

UMSL | Academic Affairs

University of Missouri–St. Louis

Academic Affairs Communiqué

April 8, 2020

Welcome to the third **Academic Affairs Communiqué**, designed to address questions being raised by faculty and others in our campus community.

1. How can I request an extension of my tenure-track clock?

As noted in the March 27th communiqué, as per [*CRR 310.025 - Extension of Probationary Period for Faculty on Regular Term Appointment, Section B*](#), we have a process for faculty to apply for a one-year extension of the tenure-track probationary period in extenuating circumstances. **We fully recognize that the reprogramming of academic activities due to COVID-19 represents extenuating circumstances.** To initiate the process, tenure-track faculty will submit their formal request for a one-year extension of the tenure-track probationary period in writing addressed to the Chancellor, but routed through their Department/Unit Chair **by June 1st** of the calendar year in which they are scheduled to apply for tenure (e.g., faculty scheduled to apply for tenure in 2020-21 will submit their request by June 1, 2020).

For requests related to COVID-19, faculty do not need to provide an elaborate explanation with their requests. As with other requests for extending the tenure-track probationary period, Department/Unit Chairs shall submit their formal recommendations in writing on Department/Unit letterhead to the Dean. The Dean shall then submit the formal recommendation in writing on College/School letterhead to the Provost, who shall forward these recommendations to the Chancellor. The Chancellor makes the final decision to grant the request in consultation with the President.

All of those in the approval chain for these requests (e.g., Department/Unit Chairs, Deans, the Provost) are expected to **exercise generosity** with respect to recommending these extensions due to the reprogramming of academic activities during COVID-19.

2. I am scheduled to apply for tenure and promotion in Fall 2022. I am unsure of the extent to which COVID-19 has affected my research. Do I need to decide now to request an extension of my tenure-track clock?

No. Faculty who wish to request a one-year extension of their tenure-track probationary period must make this request by June 1st of the calendar year in which they are scheduled to apply for tenure. Faculty scheduled to apply for tenure and promotion in the 2022-23 academic year will need to submit their extension requests by June 1, 2022 following the same process outlined in #1 of this Communiqué.

- 3. I previously received a one-year extension of my tenure-track clock. Am I still eligible to apply for another one due to COVID-19 that has negatively impacted my research/creative works?**

Yes. As per *CRR 310.025 - Extension of Probationary Period for Faculty on Regular Term Appointment*, in extenuating circumstances, faculty may be approved up to two (2) one-year extensions of their tenure-track probationary period. Please follow the process outlined in #1 of this Communiqué. (*Note: Faculty who already received two one-year extensions of their tenure-track probationary period prior to Spring 2020 should contact Dr. Marie Mora, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, if they have additional questions.*)

- 4. While we will not have merit pay increases this year due to the budget shortfall, will faculty who were just promoted still receive their salary adjustments associated with the promotion?**

Yes! Tenured, tenure-track, and NTT faculty who have gone through the formal promotion process this academic year (2019-20) will receive the salary adjustments associated with the promotion to their new rank. These adjustments are not the same as merit increases.

- 5. I saw that some universities have decided to eliminate student course evaluations for this semester. Is UMSL going to do the same?**

No. We believe that students have the right to provide their input through the student course evaluations. Moreover, faculty who are excelling under the circumstances of pivoting their face-to-face classes to remote instruction may wish to have this type of input from students. At the same time, it is the expectation of the Office of the Provost that student evaluations are only one measure of teaching effectiveness, and that the Spring 2020 evaluations should not be weighted or assessed in the same manner as student course evaluations in other semesters. Such decisions should be made at the Department/Unit and College levels, and articulated in future faculty reviews of teaching.

- 6. I heard we have a hiring freeze. May I still hire a graduate research assistant using funds from an external grant on which I am the Principal Investigator?**

At this time, hiring for graduate research assistants through external funding sources such as grants is permitted for Summer 2020 only. We expect to have an update on hiring graduate research assistants for the fall soon.

7. How should I proceed when students report to me they have tested positive for the Corona Virus?

Chris Sullivan, the Student Health Officer on campus, is tracking student cases of COVID-19 and following up with students reporting to be infected with information on available campus supports and assistance. **Protection of the student's privacy is paramount** so please do not ask additional questions about a student's health and instead, forward the student's name to Chris at msullivan@umsl.edu.

8. If a student reveals sensitive information about social services needs such as housing insecurity or inability to support activities of daily living, what is the best campus resource to which I can connect them?

Please direct them to [Student Social Services](#). If you would like to consult with someone in that office please reach out to Robin Kimberlin at kimberlinrm@umsl.edu. Please do not forward emails containing private and protected student information as this is a HIPAA violation.

9. What do I need to do for students who are changing their grading option to "Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory"?

There is no special role for faculty in the request process. Students will submit the request to convert their course to an S/U grading basis through an app housed in the registrar's office. The request is routed to the academic advisor for approval to ensure that the request is appropriate for the given course or program and to mitigate unintended consequences of changing the grading basis. Faculty will not know whether or not a student is taking their course on the S/U grading basis until the end of the semester when grades have been submitted. This has always been the case with the S/U grading basis.

When submitting grades there is also nothing special required of faculty members. Faculty members simply input the earned letter grades as they normally do, and MyView will then convert to the S/U grades to be reported on the student record.

10. How can I help my struggling students within the context of my course beyond referring them to campus resources?

Trauma has serious impacts on the ability to learn but there are a number of great trauma-informed teaching strategies. The [April 8th CTL Newsletter](#) has a list of those strategies that you might implement to support your struggling students.

11. The March 27th Academic Affairs Communiqué mentioned extending some of the deadlines in the timeline for tenure/promotion reviews for 2020-21. Is this still the case and will deadlines be similarly extended for NTT faculty promotion reviews?

Yes, to both questions. We are currently working out the details and expect to announce these revised timelines in the next several days.

12. Will these Academic Affairs Communiqués be posted online?

Yes. These are being posted on the [Academic Affairs website](#), and a link to this website can be found on the main page of UMSL's [Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) website](#), which includes other useful links, such as to the Chancellor's updates and the Keep Teaching and Keep Learning websites.

Once again, **thank you** for all of the work you are doing to continue to transform lives during these challenging times. Each and every one of you is making a difference in the lives of our students and for UMSL. Please stay safe and healthy!

Sincerely yours,

Marie T. Mora, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, and
Beth Eckelkamp, Associate Provost for Student Success

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