



MEMO

Date: April 17, 2020

To: All untenured tenure-track faculty

From: Bob Jones, Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost
Danny Weathers, President, Faculty Senate

Subject: Probationary period for untenured faculty whose penultimate year occurs after the 2020-2021 academic year

Dear Faculty,

The COVID-19 pandemic has created, and will continue to create, unprecedented challenges, disruptions, and adjustments for faculty, both personally and professionally. Many faculty are concerned about the impact of the pandemic on their ability to earn tenure. Please note that University leaders understand the challenges and concerns and are identifying and implementing ways to support faculty to the fullest extent possible. This memo addresses one way of supporting faculty – extensions to the probationary period (“tenure clock”) of untenured faculty.

We are fortunate that Clemson’s Faculty Manual already provides protection for faculty by allowing extensions to the probationary period. Extensions can be granted for various reasons, including the “special circumstances” we are now experiencing. Per the manual (*Chapter V, C.3.b.v.(2)(b)*):

Request for an extension of the probationary period at the request of a faculty member for serious illness, family tragedy or other special circumstances may be submitted to the department chair and granted upon the approval of the TPR committee, department chair, dean and Provost.

If the pandemic has interrupted faculty progress toward professional, creative, and/or scholarly achievement, the policy stated above was created to accommodate such interruptions. If faculty would like to request a probationary period extension *for interruptions arising specifically from COVID-19*, please note the following:

- The policy applies to tenure-track faculty who were hired prior to July 1, 2020 and who enter their penultimate year *after* the 2020-2021 academic year.
- The extension will be for one year.
- Per the Faculty Manual, faculty desiring an extension must submit a written request to the department chair. Faculty submitting requests due to the COVID-19 pandemic are strongly

encouraged to submit during the 2020-2021 academic year by March 1, 2021 in order to have their probationary period timeline clarified in time for annual reviews. Submitting beyond this date may require additional explanation. To streamline the process for all parties, the Provost's Office has created the attached extension request form.

- As a reason for the request, faculty may simply indicate "Interruptions in productivity caused by COVID-19." However, faculty are encouraged to provide a more descriptive but brief explanation of the reason for the request, as this information may prove useful for future reference.

Further, please note the following:

- Faculty who do not immediately request an extension to the probationary period due to COVID-19 are not precluded from doing so in the future. Policies outlined in the Faculty Manual regarding extensions will still apply. Faculty who delay requesting an extension due to COVID-19 may need to provide more substantial documentation and justification than is currently being requested.
- Faculty who request an extension due to COVID-19 are not precluded from requesting extensions due to other reasons (for example, childbirth, illness, or family tragedy).
- Faculty who receive an extension due to COVID-19 may subsequently return to their "normal" probationary period by reducing the probationary period in consultation with the department chair, TPR committee, and Dean as described in the Faculty Manual (*Chapter V, C.3.b.v.(3)(a)*).

The challenges that faculty are facing, and may continue to face for some time, are difficult to anticipate, understand, and document. Consequently, we strongly encourage all parties involved in the approval process to be sensitive and accommodating to these special circumstances. Please route the request as quickly as possible. Also note that, per the Faculty Manual, "the Provost will make the final determination."

Questions about the process should be directed to Amy Lawton-Rauh, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs (APFA@clemsion.edu)

Additionally, as departments review their TPR documents for other reasons (such as developing criteria for the Principal Lecturer rank), we encourage them to also take the opportunity to consider incorporating policies and procedures for accommodating the impact of pandemics, natural disasters, and other crises that extend beyond individual faculty experiences.

We thank all faculty for rising to the challenges of this unprecedented situation. Your hard work and dedication to your teaching, scholarship, and service are inspiring. We wish you a great finish to the semester.

Sincerely,

Bob Jones



Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

Danny Weathers

President, Faculty Senate

