

COVID Impact Statement Evaluation

Guidance for Reviewers

Michigan Tech faculty members have been asked to submit a COVID Impact Statement to document and reflect on the effects of the pandemic on their career. The statement will be part of the faculty member's Faculty Activity Report (FAR) and will be called out in the faculty member's dossier for the purpose of tenure, promotion, and review. These statements are intended to provide reviewers with information needed to perform a fair, thorough, and fully contextualized review of the faculty member's record.

Michigan Tech's standards for review and promotion have not changed on account of the pandemic. However, we recognize that the pandemic affected nearly all faculty members' productivity in research, teaching, and/or service in some way. We also recognize that faculty members experienced many different effects—both negative and positive—and that the magnitude of these effects varied greatly based on multiple factors such as academic discipline, research methods, and personal and professional obligations. The COVID Impact Statement is not an explanation for not meeting promotion or tenure standards; instead, it can provide important context about a faculty member's achievements and the timing of those achievements during the pandemic.

Reviewers should consider COVID Impact Statements in ways that advance inclusive attribution of contributions and accomplishments and minimize biases. They should take into account the context and challenges that a faculty member has faced, how they have mitigated these challenges, and how they plan to adaptively manage ongoing effects moving forward, as summarized in the COVID Impact Statement. Reviewers should recognize that faculty workload may have looked very different during the pandemic and extend the benefit of the doubt that the candidate prioritized their efforts given their unique challenges. For example, pivoting to online teaching or increased mentoring/advising responsibilities may have resulted in less productivity in other areas of work. Some faculty members may have had to shift their data collection methods or even change their research focus. Alternate methods of dissemination (e.g., webinars) became common.

Please use the following guidelines for reviewing COVID Impact Statements:

1. The COVID Impact Statement should be acknowledged as an important part of the candidate's FAR and dossier. Read it carefully to contextualize the candidate's case.
2. The stated impacts should be accepted as truth.
3. The faculty member's accomplishments must be evaluated based on the information that is provided. Do not make inferences or judgements about a candidate's situation.
4. The work that a faculty member produced must be evaluated based on quality and its impact on the field, not simply on the quantity of work.
5. The time to tenure/promotion must not be a consideration. Tenure extensions have been granted for a variety of valid reasons, which do not require any further assessments of validity.
6. Each impact statement must be considered only in relation to the faculty member who has submitted it. Making comparisons among candidates can introduce bias.
7. Recognize that the impacts of COVID have varied greatly among faculty. Attend entirely to how the candidate has overcome challenges.
8. Recognize that impacts may be ongoing, and may even be changing over time. Some impacts may affect a faculty member's work for many years to come.

In summary, reviewers should consider the impacts COVID-19 has had on individual faculty members and evaluate their records holistically and in context, taking special care not to introduce bias into their evaluation. While this is always the expectation for promotion and tenure reviews, deliberate attention to these matters is even more important as we recover from the pandemic.