

January 4, 2022

To: Academic Senate Faculty

From: David Marshall, Executive Vice Chancellor
Dana Mastro, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Personnel

Re: Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts on Faculty

Last Spring, UC Provost Michael Brown formed a Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts on Faculty Working Group charged with reviewing and prioritizing 21 UC Academic Council recommendations, and assessing actions already taken by campuses to alleviate COVID-19 impacts on faculty, in order to identify efforts the campuses could undertake to respond to the areas of greatest concern. The report was distributed to the Academic Senate and a link to it is provided [here](#) on the Senate website. The report focuses on Academic Personnel policies and practices, as well as faculty research opportunities. The three major recommendations in the report address: guidelines and guidance on COVID Impact Statements in the merit and promotion system; options for reviews for faculty whose scholarly activities have been seriously impacted by the pandemic; and need-based funding for research recovery. Although the Working Group was not unanimous in its various recommendations, it was “near unanimous in agreeing that these measures should continue for up to three to five years.” It also recognized that any programs requiring funding would have to be implemented and sustained “commensurate with campus resource levels.” This acknowledgement is relevant for our campus, which falls in the report’s category of campuses where resources are “most constrained.” Campuses have been asked to share with the Working Group, the relevant measures they have taken. We wanted to share this summary with our faculty as well.

Since March of 2020, when the local, state, and national response to COVID-19 interrupted the end of the Winter Quarter, Academic Affairs has worked closely with the Academic Senate to identify and respond to a variety of impacts on faculty. Working collaboratively with units and leadership across campus, we have maintained an ongoing focus on addressing the far-reaching implications of this pandemic on teaching, research, and the Academic Personnel merit and promotion system. Although it is not possible to make up for or fully mitigate the disruption, difficulties, and pain caused by this international pandemic, we have tried to provide support for faculty and adapt our policies and practices to ensure that our Academic Personnel system, centered on academic peer review and shared governance, appropriately and effectively balances excellence and rigor with flexibility, equity, and compassion.

This memo summarizes some of the relevant actions that our campus has taken and is taking to address the important areas of concern identified in the report, and includes some links to past communications and policy statements. (Academic Personnel has archived relevant memos and guidelines on its [COVID-19 Information & Resources page](#), going back to March 17, 2020.) Although we do not comment here on each facet of the actions discussed or recommended by the Working Group, our decisions since March 2020 and our ongoing and evolving efforts to address the impacts of COVID-19 are consistent with the principles and general priorities discussed in the report. Throughout the pandemic, we have emphasized that some of the effects and implications are likely to reverberate for many years; we may see impacts in some merit and promotion cases well after the pandemic is over. For that reason, our discussions and assessments will continue and adapt, as needed, to respond to both current and future impacts.

The UC Working Group offered a number of recommendations associated with faculty merit reviews, in particular about COVID impact statements. Many of these already had been addressed on our campus, in close consultation with the Committee on Academic Personnel, Senate leadership, and the deans. Although we did not choose to rebrand COVID Impact Statements as “COVID Opportunities and Challenges Statement,” as the Working Group recommended, we have provided guidance and advice, given examples of what can be included in the statements, assured faculty they did not need to include private information, encouraged the inclusion of positive contributions made during the pandemic, reminded departments and chairs of their responsibility to provide appropriate context for cases in which there were COVID impacts, provided guidance to external referees

assessing tenure and promotion cases to consider the impact of the pandemic in assessing candidates, and communicated these updates to departments and faculty. All of these previous actions are consistent with the report's recommendations, even where they do not follow every detail.

Most relevant here is the January 25, 2021 memo, "[COVID-19 and Merit and Promotion Reviews](#)" and the accompanying document, "[Guidance for Covid Impact Statement.](#)" These communications emphasize that flexibility and thoughtful consideration of accomplishments in light of opportunity should be the norm at all levels of review. Additionally, in line with the Working Group's recommendations, these documents offer a list of possible impacts in all areas of review, provide approaches for departments and reviewing agencies to understand and contextualize performance relative to opportunity, and encourage faculty to identify important accomplishments and innovations made during the pandemic, among other recommendations. The use and interpretation of COVID Impact Statements also were discussed at length in numerous training sessions, meetings, as well as in a subsequent memo on October 1, 2021, contained in the Fall 2021 [Academic Personnel Newsletter](#). In last year's merit review cycle, we already began to see the importance and value of these statements in providing reviewing agencies with essential context for understanding and appropriately evaluating faculty members' accomplishments in light of the constraints of this environment.

The report additionally discusses ideas about retroactive pay and advancement for faculty who elect to defer their merit reviews. Although after March 2020, we advised faculty of options to defer or "stop the clock," our campus approach, following our practices and policies, instead has focused on guidance to assist faculty who wish to proceed with cases, on time, in the context of holistic reviews that take COVID impacts into account. In many cases, this approach provides options for faculty to move forward with their advancements, maintaining their upward trajectory in step and salary rather than delaying. The expanded use of the special steps is one example and demonstrates efforts to adapt existing policies and principles to consider COVID impacts. More information can be found in the March 24, 2021, memo, [COVID-19 Impact and use of the 'special steps' \(Assistant Professor/Lecturer PSOE V & Associate Professor/LSOE IV\) in the upcoming review cycle](#), as well as the [Stopping or Extending the Tenure Clock](#) section of the January 25th memo and the [Fall 2021 Academic Personnel Newsletter](#).

