

A STATEMENT ON PROMOTION, TENURE, & ANNUAL EVALUATIONS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Considering the extraordinary circumstances faced by faculty during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, Faculty Senate issues the following recommendations regarding Annual Evaluation, Tenure, and Promotion processes at Arkansas Tech University. These recommendations are meant to reduce any harmful impact on faculty development or performance due to interruptions or changes in practices because of COVID-19. Recommendations follow:

1. **TENURE TRACK FACULTY MAY REQUEST AN EXTENSION ON THEIR PROBATIONARY PERIOD PER THE FACULTY HANDBOOK:**

“A tenure-track faculty member may receive approval for a leave of absence or an extension of the probationary period for extraordinary circumstances. The applicant requesting an extension must appeal in writing to the dean of the college. If the dean of the college determines that a leave of absence or extension of the probationary period is warranted, then a recommendation will be made to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Vice President for Academic Affairs will indicate in writing whether the probationary period has been extended and specify its length in time.” (ATU FHB p. 18)

If you are a tenure track faculty member and you feel that your teaching, scholarship, and service output and chances to gain tenure have been adversely impacted by changes in standard practices during the response to COVID-19, then you are encouraged to contact your Department Head and Dean to begin the process of extending your probationary period beyond the original timeline relative to your hire date. The length of the extension must be negotiated with your Dean but should not exceed the amount of time you have been impacted by changes in standard practice (e.g., you cannot ask for a three-year extension if the impact has reduced your standard output for one year).

2. **DPTCs SET CRITERIA FOR FACULTY EVALUATION (IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT HEAD) FOR EACH DEPARTMENT PER THE FACULTY HANDBOOK:**

“The DPTC is expected to work with the department head to establish guidelines for evaluation of all faculty of each type and rank, and these guidelines would be made available to the faculty members at the start of the evaluation period, giving the faculty member adequate time to meet expectations. Academic evaluation, conducted by learned peers within one’s discipline, is an essential component of the promotion and tenure process.” (ATU FHB p. 21)

As members of a DPTC, you should work to revise your criteria regarding weights or other metrics used to assess faculty (tenure track or non-tenure track) performance

along lines of teaching, scholarship, and service for all faculty under your review without penalty. These revisions should include options for faculty to include or exclude student teaching evaluations for semesters where classes are moved unexpectedly online; that is, faculty get the option to include or exclude those student teacher evaluations for semesters affected without penalty in the evaluation process. These revisions should also include options for altering standard expectations in scholarship and/or service based on constraints or loss of opportunity beyond the faculty member's control (e.g., conference cancellations, bans on professional travel, social distancing that prevents service participation, etc.). DPTCs are encouraged to use their discretion in revising criteria for evaluation to include evidence of intent to participate as a substitute (e.g., conference acceptance prior to cancellation, etc.). In short, DPTCs are encouraged to work with and support faculty in the evaluation process to mitigate any impact on performance during these extraordinary times.

3. **ANNUAL REVIEW, TENURE, OR PROMOTION EVALUATIONS MAY BE AFFECTED BY THESE CHANGED INTO THE FUTURE.**

As of the writing of this recommendation, the response to COVID-19 still continues and may continue well into the next academic year. This being the case, all committees or individuals responsible for establishing criteria and evaluating faculty for annual reviews, tenure, or promotion are recommended to be flexible and receptive to changes in the evaluation processes while the COVID-19 response impacts faculty teaching, scholarship, and service opportunities. For example, faculty affected now by changes in standard practice as a result of COVID-19 will apply for tenure or promotion in the future. In that instance, evaluation of tenure by all parties that review portfolios (i.e., DPTC, Dept. Head, Dean, UPTC, VPAA, etc.) should take into account evaluation criteria changes at the DPTC level for that affected time period during subsequent reviews. These recommendations should apply to any semester where faculty performance has been adversely affected by changes in normal practice as a result of COVID-19, and faculty members should not be harmed in the evaluation, tenure, or promotion process for circumstances beyond their control during a response to COVID-19.

By following the guidelines already in place, and adding increased flexibility and sensitivity to the myriad demands placed on faculty, staff, and students during the COVID-19 outbreak, these recommendations give Arkansas Tech faculty the opportunity to remain successful and continue to thrive as scholars, teachers, and community leaders.