



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

June 1, 2023

Dear Evaluators and External Reviewers,

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on faculty scholarship, teaching, and service create unique challenges—and thus novel risks—for the regular progression of many faculty careers. Current research and our own experience indicate that such risks are ongoing and tend to be borne unequally. As members of the academic enterprise, it is our responsibility to mediate these risks and their likely impacts on equity among faculty; thus, Villanova University encourages the application of appropriate judgement, wisdom, and discretion on the part of faculty evaluation committees and invited external reviewers. Such prudence is within the scope of existing Villanova University policy and is consistent with our enduring commitment to the Augustinian values of *unitas*, *veritas*, and *caritas*.

This letter and accompanying *Villanova University Statement Documenting Impacts of COVID-19 on Faculty Scholarship, Teaching, and Service* set expectations for the implementation of existing policy for faculty evaluation within the context of enduring impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Evaluators and external reviewers should keep several key tenets in mind when conducting reviews of faculty performance:

- Evaluators and external reviewers are instructed to assume that pandemic impacts occurred and continue to occur for each candidate. A range of possible impacts is described in the accompanying *University Statement*. This *Statement* does not provide an exhaustive list; the effects of the pandemic on faculty scholarship—in forms such as compounding backlogs for peer review and publication at journals and presses—continue to develop. Candidates are not required to document specific personal or professional impacts in their assessment materials but may choose to do so.
- Current University policy recognizes the natural variability in the time and effort a faculty member may give to teaching, scholarship, and service—variability that is certainly exacerbated by impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated factors beyond the control of any individual. This variability must be taken into account in all evaluations of faculty. Because external reviewers do not assess teaching or service, we expect them to be guided by the *University Statement* as they focus on the scholarship produced by the faculty member.

- Regarding candidates with scholarship expectations associated with tenure and/or promotion: **a successful candidate must demonstrate scholarly achievement through a documented record of scholarship, which will be evaluated for quality and potential for further contribution rather than pace or time under which work was completed.** Evaluation of this body of work must be done in the context of the *University Statement* documenting the tangible and intangible impacts, lost opportunities, and constraints on faculty productivity.

These expectations for evaluation committees and invited external reviewers will be in effect until further notice. This letter and the *University Statement* are reviewed and revised annually to meet current needs. The intent of these instructions is to ensure that faculty career progression at Villanova University will not be seriously delayed or disrupted because of the COVID-19 pandemic and that all faculty contributions, especially in these extraordinary circumstances, are recognized in keeping with our University mission and values.

Sincerely,

Patrick G. Maggitti, PhD
Provost

Villanova University Statement Documenting Impacts of COVID-19 on Faculty Scholarship, Teaching, and Service

I. Preamble

An individual faculty member will not be required within their assessment materials to explicitly demonstrate constraints, losses, or impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on scholarship, teaching, or service; rather, the University Statement will serve this purpose. All faculty across all disciplines have been affected to greater or lesser degrees by the pandemic, but the impacts are compounded by differences among faculty. Below we document some impacts that likely slowed the pace of scholarship or research productivity, affected teaching loads and evaluations, and influenced service activity. Some faculty may experience other additional impacts not listed. Departments or Colleges may supplement this University Statement with discipline-specific descriptions.

II. For Internal Evaluators and External Reviewers

This document is meant to assist internal evaluators and external reviewers in their review of candidates for tenure and promotion, considering the significant impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on all facets of faculty life. Existing University rank and tenure policy states that the *“criteria and norms are guides to be prudently applied in what is inherently a process of judgment that looks both prospectively and retrospectively and which evolves over time”* (Section D.I). Similarly, current University policy recognizes that *“for many good personal and institutional reasons, faculty members will vary, sometimes substantially, in the amount of time and effort they give to, and in the degree of excellence they achieve in, teaching, scholarship, and service”* (Section D.II). For reasons detailed in Section III of this document, the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed markedly to this variability among members of the faculty. **Internal evaluators should take this into account when assessing the record of a faculty member’s performance over time.** Because external reviewers do not assess teaching or service, we expect them to be guided by the *University Statement* as they focus on the scholarship produced by the faculty member.

