PANDEMIC IMPACT STATEMENTS:
A MESSAGE TO PENN FACULTY
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from
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In September 2020, the University extended the probationary period by one year for all faculty who are assistant professors and associate professors without tenure in the tenure, clinician-educator, and research tracks whose reviews have not already begun, who are not in their mandatory or terminal year, and who have not already received an extension related to COVID-19. Penn faculty have made rapid changes to their teaching; experienced illnesses and deaths in their families; spent more time advising, mentoring, and supporting students; and experienced barriers to conducting and disseminating research, with limits on field research, lab and facility closures, loss of research subjects, conference cancellations, journal publication slowdown, and more. Most assistant professors in non-health schools who responded to the October 2020 COVID Check-In reported that they were spending more time on teaching than before the start of the pandemic, and most assistant professors also reported that they were spending more time on caregiving and household responsibilities.

The specific short- and long-term implications of the pandemic will be different for different faculty members. For example, the negative implications for traditional measures of faculty productivity may be greater, on average, for women faculty and faculty of color, given gender differences in caregiving responsibilities, disproportionate negative health- and economic-related effects of the pandemic on Black and Brown people and communities, and greater expectations for women faculty and faculty of color to engage in mentoring and institutional service. Early data show that journal submissions during the early months of the pandemic were lower for women than for men. The full implications of the pandemic for faculty work will play out over the next several years, given the cumulative and longitudinal nature of faculty research, grant, and publication processes.

To normalize recognition of these factors, the University is adding a pandemic impact statement to its faculty review process. All faculty members may include pandemic impact statements in their annual performance and activity reports and in their dossiers for appointment, tenure, and promotion. In their pandemic impact statement, faculty should describe how the pandemic has influenced their work and career trajectory. As outlined below, faculty may describe changes made to teaching, advising, mentoring, service, and research in response to the pandemic, as well as other implications of the pandemic for faculty work and life. Faculty are not required to disclose any confidential personal health issues.

External reviewers will be informed that the University added a pandemic impact statement to its review process in spring 2021 and will be asked to consider the short- and long-term implications of the pandemic on working conditions, productivity, and career trajectory when making their evaluations if the dossier includes a pandemic impact statement. Reviewers will
also be asked to focus on the quality of scholarly contributions more than the quantity. The revised External Reviewer Letter templates are posted [here](#).

Including pandemic impact statements in the review process is an added step in the University’s response to the pandemic for our faculty. As we move forward, schools and departments are encouraged to consider how they can continue to use these statements to recognize and account for the short- and long-term implications of the pandemic for individual faculty members. We look forward to working with deans, department chairs, and faculty to support the inclusion and use of these statements and advance other related next steps.

**Guidance For Pandemic Impact Statements**

The pandemic impact statement describes how the pandemic has impacted a faculty member’s work and career trajectory. The statement reflects the faculty member’s individual circumstances and experiences and may include the following:

- **Teaching**: Changes in course load and course delivery; learning, use, and incorporation of new instructional technologies; changes in time spent.
- **Advising and mentoring**: Changes in advising load; support provided to students experiencing pandemic-related challenges; changes in time spent.
- **Service**: Engagement in efforts to make pandemic-related changes to curriculum, advising, lab access, etc.; engagement in pandemic-related initiatives for the department, university, professional association, and other organizations; changes in time spent.
- **Research and scholarship**: Restrictions on access to research sites, labs, facilities, studios, and other venues; restrictions on professional travel and field research; loss of access to research subjects; need to restart or pivot research; cancellation of seminars, presentations, and opportunities to collaborate; slowing of publication and grant funding processes; redirection of funding; changes in time spent.
- **Other challenges**: Resource constraints (e.g., internet, work space); caregiving and homeschooling responsibilities; health issues* (for self or family); visa restrictions. (*Disclosure of personal health issues is confidential and not required.)

**Resources**

ADVANCE Project, University of Massachusetts-Amherst. (2020, August 17). [Documenting pandemic impacts: Best practices](#).