Consistent with Working Group recommendations about "Faculty Case Preparation," we have provided direction regarding how cancelled or postponed professional activities, performances, and exhibitions should be treated in merit cases, as well as how ESCI scores and teaching evaluations should and shouldn't be taken into account. See [Guidance for faculty merit cases on reporting cancelled or postponed performances, exhibitions, and other artistic events due to COVID-19; ESCI Scores and Teaching Evaluations](#); and [Upcoming Academic Personnel Review Cycle](#). In addition, we updated the language used in the solicitation of external reviewers (see [Red Binder I-50](#)) to address our expectation that COVID impact be considered in evaluations.

As we have emphasized in previous messages sent jointly with Academic Senate leadership, existing APM and Red Binder policies provide a precedent and a framework for evaluating merit reviews with flexibility and understanding. We have asked departments, deans, and CAP to utilize compassion and adaptability when implementing campus and UC policies and standards in the review of academic records during these unusual conditions. We will continue to work with deans and CAP to develop and refine guidelines for implementing our policies under these extraordinary circumstances.

Other recommendations in the Working Group report address faculty workload, teaching, and research. In order to recognize and attempt to address the workload burdens experienced by certain faculty, especially those with caregiving responsibilities, we encouraged "[Flexibility in Faculty Assignments](#)" and provided guidance on work-related adjustments (see [Documenting Temporary Adjustments of Workload](#)) along with [Examples of Temporary Modifications of Duties](#). Supplemental Teaching Assistant support was provided to departments to assist faculty with remote teaching as well. The [Keep Teaching](#) website provides and documents extensive resources and support for faculty to assist them in remote teaching activities, including two Summer Institutes focused on pedagogy and course design. Guidance also was offered on copyright and intellectual property questions related to remote and online teaching: see [Guidance on Copyright of Course Materials at UC Santa Barbara](#).

In March of 2021, UC Santa Barbara Office of Research organized a [Research Assistance Program](#) to offset some of the negative effects that the COVID-19 pandemic was having on faculty research, noting that faculty with dependent care responsibilities were being disproportionately affected. The program was offered to full-time Academic Senate members who experienced COVID-related research delays due to significant dependent care responsibilities since March 2020. Up to \$8,000 of flexible research assistance funding was provided to faculty for a variety of purposes, including “hiring of students, GSRs or other research assistants, research expenditures and, while unlikely, course buyouts to allow for additional time to be spent on research-related activities.” In addition, in July of 2021, the Academic Senate, Office of Research, and Office of the Chancellor provided funds for an Early Career Faculty Acceleration Program intended to help early career faculty by providing financial assistance to accelerate and enhance their research, creative activities, and professional development in recognition of “the serious impact that the pandemic and its related restrictions of 2020-21 have had on the scholarly development of our early career (pretenure or security of employment) faculty.” \$7000 was provided to each eligible faculty member.

We reaffirm our commitment to assess and respond to the impacts of COVID-19 on our faculty, and to evaluate the efficacy of our mitigation efforts. We also will continue to review best practices from other campuses and any forthcoming recommendations from the Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts on Faculty Working Group, alongside recommendations from our own Academic Senate committees, academic departments, deans, and other administrative colleagues. Although we cannot offset all of the effects of the worldwide pandemic, we are dedicated to supporting the well-being and success of our faculty by adapting our practices as we work together to advance our common values and mission.

Thank you.

Academic Personnel Communications and Resources

- October 1, 2021 - [Academic Personnel Newsletter: Fall](#)
- August 16, 2021 - [Guidance for faculty merit cases on reporting cancelled or postponed performances, exhibitions, and other artistic events due to COVID-19](#)
- June 23, 2021 - [Guidance Regarding Return to Onsite Work for Academic Appointees](#)
- April 20, 2021 - [Academic Personnel Newsletter: Spring](#)
- March 25, 2021 - [Covid-19 Impact and use of the special steps](#)
- January 25, 2021 - [COVID-19 and Merit and Promotion Reviews](#)
- January 25, 2021 - [Guidance for COVID Impact Statement](#)
- January 25, 2021 - [Examples of Temporary Modifications of Duties](#)
- November 19, 2020 - [Instructional Planning and Related Issues](#)
- October 14, 2020 - [International Remote Employment FAQs](#)
- October 12, 2020 - [ESCI Scores and Teaching Evaluations](#)
- October 7, 2020 - [COVID Related Leave Options for Academic Employees](#)
- October 1, 2020 - [Upcoming Academic Personnel Review Cycle](#)
- September 2, 2020 - [Updates on COVID-19 Related Policies Exceptions for Academic Employees](#)
- June 23, 2020 - [Presidential Proclamation Suspends Certain Nonimmigrant Entries - NO IMPACT to F-1 students/ J-1 scholars/ or current H-1Bs](#)
- May 26, 2020 - [Extension of the Tenure Clock](#)
- April 27, 2020 - [UCOP Guidance Regarding COVID-19 Related Leaves and Job Protections for Academic Employees](#)
- April 22, 2020 - [COVID-19 Related Leaves for Academic Employees](#)
- April 15, 2020 - [COVID-19 Related Leaves and Job Protections Guidance](#)
- April 2, 2020 - [Academic Personnel Updates](#)
- March 26, 2020 - [Office of the President Guidance on COVID10-Related Leave for Academic Appointees](#)
- March 18, 2020 - [Guidance Regarding COVID-19 Administrative Leave for Academic Employees](#)
- March 17, 2020 - [Academic Personnel Updates Related to the COVID-19 Crisis](#)