



Dear faculty,

In response to questions raised during Faculty Senate on March 13th and directly to my office, I am writing to provide guidance on adjustments that will be made regarding faculty evaluations for terms affected by coronavirus. My goal is to fairly and accurately capture, recognize, and reward faculty work. So many of you are stepping up in remarkable ways to meet urgent and emergent needs and this ongoing excellence is vital to the future of DU. I want to encourage faculty to experiment, adapt, and adjust during the weeks online so that we are making continuous improvement.

In partnership with all the deans and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee I write to share these guidelines.

Teaching

Some academic programs have accreditation assessment rules that necessitate teaching evaluations. Elimination of course and teaching evaluations for spring terms is therefore not possible. While the format and process for course and instructor evaluations will remain the same, faculty are encouraged to discuss them in the context of the current crisis and to use the results for professional growth. The deans and provost have agreed not to use these in isolation to make decisions that affect employment. These evaluations will only play a role in any contract renewal, promotion, or tenure materials, if faculty opt to include them. We will continue to collect them, recognizing that faculty will lean in and shine during this time and we want to encourage, incentivize, and support proactive behavior.

Even in the best of times, we know these measures do not fully capture teaching excellence and can contain bias. While the timing is not optimal, considering

alternate measures of teaching effectiveness while documenting the labor involved, promises both short- and long-term benefits. Those in positional authority, including department chairs, directors, and senior faculty should communicate to colleagues preparing for tenure, promotion, and reviews your commitment to ensure a fair review process following this academic upheaval. Especially for newer colleagues and those near promotion, tenure, and renewal, please consider offering support for alternative best practices for assessing teaching, such as peer evaluations. Over the next few weeks, we will share some the promising practices we find in support of alternate evaluation.

Research

Many of you likely planned to complete or make progress on scholarly pursuits during spring break and have now been asked to redirect your efforts to preparing for online teaching. You may also have concerns about ongoing impacts to your scholarship next quarter.

I anticipate research, scholarship, and creative works will continue to be affected in many ways. Research may be impacted by reduced ability to collect data or transitions to remote data collection. Resulting grant progress and production of publications may be unpreventably slowed. Anticipated creative works and performances may be postponed, cancelled, or without audiences. Fieldwork may be curtailed, postponed, or cancelled along with opportunities for scholarly presentations. You may be supervising graduate student research that needs to be adjusted in terms of expectations or timelines. The goal is to continue to do quality work but in formats that are safe and at a pace that is realistic given the times.

We will be working in collaboration with you, department chairs, directors, and supervisors, your deans, and professional organizations to articulate what best practices in the evaluation of research, scholarship, and creative works look like in these times. Internal grants will have leniency in adjusting deadlines, and faculty are encouraged to reach out to external funders to determine what flexibility can be afforded. We will communicate via Jerry Mauck regarding policies from large agencies with multiple PIs on campus (NIH, NSF) that impact broad segments of our community.

Our research, scholarship, and creative works are as vital now as they ever were. Undoubtedly there will be pressing needs and new opportunities to realize our vision of being a private university dedicated to the public good. The world needs the work that we do and it is central to who we are.

Service

Service in these next days, weeks, and months may look different than it has in the past. It is more important, not less, even though it doesn't have committee titles or fit into accepted categories.

Capturing faculty workload has always been an imperfect art. Please document your work, so it can be recognized in annual reviews. While this would happen as part of our normal review processes, the current situation requires and inspires new activities and efforts and has unique demands.

I expect deans, chairs, directors, and direct supervisors will explicitly keep the context of this spring in mind when evaluating teaching, scholarship/creative work, and service this year and in future promotion evaluations.

I have always felt the faculty are the heartbeat of the university. Your compassion toward our students, your continued commitment to teaching, your pursuit of knowledge and expression of the human spirit during these times and beyond will be the reason that we thrive in the future. You are appreciated. Thank you for all that you have done, are doing, and will do.

Best regards,

Corinne Lengsfeld
Interim Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor

