

MEMORANDUM

TO: Steering Committee

FROM: Committee on Faculty Affairs

CFA Final Recommendation on “Modification of Scholarly Expectations for COVID-19” charge

DATE: April 24, 2020

Background

COVID-19 represents a major disruption to faculty scholarship, higher education, and society in general. With respect to faculty scholarship: shifting courses online has required faculty to devote additional, unplanned time and resources to their teaching; some scholars no longer have access to their labs, equipment, and/or data; and the publication process has slowed as referees and editors have less time to devote to reviews and submissions. In addition to these scholarly disruptions, many faculty members face new challenges in balancing work and life and in maintaining personal health and well-being. Such challenges fall disproportionately to faculty who belong to vulnerable and/or underrepresented groups. All of these changes make it harder for junior faculty members to meet scholarly requirements for tenure and promotion. To acknowledge the transformed landscape in which faculty are working, well over one hundred Colleges and Universities across the nation have extended tenure clocks and/or shifted the standards for tenure and promotion.

The College of New Jersey, along with the other state colleges in New Jersey, has its tenure clock determined by state law. According to the General Counsels at the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities, The College cannot extend the clock unilaterally, but requires statutory relief to do so. The President of the College’s local union chapter has stated that the Council of New Jersey State College locals will not seek such relief from the state. Under these circumstances, College governance seeks remedy for junior faculty working under the disruptions created by COVID-19.

Charge:

Steering asks CFA to consider and recommend ways to adjust scholarly expectations for tenure and promotion to associate professor in response to the disruptions caused by COVID-19.

These recommendations might include reductions in scholarly expectations within disciplinary standards, as well as other solutions that CFA may propose. For example, CFA might propose

that departments have the option to revert back to the disciplinary standards they had in place under the four-year tenure clock just a few years ago. (However, this may not be a good option for departments that added to *and changed* their disciplinary standards. These departments may need to reduce their standards in a different way.)

In drafting their recommendations, CFA should consider, at a minimum: (a) how the recommendation affects faculty at different stages in the reappointment and review process; (b) how the recommendation can be implemented consistently, equitably, and quickly across departments and programs; and (c) how the recommendation might affect faculty with appointments in more than one department. CFA will likely generate many other issues to consider, as well.

Because the matter is urgent, Steering asks that CFA address this issue right away and ahead of any of its other work. We request that CFA present its initial recommendation to the Faculty Senate at its April 15th, 2020 meeting. Simultaneously, Steering will facilitate expedited collection of testimony among Faculty, Deans, and Department Chairs. Steering requests a final recommendation by April 22nd, 2020.

Testimony Tier: Faculty and Staff: Tier III

The issue requires a high degree of testimony from the campus community. The assigned council or committee should consult with relevant individuals and groups in developing a preliminary recommendation. The completed preliminary recommendation should then be made available to the relevant stakeholder groups. Testimony should be solicited in the form of both written and oral feedback, as well as approval by the appropriate representative bodies.

Timeline CFA should prepare a preliminary report for Steering by April 8th. Steering will then facilitate testimony from the campus community with the aim of revising and deciding on a recommendation by April 15th, 2020.

CFA Final Recommendation:

CFA agrees that the COVID-19 pandemic (hereafter referred to as COVID-19) has already disrupted the normal course of faculty and librarian scholarship/creative/professional activities. At the time of writing this recommendation, the full impact of this global catastrophe is not known. There is certainty that faculty/librarian life, and more specifically faculty/librarian scholarship/creative/professional activity, will be negatively impacted. CFA agrees that the

College should move swiftly to reassure pre-tenure faculty and librarians that scholarly expectations for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor/Librarian II will be adjusted for the disruptions caused by COVID-19.

CFA developed a plan to achieve this goal using the following guiding principles: (1) pre-tenure faculty and librarians should be supported during this challenging time, (2) the tenure clock is fixed by state law and unlikely to change; however, the criteria used in evaluating candidates for tenure/promotion can be altered, and (3) the modified process should be flexible to accommodate unforeseen impacts on faculty/librarian workload, and it should be as simple as possible.

