

Date: February 17, 2021

From: Chuck Taber, Provost and Executive Vice President  
Melinda Markham, Faculty Senate President

RE: Guidance for COVID-19 Impact Statements for Evaluations

Dear Colleagues,

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been felt across the university with faculty and staff facing unprecedented professional and personal challenges. In addition, protests for racial justice, the 2020 election, and the university's financial struggles have taken a toll on the well-being of all of us. Since the pandemic began, the university has taken steps to provide flexibility for both faculty and staff evaluations. For unclassified professionals and USS staff, the university [announced](#) in July the suspension of requirements for formal evaluations for 2020. For faculty, the university announced a [one-year extension on tenure clocks](#) for probationary faculty and [optional use of TEVALS](#).

On December 16<sup>th</sup>, we sent a [message](#) to deans, department heads, and faculty about the need for uniform tools for faculty to record, and departments to evaluate, COVID-19 impacts on faculty productivity. To that end, we stated that the Faculty Senate and Office of the Provost were developing guidance for including the following items in any future faculty evaluation.

- A COVID-19 Impact Statement for faculty to use.
- A prepared statement from department heads to internal reviewers about the pandemic's impact on faculty, and Kansas State University's commitment to quality of RSCAD, with an understanding that quantity or timeliness of productivity may be impacted in the post COVID-19 era. A similar statement would also be included with communications to any external reviewers solicited for promotion and tenure evaluation.

Last week, Faculty Senate approved the following guidance to assist faculty with preparing COVID-19 Impact Statements. While the focus of the guidance is on faculty evaluations, staff and administrators have also been impacted by the pandemic. We encourage all staff and administrators to talk with their supervisors about COVID-19 impacts in any evaluation of their work and in setting their goals and expectations for 2021.

If you have questions regarding the guidance below, please contact Brian Niehoff at [niehoff@ksu.edu](mailto:niehoff@ksu.edu).

## **COVID-19 Impact Statement Rationale & Guidance**

Approved by Faculty Senate on February 9, 2021

### **Rationale**

The COVID-19 pandemic immediately impacted faculty members' ability to pursue their work in all areas of achievement.<sup>3</sup> Most faculty members have had to do significantly more work, moving courses online, mentoring students in need, working outside university facilities, reworking university, college, and department programs, and serving on task forces to help the university and community manage current realities. At the same time, many faculty members are experiencing delays, damage, and/or changes in their research plans that have negatively impacted or will negatively impact their productivity and RSCAD record, due to, for example, the lack of access to labs and facilities, research sites, and research subjects, as well as cancelled conferences and inability to travel to conduct research and meet with collaborators.<sup>1,4</sup>

Faculty well-being has also taken a toll, through the anxiety and stress that COVID-19, protests for racial justice, the 2020 election, and the university's financial struggles have produced. Faculty are not only tasked with professionally caring for themselves, their students, and their colleagues, they are also responsible for personal self-care and the care of others in their lives outside of the university. Attending to health and well-being during these extraordinary times has also taken time and energy away from professional productivity.

These effects are not felt equally by all faculty members, as research shows that women and Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) faculty members have experienced the most adverse impacts on their work.<sup>3,4</sup> Those with children and other caregiving responsibilities were also heavily impacted. Meanwhile, during the 2020-2021 academic year various colleges at Kansas State University also experienced furloughs, which exacerbated these negative effects on productivity in RSCAD, teaching, and service.

The impacts of the pandemic will resonate throughout faculty careers for many years. Documenting these impacts helps universities recognize the differential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic—allowing them to mitigate against unequal outcomes. Documenting the effects of COVID-19 allows the university to assess faculty members fairly, accounting for their different working conditions under the pandemic. Through careful documentation and thoughtful recognition of the pandemic impacts in fair evaluation processes, the variable impacts of COVID will be less likely to worsen existing inequalities.<sup>3</sup>

All faculty, staff, and administrators are encouraged to submit a COVID-19 impact statement during the spring 2021 semester. However, the true impact of this pandemic may not be known for years. As a result, individuals may update their COVID-19 impact statement as deemed appropriate.

## How to Document Faculty COVID-19 Impact Statements

All faculty members should prepare a “COVID-19 Impact Statement” for inclusion in their dossiers for any future reviews, including annual reviews and, promotion and/or tenure reviews, post-tenure reviews, and professorial performance awards, beginning in Spring of 2021. The purpose of the statement is to provide reviewers the information they need to perform a fair, contextual review; faculty members should not feel compelled to divulge personal information that they would prefer to keep private.<sup>3</sup>

The COVID-19 Impact Statement should not be burdensome or overly-long. In one page, candidates are encouraged to describe both negative and positive impacts they have experienced as a result of the pandemic. The statement should identify impacts that help reviewers to understand how COVID-19 influenced their work, both in terms of the impacts on their workload, as well as unexpected opportunities and challenges. The ultimate goal is to make visible relevant, but potentially invisible, impacts. If a candidate believes that there was no discernible impact, they can use the statement to indicate that.<sup>3</sup>

The COVID-19 Impact statement should be organized into the following sections: 1) Research, Scholarship, Creative Activity, & Discovery (RSCAD); 2) Teaching & Learning; 3) Service & Engagement; and 4) Other (e.g., Administration, Professional Development, Extension). The following is a partial list of demonstrable impacts to help guide faculty in their statements.

