


## FAC: COVID-19 Policies for Faculty at the University of Delaware

### A. Cover Page

Institute of Higher Education (IHE): University of Delaware



**Brief Introduction:** University of Delaware (UD) is a mid-sized, suburban campus located between Washington D.C and New York City. It has ~23,000 students and 1,356 full-time tenured/tenure-track (TT) and non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty distributed among eight colleges. UD is a public institution with a private charter, the largest university and the primary doctoral granting institution in the state. It shares similarities with other flagship state institutions, yet is smaller than most and does not have a law or medical school. A Carnegie Research University with very high research activity, UD is heavily invested in STEM research. Roughly [two-thirds of UD's full-time faculty](#) (Associate in Arts faculty not included) and [over three quarters of UD's doctoral programs](#) are in STEM disciplines (social and health sciences are included in STEM throughout this document).

UD has made strides in STEM faculty diversity in the last decade. For example, between [2012](#) and [2020](#), the percentage of women among T/TT faculty in the College of Engineering (COE) rose from 15.7% to 22%. In the Natural Sciences (NS), this figure rose from 23.7% to 32% during the same time span. Progress has been slower with respect to racial and ethnic diversity. Again using COE and NS as an example, in fall 2020 COE and NS combined had only 20 non-White, non-Asian T/TT faculty (out of 293 total; 6.8%). Also potentially precarious are advances made with respect to academic rank and leadership. For example, in the COE women disproportionately occupy the lower ranks. [In fall 2021](#), women comprised 32% of full-time NTT faculty, 29% of T/TT assistant professors, 26% of T/TT associate professors, and only 19% of T/TT full professors. One of COE's seven department chairs is a woman. While this is an improvement since 2012 ([7.3% COE T/TT full professors and no women chairs](#)), work remains to increase women's representation at higher ranks.

Like many IHEs, UD has established policies (described in section B) intended to equalize access to career opportunities for faculty in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. But policies alone do not always translate to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). UD has institutional resources and experience that will help ensure our COVID-19 policies for faculty will lead to DEI on our campus. UD has been monitoring and working to enhance faculty DEI, with an emphasis on STEM, since 2008 through its ADVANCE program, funded initially by an NSF ADVANCE PAID grant and now by an Institutional Transformation award (2014-present). Examples of UD ADVANCE actions to improve faculty DEI include supporting formal mentoring for faculty, developing workshops on best practices for members of all faculty search committees, and supporting faculty leadership and advancement. The ADVANCE team monitors faculty DEI through regular faculty climate surveys (our most recent survey was done through Harvard's [COACHE](#)) and research using [institutional data](#) on topics such as UD faculty career outcomes by gender, race/ethnicity, and research discipline. A strong partnership between UD's ADVANCE team and Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE) is an asset that helps the institution identify areas in need of attention and take action.

Other faculty stakeholders invested in policies related to faculty DEI include UD's active Faculty Senate (which has a DEI Committee) and faculty union. UD ADVANCE has a history of working effectively with these groups and with the upper administration to establish, interpret, disseminate, and strengthen policies and practices related to faculty career advancement and equity on our campus. Other campus DEI partners include UD's Anti-Racism Initiative (UDARI) and the UD Faculty Achievement Program (UDFAP), which supports informal faculty mentoring (e.g., peer mentoring groups, accountability structures, and intensive P&T dossier-preparation workshops).

**Acknowledgement statement.** Groups that contributed to the development of the actions described in this submission include the Provost's office, The Provost's Task Force on Equity in Faculty Evaluation, the Faculty Senate, UD ADVANCE, OIRE, UDFAP, and the Provost's Return to Campus Task Force.

## B. Narrative

### Background: Description of the Anticipated Long-Term Impact(s) on DEI at IHEs and at UD

A broad literature documents gender and racial/ethnic disparities among faculty in higher education. Women faculty are underrepresented in STEM (among other disciplines) and faculty of color are underrepresented in most fields [25]. (Note: Asian men are not underrepresented in engineering and the natural sciences at UD.) Both groups experience inequities in resource distribution, often have smaller professional and mentoring networks, and experience chillier climates [3, 7, 10, 11, 17, 20]. Women faculty perform more service than men, with faculty of color facing particularly heightened service burdens [14, 16]. Evaluation bias is also well documented and can lead to gender-based and racial/ethnic disparities in hiring decisions, grant funding, peer review, student evaluations of teaching, promotion & tenure (P&T), and so forth [4, 5, 10, 11, 17, 20, 29, 32].