Testimony was collected at the April 15, 2020 Faculty Senate meeting and through an electronic survey. Generally, the testimony was supportive of CFA's proposed plan (of the 29 respondents to the survey 62% supported it, 14% opposed, and the residual comments were neutral or outside the scope of the charge). Testimony that opposed CFA's plan expressed a variety of opinions that were considered. Some erroneously believed that a Qualifying Life Event adjustment within the Reappointment and Promotions process would extend the clock. It would not. Some expressed a desire to wait until the fall to take action. Such inaction would harm pre-tenure faculty/librarians who are currently stressed by the extreme disruptions. Some expressed concern that scholarly/creative/professional modifications would lower standards and hurt the long-term quality of the faculty. The process of modifying scholarly/creative/professional expectations will calibrate expectations to compensate for disruptions from COVID-19. Only a few years ago, TCNJ had a shorter tenure clock. When the longer pre-tenure period became a reality, scholarly expectations were increased to adjust for the longer pre-tenure period. Given that many faculty went through the reappointment process with a shorter tenure clock, CFA did not see any credible evidence that scholarly modifications would have any impact on the long-term quality of faculty scholarship.

CFA proposes the following three steps to achieve this goal:

1. **The campus should issue a statement of support for pre-tenure faculty and librarians.** CFA, in conjunction with the Steering Committee who wrote the governance charge, drafted a statement (below) that should be accepted and endorsed by the Steering Committee, Faculty Senate, TCNJ-AFT, Council of Deans, Provost, President, and Board of Trustees. This statement should be distributed to the campus community.

“TCNJ statement on reappointment expectations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 represents a major disruption to society, higher education, and

faculty/librarian workload. Pre-tenure faculty and librarians are on a 5-year path to earn tenure where their teaching, scholarly/creative/professional activities, and service are evaluated annually. By the time of tenure, faculty/librarians must have established competencies in teaching/librarianship, scholarly/creative/professional activities, and service. The COVID-19 pandemic disruptions threaten the ability of each pre-tenure faculty and librarian to achieve these predetermined levels of competency. Furthermore, such challenges fall disproportionately to faculty/librarians who belong to vulnerable and/or underrepresented groups. Some examples of disruptions include (but are not limited to):

- Spring 2020 courses were quickly moved online. This required faculty to devote extraordinary amounts of time to their teaching, created an unorthodox teaching environment, and took time away from scholarship.
- Scholars lost access to their labs, equipment, software, samples, and data; additionally, purchasing of supplies and equipment will see extensive delays
- Funding opportunities from private and public organizations may be impacted for the foreseeable future in many areas
- The publication process is delayed
- Conferences, exhibitions, and performances have been canceled
- Many faculty members face new challenges in balancing work and life and in maintaining personal health and well-being. This takes away time normally allocated to teaching, scholarly/creative/professional activities, and service.

Well over 100 Colleges and Universities across the United States have extended tenure clocks and/or shifted the standards for tenure and promotion to compensate for the transformed landscape in which faculty and librarians are working. The College of New Jersey, along with the other state colleges in New Jersey, has its tenure clock determined by state law. According to the General Counsels at the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities, The College cannot extend the clock unilaterally, but requires statutory relief to do so. The Council of New Jersey State College locals does not appear to be seeking a change to the reappointment timeline. Instead, members of College governance (Committee on Faculty Affairs, Steering Committee, Faculty Senate, TCNJ-AFT, Council of Deans, Provost, President, and Board of Trustees) are uniting to seek relief for pre-tenure faculty/librarians working under the disruptions created by COVID-19. These campus members are directing Promotion and Reappointment Committees (PRC) who have pre-tenure faculty/librarians to create a “modified scholarly/creative/professional expectations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic” for each pre-tenure faculty/librarian. This document will set forth modified expectations for teaching, scholarly/creative/professional activities, and service and detail how they have been humanely recalibrated to adjust for the COVID-19 pandemic. These documents will be

reviewed and approved by the Dean, and they will become part of the applicants' reappointment materials.”

2. **Amend the reappointment process** - The summative review of the reappointment process should be amended for any faculty or librarian who has modified scholarly/creative/professional expectations due to COVID-19 (see #3 below). The reappointment process should be amended to include College Promotion and Tenure Committee (CPTC) review of any summative reappointment candidates who are NOT recommended for reappointment by either the Promotions and Reappointment Committee (PRC) or Dean. This additional review step adds another layer of review to ensure that reappointment standards have been humanely recalibrated to adjust for COVID-19 disruptions. This adjustment should remain in effect through the entire reappointment cycle for any affected faculty or librarians because this situation is evolving and future disruptions cannot be predicted.
3. **Create individual adjustments for scholarly/creative/professional standards** - All Departments and Programs who have faculty/librarians in the reappointment process affected by COVID-19 disruptions (including any faculty/librarians who begin work at the College after Spring 2020) will create modified scholarly/creative/professional expectations. This process applies to every tenure case and every promotion automatically tied to the tenure decision. Given that the full impact of COVID-19 is not known, **future disruptions will automatically trigger the steps described below** to create a modified set of standards that helps faculty and librarians adjust to the external disruptions. Modifications of scholarly/creative/professional activity standards will be developed and memorialized in a “modified scholarly/creative/professional expectations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic” document. The following steps will produce this document:

