APPENDIX: Navigating Tenure and Promotion During the Times of Pandemic.

The converging pandemics of COVID-19 and racial injustice have created several obstacles to tenure and promotion. Faculty members have lost access to university libraries and their institutional offices. Theatres, archives, and libraries have been shut down, and many face the possibility of permanent closure due to budgetary cuts. Restrictions on air travel have limited access to work-related travel, including academic conferences, research trips, ethnographic study, and creative activity. Institutional budgets have tightened, including the budgets that theatre departments have used to fund their seasons and the production work of their faculty. ATHE is also mindful that numerous studies show women and People of the Global Majority are caught in a particularly precarious situation navigating work responsibilities with additional labor related to family care on top of their responsibilities supporting marginalized students whose educational progress has been harmed by the structural inequities present in academia. Additionally, the emotional toll of the ongoing state-sanctioned violence and murders of Black and Brown people by police and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 in these communities and Native American and Indigenous communities along with violent attacks against Asian and Asian Americans are also impacting the wellbeing of faculty and students. The extensive advocacy efforts that many of these faculty and students have undertaken have led to a racial reckoning throughout the theatre, film, and television industries but may also yield potential backlash considering historical patterns of resistance against white supremacy. As a result, faculty members research agendas have been slowed and institutional requirements must adjust to this new reality.

ATHE is confident that theatre will remain vital as it re-opens across the globe, but researching, teaching, and creating theatre will look different for the foreseeable future. There will be a shortage of creative work available as many theatres have shuttered or reduced their seasons.

While many institutions will move to address faculty concerns, theatre professors face a particular set of challenges. ATHE offers the following recommendations in hopes of assisting those individuals who are in their probationary periods:

- Colleges and universities should allow faculty members to pause or extend their tenure clock in order to allow tenure-track candidates the ability to re-energize their plans for research and creative activity and to execute those plans as fully as possible prior to tenure review. This may take more than one year.
- Additionally, institutions should create space for course releases that prioritize Assistant and Associate Professors whose research agenda has been slowed due to the pandemic. Special attention should be given to those who have had to reduce their labor because of caregiving responsibilities.
- Many conferences were cancelled as a result of the pandemic. Institutions should accept listing in a cancelled conference’s program as documentation of research.
- Institutions should adjust the expectations for off-campus creative activity to acknowledge theatre lockdowns and the pandemic’s economic impacts on performance venues across the world.
- Institutions should acknowledge the sudden changes in teaching modalities and the restructured assignments, learning objectives, and assessment strategies as demonstrations of excellence in teaching. This labor should be framed as such in the candidate’s teaching narratives and understood within that context by the institution’s tenure and promotion committee.
- Many professors have successfully developed new pedagogical models that will successful
delivery of virtual and asynchronous courses. Institutions should work with those instructors who wish to teach in this manner to ensure that they can do so when possible. Individuals who wish to teach in this way should be mindful of controlling their intellectual property and not ceding it to the institution for unauthorized use in the future.

- In spite of the labors that many individuals have taken to adjust to new teaching modalities, ATHE recommends that professors should not be forced into teaching modalities in which they do not wish to participate in.

- Individuals who come up for tenure and promotion should have the right to exclude teaching evaluations for courses taught during the pandemic from consideration in their tenure and promotion portfolios. Institutions should ensure that tenure and promotion committees not view this gap in evaluations as a negative mark against the professor.

- Institutions may not be able to bring external evaluators onto campus to conduct reviews of creative activity. In such instances, the department and institution should underwrite the cost of making digital and virtual demonstrations of creative activity available to external evaluators for review.

- Where the media may not be reviewing productions due to budgetary and travel restrictions, institutions should work with faculty to find individuals who may conduct a written evaluation of the production.

- External evaluators of on-and-off-campus virtual creative activity should take into account the limitations of the production (e.g., the difficulties of conveying scenic design over Zoom, designing costumes based on the actors’ wardrobe, etc.).

- Institutions should be careful about the service assignments that they place on tenure-track faculty or those who are due for advancement in rank. Professors, especially those born outside of their country of employment and those who work internationally, may continue to face obstacles to travel.

- During the pandemic, many departments and institutions have conducted office hours, faculty/committee meetings, and other institutional business via virtual meetings. Institutions should work with faculty to facilitate opportunities to conduct business virtually when possible.

- Institutions should be mindful of the historical backlash against people of the global majority for advocating against white supremacy, institutionalized racism, and anti-Blackness. Advocacy efforts should be framed as teaching, research and/or service in the candidate’s tenure and/or promotion narratives and understood within the context of these converging pandemics and historical liberation movements by the institution’s tenure and promotion committee.