

COVID-19 Faculty Support Ad-hoc Committee Recommendations

December 21, 2020

The COVID-19 Faculty Support Ad-hoc Committee, which is comprised of faculty and academic administrators across NDSU, met in fall 2020 to develop faculty support recommendations in relation to the current pandemic. As part of the charge from the Provost, the committee considered input from scholars and organizations with expertise on the pandemic; the effect of the pandemic on teaching and research/creative activities and its differential impact on faculty groups; and other universities' plans to support their faculty; and feedback gathered from NDSU faculty, chairs/heads, and deans. As we consider ways to support faculty it is important to recognize the general impact of the pandemic on most teaching and research/creative activities, as well as the differential impacts of COVID-19 on faculty groups. There is growing evidence that COVID-19 has been disproportionately disruptive to faculty with caregiving and other family responsibilities, often women and underrepresented minorities. Compare for example, the impact of COVID-19 on a faculty member with no caregiving responsibilities, no fieldwork, no human-subjects research, no closed labs, no underlying health conditions, etc. (who may be able to publish seven articles during the pandemic) with impact on the faculty member who had additional demands placed on them from extenuating circumstances, such as being a primary caregiver, assisting a family member with special needs, accommodating closed schools, having personal health-related conditions, and who needs to travel to an archive periodically to conduct research (who may have not been able to uphold a steady publication record during pandemic conditions).

In order to help support our faculty, the ad-hoc committee recommends adjustments in the following areas for implementation by academic units:

- Tenure and promotion timelines (probationary faculty and associate professors)
- Job descriptions and workloads
- Teaching schedules and support
- Formal institutional documentation of COVID-19
- Unit promotion and tenure criteria
- Course evaluations
- Guidance to reviewers (annual, third-year, promotion, tenure)
- Service workload obligations
- Annual and promotion raises
- Optional COVID-19 impact statement
- Prospective faculty hires
- Graduate student supports (stipends and health insurance)
- Caregiver assistance
- Faculty networking and mentoring

These recommendations are largely accepted by faculty. An anonymous survey was sent to faculty in early December to gather feedback. The survey was completed by 135 faculty. About 82-96% of the respondents agreed that all but one of the proposed recommendations would help support our faculty. The support for salary increase

related recommendation was only 70%. The Committee also conducted focus groups with pre-promotion faculty (~35), department chairs/heads (~20), and deans. The feedback from the survey and focus group discussions were used to clarify and improve the proposed recommendations presented in this document.

While implementation of some of the recommendations may not be feasible for all units in this challenging budget environment, these adjustments are essential for faculty retention and success and critical for maintaining NDSU’s distinction as a student-focused, land-grant, research university.

If these recommendations are approved by the President and the Provost, Office of the Provost/Faculty Affairs should work with College Deans to develop an implementation plan.

Tenure and Promotion Timeline Extension. All tenure-track faculty should be granted an additional one-year COVID-19 automatic extension of their probationary period. While use of this extension should be supported, faculty should have the option at any time to return to the original schedule of review. See Table 1.

- This one-year automatic extension is in addition to the probationary period extension that was granted in Spring 2020 to all probationary faculty.
- This one-year automatic extension is in addition to the probationary period extensions allowed in NDSU Policy 352.3.6.
- Submitting a portfolio for an on schedule third year review will not be considered returning to the original schedule of review for tenure.
- This one-year automatic extension does not apply to faculty whose portfolio has been already submitted for tenure review in the 2020-2021 academic year.
- Consistent with NDSU Policy 352, Sec. 3.6.6, reviewers should regularly be reminded that “Granting of an extension does not increase expectations for performance.”

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| Table 1. Probationary Period Extensions. <i>i) Policy 352</i> | Up to three years by request/notification | Based on institutional, personal or family circumstances, personal illness or disability | Submit request (or notification if childbirth) to Office of the Provost |
| <i>ii) Automatic Extension One</i> | One-year, automatic | COVID-19 | All probationary faculty were granted this extension in Spring 2020 |
| <i>iii) Automatic Extension Two (this proposal)</i> | One-year, automatic | COVID-19 | All probationary faculty to be granted extension |

Associate professors, including professors of practice and research professors, will be granted a one-year extension to the maximum time in that rank as stated in Policy 352.3.3. This one-year automatic extension is in addition to the extension that was granted in spring 2020 to all associate professors. For promotion to the rank of full professor, impacted faculty may choose to be evaluated by the criteria in effect at the

time of the previous promotion, if the application is made within ten years of their previous promotion.