Additionally, pandemic-related disruptions and constraints may impact a faculty member’s ability to maintain a consistent trajectory of scholarship. Evaluators are reminded that all faculty experienced significant disruption beginning in early 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and many constraints continue to this day. Impacts of the pandemic are likely to be both tangible and intangible. Considering this, and consistent with existing University tenure and promotion policy, evaluators are reminded that the *“quality of one’s scholarly achievements is more important than the quantity”* (Section D.II.2). **A candidate for tenure and/or promotion must demonstrate scholarly achievement through a documented record of scholarship that will be evaluated for quality and potential for further contribution, rather than pace or time under which the work was completed.** Each candidate’s record must be evaluated in the context of this University COVID-19 statement documenting the tangible and intangible impacts, lost opportunities, and externally imposed constraints on faculty productivity that occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

III. Impacts on Scholarship, Teaching, and Service

Losses and Constraints - Time: significant time reallocated to teaching from March 2020 through the 2020-2021 academic year; increased time providing service and support for students; time reallocated to caregiving duties; sabbatical leave time redirected; delayed review of manuscripts and grant proposals. **Physical space:** Villanova facilities, including research space and Falvey Library, closed from March 26 - June 25, 2020; student research limited throughout Summer 2020; limited research activity resumed on June 26, 2020, with strict attendance

Effective June 1, 2023. Document to be reviewed annually.

limits and social distancing measures in place; lost access to labs, studios, workshops, performance and practice spaces, archives, field sites; library resources available only through contactless pickup; additional faculty work required to develop individualized plans for closing/re-opening laboratories, including coordination/training of research teams and developing lab-specific safety protocols; Villanova facilities continued to operate under limited occupancy rules and strict social distancing guidelines through June 28, 2021, with continued indoor masking required until February 14, 2022. **Personnel:** hiring frozen from March 2020 - May 2021; delayed onboarding of research and teaching staff; restricted travel/funding for non-citizen visiting scholars; reduced graduate enrollments in 2020-2021 academic year; restricted interactions with support personnel due to social distancing, facility occupancy limits, or need to interact virtually. **Data:** longitudinal studies disrupted; research animals, plants, or cell lines lost or populations reduced; access to human subjects curtailed or eliminated; seasonality effects not documented; experiments disrupted during shutdown, resulting in loss of data or need to restart experiments. **Supplies:** PPE donated to medical facilities; continued supply chain disruptions for equipment and supplies needed to continue or restart research. **Finance:** students maintained on payroll without project-related effort; discretionary budgets frozen; investments in infrastructure delayed. **Opportunities and connections:** invitations to make presentations cancelled; connection to colleagues and networks at conferences diminished; essential research travel curtailed; interactions with mentors, collaborators, and informal networks disrupted; opportunities for informal and formal faculty mentoring and professional development diminished.

Additional responsibilities - Teaching: transitioning to online teaching in Spring 2020 within one week; learning and adopting new and sometimes unfamiliar technology; reimagining and redesigning academic year 2020-2021 courses for new delivery modalities; modifying lab or studio-based instruction; assuming additional teaching load due to personnel changes/hiring freeze; creating accessible materials; assisting others with technology. **Student support and mentoring:** supporting student transition to online environment; supporting new student career plans; transitioning student projects to allow for remote work; increased advising load; supporting graduate students who required program extensions or modified research plans; supporting students in distress; increasing emotional labor, especially for women and minoritized faculty already mentoring students at higher levels. **Service:** continuing essential committee work; assuming new committee responsibilities related to COVID-19; participating in public forums; transitioning service to online format (e.g., seminar series, department events, etc.); fielding increased professional service requests (reviewing, etc.). **Caregiving:** local school closures began March 6, 2020; stay-at-home orders and nonessential business closures in PA, NJ, and DE tri-state region began March 13, 2020; reopening of schools and businesses using highly variable hybrid and in-person models continued through academic year 2021-2022; caring for dependents with no alternatives for childcare, eldercare, and schooling during work hours; allocating significant additional time to care for others; assisting loved ones with disabilities or life-threatening conditions; supporting partner with responsibilities as an essential worker; serving as head of household with no partner.

