Supporting Probationary Faculty

Information and suggestions for best practices to ameliorate impacts of pandemic-related disruptions on research, scholarship, and creative activity.

Tenure clock extensions

- Automatic one-year extension of tenure clock is in place, per Provost’s office announcement
  - [https://provost.uiowa.edu/temporary-changes-faculty-policies-spring-2020](https://provost.uiowa.edu/temporary-changes-faculty-policies-spring-2020)
- Requests for a second year of extension may be considered if such a request is made by the probationary faculty member on or before July 1, 2021. The following considerations may apply as justification for such a request:
  - There are existing policies for extension of the regular 6-year period of probationary appointment, which can be found at: [https://opsmanual.uiowa.edu/human-resources/faculty/tenure-and-non-tenure-appointments](https://opsmanual.uiowa.edu/human-resources/faculty/tenure-and-non-tenure-appointments)
  - Dean’s office will consider significant and justified pandemic-related research disruptions (e.g., inability to travel to perform research at external facilities, inability to recruit graduate students, inability to acquire and set up equipment and laboratories, unavoidable caregiving duties, loss of access to materials and audiences) as justifiable impediments under this policy
  - Dean’s office will relay its endorsement to Provost’s office, with whom final decisions rest

Start-up funds spend-down

- A one-year extension is automatically granted upon request to Associate Dean for Research (no justification needed). Note: Standard start-up fund policy is to spend within 4 years after initial appointment of the probationary faculty members, unless otherwise determined by negotiation with the DEO.
- Flexibility in allocating funds from startup due to justifiable unexpected COVID-related situations (switching allocations from equipment to student for example).
- A second one-year extension justified by pandemic-related research disruptions can be requested of the DEO, in consultation with the Associate Dean for Research.

Suggestions to departments for mentoring probationary faculty/mitigating impact of pandemic-caused delays and disruptions

- DEOs should be proactive in scheduling meetings with each of their probationary faculty members to assess pandemic-related impacts on their scholarly activity and consider mitigation.
- Though typical probationary faculty service loads are low, there are cases in which assistant professors carry major obligations. In such cases, DEOs should make every effort to reassign, reduce, or postpone such service if research is impacted.
- DEOs should consider ways in which re-arranged teaching assignments might aid research productivity.
  - Avoid where possible moving probationary faculty from course to course; repeated teaching assignments reduce time devoted to course preparation.
In cases of co-teaching, consider block arrangements that might allow probationary faculty several weeks of “off” time to focus on scholarship.

- Departments should consider enhancing opportunities for probationary faculty to gain national or international exposure in a time of pandemic-related disruption.
  - Work with peer departments at other institutions to develop an “assistant professor exchange” for Zoom seminars.
  - Ask probationary faculty to identify online conferences at which they would like to present and interact, and if needed provide teaching relief/reorganization on those days to allow them to participate fully.
  - Allow any departmental or start-up travel funds to be utilized for virtual conference fees.

Considerations for third-year review and tenure portfolios

- CoE administration will devise a new form, *Pandemic-related Impacts on Research Productivity*, to be included in portfolios for faculty to detail (e.g.):
  - Time spent on pandemic shut-down and ramp-up activities during 2020.
  - Inability to hire graduate students or other personnel to perform research work.
  - Time spent transitioning to online teaching or other unanticipated teaching related delays.
  - Impacts due to loss of ability to travel (e.g., cancellation of seminars and conferences, lack of access to non-digitized archives, closure of libraries, and other sites).
  - Impacts due to reduced access to human subjects and survey participants.
  - Impacts due to disrupted supply chains or required restrictions on animal subjects.
  - Steps taken to mitigate these impacts and ensure productivity.

- Departments could consider allowing a minimum of 5 external letters for tenure/promotion review due to increased demands on all faculty brought on by pandemic-related disruptions. This may also help ensure that only those external reviewers whose expertise best prepares them to fairly assess the candidate’s work will be secured.

- Update instructions to departmental consulting groups, the Collegiate Consulting Group, and external reviewers to ensure they are aware:
  - Automatic or requested tenure clock extensions are not treated as special or extraordinary circumstances in evaluating qualifications/readiness for tenure/promotion.
  - Consider virtual seminars and conference presentations as equivalent to traditional in-person presentations.
  - Consider that research and scholarship “ pivots” in response to pandemic-related disruptions may result in a more diversified, collaborative, and potentially less-cohesive portfolio that nevertheless generates high-quality research products.
  - Consider possible delays in graduate student completions due to pandemic-related disruptions when assessing mentoring records.