Faculty Position Descriptions/Workload Adjustments. Faculty position descriptions and workloads for Spring 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021 should be adjusted to represent how efforts have been redirected from one area to another as a result of COVID-19's impact on teaching, learning, research/creative activities, extension, service performance environments.

- A redistribution of effort should reflect the increased amount of time faculty have devoted to *teaching, advising, and mentoring*. A change in teaching load may be made in recognition of the extra effort required to design and deliver high-quality remote or HyFlex courses; participation in professional development opportunities related to HyFlex instruction; or increases in student demand for faculty time outside of course meeting times; supervision of Learning Assistants or CARES Act assistants.
- A redistribution of effort should reflect changes in *scholarly activities*. A change in research/creative activities load may be made in recognition of restrictions on access to research labs, libraries, archives, extension offices, performance venues; conducting field or human subjects research; and travel, collaborations, meetings.
- A redistribution of effort should reflect changes in *service loads*. A change in service load may be made in recognition of leadership and/or participation in COVID-19 efforts; or as a modification of internal and external service obligations.
- Consistent with NDSU Policies 352 and 350.1, all full-time faculty must have a current position description that is reviewed and updated annually.
- For faculty whose research and/or workload have been impacted, units should extend the amount of time faculty have to use their start-up funds.

Teaching Schedules and Support. Units should provide flexibility in course times, classroom assignments, and HyFlex delivery modes to help faculty manage home and professional responsibilities.

- Units should offer more support for instructors who have multiple large introductory courses that require more student contact.
- Units should ensure that faculty with fixed-term or part-time contracts have adequate financial resources and support to continue offering their classes.
- Units should ensure that part-time faculty have access to technology (e.g., laptops, tablets) and library resources needed to prepare their courses.

Document Impacts of COVID-19 on Faculty Work. Unit chairs/heads and PTE committees should develop a general statement to document the impact of the pandemic on departmental faculty teaching, research/creative activities, service and disruptions to faculty work. Statements should describe the impact of closures, travel restrictions, social-distancing limits, etc. on short-term and long-term faculty productivity with particular attention to their discipline.

- See memo from the Department of Communication as an example.

- Units should create spaces for faculty to share their concerns with administrators and reviewers about impacts of COVID-19 on their careers.

Adjust Unit Promotion, Tenure, and Evaluation Criteria. Units should be required to adjust their promotion, tenure, and evaluation criteria, at least for academic years 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022. COVID-19 have changed, slowed or suspended the research/creative activities and extension/engagement activities or cancelled research meetings, extension programs, or juried competitions. Further, review times for some journals and funding agencies have been affected. Adjustments to promotion, tenure, and evaluation criteria will assure continuation of high-quality research/creative activities and excellence in teaching. If new tenure and/or promotion criteria are adopted, faculty, including those who are granted an extension of their probationary period, may choose to be evaluated under the newly adopted criteria.

- Units should be required by the Office of the Provost to suspend “sustained” or “continuous” excellence requirements for teaching, research/creative activity, etc. for tenure and promotion.
- Units should recognize both short-term and long-term effects of COVID-19 on faculty productivity even after the pandemic.
- Units may consider using a different standard when assessing faculty research and publication activity. For example, typical expectation of XX papers per year does not apply for the years 2020, 2021, 2022 and the requirement that a minimum of YY papers at the time of the promotion to full professor request does not apply for the years 2020, 2021, 2022.
- Units may honor papers accepted at conferences that were cancelled as evidence of scholarly productivity and contribution.
- Units may recognize special contributions faculty made to support the campus community during the pandemic.
- Units should recognize the mentorship and support that faculty offered to students and colleagues inside and outside of the university regarding job searching, maintaining scholarly productivity, and transitioning to on-line teaching and learning.

