

Faculty Representative to the Board of Trustees Report

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Summary

During my time as faculty representative, I hope to bring one primary message to the board: *Investments of time, money, and resources supporting research and scholarship will help us achieve excellence in undergraduate education and research which will improve our academic reputation and help fulfill our land-grant mission.* To begin this discussion, I first offer an overview of the tenure and promotion process with specific emphasis on how complications from the COVID pandemic have impacted this process and the core teaching, research, and service activities of the faculty.

As discussed below, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic reach far and wide within the university community. The most common observation from the faculty is that time required for teaching increased significantly. This is expected due to the need to teach in an online or hybrid mode. However, the faculty also spent a significant amount of time taking on the role of personal counselors for many students to help them cope with the pandemic impacts. The most common research impacts were due to loss of time from teaching duties, limited access for faculty and students to the labs, grants getting rejected or delayed due to lab access or travel restrictions, and publications not getting finished due to the reduced amount of time to devote to those efforts. There is a potential that the quality of teaching may increase in future years based on the additional time the faculty spent on course modification/development. However, that remains to be seen. There will be long lasting impacts on research outputs, mainly manifested in lower numbers of the critical products (books, peer-reviewed publications, patents, etc.) that are used in a tenure and/or promotion package to demonstrate success. For the 2020-2021 yearly evaluation, all faculty were required to include a "Faculty Impact Statement" with their annual evaluation to describe the impacts of the pandemic on their work. In this document, the faculty can explain things like the increased amount of time counseling, advising, and mentoring students due to the pandemic and/or lack of access to resources due to supply chain. Though these efforts were critical for the health of our community, there is no place to document such efforts in a tenure and/or promotion application. Thus, these Faculty Impact Statements will be a resource to raise awareness of the impact of the pandemic on faculty across the University.

Discussion of COVID-19 pandemic impacts on faculty performance

For consideration of tenure and/or promotion, faculty must submit documentation of their efforts related to teaching, research, and service. Following submission of the materials, the application is reviewed by the departmental tenure and promotion review (TPR) committee, the department chair, the dean, the provost, and the president. The TPR committee requests letters from several external reviewers in the candidate's field of research which are then included in the application. At each review step, the complete application is considered and the candidate is provided with a letter describing the review and recommendation before the final decision of promotion and/or tenure is made by the President. This is the general procedure and specific modifications may be in place per individual departmental guidelines. Development of tenure and promotion guidelines are the responsibility of each individual department (with final approval from the Provost's office). Thus, specific guidelines are

unique to each department. However, generally, all faculty are evaluated based on research performance, teaching performance, student mentorship, and service. Below I have briefly summarized these each of the general criteria and some common methods of demonstrating success. Then provided specific quotes from the faculty providing examples of how the pandemic has impacted their work.

Teaching: Our primary role as faculty is teaching. Faculty being considered for promotion and/or tenure must demonstrate ability and commitment through course development documents, evaluations (student, peer, exit, and/or alumni), and honors/awards.

Direct quotes from faculty describing pandemic impacts on teaching

"I spent much more time in emotional support of undergraduate students during the fall semester. I scheduled special Zoom office hours to help students that could not attend synchronous class sessions. Being emotionally available for my students is something I have aimed for, but over the past 18 months, I have had to take on a totally new role as listener, guidance counselor and cheerleader to keep my students engaged and wanting to do well in class."

"The online and Zoom format did allow me to invite several African American authors to virtual discussions with my class and the students were very engaged and enjoyed meeting the writer of some of the literature that we read."

"Between prepping and recording lectures, supervising TAs in offering labs, and dealing with 3x the normal workload of answering student emails, meeting with students online, having Zoom help sessions and office hours to answer questions from recorded lecture material, and developing online assessments for lecture that would minimize cheating on exams, I did very little in the fall semester outside of teaching (occupying easily 80% of my work week)."

Research: The scope of faculty research at Clemson is remarkably broad and varies in content and mode of delivery. But generally, research outputs are some demonstration and communication of knowledge or insight gained that is delivered to the community. Research success is demonstrated through publications, performances/exhibits, presentations, and honors/awards. While these are typically the products of research, obtaining financial support for ones work through sponsored programs is another primary criterion. Therefore, proposal writing to competitive federal, corporate, or state sources to obtain research funding is expected. Additionally, teaching and research are intertwined with student mentoring. As such success in student mentoring is generally demonstrated through student graduation and associated outputs (theses, dissertations, publications, etc.).

Direct quotes from faculty describing pandemic impacts on research and student mentoring

"I have a colleague in my department who was awarded an NSF grant, and all of her data collection was to take place in China in the spring of 2020. She was set to leave for China in January of 2020, when the borders closed. It has been almost two years now, and she still has not been able to start her data collection, so her project is essentially on hold." (as reported by the lead senator for the college).

"One faculty team had a grant highly-favorably reviewed, but the grant was rejected on the grounds of COVID. The reviewers indicated "we do not see how this research can be completed during the pandemic." The team was encouraged to reapply in a future application period. While the PI was tenured, both co-PIs were junior at the time." (as reported by the lead senator for the college)

“We were approved to travel to the UK in summer of 2020 to begin data collection in the lab of a colleague at Oxford. However, as a result of Clemson’s international travel restrictions in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, my students and I were unable to go. A \$3.5M collaborative research proposal submitted to DOE (December 2019) with partners in the UK and European Union, was well scored, but not awarded as a result of concerns over travel and training opportunities for U.S. graduate students and postdocs to facilities in the UK.”

Internal and External Service: Generally, the requirements for service are weighted more heavily after tenure has been awarded and a faculty member is seeking promotion from associate to full professor. These activities include professional leadership positions, participation on external and internal committees, reviewing papers and proposals, and public or private consulting.

Direct quotes from faculty describing pandemic impacts on service

“I know of several more anecdotes of faculty facing additional hardship because of COVID being asked to take on additional uncompensated service (beyond their typical service load). I realize it's not tied to your question, but it's been quite widespread.” Statement from lead senator of a college.

“I fear that the loss of time devoted to research, and extension responsibilities (90% of my pre-COVID workload), will have repercussions on my productivity in this area for several years to come. This will mean that tenure and promotion to Associate Professor will either be delayed or based heavily on my pre-pandemic productivity.”

“In the past year, the amount of time I typically devote to service per week increased from a few hours to one or two full days. This time was spent mostly trying to help navigate the changing conditions of the pandemic and accommodate the faculty, staff, and students as best as possible. Additionally, managing my research team to maintain social distancing due to lab capacity was much more time consuming than expected.”