

**An Opportunity for Equity:
Recommendations for candidate statements and evaluations, to address
disproportionate impacts on faculty regarding tenure and promotion due to COVID-19
DRAFT
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Statement of the Problem

Research has found that non-tenured faculty have been disproportionately impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic, with extreme disparities across gender, race/ethnicity, disability status, and caregiving (see Oleschuk, 2020 for extensive literature review). Additionally, non-tenured faculty have additionally been differentially affected by the pandemic in a variety of ways, for instance through additional child and/or elder care responsibilities, increased levels of anxiety and depression, stressors of living and isolating alone, experiences put on hold, recruitment for studies on hold, those trying to buy equipment and furnish their labs (etc.). These unequal balancing acts have been catalogued in research (e.g., Cardel, 2020), research letters (see letters in *Nature* and *Science*), academic organizations (e.g., The Declaration on Research Assessment) as well as in the popular press (see “The virus moved female faculty to the brink. Will Universities help?” and [“Could the Pandemic Prompt an Epidemic of Loss of Women in Sciences?”](#) In the *New York Times*).

Research also suggests that tenure and promotion considerations cannot proceed as business as usual given the disruptions of the pandemic in 2020 and 2021 and that these disruptions will impact faculty research programs in years to come (Htun, 2020). Moreover, as the pandemic further exacerbates existing social and academic inequalities related to tenure and promotion (American Sociological Association, 2020), there needs to be recognition of and support for reducing these disparities in evaluating tenure and promotion cases in the age of COVID-19.

Suggested Guidance

To combat the multiple and intersecting difficulties brought on by Covid-19 that impacts pre-tenure faculty’s research programs, and to ensure that standards of our R1 research university for research productivity, potential and trajectory are maintained, we provide the following approaches to evaluation along with helpful advice for developing candidate statements. These approaches are taken from an exhaustive search of what other universities are doing, what major academic organizations endorse, and what research supports.

From Vice Provost of Academic Affairs, UC Davis

“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.”

Guiding Principles: Compassion + Flexibility

The guiding principles for supportive action for the faculty are to show compassion and flexibility in developing materials, assessing packets, and department guidance. These principles have been expressed by the Provost and Academic Senate Chair in their 2020 letter, that remains in effect and for the coming years, they write in support of “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.”

Similarly for Federation faculty, the Academic Federation Personnel Committee have requested “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.”

For additional information and insights, see the COD meeting on Dean Advancement Letters Presentation.

Guidance for Candidates

- Academic Affairs will allow 1 additional page to candidate statement regarding COVID-19 impacts (there is a hard cap on 5 pages for the candidate statement + DEI statements via MIV)
- Urge all colleagues involved in all faculty evaluation processes to show compassion and flexibility
- As suggested by UCD Academic Affairs and the Chair of CAP, we request that COVID-19 impact statements be mandatory (or at least strongly encouraged) to ensure equitable review across dossiers and to be sent out to external reviewers. Faculty are strongly encouraged to include context for COVID-19 related impacts (e.g. Increased family responsibilities and caretaking) for all personnel actions.
 - Some suggested prompts:
 - Describe how COVID-19 has impacted your approach to teaching, for example, including technologies used, assessment of student work, learning outcomes, and other teaching strategies.
 - Describe how COVID-19 has impacted your scholarly and/or creative agenda. Please explain any adjustments to your research schedule, goals, and subject matter.
 - Describe how COVID-19 has impacted your service to campus.

- Faculty are encouraged to include their research goals and plans and how they have adapted these plans due to COVID-19
- We also encourage faculty to utilize resources such as the [Best Practices Tool #1: Documenting the Impact of COVID-19 on Faculty](#) (Subramaniam, 2020)

Guidance for Review of Academic Personnel Impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic

We provide guidance for faculty evaluation for the ad-hoc committee in its evaluation of the dossier, their letter, and faculty discussion of cases.

- Recognize and acknowledge the common difficulties the pandemic poses for all faculty
- Understand individual faculty circumstances varies widely
- Acknowledge faculty efforts to respond to the pandemic as an exceptional part of faculty workload
- Normative pandemic effects on scholarly production - “Covid slow-down” and value research trajectory and quality (such as significance and impact on the field, novel lines of investigation)
- We encourage faculty evaluation to consider such demonstrable disparate impacts due to extenuating circumstances beyond the candidate’s control (ex. pandemic) and that evidence of trajectory towards achieving the deliverables expected for advancement will be considered as evidence of scholarly productivity.
 - In order to qualify, the reduction or absence of particular deliverables must be addressed in a personal statement that describes how teaching, scholarly, service, and/or equity and inclusion activities were disrupted and adapted due to the extenuating circumstances. Adaptation may also include redistribution of professional energy from one aspect under review to another, such as service to teaching, or scholarship to equity and inclusion.
- Recognize that caregiving (e.g., children at home doing remote schooling, home-bound parents, ill family members) has impacted many faculty members.
- Acknowledge innovations in teaching, with the enormous shift to creating and delivering online course curricula.
- Consider achievements relative to opportunity and how the faculty member has performed historically.
- Consider that the process of publication may be slower than usual, as publishers and editors are needing more time to find reviewers. Campuses might consider asking faculty members to list the date of the submitted article.

Research-supported Suggestions for the Department

- Evaluation criteria must consider the pandemic’s differential impacts on women, and faculty of color, and must ascribe equal value to the range of faculty responsibilities, acknowledging these contributions’ importance to the university’s success.
- Allow nonessential scholarship to be paused during the pandemic, understanding that after a return to “normal” life research will not start all of a sudden, and consider “hold harmless” notifications in tenure and promotion cases to inform T&P committees they should lower the standard for that period.

