

Proposed actions for COVID-related issues regarding tenure and promotion

1. Proposed Opportunity for COVID Statements in T&P files

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting shut down had an unprecedented impact on research, scholarly, and creative activities at UAlbany in 2020. COVID-19 has had differential effects on various disciplines and across sub-populations of faculty. It is hereby proposed that faculty under consideration for term renewal, promotion with continuing appointment, or promotion to full professor be offered the opportunity to include a statement in their dossier contextualizing the impact COVID-19 has had on their research program and any resultant delays, gaps, or programmatic shifts in research activities. It would be expected that these statements would be reviewed and verified by department chairs or deans as appropriate. These statements may become particularly important for future promotion cases as we put COVID-19 behind us and the relevant context for individual cases becomes obscured by time. These statements would be on a voluntary basis and the simple fact of inclusion or exclusion of such statements would not affect decisions. The standards for tenure and promotion would remain unchanged.

2. Extension of Start-up Funds due to COVID-19

The provision of start-up funding assists new faculty members with establishing a successful program of research, scholarship, and creative activity and when appropriate, to secure external funding. The existing policy operates on the assumption that faculty will spend start-up funds and be independently operational within the first three years, although faculty can make requests to extend access to start-up funds past the three years for legitimate reasons. These requests need to be reviewed and approved by chairs and deans. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on research and purchasing activity has impeded the timely expenditure of start-up funds in some cases. A memorandum of understanding between the State of New York and UUP in April 2020 granted all pre-tenure candidates an automatic one-year extension to the tenure clock. It is hereby proposed that access to start-up funds be concomitantly extended by the same one year period.

3. COVID-specific language to be added to the solicitation of external evaluations for promotion with continuing appointment and promotion to full professor *[This policy has already been implemented]*

General consideration:

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, research facilities were closed and faculty moved their courses online with short notice during Spring 2020. In addition to disruptions on campus, many faculty were working at home while simultaneously providing dependent care in the wake of daycare, elder care, and K-12 school closings. Disruptions to research continued for some into the summer. We ask that you consider these unprecedented circumstances when reviewing a candidate's productivity during the 2020 pandemic.

Regarding "Tenure clock" stops:

As at all universities, the University at Albany has a standard probationary period prior to review for tenure and promotion. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all pre-tenure candidates were granted a one-year extension under a memorandum of understanding between the State University of New York and United University Professions, our faculty union. This one-year extension was granted as a matter of right and candidates wishing to opt out could do so by request. Candidates who have accepted these extensions should be held to the same standards as a typical probationary period.