

Faculty Senate



M2020.21.4 Motion to Recommend Adjustments by Deans and Chairs in Workload Policies and Expectations Due to Challenges of COVID-19 Pandemic

Originator: Senator Berg and the Executive Committee

Whereas: University of Memphis faculty members recognize the need to be strategic with resources considering the multifaceted effects of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). In light of such decisions now having been made in colleges/schools across campus, university leadership has asked faculty and staff to understand the realities of the budget challenges stemming from the pandemic. However, for this university to be fully prepared for the next several years, university leadership needs to understand the realities that faculty will face, particularly towards the attainment and maintenance of R1 status.

Whereas: Some faculty at the University of Memphis, including tenure-line, have been informed that their regular, expected teaching load will increase and graduate assistant (GA) support will be reduced or eliminated. Understandably, with no GA to support the administration of courses, faculty efforts toward teaching will increase considerably. As a result, those who traditionally take on multiple research projects and significant service commitments (in addition to teaching) may need to shift their focus and/or resources to sustain priorities and balance these with an increased teaching load. Faculty have also reported challenges of longer wait times for publication decisions, reduced access to organizations struggling in the pandemic economy, external funding sources no longer offering grants, and trying to produce research while working from home and keeping care of dependents. All these challenges can have significant implications for how faculty are evaluated annually and for those working toward promotion, whether it is from assistant to associate or associate to full professor. Indications to faculty are that many of the necessary changes that have been made will last for more than a year. Thus, it would be unfair to evaluate faculty whether annually or for promotion without acknowledging all these realities or require faculty to wait multiple years before going up for promotion.

Be it resolved that,

The Faculty Senate strongly recommends that the university administration recognize the challenges faculty will encounter and strive to return faculty workloads and support back to pre-pandemic levels as soon as possible. Until such a time, annual evaluations of faculty and decisions for promotion should heavily weigh the adjusted workloads and support of faculty stemming from the pandemic. Faculty should not be negatively affected by unexpected workload demands in their annual evaluations or efforts to be awarded promotion nor should such career advancement be delayed for multiple years as the university recovers from the pandemic.

Recipients:

Tom Nemon, Provost

Motion Passed 8/25/2020

Vote: 27 For, 0 Against, 1 Abstain