The COVID-19 pandemic is already amplifying pre-existing inequities among faculty in higher education [22]. Both anecdotal and hard data indicate that women faculty and faculty of color have experienced more adverse impacts on their work than their white male counterparts [12, 23, 27]. One line of research documents lower research productivity – typically measured in terms of number of manuscript submissions or order of authorship – since the start of the pandemic for these groups [1, 2, 18, 19, 21, 27]. A second line of research indicates that women have experienced larger reductions in their work hours than men in the pandemic [6, 9, 26]. Although the reasons for this are still under investigation, data suggest that women faculty took on greater amounts of caregiving and housework during the pandemic than men [33]. Research also indicates that women and faculty of color tend to perform more service and mentoring work (often invisible or undervalued) than their male colleagues [14, 15]. It is anticipated that disparities in productivity and in time for work, if not mitigated, will lead to disparities in retention and advancement of both groups. There are other concerns as well. For example, research demonstrates that mothers face bias in workplace evaluation, with faculty mothers being no exception [8]. Likewise, faculty who have historically experienced bias in research funding may have a harder time rebounding from pandemic-related research setbacks [12]. If not addressed these factors and others build upon each other and are likely to result in long-term negative impacts on DEI at IHEs.

We expect that the long-term impacts of the pandemic on faculty careers at UD will be similar to those described above. The impacts for women in STEM and for faculty of color are of particular concern. As discussed in the cover sheet, at UD women faculty are underrepresented in most STEM disciplines. The institution has seen gains in women's representation at lower ranks, but women remain underrepresented at the full professor level. Faculty of color are underrepresented in departments campus-wide, with the exception of Asian men in STEM. Prior UD ADVANCE research shows that [rates of turnover for women of color faculty at UD outpace that of their white colleagues](#) and that [faculty of color perceive their departmental climate as less positive than white faculty](#). While some strides have been made (see above), if our existing women faculty and faculty of color hit the roadblocks expected from the pandemic, it could slow existing progress in faculty DEI.

Actions taken by UD in response to the pandemic have occurred on campuses across the country. What UD has done especially well is the integration of these responses with other DEI work on campus.

### Policy Actions Taken

In August 2020, Provost Robin Morgan formed a Task Force on Equity in Faculty Evaluation. This group was composed of faculty and administrators from across campus; their charge was to develop policy proposals to address the impacts of the pandemic on faculty work life and DEI at UD. The committee reviewed the literature on equity in faculty evaluation and the early work on the COVID-19 impacts on DEI [30]. They also reviewed institutional responses from a range of other universities (e.g., U-Mass and U-Wisconsin) as well as emergent guidance from professional associations, granting agencies, and other sources (e.g., [13, 24]). They proposed four broad recommendations for all (non-temporary) UD faculty. The policies were reviewed and quickly adopted with minor modifications by the [University Faculty Senate](#). The policies include (paraphrased):

1. *All faculty receive a one-year automatic extension to the tenure/contract clock.* This recommendation was made in response to clear evidence that faculty research productivity was interrupted during the pandemic, with uneven outcomes expected for different disciplinary and demographic groups. The universal extension does not affect a faculty member's eligibility to exercise regular 'Stop the Clock' options (e.g., for childbirth or adoption). The policy is automatic, with a provision to opt-out if faculty would like to apply for promotion and tenure on their original contract schedule. Opt-out approaches are thought to be more equitable and aim to mitigate bias by normalizing the use of the extra year [12].
2. *The inclusion of student evaluations of teaching (SET) for Spring 2020 and AY 2020-2021 are optional in the promotion and tenure process.* The rapid transition to online learning was expected to result in generally lower levels of student satisfaction with courses and might lead to lower SET scores. Additionally, the existing literature on gender and racial/ethnic bias in SET suggest that impacts on scores might be uneven across groups of faculty and result in a double-downgrading for already marginalized groups.
3. *Inclusion of a 'COVID-19 Impact Statement' in P&T dossiers.* Emerging guidance from national granting agencies and academic associations emphasizes the importance of adapting policy and practice around faculty reviews in order to ensure that reviews will fairly and consistently account for the disruptions of the pandemic [13]. To that end, all faculty members are required to prepare a 'COVID-19 Impact Statement' for inclusion in their P&T dossiers. The purpose of this statement is to provide reviewers the information they need to perform a fair, contextual review. All faculty are required to submit a statement, regardless of whether they were negatively impacted, in order to normalize their use and to mitigate against bias.
4. *Inclusion of a statement to external evaluators about the effects of COVID-19 on faculty development at UD.* This statement explains UD's COVID-19 policies (specifically, numbers 1 and 2 above) and encourages reviewers to recognize ways in which the pandemic affected the candidate's work. This policy is expected to reduce variability in how external reviewers take into account pandemic disruptions in faculty productivity.

Policies 3 and 4 are in place through the 2028-2029 academic year. Although the pandemic working conditions are fresh in people's minds now, attention may wane over time. Pandemic impacts are nonetheless expected to affect faculty research trajectories for many years to come (~10 years).

Separately, the administration offered replacement sabbatical for those faculty whose regularly scheduled sabbatical was interrupted by the pandemic to ensure those faculty did not lose critical professional time.

