



OFFICE OF
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

February 10, 2021

To: Deans and Department Chairs



Fr: Senior Vice Provost Barbara Rodríguez

Re: Addressing COVID-19 in Faculty Annual Reviews

We recognize the current crisis has caused significant disruptions to faculty in their research/scholarship/creative work, teaching, and service goals. Many faculty members are facing additional challenges as a result of extra caregiving responsibilities, personal health concerns, and other disruptions. Based on these challenges, we previously granted an automatic extension to the tenure clock for all tenure-track faculty members. Faculty members can still opt out of this extension and the information about this process can be found on the [UNM OFAS website](#). Even with this extension, it is critically important that annual performance reviews are approached with understanding and flexibility.

Faculty are strongly encouraged to address the impact of COVID-19 on their research/scholarship/creative work, teaching, and service in the narrative summaries they prepare for their annual performance reviews (Faculty Handbook B 4.2.3 (b) 4; B 4.9.3; B3.3 B.1.). The purpose is to provide UNM faculty the opportunity to document and summarize the effects of the pandemic on faculty workload and professional opportunities, and the resulting impact on faculty productivity, performance, and trajectory. Such documentation provides peer evaluators with important context to perform a fair, contextualized evaluation of the faculty member's performance and contributions.

Listed below are some points to consider in documenting impacts. The list is indicative but not exhaustive. Faculty members are encouraged to describe how they navigated/managed a given issue, if they were able to do so. This will enable peer evaluators to understand the challenges posed by the pandemic, how and where the faculty member was able to respond, and where they were not able to respond. An important goal is to make relevant but potentially invisible impacts visible.

Please note that faculty are not expected to reveal private medical information about themselves or other persons. A faculty member could address a disruption caused by COVID-19 illness by stating, for example, that “due to effects of the pandemic, all work stopped for a period of XX weeks.”

COVID-19 *impacts* to consider include, but are not limited to:

- Shift to devoting substantially more time to teaching, and less to scholarship, because of the move to remote teaching, learning, and advising (undergraduate and graduate level)
- Increased time spent in contacting, supporting, and finding assistance for students in distress
- Lack of infrastructure at home to support virtual work (e.g., technology access, overloaded bandwidth, lack of quiet space, etc.)
- Disruptions and reduced productivity engendered by intensified caregiving (childcare, eldercare, etc.) responsibilities
- Personal circumstances and family responsibilities (apart from caregiving) that required attention and time such as home schooling, personal health issues, illness of family members, and/or death in the family which resulted in differential impacts
- Travel interruptions, postponements
- Delay of book contracts and publication due to book press closures
- Delays in peer review and publications due to reviewer unavailability, or disrupted administrative operations at journals and other publishers
- Cancellation of conferences, invited talks, performances
- Closure of research facilities, or performance and exhibit venues
- Cancellation of fellowships, artist/scholar-in-residence appointments
- Lack of access to laboratories, field sites, studios, or study populations
- Difficulty in obtaining peer observation of teaching and other forms of feedback, mentorship, and support
- Reduced access to facilities, locations, personnel, or collaborators
- Time committed to covering another faculty member's course or in other ways filling in for colleagues who were unavailable due to impacts of COVID-19
- Greatly increased service responsibilities for some faculty, especially for those involved in adapting departmental, college, or university-wide processes and procedures for COVID-19, as well as those doing community outreach and engagement, that reduced time for research and/or teaching
- Complicated external service responsibilities such as journal editorships, chairing of academic conference sessions, professional organization service, and other integrated scholarly service affected by the need to make adjustments in response to the pandemic
- Interrupted and/or altered engagement with community-based partners and institutions
- Financial stress caused by the elevated costs of childcare, eldercare and/or healthcare increased anxiety and other mental health issues that impede productivity and performance
- Physical and mental exhaustion from constant uncertainty and requirements for recurring adaptation to changing and unpredictable working conditions

Faculty may discuss how they responded to disruptive conditions in alternate and creative ways. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Altering research priorities to answer emergent questions related to the pandemic
- Supporting students in changes to the mode of learning and/or advising
- Engaging in invisible service by supporting colleagues and students that were new to the University or who needed greater help with technologies of remote work and learning.

- Providing invisible service to support the mission, e.g., developing with or assisting with new policies and processes, helping others navigate problems, additional community service, which in turn reduced one's own ability to do work
- Reconfiguring courses with community engagement and service components
- Increased service in academic governance, and university/academic unit reopening subcommittees or review processes