




To: Tenure-Track Assistant Professors

Via: College Deans, and Department Heads, Chairs, and School Directors

From: Ron Fricker, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs 

Cc: Executive Vice President and Provost
President of the Faculty Senate
Senior Vice President for Research and Institute Directors
Associate Deans for Faculty Affairs and College HR Division Directors

Date: March 5, 2025

Subject: Addressing P&T Impacts from Research Grant and Contract Interruptions

- Purpose.** Recognizing the concerns of pre-tenure, tenure-track faculty about the potential impacts of federal grant and contract disruptions on their research progress, and the ongoing uncertainty surrounding these disruptions, this memo clarifies the promotion and tenure (P&T) mechanisms available to support those affected.
- Background.** Federal funding is essential for many pre-tenure faculty as they establish and sustain their research programs. The university acknowledges that recent—and potentially ongoing—disruptions to federal grants and contracts, including the reduction or cancellation of awards, delays in funding decisions, and uncertainty about future availability, may pose significant challenges. These disruptions may impact some faculty members’ ability to meet P&T expectations within their original timeframe.
- Discussion.** Virginia Tech is committed to supporting faculty through unexpected professional challenges. To help mitigate the impact of funding disruptions, the Faculty Handbook (Section 3.4.1.3) allows for extensions of the probationary period in cases of “extraordinary professional circumstances not of the faculty member’s own making.” While rare, such extensions have been granted in the past for faculty whose research was disrupted by circumstances beyond their control, ensuring faculty have a fair opportunity to meet promotion and tenure expectations.

Faculty whose research has been substantially affected by federal funding delays or disruptions may be eligible for this provision. While it is too early to fully assess the scope and duration of these disruptions, Virginia Tech will evaluate tenure clock extension requests on a case-by-case basis as the situation develops. Our priority is to ensure that faculty have the time, flexibility, and support needed to succeed without being placed at a disadvantage due to factors outside their control.
- Looking Forward.** Faculty who believe their research progress has been significantly affected are encouraged to consult with their department head, chair, or school director to discuss their specific circumstances. As the impacts become clearer, the Office of the Provost, in collaboration with departments and colleges, will carefully consider tenure clock extension requests to ensure faculty have the necessary support to succeed.

Thank you for your dedication to research, scholarship, and the mission of Virginia Tech. We appreciate your contributions, your resilience in the face of these challenges, and remain committed to supporting your success.