### How Actions Ensure DEI in STEM

Establishing policies is not enough to ensure DEI. Policies need to be intentionally disseminated and monitored for effectiveness and equitable implementation. A concern with UD's new COVID-19 policies was that faculty and committees would feel uncertain about how to implement and interpret them. In fact, data on faculty perceptions of the P&T process on campus from climate surveys indicate an already [high level of uncertainty surrounding P&T expectations](#), particularly among women and faculty of color. An additional concern was that COVID-19 impact statements might prime pre-existing bias against already marginalized groups (discussed above). To ensure equitable implementation of the policies and allay faculty concerns, a variety of campus groups have collaboratively engaged in inclusive communication surrounding these policies. For example, UD ADVANCE, together with the Provost's Office and the DEI committee of the University Faculty Senate, hosted panel discussions on writing COVID-19 impact statements and on their use of faculty evaluation. These events were well attended (N~200) and will be offered annually for the duration of the policy. Resources from the panels, including slides and detailed notes, are posted [online](#).

Efforts to address the impacts of COVID-19 on faculty DEI are starting to become embedded in already existing programming and initiatives. For example, the UDFAP has added an element on writing COVID-19 impact statements to their dossier and peer review preparation workshops. UD ADVANCE has developed a [written resource](#) on UD's COVID-19 policies for departments, faculty, and mentors. Special attention is given to COVID-19 impacts and mitigation efforts in the UD ADVANCE [Best Practices in Faculty Recruitment](#) workshops and in their annual co-hosted [P&T panels](#). All of these opportunities and resources are available to all UD faculty.

Finally, the administration has supported and communicated equity-focused recommendations that did not become formal policy. For example, the Task Force on Faculty Evaluation recommended reducing non-necessary service work, being attuned to caregiving responsibilities, and establishing training for chairs that underscores “the strains caregivers will face during the 2020-2021 academic year, paying particular attention to how this crisis will be amplified for single parents, people of color, and others at the intersections of marginalized identities.” A follow-up Task Force on Faculty Return to Campus offers recommendations (soon to be released) aimed toward strengthening community on campus while also allowing for flexibility for individual needs. A result of all of this dialogue on our campus about inclusivity is that people are starting to think more broadly about the situations of others. There is a heightened recognition that not all faculty members have the same working conditions, experiences, and opportunities. Such inclusive communication is especially important to promote equity in fields like STEM, where women have low representation in most of our departments. Faculty of color are underrepresented in STEM, and in most departments across campus. Because STEM faculty make up a large proportion of our overall faculty, applying these policies and communication activities to all faculty helps with this element of DEI work.

### Plans for Monitoring Effectiveness Over Time

UD routinely monitors faculty diversity and publishes diversity data [online](#). UD ADVANCE has been actively monitoring faculty DEI since its inception through policy and data analysis. The impacts of COVID-19 on faculty evaluation are becoming and will continue to be an important part of the UD’s data-driven analysis of faculty equity on campus. Specific monitoring actions include:

- Continuing to collect annual data on UD faculty demographics as related to faculty hiring, promotion, time in rank, and leadership roles in order to monitor for gender and racial/ethnic gaps. This data collection has been occurring since 2014 as part of UD’s NSF ADVANCE grant. Future data analysis will take a closer look at the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic working conditions on faculty career outcomes.
- Continuing to monitor faculty climate through regular [faculty satisfaction surveys](#), which has been done every 2-3 years since 2014. Working groups composed of faculty across campus analyze results and make recommendations for improving faculty job satisfaction at UD. The analysis and recommendations are made available to all faculty through panel discussions and written reports.
- Continuing to publish UD-specific research briefs on faculty recruitment, retention, and advancement based on institutional data and faculty interviews.
- A proposed multi-pronged research project that examines differential impacts of the pandemic with the use of faculty interviews and by examining the statements themselves. We also hope to survey P&T committee members to gain insight into how these statements are used in evaluation. The pilot project will be at UD, which will give us insight into specific impacts at the institution. The next step is to examine the same research questions with respondents from other institutions that have implemented similar policies surrounding COVID-19 impact statements. The research study will allow for benchmarking and add to the national conversation. This is the only monitoring action not currently in progress.

### Institutional Resources Need to Implement the Actions

The actions described above were implemented with minimal cost to the institution. The primary institutional resources needed to develop and disseminate UD’s COVID-19 policies are faculty and administrator time. Much of the policy development was done by standing or ad-hoc committees. What does take time is making sure that the policies are carefully implemented and that there is follow-up to make sure that the policies are effective. This is where institutional structures that support and monitor faculty DEI are especially useful. At UD, these structures include OIRE, the UD ADVANCE Institute, UDFAP, and UDARI. With the exception of OIRE, these groups are currently supported through institutionally approved workload adjustments or course buyouts. Collectively they make up a specialized team of people who have experience in monitoring equity with the use of institutional data. Monitoring the impacts of COVID-19 on faculty DEI is simply part of their broader DEI work.

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