

July 13, 2020

Dear RIT Faculty,

As RIT continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Academic Senate and the Office of the Provost have collaborated on a series of adjustments to university policy designed to help faculty respond to the unique circumstances we all face. Thus far, these adjustments have included extensions of the tenure clock, deferrals of planned sabbaticals, and adjustments to sabbatical application eligibility. In this memo, we report on adjustments to Policy E07.0, Annual Review of Faculty. The Academic Senate approved these adjustments at their June 25, 2020 meeting.

Policy E07.0 contains two major elements: the faculty plan of work and the annual evaluation. Both are addressed in this memo.

Plans of Work: Most faculty established their 2020 plans of work prior to the onset of the pandemic and thus goals for this year were grounded in a fundamentally different environment than the one we are in today. The closure of labs and studios and the work involved in moving to remote instruction in the spring significantly reduced opportunities for scholarship during the spring semester and early summer. The work involved in preparing for a fall semester characterized by social distancing and blended class modalities may further reduce time for scholarship and alter some faculty members' teaching plans. Taken together, it is clear that the goals established earlier this year for research, teaching, and service should not be used to evaluate faculty members' performance in 2020.

For these reasons, faculty plans of work for 2020 will be suspended. This means faculty members will not be held to the goals they originally established and that no faculty member will be penalized for failing to achieve a goal documented in those original plans.

Annual Evaluation: The suspension of plans of work naturally raises the question of faculty evaluations which will take place during spring of 2021. In most colleges, faculty members complete extensive annual self-assessments of their success in meeting their approved plan of work goals. From that self-assessment, the department chair or school director prepares a formal evaluation, which can be equally extensive and includes an overall performance rating. The Academic Senate and the Office of the Provost propose that all colleges adopt an approach to self-assessment and evaluation this year that minimizes the time and effort required by all parties. To meet this overarching objective, each college will adopt the following streamlined approach for this year's annual evaluation process. RIT requires only that an annual rating be recorded in Oracle, that there be documentation available to support the rating, and that both the rating and the associated documentation be available to the faculty member. Keeping this in mind, the following will be required: (a) the faculty member will submit a brief report on accomplishments the specific

form of which may vary and will be determined by the college; (b) the department chair/school director will prepare an equally brief statement with feedback that explains the basis for an overall annual rating. For faculty who are on the tenure track, feedback must also incorporate progress towards tenure and a statement as to whether the faculty member is still on track for tenure.

During this unique year, the basis of evaluation will also shift. Almost every faculty member was faced with new and unfamiliar situations and demands that had to be rapidly integrated into their work. The move to working from home upended many of the typical expectations of faculty work, particularly for faculty who have children at home or who have to care for aging or ill family members.

It is important these factors be considered when assessing faculty performance this year. Department chairs and school directors preparing annual evaluations will actively consider the unique COVID-relevant context within which instruction, research, scholarship, creative activity, and service took place. Faculty members submitting self-evaluations or other materials will provide, where relevant, specific information about this context when reporting their accomplishments next year. Examples of questions to consider are adapted from the May 2020 joint memorandum on the use of SRATE feedback and include:

- To what extent did the faculty member experience changes in teaching assignments, including schedule changes and modality changes?
- What was the faculty member's level of previous experience with the courses and modalities he/she/they ultimately taught?
- To what extent were the technologies used for teaching during 2020 new to the faculty member?
- In what ways was the faculty member's ability to do research or engage in scholarship or creative activity altered and for how long?
- During the periods of remote work, how did circumstances at home impact a faculty member's ability to teach effectively and to engage in research, scholarship, and creative activity?

2020 continues to be a year of significant disruption and uncertainty and one in which we have all been called to exercise enormous levels of creativity and flexibility on behalf of our students as well as in our research, scholarship, creative activity, and service. The annual plan of work and evaluation process is one in which it is appropriate to exercise equal levels of creativity and flexibility and all colleges are expected to examine additional ways in which they can meet the minimum requirements associated with performance review while significantly reducing the time associated with completing this process.

Ellen Granberg, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
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