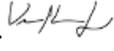


Date: August 10, 2020

TO: All Faculty, Deans, and Associate Deans

FROM: Vincent J. Del Casino Jr. 
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Guidance for RTP and Lecturer Evaluations in the Era of Pandemic

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Spring of 2020 created an unprecedented environment for everyone at SJSU. The move to fully remote teaching, coupled with the fact that we were asked to “shelter-in-place” and abandon our work on campus, has differentially disrupted the progress of many of our colleagues.

With this in mind, this memorandum outlines how this major disruption should be considered in relation to the evaluation of RTP and lecturer evaluations. We still don’t know how much longer COVID-19 will alter our teaching, research, and service work; the concerns outlined below will need to be taken into consideration by review committees for many years to come.

What appears below has been reviewed by a number of campus communities, including the Academic Senate Executive Committee, the Deans, and Department Chairs, as well as the Professional Standards Committee, which helped craft much of the original language that appears below in consultation with other constituents on campus. Comments from these groups have been incorporated into this document.

A. General Considerations

1. Application of these considerations:
 - a) All of the following considerations apply to *RTP evaluations*. This memo provides guidance to assist evaluators in this task.
 - b) Many of the following considerations apply to *Lecturer evaluations*—most typically the teaching considerations, but others also depending upon whether a particular Lecturer assignment includes service or research.
- 2) The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disparate and unequal effects on faculty. Just as in the past, evaluators must NOT make comparisons between candidates. To do so would exaggerate and worsen the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic for those candidates who are most affected.

- 3) The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic may become manifest in either some or all of the teaching, service, and RSCA work of a faculty member. Effects may result from the non-availability of library and archival sources in the summer of 2020, the closure of research sites in the United States and abroad, the suspension of laboratory and analysis facilities for scientific research, and so on. To fairly evaluate a faculty member, it will be essential to consider the trajectory of the candidate's achievements prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, *specifically whether that trajectory would normally have allowed the faculty member to meet the policy standards*, in addition to giving full credit for whatever the candidate was able to do to respond to the changing conditions faced by the candidate. The effects may be short-term or longer-term and may be considered as part of any candidate's file from Fall 2020 through the next evaluation period.

B. Teaching Related Considerations

- 1) *Draw no negative inferences if faculty elect to exclude Spring 2020 SOTEs.* Faculty are allowed (by S20-4) to exclude the results of SOTEs conducted during Spring 2020 from their "Working Personnel Action Files" (materials submitted for performance reviews such as dossiers). Faculty are also routinely allowed to exclude the results of other SOTEs (approximately 1 per year for faculty who meet this exception under F12-6, E4) from their evaluation process.
- 2) *Interpret SOTEs from Fall 2020 with care.* Many faculty were teaching semester-long online courses for the first time. Some courses are extremely difficult to convert to an online modality and some students dislike online modalities. Students could also voice negative reactions that have little to do with the quality of the instructor's efforts or the instructor's ability. Evaluators **must** read the entire SOTE and contextualize the differences that faculty may see in these relative to other similar courses taught in different modalities. Reviewers should carefully review all the SOTE measures, both quantitative and qualitative.
- 3) *Contextualize teaching with a holistic view.* SJSU policy says: "When evaluating effectiveness in teaching, chairs, committees, and administrators are required to conduct a holistic evaluation. This means that teaching must be considered in context and must be evaluated using multiple sources of information" (F12-6). *The COVID-19 pandemic is a paramount contextual factor when evaluating teaching* conducted beginning Spring 2020.
- 4) *Policy prohibits reliance solely on SOTEs to evaluate teaching.* During the current climate, it is even more important to evaluate teaching success in the context of the unfavorable conditions created by the pandemic.
- 5) *Direct observations (aka peer observations) must give credit to faculty who made significant changes in their teaching pedagogy.* As our policy says: "Advanced consultation is required so

that the peer observer can understand how to put the observation into the context of the overall course and curriculum” (F12-6). Observers must consult with the faculty member and summarize the work undertaken to convert course pedagogies and any other proactive measures undertaken to adjust in their reports.

C. RSCA Related Considerations

- 1) *Research should be contextualized by the faculty members and the review committees within the context of the impacts of the pandemic.* The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted research programs and agendas. Faculty should clearly explain the impact of COVID-19 on their research agendas.
- 2) *The faculty narrative statement should explain the trajectory of the research program prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.* This includes summarizing the impacts on the current research and outlining expectations for the research following a return to “normalcy.”
- 3) *Evaluators should evaluate a candidate’s RSCA potential during a future career at SJSU.* This will require consideration of what the overall trajectory of a candidate’s RSCA accomplishments would/will be apart from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This impact may track differently depending on where in the evaluation cycle a faculty member may be (e.g., a fifth year faculty member putting together their RTP file for tenure and promotion vs. a second-year faculty member preparing a mini-review).
- 4) *In some cases, faculty will have changed the research program and due consideration should be given to these changes.* The COVID-19 pandemic has provided opportunities for **some** faculty to rethink and/or rework research programs. Evaluators should generally be supportive of those faculty who pivoted their research in response to the manifold recent crises.

D. Service Related Considerations

- 1) For some faculty the COVID-19 pandemic created new and unexpected service loads, as they work(ed) to help the university, their departments and our students adjust. It is particularly important to regard service achievements within the academic assignment-RSCA-service “triad” and to give full credit to faculty who have undertaken additional service.
- 2) For some faculty, service opportunities may have been sharply curtailed and/or eliminated. For example, those faculty for whom face-to-face interaction in the community is an essential part of their service have been deeply affected. Such faculty must be given the same consideration to

those whose RSCA activities were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on the overall trajectory of their service.

- 3) Evaluators must bear in mind that many activities undertaken to assist SJSU and the community adjust to life during a pandemic can be considered “service” and credit should be awarded for this work.

E. Further Considerations for Preparing and Reading Dossiers

- 1) Candidates should use their narrative statement and/or rebuttal statement (as they feel appropriate) to explain the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their teaching, research, and service.
- 2) Candidates are not expected to reveal personal and/or sensitive information (although they can if they individually choose to do so) when explaining the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their professional lives. The description of the trajectory of their work (teaching, research and service) prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, what happened to this work during the pandemic, and plans for the future is sufficient. While evaluators need to understand the impact of COVID-19 upon a candidate, they are NOT entitled to know the specific reasons for that impact, since such reasons could disclose sensitive personal and/or medical information.
- 3) Evaluators must read narratives with a sympathetic understanding of the life of the pandemic. As part of the RTP training programs that will take place over the next several years, evaluators should generally be asked to consider the catastrophic effects of COVID-19 on the professional lives of their colleagues and how to best engage those in their evaluations.