TO: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Board of Trustees

FROM: Robert A. Blouin, Provost
Provost, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

DATE: March 22, 2021

RE: Request for extension of COVID tenure clock relief

On May 21, 2020, the Board of Trustees approved a temporary amendment allowing additional tenure clock relief for COVID-19-related disruptions to faculty duties. The temporary amendment is set to expire on May 20, 2021. This memo requests the Board approve a one-year extension of the amendment (until May 21, 2022). This extension would allow faculty members to apply for a single COVID-related tenure clock extension between May 21, 2021 and May 22, 2022, if they have not already received a prior COVID-related tenure clock extension. The reasoning for the request is set forth below.

The pandemic continues to affect many aspects of University operations, including faculty members’ ability to carry out research and scholarship activities. Faculty members report difficulties related to budget cuts and resource limitations as well as lost professional opportunities. The Trustee Policies and Regulations Governing Academic Tenure in The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill currently limit tenure track faculty members to 24 months’ total extension of the tenure clock. Some tenure track faculty members may have or soon will reach this limit but still need additional time on the tenure clock as a result of the unexpected and unprecedented changes to their work due to the pandemic.

The Provost’s Office requests that you approve a temporary amendment to the Trustee Policies and Regulations Governing Academic Tenure in The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to suspend the 24-month limit on total extensions for cases where the faculty member requests an extension for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Provost’s Office would review these requests under the existing university process for tenure clock extensions. Faculty members are permitted only a single extension for COVID-related reasons; however, they may still be granted extensions for other reasons (e.g., medical, birth of a child, etc.).

Attached is a suggested policy amendment memorandum for your consideration.
This memorandum sets forth a temporary amendment to the Trustee Policies and Regulations Governing Academic Tenure in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The temporary policy amendment described below is effective for a period of one (1) year beginning May 20, 2021 and ending May 20, 2022 unless further extended or otherwise altered by the Board.

Section 2.c.6.ii. of the Trustee Policies and Regulations Governing Academic Tenure in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is hereby temporarily amended as follows:

(iii) Special provisions for extending the maximum probationary period

For reasons of health, requirements of childbirth or child care, or similar compelling circumstances, a faculty member holding a probationary term of appointment at the rank of assistant professor or associate professor may request a written memorandum of amendment extending the term of the current appointment and thereby the maximum probationary period with no resulting change in normal employment obligations, in order to provide the faculty member additional time to demonstrate fully his or her professional qualifications for reappointment or permanent tenure. Extensions under this subsection (iii) may be granted in increments not to exceed 12 months, up to a maximum of 24 months (including any extensions that may have been granted under subsection (ii), above), except that a single extension beyond a maximum of 24 months may be approved by the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic.