Covid-19 Impact

Due to Covid-19, Georgia Tech closed its Atlanta campus, including research facilities, on March 12, 2020, and moved to online instruction on March 23. Research facilities resumed limited operations on June 18. Despite increasing campus activity in the fall 2020 semester, there were lingering effects of the pandemic on university work. As a result of this disruption, all untenured faculty members were allowed a one-year extension of their probationary period. We do not expect productivity during the period disrupted by the pandemic to match that of other academic years; we also expect that for some researchers the impact may extend beyond the period of campus closure. Please also note that teaching evaluations were not collected for individual faculty in Spring 2020 because of the sudden move to remote learning in the second half of the academic term. Teaching in Fall 2020 was conducted over a compressed semester schedule in a variety of formats (e.g., in-person, remote, and a hybrid of in-person and remote sessions); an unexpected, different mode of instruction may influence student evaluations. Spring 2021 continued to have campus restrictions on the physical buildings and activities within, including those in research labs, in order to abide by CDC recommendations and University System of Georgia guidance. The teaching modes continued to be a mixture of remote, hybrid, and in-person throughout Spring 2021.

We ask that evaluators consider the candidate’s overall record in light of the many dimensions by which the candidate’s progress, particularly related to research, may have been affected by Covid-19, including but not limited to:

- Changing household circumstances due to lockdown, including school and childcare closures, spread of illness, and unemployment of family members.
- Loss of access to labs, both Georgia Tech facilities and national labs, a circumstance likely to have impacts beyond the next year, due to cascading scheduling.
- Loss of access to archives, library materials, and fieldwork sites.
- Long-term disruption of research involving human subjects or fieldwork due to Institute-required stoppages and also the difficulty of recruiting participants during the pandemic.
- Shift in intellectual focus of scholarship from experiments to modeling, which may be less effective or publishable in some research areas.
- Loss of previous funding and lack of new funding, particular concerns for those relying on industry relationships.
- Impacts of changes to less familiar instructional modes (i.e., online and hybrid) influencing student evaluations of teaching, perhaps based on individual student preference for in-person or online mode of delivery.
- Being enlisted to teach less familiar or new courses due to program needs.
- Fewer opportunities to teach specialized, smaller-enrollment courses because of fewer on-campus students.
- Fewer opportunities to teach since some faculty were encouraged to reduce program budgets by buying out courses, resulting in fewer teaching evaluations.
- Slowed student progress toward a degree. For example, expectations that assistant professors will have graduated doctoral students in some degree programs prior to tenure should be moderated.
- Fewer new international graduate students and postdocs being able to enter the United States, impacting advising of students and research productivity of faculty.
- Students and visiting scholars interrupting or discontinuing their studies and work to return to their home countries.
- Cancelled opportunities to present at conferences, which diminishes opportunities for networking, visibility, and professional service.
- Lost opportunities for seminar visits.
• Diminished research outcomes due to lockdown and budgetary problems affecting publication venues (e.g., journals and presses).
• Greater difficulty in obtaining external references, due to increased faculty workload around the world.
• Taking on different roles to help with budgets, teaching, and student expectations/needs during this changing time.

Some of these effects can be quantified, and faculty have been allowed to footnote events and opportunities that would have occurred (e.g., seminar visits and conference talks) or which were impacted (e.g., grant budget reductions or stoppages) by the pandemic with a footnote such as “Cancelled due to Covid-19.” Other effects cannot be captured in a cv or a narrative statement, and reviewers are encouraged to reflect on the well-documented effects of Covid-19, especially on women, black, LatinX, AAPI, and Middle Eastern faculty, see for example the references below.

References