Other Impacts - Concurrent crises: racial violence compounded pandemic's impact, especially for faculty of color and those they mentor; COVID-19 negative health impacts and deaths greater in communities of color; greater focus on racial justice, intersected with pandemic impacts; political violence compounded pandemic's impact on faculty and those they mentor. **Health and wellbeing:** lost work due to illness; increased anxiety for family, health, career; elevated exhaustion, isolation, stress, and burnout; coping with illness or death of family members or close associates due to COVID; diminished memory and cognitive capacity due to pandemic impacts. **Home office/work environment:** restricted to home office environment not conducive to thought work; limited access to adequate space and internet capacity for remote work; increased demand for home cable, wireless internet, furniture, and space and competition among household members for these resources.

Effective June 1, 2023. Document to be reviewed annually.

IV. Origin of the COVID-19 University Statement

In November 2020, Provost Patrick Maggitti tasked the Villanova Initiative to Support Inclusiveness and Build Leaders (VISIBLE) to lead a project to help the University address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on faculty career progression. With support from a team of consultants, VISIBLE implemented a broad, participatory project to gather feedback from faculty stakeholders to better understand the effects of the pandemic on scholarship, teaching, and service and to integrate this understanding into a faculty evaluation process that is equitable, inclusive, and respectful of disparate impacts. In February 2021, VISIBLE collected information through a confidential questionnaire and series of listening sessions open to all faculty and assembled an Ad Hoc Subcommittee with representation from key stakeholders to receive a report with findings and recommendations for action. VISIBLE disseminated an executive summary of the report to the faculty, conducted community forums to receive further feedback from stakeholder groups, and shared this additional feedback with the Ad Hoc Subcommittee. With all this information in hand, the subcommittee refined the original recommendations for subsequent consideration by the Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee (FRRC) and the Council of Deans. FRRC and the Council of Deans provided further comment on these recommendations and passed them to the Provost for consideration and implementation by June 1, 2021. This statement and accompanying letter from the Provost set expectations for the implementation of existing policy for faculty evaluation within the context of impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

V. Helpful Resources

- Bogliacino, F., et al. (2021) [Negative shocks predict change in cognitive function and preferences: assessing the negative affect and stress hypothesis](#). *Scientific Reports*, 11, 3546.
- Ford, T. N., et al. (2020) [Race gaps in COVID-19 deaths are even bigger than they appear](#). The Brookings Inst.
- Guarino, C. M., & Borden, V. M. H. (2017) [Faculty service loads and gender: Are women taking care of the academic family?](#) *Research in Higher Education*, 58, 672-694.
- Lund, E. M. (2020) [Even more to handle: Additional sources of stress and trauma for clients from marginalized racial and ethnic groups in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic](#). *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*.
- McDaniel, J., et al. (2020, September 18) [Months into the unknown, light-years from normal](#). *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2021) [Impact of COVID-19 on the Careers of Women in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- Office of the Provost. (2019) [Rank and tenure policy and the guidelines for preparation of rank and tenure files](#). (see Handbooks and Guides)
- Ramsey, S., et al. (2020) [2020 vision: How a global pandemic and the black lives matter movement focused our teaching](#). *European Journal of Educational Sciences*, 7(4), 27-39.
- Ranji, U., et al. (2021) [Women, work, and family during COVID-19: Findings from the KFF women's health survey](#). *Women's Health Policy*.
- Villanova Initiative to Support Inclusiveness and Build Leaders (2021) [Faculty work and life during the pandemic, national data on disparate impacts point to future challenges](#).
- Zhang, W., et al. (2020) [How does social distancing during COVID-19 affect negative moods and memory?](#) *Memory*, 29(1), 90-97.

This statement draws from the work of [Malisch et al. \(2020\)](#) and the ADVANCE offices at Rochester Institute of Technology and UMass Amherst. VISIBLE is funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation.

Effective June 1, 2023. Document to be reviewed annually.