



Memorandum

To: Deans, Department Heads, Chairs, Directors and Faculty

From: Andrea J. Romero, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs

Date: December 3rd, 2020

Subject: Additional Information on Annual Reviews

Dear all,

Nothing about the 2020 year has been normal or typical for anyone across the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the racial pandemic. We have all seen and experienced first-hand the extent to which the daily work lives of faculty have been directly impacted. As such, I am writing to share additional guidance concerning how to adjust our usual expectations of faculty activity in order to better correlate with the realities of the pandemics. We did sincerely investigate suspending annual reviews, however, both ABOR and UHAP policy mandate annual review for all tenure-track, continuing status and career-track faculty. We recommend that compassion for ourselves and each other at this moment requires us to reconsider using only traditional metrics or standards for review of activity during 2020. Rather than focusing on traditional evaluative approaches for 2020, we encourage a **formative approach** that provides opportunity for reflection on how faculty activity was affected by the pandemics and discussion for strategic planning of 2021 activities. Formative reviews emphasize professional growth through constructive support of assessing current activity and informing strategic planning. By focusing on strengths while identifying challenges, a formative approach can improve professional development and even encourage risks that may lead to innovation and advancement of knowledge.

The Provost, in a previous memo, provided **as much flexibility as possible within the bounds of existing policy**, which still requires peer review, scoring, and meeting with the department head. Although numerical scores are still required for annual review by peers and department head, we recognize the inherent challenge of reconciling a formative approach with

the need for scoring. Thus, rather than too narrowly focusing on scores, we recommend more emphasis on the written summary from the department head and meeting with the department head as an opportunity to engage in reflection and formative feedback. Student Course Surveys (SCS) were not required for 2020 instructors and will not be required for 2020 annual review. This was decided because of the rapid transition to remote learning in Spring 2020 and the variability and instability of teaching formats in Fall 2020. Peer teaching observations were still possible for remote learning, in which case it was recommended that observers choose only 2-3 areas to focus on while observing remote learning – [see this link](#) for guidance for observing remote learning.

We encourage celebrating faculty who have gone **above and beyond their traditional work** in order to address either pandemic. This will require **a more expansive view of what counts for each area of the workload as well as an openness to understanding ways in which faculty have needed to re-focus their efforts**. We can provide recognition of work that may be on-going, including unexpected service activities that have helped the university address financial changes, student needs, racial inequities and pandemic related topics. This may also include forms of **public scholarship** where faculty have addressed urgent social and health issues in public spheres. In addition, recognition of how faculty quickly pivoted in teaching and scholarship to integrate the health and racial pandemic historical moments, including rapidly adopting and refining remote learning strategies and technical applications. Such efforts deserve to be recognized as significant achievements during the 2020 year, especially during this time period when furloughs and pay-cut related flex time have reduced the amount of available or expected work time.

At the university level we recommend using [UAVitae](#) for the following limited content this year:

- Narrative summary of previous year and goals for following year
- Peer annual review summary and scores
- Department Head/Director annual review summary and scores
- Syllabus upload
- Faculty Workload
- Input only data in UAVitae that will be used to update [UAProfiles](#), specifically scholarly activity, interests, awards/honors, and bio.
- Updated CV upload

Formative Approaches to Annual Review Meetings between Faculty and Department Heads:

1. **Start with positive feedback and strengths.** Make sure this is a two-way conversation. Ask faculty to highlight 1-2 of their accomplishments during the past year.
2. **Ask questions for an honest conversation** about how teaching, research, service, or other activity was affected by COVID-19 pandemic or the racial pandemic. (*See handout from [Malish et al., 2020](#) for specific questions related to teaching, research and service in regard to pandemic alterations in workload*)
3. **Take an expansive view of what counts.** Consider preparatory work that will lead to future activity, acknowledge quick changes to address pandemic topics (COVID-19 or

racism), recognize additional service activities related to workgroups for topics of COVID-19 or racism pandemics.

4. **Make and refine goals for the coming year** and discuss long-term plans over a 3-year period for each section of their workload. This process can help faculty set and prioritize work goals for 2021.
5. **Discuss how short-term goals will lead to long-term outcomes.** Taking a long-term vision helps to contextualize the current year's activity. Quantifiable aspects of productivity fluctuate over time, which at times may leave faculty feeling unappreciated. Many faculty activities require several years to reach completion, and thus annual metrics may be misleading if they are not placed within a longer-term context.

Useful Reading on Best Practices for Faculty Performance Reviews:

<http://insidehighered.com/digital-learning/blogs/technology-and-learning/7-ways-performance-reviews-are-misaligned-learning>

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/01/26/aacu-session-focuses-holistic-faculty-evaluation>

For Malish et al. (2020) article see this link:

<https://www.pnas.org/content/117/27/15378>

For articles on how Gender and Race have been impacted by Pandemics:

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3623492

<https://www.epi.org/publication/black-workers-covid/>