Course Evaluations. Course evaluations (Student Course Experience Survey, *formerly SRO/s*) for Fall 2020 courses will be conducted as planned. Students will complete course evaluations online. Assistant and associate professors, including professors of practice, will determine whether to include or exclude Fall 2020 (*and Spring 2020*) evaluations in their portfolio for third-year, promotion, and tenure reviews. However, the State Board of Higher Education policy ([605.1, section 8](#)) states that annual “[e]valuations of all teaching faculty must include significant student input.” Therefore, all teaching faculty, including lecturers and senior lecturers, will determine whether to include course evaluations from Spring 2020 or Fall 2020 or both semesters in their annual activity report. Faculty will not be judged on whether they choose to include or exclude course evaluations in their activity report or portfolio.

- Consistent with NDSU Policy 352 and Policy 332, student evaluations should not be used as the sole basis for evaluating effectiveness of teaching. Consistent

with NDSU policies, faculty and reviewers should utilize a holistic approach that triangulates the measurement of teaching effectiveness, including peer evaluation.

- Course evaluations should be used for formative rather than summative purposes.
- In lieu of course evaluations, units should attempt to include alternative student input, whether formal or informal. For example, units may gather feedback through exit interviews with students.

Guidance to Reviewers. Reviewers of annual activity reports, and third year, promotion, and tenure portfolios should be instructed to take into account exceptional circumstances occurring in 2020 and potentially in 2021 due to COVID-19.

- Tenure and promotion dossiers typically require steady building and deepening of expertise and impact over time, but the pandemic will necessitate an understanding about shifts in research productivity and focus. While faculty are still expected to meet tenure and promotion criteria, portfolios should be considered relative to opportunity during the pandemic period and post-pandemic period.
- Both internal and external reviewers should be reminded to follow the following statement in the Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure Portfolio: *The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in 2020 created extraordinary circumstances and disruptions that may have seriously impacted faculty productivity. We ask that in your appraisal, you take into account and be sensitive to the extraordinary circumstances in your review of Professor _____'s contributions.*
- Consistent with NDSU Policy 352, Sec.1.3., PTE committees must attest and verify that the candidate was evaluated according to the criteria and position descriptions in place during the evaluation period, acknowledging that position descriptions may have changed significantly as a result of the pandemic and its impact.
- All reviewers should be required to complete training on bias and differential impact of the pandemic offered through the Office of the Provost. In recognition of this differential impact, reviewers should avoid comparing and contrasting candidates' relative productivity.
- Reviewers should be trained to recognize the individualized impacts of the pandemic and, if applicable, avoid universalizing optional COVID-19 Impact Statements, noting that the same factor that presented an opportunity for one candidate may have presented a hardship for another.
- Consistent with NDSU Policy 352, Sec. 3.6.6, reviewers should regularly be reminded that "Granting of an extension does not increase expectations for performance."

Reduce service workload obligations. Reduce service workload obligations this year as a way to accommodate increases in teaching loads and caregiver demands of faculty members. Committee work should be limited to essential items that must be completed.

Annual and Promotion Salary Raises.

- In further recognition of the differential impact of COVID-19 on faculty performance, for faculty who meet expectations in FY 2021 an across the board

salary increase should be implemented. However, units should be allowed to make internal equity adjustments.

- For faculty who were granted a tenure or promotion timeline extension: To the extent allowed by NDSU and NDUS policies, once the faculty member is promoted, the promotion salary increment should be made retroactive to when that person would normally have begun the promotion process — ensuring they do not face an economic disadvantage from delaying their tenure or promotion due to COVID-19.

Optional COVID-19 Impact Statements. Allow faculty the option to add a one-page COVID-19 impact statement to their annual, third-year, promotion, tenure, and post-tenure reviews.