- The Department recognizes that the shift to high quality and equitable online teaching represented a substantial commitment of effort and time.
- Using the “Honest Conversation” for conversations regarding assessment of candidate applications, (see from [Malisch et al., 2020 PNAS](#) - provided guidance from Academic Affairs to CAP & Dean’s, see Advancement Letters Powerpoint)

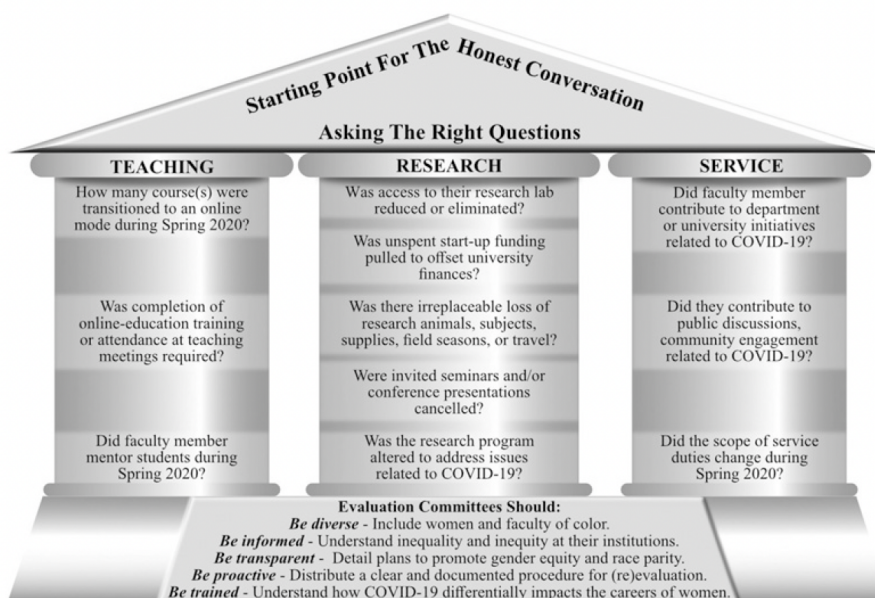


Fig. 1. COVID-19 has exacerbated existing gender inequities. An honest conversation within academia can help mitigate bias. Image credit: Roel Fleuren (<http://www.sciencetransmitter.com>).

- Research suggests, clear metrics, tangible benchmarks, and effective communication are imperative for decreasing bias in merit and promotion decisions.
- Additional suggestions include adapting the reviewer onboarding process of the National Science Foundation, in which reviewers are required to watch a short video on various types of biases that impact judgement.
- See also the [National Academies' Report on COVID-19 Related Impacts](#) some key findings summarized here:
 - “The preliminary evidence indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected the productivity, boundary setting and boundary control, networking and community building, and mental well-being of women in academic STEM. Collaborations have been disrupted, career progression paused, and women are facing challenges associated with gendered effects of remote work conflicting with caregiving responsibilities.
 - Because women were underrepresented across most STEM fields, women are more likely to experience academic isolation, including limited access to mentors, sponsors, and role models that share gender, racial, or ethnic identities. Coupled with the physical isolation stipulated by public health responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, women in academic STEM have been isolated within their fields, networks, and communities.
 - Furthermore, women working in STEM disciplines have begun to experience additional disruptions that may affect their academic productivity and careers. Preliminary evidence from 2020 suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic affected

women's ability to engage actively in collaborations. For women in STEMM with caregiving responsibilities, many had significantly less time in the day to network and engage in collaborations because of increased non-work tasks. Women's shares of first authorships, last authorships, and general representation per author group as well as overall team size have decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- With variations by discipline, women also published fewer papers and received fewer citations of their work between March 2020 and December 2020, which may affect their job stability and future ability to obtain funding. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many stresses women in academia face under usual conditions. For example, delays in obtaining clearance for conducting research during 2020, a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, lead researchers to experience increased burnout, sleep disturbance, and poor appetite; increased interpersonal problems; and decreased motivation.
- Along with these potential negative effects, the COVID-19 pandemic may be catalyzing changes that could portend a better future for women in academic STEMM. For example, professional conferences adapted quickly to virtual platforms, allowing global participation, and often increasing access by removing travel-related barriers that can affect women more than men, given their caregiving responsibilities. There were also some emerging data by the end of 2020 indicating that approaches some academic leaders used to make decisions, govern, and be accountable were more gender inclusive and may help to eradicate growing equity gaps. Some campuses began to think about the long-term implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and suggested strategies to address this issue, such as revised strategic plans aimed at ameliorating equity gaps. However, budget cuts made by many colleges and universities in response to the economic constraints that arose during 2020 greatly affected contingent and non-tenured faculty members—positions disproportionately occupied by women and People of Color. Taken together—positive and negative—it is important to identify and illuminate the ways that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected and will affect women in academic STEMM for years to come.”

Addendum: Intersections with Racial Trauma

We also note that stressors related to unforeseen impacts from COVID-19 as well as wildfires are compounded by ongoing stress related to racial trauma, historical genocide, and resulting intergenerational trauma. Such stressors have been tied to adverse mental and physical health outcomes and often confound stress brought on by the pandemic and/or California wildfires. Attention should be paid to how impacts from COVID-19 intersect and compound impacts from racial trauma.