

A Call to Higher Education Administrators Regarding Faculty Review and Reappointment Processes
During the COVID-19 Crisis

March 23, 2020

Higher education is facing unprecedented circumstances due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Courses are moving online; campuses are closing; conferences are cancelled. These changes are already generating significant consequences for institutions, faculty, and students. In response to these rapidly changing and uncertain conditions, several institutions have announced changes to their faculty review and reappointment processes, including allowing one-year tenure clock extensions and limiting how student evaluations of teaching from this term will be used. The American Sociological Association (ASA), in collaboration with the scholarly societies listed below, commends these institutions for quickly taking steps to recognize the parameters of our current context and encourages all institutions of higher education to consider appropriate temporary adjustments to their review and reappointment processes for tenure line and contingent faculty.

Faculty members are working hard to maintain educational continuity for their students, in some instances without necessary institutional support. They have been asked to restructure their courses, assignments, and pedagogies within days and to make sure that even students with limited access to online resources from their off-campus homes can fulfill course requirements. In addition, they are spending considerable time advising and reassuring students who are trying to manage this stressful situation. Such faculty labor is easy to overlook, but it requires a considerable investment of time and energy.

These disruptions to faculty work are compounded by the many disruptions throughout our communities. For example, school cancellations at the K-12 level mean that caretaking obligations have increased dramatically, often with an expectation that parents home school their children. Sick family members need care, and elderly people who are alone need support. At the same time that faculty are being asked to do more for their campuses, they are also being asked to do more for their families and communities.

In this context, we recommend limiting the use of student evaluations of teaching from the current term for both tenure line and contingent faculty. Transitioning a course to an online format mid-semester will create disruptions which are beyond the control of the instructor, and many faculty and students are learning how to use online communication platforms for the first time. It seems inevitable that these circumstances will affect student evaluations of teaching in ways that may not accurately reflect the faculty member's teaching under normal conditions.

We also recommend adjusting expectations for faculty scholarship during this period. Data collection with human subjects has been curtailed; libraries and labs have closed; conferences and invited lectures have been cancelled; and journal review processes are likely to be delayed. In addition, the time that faculty have committed to ensure continuity in their students' educational experiences means they have less time to devote to scholarship. It seems inevitable that these unavoidable circumstances will result in a period of reduced scholarly activity for faculty.

In conclusion, to assure the continuation of high- quality research and excellence in teaching, we recommend a pause in normal procedures for faculty review and appointment. We call on institutions of

higher education to clearly articulate to faculty how criteria and expectations for review and reappointment will be modified to reflect these unprecedented circumstances. Institutional measures must be adopted to support faculty in this new, uncharted environment. We also strongly encourage institutions to communicate these changes to their faculty expeditiously in the interest of allowing our colleagues to focus attention on the immediate work at hand rather than anxiety about future evaluation.

During this difficult time, we are grateful that leaders in higher education are working hard to support both their institutional missions and the many people engaged in the hard work of accomplishing those missions. (For a PDF version of this statement, [click here.](#))

Endorsements:

African Studies Association
American Academy of Religion
American Anthropological Association
American Association of Geographers
American Association of Philosophy Teachers
American Counseling Association
American Educational Research Association
American Folklore Society
American Historical Association
American Musicological Society
American Philosophical Association
American Political Science Association
American Psychological Association
American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies
American Society for Theatre Research
American Studies Association
Archaeological Institute of America
Association for Asian Studies
Association for Counselor Education and Supervision
Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies
Association for Theatre in Higher Education
CAA
The Council of Writing Program Administrators
Dance Studies Association
Executive Committee of the Association for Jewish Studies
German Studies Association
International Center of Medieval Art
Latin American Studies Association
Law and Society Association
Linguistic Society of America
Medieval Academy of America
Middle East Studies Association
Modern Language Association
National Communication Association

National Council of Teachers of English
National Council on Family Relations
National Council on Public History
Organization of American Historians
Rhetoric Society of America
Society for Cinema & Media Studies
Society for Classical Studies
Society for Ethnomusicology
Society for Music Theory
Society for Personality and Social Psychology
Society for Research in Child Development
Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study
Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics
Society of Architectural Historians
Society of Biblical Literature
Sociologists for Women in Society
World History Association