### Some Demonstrable Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic<sup>3</sup>

#### Teaching

- Pivot to remote instruction in March, 2020, was inhospitable to everyone concerned. Some courses were more negatively impacted than others, especially those that involve lab/studio/clinical/field-based pedagogy
- For those who choose to include student evaluations for the 2020 spring semester, the comments and numeric metrics need to be contextualized for the rapid shift in delivery mode
- Technology challenges altered traditional methods of assigning and assessing student work
- Remote or hybrid instruction continuing into the 2020-2021 academic year required many faculty members to spend a significant amount of time, often unpaid, learning new pedagogical methods and technological approaches, and revising existing courses for new teaching approaches
- Advising & Mentoring—Students<sup>2</sup>
  - Additional work needed to support those experiencing health, economic, and social consequences of COVID-19
  - Additional advising time because of physical or mental health concerns
  - Disruptions because of concerns of status of international students or newly admitted international students being unable to travel
  - Concerns due to uncertainty and lag times in communication between when a student raises a concern and when a university response is received

- Other
- Caregiver needs intruded on teaching time
- Additional teaching responsibilities in response to pandemic (e.g., serving as a replacement instructor for a colleague; sudden changes in workload; serving as a technology point-person for colleagues, etc.)
- Cancellation of performances and exhibitions
- Cancellation of field courses
- Cancellation of community engaged educational programs
- Interruption of clinical teaching and supervision of internships; the need to revise how those programs are designed and delivered
- Required revisions of research and teaching assistantship activities for undergraduate and graduate students who are under faculty supervision
- Cancellation of conferences related to teaching professional development
- Student feedback potentially more negative
- Collaborators/team teaching members impacted
- Interruption/cancellation of study abroad
- Extension work was interrupted or cancelled
- Sabbatical interruptions, postponements or adjustments
- Other

### **Research, Scholarship, Creative Activities, & Discovery (RSCAD)**

- Lab closures, capacity reductions, relocations, and/or loss of research material
- Impacts on grant funding, including changes in the priorities of granting agencies, cutbacks in funding available, new grant funding opportunities, and the fact that faculty were encouraged to continue to pay students, postdocs and technicians even if not advancing projects.
- Cancellation of book contracts due to the closure of or cutbacks at university or other presses
- Cancellation of performances and exhibitions
- Cancellation of conferences before or after abstracts/papers accepted
- Inaccessibility of field work sites, human subjects, libraries, archives, and other research collections
- Delays in journal review process and publication schedules
- Impacts on recruiting, supporting, retaining, replacing, and arriving research personnel and graduate students
- Delay in arrival or inability to hire (e.g., due to travel issues) international students/postdocs
- Impact of the need to revise/redefine activities of undergraduate and graduate student research assistants and how those trainees are supervised and mentored
- Cancellation of invited talks
- Cancellation of fellowships, artist/scholar-in-residence appointments
- Caregiver needs intruded on research time
- Other workload priorities intruded on research time
- Collaborators/research team members impacted

- Extension work was interrupted or cancelled
- Sabbatical interruptions, postponements, or adjustments
- Other

### Service

- Time spent on COVID-19 response teams and committees (especially during uncompensated time / summer months)
- Pandemic response suspended or curtailed traditional and ad hoc service assignments
- Pandemic response greatly increased service responsibilities for some faculty, especially for those engaged in community outreach, governance, curriculum, or mentoring.
- Pandemic complicated external service responsibilities such as journal editorships, chairing of academic conference sessions, professional organization service, and other integrated scholarly service
- Service to community-based institutions was halted and then altered in significant ways; as were public presentations
- Caregiver needs intruded on service time
- Other workload priorities intruded on service time
- Collaborators/service & engagement team members impacted
- Sabbatical interruptions, postponements or adjustments
- Other

### Other (Administration, Professional Development; Extension)

- Added administrative responsibilities
- Alterations in and/or additions to meeting schedules
- Cancellation and/or modification of professional development opportunities
- Cancellation of Extension activities
- Other

\*Special thanks to the APLU interest group of faculty affairs professionals, especially Michelle Budig and the UMass Amherst ADVANCE team, Matt Kinservik from the University of Delaware, and Mangala Subramaniam from Purdue University for sharing their research, resources, and COVID-19 Impact Statements. Source material is listed below.

### Sources:

<sup>1</sup> Malisch, et al. Supplement to “Old Problem and New Solutions to Ensuring Gender Equity in Academia in the Wake of COVID-19” *PNAS* July 7, 2020 117 (27) 15378-15381; first published June 17, 2020; <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2010636117>  
[https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/suppl/2020/06/17/2010636117.DCSupplemental/pnas.2010636117.sapp.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1UmoVYqwwqYxnVrTFgPtO9Yj3SOj3LCWwM7QyxAY\\_dOAwpvIXKx8sCwrw](https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/suppl/2020/06/17/2010636117.DCSupplemental/pnas.2010636117.sapp.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1UmoVYqwwqYxnVrTFgPtO9Yj3SOj3LCWwM7QyxAY_dOAwpvIXKx8sCwrw)

<sup>2</sup> Subramaniam, Mangala. *Best Practices Tool #1: Documenting the Impact of COVID-19 on Faculty (tenure track / tenured)*. Susan Bulkeley Butler Center for Leadership Excellence, Purdue University.

(Fall 2020) <https://www.purdue.edu/butler/documents/Best-Practices-Tool-1-Documenting-Impact-of-COVID-19-for-tenure-track-and-tenured-faculty.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> University of Delaware “Report of the Task Force on Equity in Faculty Evaluation.” (Fall 2020) [https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/sites.udel.edu/dist/9/2591/files/2021/02/Equity-in-Faculty-Evaluations-Task-Force-Report\\_2-11-21.pdf](https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/sites.udel.edu/dist/9/2591/files/2021/02/Equity-in-Faculty-Evaluations-Task-Force-Report_2-11-21.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Clark, Dessie, Ethel L. Mickey, and Joya Misra. “Documenting Pandemic Impacts: Best Practices.” University of Massachusetts, Amherst ADVANCE Program. (Summer 2020) <https://www.umass.edu/advance/documenting-pandemic-impacts-best-practices>