



WOMEN'S FACULTY COUNCIL

April 8, 2020

Dear Provost Sandefur

In light of the current COVID-19 outbreak, faculty are experiencing increased demands at work and home that may significantly disrupt their professional careers. Many have had interruptions in their research, including the inability to go to labs and field sites, availability of student assistants, availability of materials, and pandemic-related issues with collaborators, funding agencies, and journals. Many events have been cancelled. These challenges should be taken into consideration during annual faculty reviews and in the tenure, reappointment, and promotion process. Universities across the nation are readjusting their standards for promotion and tenure ([link to list of institutions](#)), and OSU faculty are eager to hear from our campus administration.

The Women's Faculty Council would like to endorse an automatic, one-year extension of the tenure clock for all probationary OSU faculty who are not currently under review for tenure. We also suggest that choosing to maintain one's original RPT timeline should not be considered an early action. Further, we express the importance of allowing faculty to 'opt out' rather than 'opt in' to an extension. This approach is especially imperative given that many reasons for granting an extension in the current situation are of a personal nature (e.g., caregiving, mental health, illness, etc.), which a faculty member may not wish to formally disclose or admit had an impact on their career. Putting the impetus to initiate an extension on faculty members can create instances of inequity and opportunities for implicit bias. Given that an extension request is already stigmatized in academia, an automatic extension would alleviate some of this concern. The University and its representatives have shown incredible empathy throughout the handling of the COVID-19 situation, and we ask that this empathetic environment be extended to faculty who may be affected for years to come. From a practical vantage point, enabling faculty to opt out will not create additional paperwork or labor that would inherently be present in an opt-in policy.

Please consider our suggestion as you move forward with decisions about the annual review process, and if we can join in any discussion as the university moves forward, please feel free to reach out to us.

Sincerely,

The Women's Faculty Council Executive Board

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