Step 1 - the PRC will meet with the pre-tenure faculty/librarians to learn how COVID-19 has specifically impacted their scholarly/creative/professional activity. Given the stress that this pandemic has caused, PRCs are expected to meet with their pre-tenure faculty/librarians and begin work on the modified scholarly/creative/professional expectations document by May 31, 2020. This meeting will provide pre-tenure faculty and librarians tangible evidence of College action to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Step 2 - the PRC, in consultation with the pre-tenure faculty/librarian, will draft a “modified scholarly/creative/professional expectations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic” document for each faculty/librarian. This letter between the PRC and candidate will detail how **teaching, scholarship/creative/professional activity, and service expectations** have been humanely recalibrated to compensate for the

COVID-19 disruptions. The expectation is that PRCs will follow the pattern that has been adopted by many institutions in the country, which is extending the tenure clock for 1 year. Because we cannot extend the tenure clock, PRCs are expected to recalibrate standards to a level of work that could be reasonably completed in 4 years rather than the current period of 5 years. For guidance, PRCs could refer to previous DS that were developed prior to 2014, when the tenure clock at TCNJ was four years.

Step 3 - Should any disputes between the PRC and pre-tenure faculty/librarians arise, the Dean will resolve these disputes in the spirit of humanely recalibrating scholarly/creative/professional standards to compensate for COVID-19 disruptions. The Dean must approve the “modified scholarly/creative/professional expectations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic” document. All parties (faculty/librarian, PRC members, and Dean) will sign the document. CFA should be copied on the document. A modified scholarly/creative/professional expectations document (steps 1-3) should be completed **by September 30, 2020**.

Should the pre-tenure faculty/librarian believe that the modifications are inadequate, they can request CFA to review the “modified scholarly/creative/professional expectations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic” document. CFA will prepare an assessment of whether the modification adequately calibrates scholarly expectations for the COVID-19 disruption.

Step 4 - The most recent, signed “modified scholarly/creative/professional expectations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic” document and any CFA assessment of scholarly adjustments (if requested by the pre-tenure faculty/librarian) will be submitted by candidates in their “Standard application for reappointment” Section E. “Evaluation Letters/Reports”.

As noted above, the true impact of COVID-19 is unknown. As soon as new impacts on faculty/librarian scholarly/creative/professional activity manifest, it is expected that the process of developing modified reappointment standards will begin again to create a revised document in light of new information.

During the process of gathering testimony, CFA learned of related issues, which were beyond the scope of the original charge. CFA would like to draw attention to the following issues:

1. Faculty and Librarians applying for promotion to higher ranks are also affected by the COVID-19 disruptions. The Reappointment and Promotions document acknowledges faculty may have gaps in their scholarship and that such gaps should be explained by the candidate. Because all faculty and librarians are affected by COVID-19 disruptions, there was a sentiment to address the collective disruption more formally. One possibility, available to all Departments/Programs, is to add a paragraph to each set of

Department/Program Disciplinary Standards to compensate for disruptions. Revised Disciplinary Standards undergo a formal review process that is described in the Disciplinary Standards Policy.

2. If disruptions continue for a long period of time, TCNJ should consider adjusting faculty/librarian workload to offset the impact of the stress and public health disruptions. Possibilities include more flexible teaching assignments, massing class sections (particularly for online classes), reducing service obligations, and/or allowing faculty/librarians to claim sick days without them reducing their sick day balance, which was a policy extended by the Governor of New Jersey to State employees.

3. Teaching evaluations for the Spring 2020 semester have already been “removed” from reappointment and promotion consideration. However, our current teaching evaluation interface through PAWS does not allow one to select or de-select evaluations for viewing by other parties. Therefore, these evaluations will be visible by PRCs, Deans, CPTC, Provost, and President. The PAWS reporting of sharing teaching evaluations should be modified to allow users to select which evaluations are shared with identified community members.