



## AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

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W A S H I N G T O N, D C

October 7, 2020

To: Peter Starr, Acting Provost

From: John Delaney, Dean Kogod School of Business

Subject: Proposal to Move Faculty Review from Calendar-Year to Academic-Year Basis

I am writing to propose that we move the faculty review period from a calendar-year basis to an academic-year basis. This proposal follows up on our conversation and subsequent discussion at Deans Council. The underlying reason for the proposal is a belief that the faculty evaluation process at American University would be improved if it was conducted on a different time cycle. For example, one problem in the calendar-year review period is that the time lag between the review period and the feedback/merit process is longer than ideal. The current review period ends December 31 but feedback does not occur typically until late in the Spring Term and merit pay information is not often provided until sometime in summer. The gap between the end of review period and provision of feedback and reward reduces the value of information provided in a faculty member's review. In addition, if someone raises a question about the review, additional delays are possible before responses occur. The gap also reduces the length of time available to adjust behavior or performance in the subsequent academic year. The situation makes the evaluation less valuable than it might be.

The current review cycle has also created some administrative challenges. For example, schools are asked by faculty to include positive outcomes that occur after the review period ended, such as an article accepted for publication or book published between January and March. This requires the creation and maintenance of internal processes to monitor such requests and ensure that the outcome is properly allocated for rolling review periods (e.g., it is not unusual to monitor publication productivity on a rolling 3-year or 5-year basis for review purposes). In situations in which noticeable improvements occur in teaching from Fall to Spring terms, feedback to the faculty member about teaching may be inconsistent with what the faculty member recalls, creating dissonance and potentially requiring an internal process denoting the improved performance.

The administrative challenges may build a bias into reviews given that faculty likely request inclusion of "good" information early in the year but ignore requesting inclusion of "bad" information.

In light of these and other challenges associated with the calendar-year review cycle, I propose that we change the faculty review period from the calendar year basis to a review period that runs from May 1 until April 30. While the selected period is arbitrary and could be slightly adjusted, it will typically include all teaching time in the spring term, which aligns with any SET score analysis that is included in an evaluation. It also allows the administrative review period to be completed in time for disclosure of results to faculty during the summer with merit pay following in September.

The change will require some adjustments in the review process for schools or departments, but the changes should be modest relative to the accommodations currently made to account for faculty requests to include positive outcomes early in a calendar year. In addition, the change in timing should improve the value of reviews.

In addition to aligning the review process more closely with the feedback and reward process, the change in review period is well-timed in this academic year for two additional reasons. First, in light of the pandemic, the likelihood of merit increases continues to be small. Thus, the timing should not adversely affect any individuals with respect to rewards. Second, given the university is moving from the FARS platform to a new faculty evaluation platform, which requires inclusion of basic data and additional input, the change is appropriate now. Indeed, a change at this time could permit a more rapid deployment of the new faculty evaluation platform, which will generate other benefits, such as elimination of the need to use multiple systems for a pilot period.

With your support, I ask that this proposal be evaluated by the deans and input from the faculty senate be sought.

Thanks for your consideration.