

**RESOLUTION TO CLARIFY LANGUAGE IN THE FACULTY HANDBOOK
REGARDING EXTENDING THE TENURE AND CONTINUED APPOINTMENT CLOCK**

WHEREAS, Virginia Tech’s Faculty Handbook includes policies for all university faculty; and

WHEREAS, the Faculty Handbook provides guidance in chapter three for faculty extending the tenure clock and in chapter four for faculty extending the continued appointment clock; and

WHEREAS, extensions of the probationary period have been granted for the birth and adoption of children, illnesses, and other circumstances that have a significant impact on faculty members’ productivity; and

WHEREAS, the 2021-2022 Faculty Handbook, section 3.4.2.1, notes that “a cumulative total of two years [of probationary period extensions] is usually the maximum probationary period extension for any combination of reasons.” And that “[t]he provost may approve exceptions to these limitations;” and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant impacts for faculty members and the provost has approved extensions related to the pandemic. When coupled with the potential for pre-tenure and continued-appointment track faculty to request additional extensions for other life events described above, it is reasonable to assume that there will be faculty members who exceed two years in extensions to their probationary period extension; and

WHEREAS, to mitigate some of the impacts from COVID-19, policy guidance (“Adaptations to Promotion and/or Tenure due to COVID-19”) was developed and shared on the provost’s Promotion and Tenure webpage. This guidance notes that “if a faculty member applies for tenure in or prior to their original mandatory year and is turned down, they should use all of their extensions before applying a second time”; and

WHEREAS, faculty members may have taken extensions and find that the impact on their productivity was not as significant as they anticipated or that they regained their momentum more quickly than they expected; and

WHEREAS, if a faculty member who has taken multiple extensions seeks tenure or continued-appointment in a non-mandatory year and are unsuccessful, under current guidelines described in the Faculty Handbook and “Adaptations to Promotion and/or Tenure” documents, they may have to wait several years to reach their mandatory year and apply a second time; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Tech has a successful history of non-mandatory promotions and is well positioned for the coming years;

WHEREAS, given the anticipated increase in the number of extensions that faculty have taken during the COVID-19 pandemic that will impact the promotion and tenure process for many years to come, it is valuable to revisit the language and practice around tenure decisions in non-mandatory years, and provide opportunities for faculty to advance in their careers when they are ready, and to feel supported by their department, their college, and the university in doing so;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Faculty Handbook include the following language in chapters three and four as indicated below in red:

Extending the Tenure Clock

A one-year probationary period extension is *automatically* granted to either parent (or both, if both parents are tenure-track faculty members) in recognition of the demands of caring for a newborn child or a child under five newly placed for adoption or foster care. The request should be made within a year of the child's arrival in the family.

An extension of the probationary period may also be approved on a discretionary basis for other extenuating non-professional circumstances that have a significant impact on the faculty member's productivity, such as a serious personal illness or major illness of a member of the immediate family. In rare cases, extraordinary professional circumstances not of the faculty member's own making may be acceptable justification for a probationary period extension, for example exceptional delays in providing critical equipment, laboratory renovations, or other elements of the committed start-up package essential to establishing a viable research program.

Faculty members who benefit from this policy are expected to fulfill their usual responsibilities during the probationary period extension unless they are also granted a period of modified duties or unless other arrangements are made. (See chapter three, "Modified Duties.")

Probationary period extensions are granted in one-year increments. A cumulative total of two years is usually the maximum probationary period extension for any combination of reasons. Requests should be made within a year of the qualifying event or extenuating circumstance. The provost may approve exceptions to these limitations.

Faculty members may only be evaluated two times for promotion and tenure or continued appointment. The two evaluations may each be in a non-mandatory year, but in the case of a second non-mandatory negative decision, the faculty member will not be allowed a third evaluation. If the second evaluation results in a negative decision, a one-year terminal appointment is offered.

Requests for a probationary period extension are submitted in writing to the department head or chair. (A form is available on the provost's website.) Approval is automatic for new parents. Documentation of medical reasons (other than childbirth or adoption) is required prior to approval; documentation of other extenuating circumstances may also be required. Approvals by the department head or chair, dean, and provost are required for probationary period extensions. The faculty member may appeal denial of the request to the next higher level in their organizational reporting structure.

It is very important that all individuals and committees participating in tenure reviews understand that any individual who receives a probationary period extension must be held to the same standard—not a higher or more stringent one—to which other candidates without such an extension are held. This is also true in the case where the candidate's dossier is considered on the original schedule for review. However, in this instance where an approved extension was granted but not utilized, the tenure review is not considered mandatory and can be conducted again in the subsequent year without penalty. A probationary extension usually extends the time frame for each subsequent review and reappointment during the probationary period. For example, an extension granted prior to the fourth year review and reappointment typically delays that review by one year.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the resolution to revise language in the Faculty Handbook to clarify extending the tenure and continued appointment clock be approved.

June 7, 2022