



# SMU

*Elizabeth G. Lobo*  
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
*Office of the Provost*

March 17, 2021

Dear Pre-Tenure Faculty:

In considering the impact of the pandemic in academic year 2020-21 on reduced travel and other possible interruptions to research, the following additions and clarifications have been made to the promotion and tenure process and third-year review for faculty. These changes complement the letter from the Provost Office dated April 20, 2020 which can be found at this link: [Letter on COVID-related Tenure Issues](#).

- The automatic one-year extension to pre-tenure faculty is being extended to faculty whose contracts began in fall 2020.
- All eligible faculty can exercise this extension to advance for consideration to tenure in the 7<sup>th</sup> year, rather than the 6<sup>th</sup> year, assuming a successful mid-point review for contract renewal (normally called the “third-year review”). This extension has already been automatically applied to terms.
- Faculty may choose not to exercise the automatic one-year extension. In the spring semester of the year prior to advancement to candidacy, faculty should consult with their mentors, chairs, and Dean’s office to determine whether they prefer to exercise (or not) the extension. The Provost Office must be notified on or before March 31<sup>st</sup> by sending a memo to Judy King if faculty opt out of the one-year extension.
- Faculty can exercise this one-year extension either prior to or after their mid-point review for contract renewal, which normally takes place in the third year.
- Faculty in the pre-renewal contract period (the three years between the hire date and the mid-point review) can choose to exercise the automatic extension in the pre-renewal period, which would move the review year into the fourth year, rather than the typical third year. The deadline for the request is September 1, of the academic year in which the third-year review would take place. Tenure-track faculty are not eligible for a junior faculty research leave until they have successfully completed this review.
- Faculty in the pre-tenure contract period (the three years between a successful mid-point review and advancement to consideration for tenure) who have not already exercised their extension can choose to exercise the automatic extension in this period.
- Faculty who do not receive a successful mid-point review (whether it takes place in the third year or in the fourth year) and faculty who do not have a successful tenure review will be issued a one-year terminal contract.

We encourage academic units to support their junior faculty in a number of ways, including by appointing formal mentors (within SMU or from other universities); meeting one-on-one with faculty annually to discuss progress, concerns, and options; hosting discussions with senior tenured faculty to support clarity around expectations and logistics; and encouraging faculty to make use of resources such as programs delivered by the National Council for Faculty Diversity and Development (NCFDD), of which SMU is a member.

Our junior faculty represent a wide variety of disciplines and are situated in a number of personal and professional situations. Some areas of scholarly and creative impact, for example, those which require travel or access to particular people or contexts, may present challenges beyond the control of faculty. Other areas might have presented fewer challenges from the pandemic. There is no expectation that the choice to make use, or not, of the one-year extension has any impact on perceptions that a faculty member is going up “early” or “on time.” Nor will there be any change in standards regardless of whether a faculty member takes the one-year extension or not.

The above recommendations have been created in consultation with the Deans and the Faculty Senate. Thank you for all that you continue to do in the areas of teaching, research/creative activity, and service during this time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth G. Lobo', written over a light blue circular stamp.

Elizabeth G. Lobo  
Provost and Vice President  
for Academic Affairs