c: Chancellor May