


MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 25, 2020

TO: Shane C. Burgess, Vice President for Agriculture, Life and Veterinary Sciences, and Cooperative Extension; Dean, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences

FROM: Jean McLain, Asst. Dean for Faculty Advancement, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences 

SUBJECT: Meetings with CALS Pre-Tenure and Continuing-Eligible Faculty on May 20 and May 22, 2020

On May 20 and May 22, I hosted Zoom meetings for the CALS Pre-Tenure and Continuing-Eligible faculty and agents to gather information regarding the COVID-19 shutdown and plans for re-entry. Specifically, in the email sent to all faculty and agents to inform them of the meeting, I wrote, "...other than the clock delay, I am not aware of any communications that address other needs of pre-tenure and continuing eligible employees. And this is why I'm reaching out to you...**what would you like Dean Burgess and the Executive Council to know as we move forward into re-opening?**" The meetings were attended by 22 CALS faculty, and I also received emails from an additional 3 faculty who could not attend the meeting but had questions/concerns to convey.

This was very much a listening session and was not meant to provide answers, though some discussion with answers did ensue (these are noted below). I realize that some questions raised should be addressed at the Unit level, others must be addressed at the College, or the Provost level. I have made no distinction between these below, instead choosing to gather all questions and concerns into a single document. Also, all points raised during the two hours of meetings are included below – there has been no filtering with respect to perceived importance of the comments. The comments made fell into **five** broad categories:

Communication of COVID-19 related plans from the upper administration has been extremely poor.

- The faculty are waiting for clear direction and quality information – but this is not being conveyed. Faculty are instead "finding out what's happening on the 6:00 news."
 - There is a general feeling that the Deans are not standing up for their people.
- What do faculty HAVE to do vs. what can they CHOOSE to do?

- It was stated that communications from CALS have generally been clear – but those from upper administration are poor. In addition, upper administration often asks faculty to commit to a change, only to change direction later on.
 - It was also stated that CALS and the upper administration are giving mixed messages, with the Dean asking the faculty to care for themselves, yet the University is asking faculty to do more work for less resources or the “ship will sink.” This mixed messaging is adding to the stress.
- It is not clear that faculty retention is a priority. Early-career faculty do feel valued, but the mixed messaging, and the knowledge that other Universities are not undergoing the same levels of cuts, makes career options outside of UA more attractive.

Scheduled pay cuts are not as progressive as they should be.

- The pay cuts seem to have been mandated “without forethought or planning” and “without consulting the people that are most impacted.” Many early-career faculty are in contact with peers from their graduate school days; they noted that Oklahoma State has made a 4% across-the-board budget cut, and that U Minnesota has cut only administrator pay by 10%. Colorado State and Oregon State are not making any pay cuts for early-career faculty. One faculty member stated that their peers at other schools are stating, “Thank goodness we’re not at the University of Arizona.”
 - A 15% pay cut to a faculty member making \$80,000 can present an enormous economic burden. A disproportionate number of early-career faculty are faced with costs of child care, new mortgages, and financial needs of extended family.
- There is an understanding that the cuts are needed due to reduced enrollment forecasts, but one faculty member stated that they had heard that CALS enrollment is actually up from last year.
 - They requested greater transparency in delivery of this data.
 - *I told them that their unit heads are receiving updated enrollment numbers regularly, and this should be passed along to faculty at the unit level.*
- It seems like “we’re being asked to do twice as much work with half the amount of support.”
- However, being able to pay their own summer salary from research grants is greatly appreciated.

Faculty have misgivings about returning to classroom teaching in the fall.

- They feel that the message being delivered is disingenuous to students – it is being announced that there will be live classroom teaching, but no one has polled the faculty on whether they are willing/able to return to the classroom.
- What is remote teaching vs. hybrid teaching vs. iClass? What do these mean?
- There is some awareness of the current proposal for faculty to clean classrooms after teaching. Is this true? How will faculty know when a room is clean (or not)?

Despite the one-year clock extension, concerns remain about promotion.

- Women are disproportionately affected by the shutdown (mainly due to childcare duties).
 - Can the University collect data on this? *I assured them that this was in the planning*

stages at the Provost's office.

- Several faculty stated that they are not fully aware of the annual timeline/due dates for dossiers – for example, one was told that their 3-year dossier would be due “sometime in early September.” *I intend to reach out to all CALS unit heads this week to encourage them to send a unit-wide email with explicit due dates for submission of dossiers, and a timeline for review at each level, to final decision from the Provost's office.*
- In addition to the 1-year delay, are dossiers impacted by the COVID-19 shutdown going to be assessed differently? Will the hardships be taken into account?
 - If the faculty member goes up for tenure in Year 7, will there be an expectation of 6 years of publications? Or 7?
 - The clock delay is greatly appreciated, but it will take a great deal of time to ramp up research again, and when this is done, research will be limited (by social distancing, for example).
 - Opportunities to present invited talks will also be severely curtailed.
- Can the faculty member receive more feedback on their 3-year dossier? Just getting a letter saying, “good job, publish more” isn't that helpful. Can the guidance be more descriptive and take into account the committee comments?
 - *Shane, I would like to discuss this with you. If this is allowed by the Provost's office, I am willing to take this on.*
- Faculty requested assistance from CALS regarding teaching assessment. Those in small units are unable to find peers in their units to conduct consistent and helpful teaching reviews. *Question for Mike Staten – can the Cardon Fellows assist with this? Perhaps we could create a CALS teaching assessment team to assist in conducting reviews?*
 - There was a great amount of concern expressed about student evaluations – the thinking being that frustrated students will not provide the constructive feedback needed to improve a course.
- One faculty member asked about options for delaying spending of startup into additional years. *Question: is this something to be worked out with the unit head?*
 - It was also noted that the waiver request (late March-early April) for spending of startup was very confusing and poorly managed. Each faculty member responded to a different schedule, depending on where startup funds were held. This started a rumor mill among early career faculty and added to stress.

Personal lives are in upheaval due to large number of as-yet-unresolved influences.

- Young children at home, summer camps are closed, grade schools and preschools may be closed in the fall. This will be immensely problematic for many early-career faculty.

Cc: CALS Executive Council
All pre-tenure and continuing-eligible faculty