- Faculty may use the impact statements to describe both positive and detrimental effects of COVID-19 on the mix or balance of their work activities and the types of work outcomes that they were able to achieve.
- Faculty may include an impact statement as a one-page addition to their context statement in their PTE portfolio, or they may choose to integrate information about the impact of COVID-19 throughout their context statement (starting 2021, the three-page context statement will be expanded to a four-page statement to allow for this).
- In annual review documents and portfolios, include sections where faculty may list the impacts of COVID-19 on their research/creative activities, teaching, mentoring, and service.
- Impacts of COVID-19 on faculty work may include, but is not limited to, changes in research focus, whether voluntary or directed; diversion of laboratory capacity to pandemic-related work; productivity changes due to family obligations, personal health, or travel/visa restrictions; effects of changes in teaching or advising conditions; additional teaching/preparations; increased advising loads; cancellations of seminars, visits with collaborators; increased time for reviews of manuscripts/grants; donation of time and resources for COVID -19 initiatives; virtual coffee hours, check-in meetings to connect and support students; creating video messages, letters, or materials to communicate course changes, resources, and other general measures of support to students; and additional work needed to develop plans for closing and reopening labs.

Evaluating Prospective Faculty and Staff Hires. Search committees should be mindful of how COVID-19 is disrupting the workflow of today's graduate students and postdoctoral scholars.

- Give future candidates the option to include a statement regarding if and how COVID-19 impacted their research, publishing, or teaching opportunities.
- Units should be mindful of equity and safety considerations in searches, and be aware and accommodating of candidates' circumstances. Whenever possible searches should be conducted virtually.
- For searches conducted virtually, units are strongly encouraged to invite the finalist(s) to visit Fargo before accepting NDSU's offer.

- Units should be alert to the differential impacts of the pandemic on candidates who may be care givers, who may have underlying health conditions, or who may be living in situations where they have little control over their physical environment.

Support for Graduate Students. Faculty and units should recognize the impact of the pandemic on physical and mental health of graduate students and their job outlook, as well as:

- Provide faculty with information they can use to support and mentor their graduate students remotely. Such information may include strategies or tips on reviewing and prioritizing goals and expectations, connecting students with writing group and professional networks, setting clear expectations, acknowledging the uncertain times, reassuring students, and being responsive to students' concerns.
- Work to increase stipends and offer health insurance benefits to graduate students, consistent with the 2019 State of the University address.
- Grant automatic extension for degree completion timelines for all graduate students.
- Help graduate students translate their COVID-19 experience into their job search (such as crafting statements within application materials similar to the impact statements for faculty promotion/tenure).

Caregiver Assistance*. Units should recognize intensified caregiving demands. To support faculty with caregiving responsibilities, units can use modified duties (NDSU Policy 320) to adjust workloads and allow faculty to use leave of absence consistent with NDSU policies.

- NDSU should approve the revisions to Workplace and Family/Dependent Responsibilities policy (134.1) first proposed in 2015 by Commission on the Status of Women Faculty and unanimously approved by Faculty, Staff, and Students Senates.

Support for Faculty Networking and Mentoring*. Establish networking and mentoring activities to support new, pre-promotion, and midcareer scholars that may have a difficult transition and progress in their career given disruptions in academic programs and research and the potential for continued disruption.

- Departments should create regular opportunities for faculty to connect and hold regular departmental meetings even without any agenda.
- Departments should create opportunities for faculty to share what is working in the classroom, in their research, in student mentoring, etc.

** Revised January 18, 2021 to clarify and ensure consistency with policy.*

Resources.

NDSU COVID-19 Guidance, Spring 2020.

https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/provost/Forms/PTE/PTE_Covid_19_Guidance.pdf

Measures to Support Faculty During COVID-19, Inside Higher Ed, September 2020.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/09/04/advice-academic-administrators-how-best-support-faculty-during-pandemic-opinion>

Supporting Faculty During & After COVID-19 Don't let go of equity.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WQrIG6LsR04jGASfF6Z8WVxl4RIRpsMj/view>

Faculty Equity & COVID-19. The problem, the evidence, and recommendations.

<https://advance.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UM-ADVANCE-Faculty-Equity-and-COVID-19-Oct-2020.pdf>

Gender Inequality in Research Productivity During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Cui, Ding

and Zhu, SSRN, 2020. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3623492

Are Women Publishing Less During The Pandemic? Here's What The Data Say,

Viglione, *Nature*, 2020. <https://media.nature.com/original/magazine-assets/d41586-020-01294-9/d41586-020-01294-9.pdf>

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