



Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Towson University Faculty

Optional Statement for Inclusion in Faculty Tenure/Promotion/Reappointment Portfolios through AY 2022-2023

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In March 2020, Towson University moved to a remote format for all campus operations in response to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and the governor's order to close down facilities. This sudden transition in format required significant changes for all TU faculty, who had to finish the spring 2020 semester remotely. In addition to the significant workload demands of transitioning to a remote teaching format with one week's notice, many faculty experienced a severe disruption in their ability to conduct research, scholarship, and creative activities. All faculty travel was shut down and academic conferences throughout the world were canceled, causing disruption in research and conference presentations. In addition, all public and private k-12 schools moved to a remote format, support services for elder adults were closed, and daycare facilities drastically reduced their capacities through Spring 2021. As a result, many faculty had increased childcare and eldercare responsibilities during this time.

The pandemic continued in the summer of 2020, with the campus largely closed to faculty and students. As the State of Maryland continued to be under the governor's emergency orders to limit density, travel continued to be restricted, access to summer camps and daycare remained limited.

The pandemic continued for the entire academic year 2020-21. For the fall 2020 semester, faculty again were required to teach in a remote format. Some on campus faculty research resumed, but travel remained severely restricted. Conferences and professional meetings switched to online formats, and research and arts venues remained shuttered. The vast majority of k-12 institutions switched to virtual learning, daycare sites remained closed, and eldercare was still disrupted.

For the spring 2021 semester, TU began a gradual reopening of the physical campus. While the vast majority of courses remained in a remote format, some classes operated in a face-to-face format in reduced density; in some cases, faculty taught face-to-face and online simultaneously. In-state travel opened up again, though many research centers, performance venues, and archives remained closed. Out-of-state travel was very limited, and international travel prohibited.

On July 1, 2021, the governor lifted Maryland's state of emergency, and TU began full on-campus operations.

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In summary, the period from March 2020 to July 2021 was highly disruptive for faculty at TU and across the globe. Faculty were required to teach in a very different manner than most were familiar with, research, scholarship, and creative activities often were significantly impacted or even halted, and many service obligations shifted. Any consideration of tenure and promotion that includes this time period should carefully weigh the unprecedented challenges this unforeseen pandemic had on faculty during this time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mel Perreault', written in a cursive style.

Melanie L. Perreault, Ph.D.

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs

