

University Faculty Senate Resolution Regarding COVID-19 Response

Passed 20 April, 2020

In the midst of much disruption in all of our lives, it is clear that Tufts is a strong and collaborative community, and the administration, faculty, staff, and students have come together to preserve the remarkable learning and intellectual environment at each of our schools. While the entire community has risen to the occasion, in light of the extraordinary situation, the Senate has put together a statement describing the impact of the COVID-19 situation on the academic careers of faculty, and implications that this may have on faculty performance and review.

UFS resolution regarding COVID-19 response

The University Faculty Senate (UFS) lauds the administration for acting swiftly to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, including extending the time to tenure for tenure-stream faculty and school-specific decisions about grading policies and course withdrawal. As elected representatives of the University's schools, the UFS recognizes that at the time of the pandemic the faculty are integral to the important effort of ensuring the safety of the entire University through their extraordinary commitment to providing a comprehensive online education to our undergraduate, graduate, and professional students, as well as maintaining the vibrant academic cultures of our various campuses through virtual interactions. Faculty commitment to the Tufts community only further emphasizes our need to maintain the existence of academic freedom and shared governance through the University Faculty Senate.

Therefore, and in view of the fact that Tufts University, as an innovative university of creative scholars within a broad range of schools, exists to create knowledge and to have a positive impact on one another and the world, we have put forth the following statement:

Teaching and Curriculum Support

1. Tufts faculty have been called upon, in an unprecedented fashion, to create and deliver online courses in a space of two weeks or less; while the creativity and energy of our faculty is highly commendable, the rapidity of the effort will inevitably result in challenges to our students' learning and training experiences, and we anticipate that evaluations by students and trainees could be adversely affected. Faculty members, especially those non-tenured faculty or faculty without continuous term appointment, such as lecturers, adjunct, or clinical faculty, should be safeguarded against the consequences of any adverse effects on teaching evaluations during this mandated and necessary time of online education.
2. Although the faculty have successfully and admirably made a transition to online education in this extraordinary crisis, demonstrating that online teaching can be a useful part of the Tufts educational portfolio, a more permanent move to any online-based curriculum at the undergraduate or graduate level would be a major change to the University, affecting the

student-centered core of our teaching and research mission, and would require consultation with the University Faculty Senate as well as the faculty of the individual schools.

3. Any decisions affecting the curriculum, including assessment of student learning, should be made in consultation with the governance bodies at the particular schools; recognizing, however, that those decisions will affect the academic mission of the University as a whole and should be made in consultation with the University Faculty Senate.
4. Any new contracts for online teaching that are entered into at the time of this crisis should be of short term, in alignment with the duration and necessity of the COVID-19 crisis, and in such cases, faculty teaching materials must remain their own property.

Research Support

5. Both the Central Administration and the Administration of each school should ensure the continued provision of financial and administrative support for the research of Tufts faculty, including grant writing support, seed funding, and travel support, etc. Many faculty members are experiencing extensive setbacks in planned research and it is of the utmost importance that Tufts University supports faculty in getting their research back on track as soon as possible.
6. We commend the Administration for acting swiftly to institute a one-year delay for tenure-stream faculty. UFS recognizes that because of the profound disruptions to both the global and domestic research enterprise, affecting the research and scholarly work of faculty at Tufts University, tenure track faculty members across the University, who have not yet achieved tenure, should be allowed to stop the tenure clock for at least one year. Tufts joins many peer institutions who have adopted similar policies, allowing their tenure track faculty one more year before tenure review,¹ and such a policy has been recommended by the American Association of University Professors.²

Faculty Support

7. Although faculty with continuous term appointments or fixed contracts do not face the same strict time limits as tenure track faculty, they nonetheless work under expectations of productivity including for research grants, and it is important to recognize that there must

¹ Policies on stopping the tenure clock in light of COVID-19 disruptions have been adopted at Yale University, Stanford University, Harvard University (if scheduled for Fall of 2020 or later), Vanderbilt University, Ohio State, University of Washington (Seattle), Amherst College, and U. of Colorado at Boulder. Such policy considerations was covered in a recent issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education <https://www.chronicle.com/article/As-Professors-Scramble-to/248289>.

² <https://www.aaup.org/news/aft-and-aaup-principles-higher-education-response-covid-19#.XoNaQ4hKg2w>. We gratefully acknowledge this article in developing our statement.

be a grace period for the normal expectations for these faculty progressing to satisfactory scholarly productivity and thus achieving their career goals.

8. All Tufts faculty annual reviews should be evaluated in light of the profound disruption this year to their research, including but not limited to grant submissions, laboratory experiments, conference presentations, data collection, manuscript reviews, creative work and performances, and to their teaching as articulated in 1.

Maintaining Strong, Consistent Faculty Involvement in Times of Crisis

1. As we continue to address this crisis, as well as those in the future, Tufts faculty will be called upon to aid in this response in ways that we have not done before. Faculty should be consulted early and meaningfully in all relevant decisions. The Tufts UFS reminds all that its purpose is, among other things, to:
 - Contribute to the formulation of university-wide plans and policies;
 - Express and communicate the views, needs, and concerns of the University Faculty with respect to University governance, academic matters and administrative practices and
 - Bring to the attention of the University governing authorities all matters that the Senate judges appropriate;
 - Provide advice to University governing authorities;
 - Be consulted early in decisions that result in any major reorganization of the University;
 - Receive timely information on annual budget priorities and to provide advice thereon, while respecting the school-based budget model;
 - Nominate faculty representatives to those University-wide committees, task forces, and Trustee committees that have faculty representation;
 - Study and make recommendations to the President or Provost on any matter of faculty concern,

Therefore, the UFS calls for a more formalized process be developed and implemented that explicitly engages faculty in times of crisis. This process can be developed and instituted by the UFS or by a combination of UFS and Tufts administration. It is imperative that Tufts takes what it has learned, and continues to learn, from this current crisis to promulgate appropriate procedures and processes applicable university-wide and for each of its schools. Beyond the immediate response for preservation of the University's core values and mission, it will also be important for faculty to contribute to the important discussion and decision-making concerning how Tufts can live its credo of civic engagement by being a model for and guiding what will inevitably be a new society, both in academia and in the greater world, when that world again opens up.