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*Chair of the Assembly of the Academic Senate
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May 1, 2020

**ACADEMIC SENATE DIVISION CHAIRS
MICHAEL BROWN, PROVOST AND EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
SUSAN CARLSON, VICE PROVOST FOR ACADEMIC PERSONNEL**

Re: COVID-19 and Instructions to Reviewing Agencies

Dear Colleagues:

The Academic Council has endorsed a set of proposed guidelines from the University Committee on Academic Personnel (UCAP) for policy and communications on merit reviews, teaching evaluations, and tenure and promotion processes in light of the COVID-19 crisis. Given the disruptions to teaching, research, and service activities, the guidelines emphasize the need for clear and open communication with faculty, and flexibility in applying academic review processes during the crisis and into the future.

UCAP recommends that both the administration and the Senate communicate directly to faculty on these issues. For the period of the COVID-19 crisis, UCAP proposes that the provisions of APM 133 and APM 760 for stopping the tenure or SOE clock should be approved *de facto*, without the need for a formal request, unless a faculty member opts out. It also requests that the systemwide Provost approve a third year of stop-the-clock for faculty who have already used two years. Finally, UCAP urges reviewing agencies to reward faculty for going to extraordinary lengths to help their students learn, and to be flexible and generous in interpreting teaching evaluations; it suggests faculty not be penalized for reduced activities and productivity, and that all levels of review in future merits cases include a compassionate consideration of the consequences of the pandemic.

I ask Senate Division Chairs to send the UCAP letter to respective Committees on Academic Personnel. I am also asking Provost Brown and Vice Provost Carlson to forward the guidelines to campus administrators and also to approve the recommendation to add a third year of stop-clock.

In turn, I should also like to thank the Chair of UCAP, and UCAP members, for their thoughtful letter with its meticulous attention to detail.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Kum-Kum Bhavnani

Kum-Kum Bhavnani, Chair
Academic Council

Cc: President's Chief of Staff Kao
Academic Council
UCAP Chair Gilbert
Senate Directors
Hilary Baxter, Executive Director, Academic Senate



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC PERSONNEL (UCAP)
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April 30, 2020

KUM-KUM BHAVNANI, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL

RE: COVID-19 AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO REVIEWING AGENCIES

Dear Kum-Kum,

The University of California's faculty has risen magnificently to the many challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis, from the emergency adoption of remote teaching to shutdowns of research facilities, cancellations of professional travel and meetings, and the inability to interact in person with our students and our colleagues. Faculty members continue to carry out their duties of teaching, mentoring, research, professional activity, and service to the University and to the public, despite the profound impacts of the crisis on every aspect of the performance of these activities. We cannot now see the full scope or duration of these impacts.

It is incumbent upon both the Senate and the Administration to provide assurance to faculty that the long tail of this disruption will be understood and accounted for in merit reviews, teaching evaluations, and tenure and promotion processes.

On every UC campus, divisional administration and/or senate leadership have communicated along these lines. UCAP applauds all these reassurances of commitment. While acknowledging the different perspectives and options of the various campuses, UCAP proposes a few common guidelines for ongoing policy and communication concerning future academic review in light of the COVID-19 crisis. UCAP recommends that Academic Council call upon both divisional Senate leadership and systemwide UC administration to adhere to these guidelines. Their basic principles are clear and open communication, and compassionate flexibility in applying the processes of academic review.

- (1) Both campus administration and campus Senate/CAP should communicate to faculty, whether jointly or separately.
- (2) Campus administration and campus Senate/CAP should communicate with every member of their faculty directly, not only through departments or other administrative units.
- (3) The provisions of APM 133 and APM 760 for stopping the tenure or SOE clock for a “significant circumstance or event that disrupts a faculty member’s ability to pursue his or her duties” should be approved de facto (without further justification) for every pre-tenure faculty member for the maximum period of additional time allowable by applicable university rules, while offering faculty members the opportunity to opt out of this stop-clock on an individual basis. In the case of faculty members who have already used two years of stop-clock provision, divisional administrators should advocate for and the UC Provost should approve a third year of stop-clock.
- (4) Recognizing that the student experience is deeply affected both by the crisis and by the emergency changes in teaching modalities, reviewing agencies should be flexible in interpreting student course evaluations from the time of the crisis. While each campus may seek its own solution regarding teaching evaluations, UCAP recommends leniency when considering evaluations for the affected terms if ratings are worse than normal for the faculty member. Reviewing agencies should reward teachers who go to the limit for their students in the face of the crisis, but should not penalize less than perfect performance.
- (5) Faculty should be reassured that, in future merit cases at every level, reviewers and decision makers will treat the consequences of this crisis compassionately, and will not penalize any faculty member for reduced activities and productivity due to the COVID-19 situation. The same principles should apply to promotions in rank and across barrier steps, provided that reviewers are mindful of the expectations for intellectual attainment in a candidate’s discipline associated with such promotions. Flexible use of the special steps Assistant Professor V and Associate Professor IV is encouraged where applicable.

Disruptions to faculty productivity will cascade beyond this term or this year, and will be magnified for those with primary caregiving responsibilities. The consequences of the current crisis will be seen in merit and promotion reviews years from now. When the time comes, we must not forget to make good on these assurances.

Sincerely,



John R. Gilbert, Chair
UCAP

Thanks to UCAP members and to Ellen Zegura (CRA) for suggested phrasing.