DATE: 7 December 2016

TO: Deans, Directors, and Department Chairs
FROM: Michael Bernard-Donals, Vice Provost for Faculty and Staff
        Steven K. Smith, Secretary of the Faculty
CC: Barbara Lanser, Disability Coordinator/Employment (OED)
RE: Tenure-clock extensions: note modified guidelines and procedures

As you know, Faculty Policies and Procedures allows probationary faculty to request extensions of the tenure clock in cases involving the birth or adoption of a child, significant elder or dependent care obligations, or other circumstances – including medical circumstances – beyond the control of the faculty member that significantly impede progress toward tenure. Requests for the birth or adoption of a child go directly from the faculty member to the provost; requests for other reasons are made to the University Committee on the recommendation of the department chair and the department’s Executive Committee and then forwarded to the provost for final approval. (Please see Faculty Policies and Procedures, chapter 7.04.)

In cases of faculty making requests based on illness or disability, it is important to maintain the confidentiality of the faculty member making the request. In such requests, the department chair should work with the school/college Divisional Disability Representative (DDR) to request medical information that would support the request. That information is to be shared only with the DDR. The DDR will share with the chair/director/dean and executive committee only what is essential for them to know to make a final determination on the tenure clock extension. Any confidential information should not be discussed or commented on outside of closed session. No information or question regarding the disability, medical condition, or medical information, however slight, should be mentioned/posed to any other party or to the person requesting the leave except through the DDR. (See http://www.secfac.wisc.edu/Rule_waivers.htm, “Guidelines for Submitting Requests for Rule Waivers -- Tenure Clock Extensions, Leaves of Absence, Conversions, Dual Roles,” on the Secretary of the Faculty website.)

When chairs are preparing the cases and dossiers of assistant professors for tenure and promotion, chairs should note any extensions of the probationary period in the chair’s letter; however, to maintain confidentiality, chairs should not cite the reasons for the extensions, regardless of the reason.

The point of the guidelines is to ensure that faculty members making requests are clear that personal and sensitive information will not be shared with colleagues who will eventually be making decisions about tenure and promotion.

We ask department chairs to share this memo with members of mentoring and annual review committees for all probationary faculty members in your units, and with all probationary faculty members.

If you have any questions about the policy on tenure-clock extensions, please contact Michael Bernard-Donals, Vice Provost for Faculty and Staff (michael.bernarddonals@wisc.edu, 262-9314), or Steve Smith, Secretary of the Faculty (sof@secfac.wisc.edu). You can also contact Barbara Lanser, the university’s Disability Coordinator/Employment, for questions about confidentiality or the accommodation process (barbara.lanser@wisc.edu, 263-2407). A list of the Divisional Disability Representatives can be found here: http://www.oed.wisc.edu/divisional-disability-representatives.htm.