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FROM: Teenie Matlock, Vice Provost for the Faculty 

CC: Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Gregg Camfield
Interim Director of the Academic Personnel Office Rose Salazar

DATE: March 30, 2020

RE: Academic Personnel Guidance Related to COVID-19

This memo provides some guidance related to possible consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for academic personnel matters in the near future. (This reflects current planning and knowledge. Some decisions or suggestions may need to be adjusted at a later point.)

Let's continue to help our faculty feel as secure as possible when it comes to academic review and advancement. No doubt COVID-19 will have an impact on teaching and research efforts. As previously noted, by this office and CAP, disruptions will be taken into account when cases are reviewed in the future. It is important to remind faculty that consequences of the crisis will be treated with resiliency and compassion. We especially want our assistant professors and assistant teaching professors to have every opportunity to achieve tenure.

Collecting Spring 2020 Course Evaluations. Course evaluations will be collected this semester. It is difficult to know what impact shifting to emergency remote instruction will have on evaluations. Some evaluations may be less positive than usual, but others may be more positive, for instance, when instructors went above and beyond. Course evaluations may also provide useful feedback for instructors wishing to do future remote teaching. At any rate, faculty can opt to have their Spring 2020 evaluations excluded from future reviews. Faculty need not worry about being “dinged” for lower than expected evaluations. They are also encouraged to explain challenges in teaching in their self-statements.

Managing Concerns about Research Productivity and Future Reviews. Faculty naturally have concerns about how the COVID-19 situation will affect research. This is totally understandable. Disruptions from “stay at home” ordinances (e.g., having to address childcare needs, contend with a sudden shift to remote instruction) are likely to have an impact. Not knowing when such disruptions will end also adds to anxiety, which adds further distraction. Our colleagues, especially early career faculty, need extra support, resiliency, and patience at this time.

In preparing materials for future reviews, individuals can always explain how research was negatively affected by COVID-19 consequences. Self-statements can include remarks such as, “Because of COVID-19, I was unable to access facilities for weeks and this prevented me from completing [project or task] in the review period.” They may discuss how it affected project collaborations or grant-writing activities. They can also make note of invited talks at conferences or universities that they were unable to attend. In future reviews of their faculty, departments and deans should be prepared to mention special challenges that arose with COVID-19 measures implemented by the University (e.g., lab closures). Such factors should be taken into account at all levels of review.

Extending the Tenure Clock. Assistant professors and assistant teaching professors may request a one-year stop the clock (i.e., pause the eight-year limit tenure clock) for extraordinary circumstances that interfere with duties, as stated in APM 133–17-h-3:

***Significant Circumstance or Event.** A faculty member may request to stop the clock during the probationary period, for reasons due to a significant circumstance or event beyond the faculty member's control that disrupts the faculty member's ability to pursue his or her duties. Examples of significant circumstances or events beyond the faculty member's control for which the faculty member may request to stop the clock include the effects of a natural disaster or the effects of significant delays in the provision of research space, facilities, or resources committed to the faculty member and necessary for his or her research activities.*

UC Merced's Academic Personnel Office created a simple “[COVID-19 Stop the Clock Certification Form](#)” to be filled out by any assistant professor or assistant teaching professor who believes this accommodation is necessary. Policy requires these requests forms to be signed by department chairs, deans, and the Vice Provost for the Faculty, but they will be granted pro forma.” *Note:* Individuals are not required to seek a one-year extension; it is an option.

Completing Ongoing Personnel Actions. All departments and deans should continue to process on-going cases, including mid-career appraisals, merits, and promotions. Faculty may use Zoom (or other such platforms) to discuss cases, and to the extent possible, remote meetings should stick to normal department procedures. The Committee on Academic Personnel will continue to meet until late June, and APO is still functioning. Every attempt will be made to avoid delays.

Completing Recruitments and New Appointments. Departments should complete their current searches this year. Virtual campus visits for final candidates should be as similar to actual campus visits as possible; for instance, there should be job talks with Q&A, interviews, etc. *Note:* The US Department of State has suspended visa services. Without premium processing of H-1B visas, there could be long delays in the processing of visas for some new faculty. This may also affect new faculty who already have visas. Please let AP School staff or APO know promptly if a new hire's start date may need to be delayed.

Cancelling Sabbatical Leave. Faculty on sabbatical leave this semester or who have an approved sabbatical leave for Fall 2020 may want to cancel it because of COVID-19 impacts. Requests to cancel sabbatical should be emailed to department chairs along with rationale for why the cancellation is needed. Department chairs will forward the requests to AP School Staff and School Dean. *Note:* Any faculty cancelling a sabbatical will be expected to be engaged in University duties for the given semester. By canceling sabbaticals and having their credits returned, faculty are agreeing to assist as needed in terms of ensuring that the University fulfills its educational mission and its obligation to its students.

Thank you for your extraordinary leadership, patience, and dedication to our faculty and the academic review process. We will continue to update you as needed.