

# Publish or Perish? Examining Academic Tenure Standards in Public Affairs and Administration Programs

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## **ABSTRACT**

Academic tenure is a topic of great concern in the field of public affairs and administration. Especially for pre-tenured faculty members, institutional expectations profoundly influence individual decisions regarding what to research and how, and where to publish results. For academic programs, the stakes are also high: negative tenure decisions affect morale and represent lost resources that may not be easily recovered, while positive decisions on marginal cases may have long-term impacts on department performance. This suggests an imperative of establishing and communicating clear tenure expectations. Yet little is known, aside from anecdote and myth, about public affairs and administration tenure standards. A survey of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration's member institutions elicited responses from 144 academic leaders (54% response rate). One portion of the survey specifically addressed this fundamental question: What are NASPAA member institutions' tenure expectations for public affairs and administration faculty members?

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## **KEYWORDS**

Tenure, faculty rewards

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The conferral or denial of tenure is among the most important decisions in higher education, with much at stake for both tenure-seeking faculty and tenure-granting departments and institutions (Weyland, 2011). For individual faculty members, tenure represents the most significant and enduring professional reward available (Park, 2011). The acquisition of tenure not only guarantees financial and job security, but also provides a degree of academic freedom and a level of autonomy uncommon in most professions. In contrast, a negative tenure decision usually

results in dismissal and can severely limit future employment opportunities (Youn & Price, 2009). For academic departments and institutions, sound decisions to grant tenure can bolster productivity and prestige, while poor tenure decisions can lead to a number of negative outcomes. For example, a questionable denial of tenure can prematurely end the career of an otherwise capable and promising scholar, while tenure granted to a marginal candidate (i.e., a false-positive vote) can lead to diminished collective productivity for the department over time (Weyland, 2011).

Given the high-stakes nature of tenure decisions, it is important to identify and understand emerging trends and practices at both the disciplinary and institutional levels. To that end, this article reports results from a 2012 survey of public affairs and administration academic program leaders (e.g., chairs, heads, deans) regarding tenure and promotion standards at public affairs and administration programs, departments, and schools affiliated with the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA). Despite the importance of academic tenure within the discipline, no systematic examination of this kind has been previously conducted, and despite much speculation, little is definitively known, aside from anecdote and myth, regarding the prevailing tenure standards in public affairs and administration.

With that said, the results of this survey help to achieve several important goals. First, these data provide pre-tenure and potential faculty members with clarity regarding the standards and expectations for tenure across the discipline as well as in different institutional settings. Second, these data provide departmental leaders and voting faculty members with a benchmark for comparisons with both peer institutions and the field at large. Finally, the results of this survey can also contribute to a much-needed conversation about how prevailing incentive structures influence the nature, scope, and quality of scholarship within the field.

### THE CONTEXT OF ACADEMIC TENURE

Initially, granting of tenure to university professors was adopted as a means of protecting and promoting academic freedom within the academy (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 1940). Traditionally, tenure and promotion decisions have been based on a faculty member's performance across three professional functions: teaching, scholarly research, and professional service. Today, the practice of granting academic tenure takes place within an increasingly competitive higher education environment, one that has seen fundamental shifts in prevailing tenure standards as well as in the composition of the faculty ranks over time. Before examining specific tenure standards

within the discipline of public affairs and administration, it is useful to consider the broader forces behind these shifts and how they have shaped and influenced the field of higher education over recent years.

Due to a variety of historical factors, college and university enrollments expanded considerably in the years immediately following World War II (Youn & Price, 2009), leading to heightened competition among higher education institutions as well as prospective students. Marginson (2006) suggests that in a "positional market" such as a higher education, this heightened competition leads prospective students to compete for admission into those institutions, which can confer the greatest status or prestige. This, in turn, leads academic institutions to compete for the most promising students by focusing on the cultivation of institutional reputations rather than the enhancement of so-called local functions (e.g., teaching, service). Over time, these pressures lead to higher academic standards, not only for student admissions, but also for faculty performance. Youn and Price (2009) acknowledge this dynamic in their analysis, noting that over time these pressures have led to "intensely competitive, status-seeking behavior" among academic institutions, creating an "increased emphasis on higher standards within the academic profession" (p. 205).

Because research productivity is more visible than teaching-oriented outcomes (Fairweather, 2002; Marginson, 2006), this push for higher standards has tended to shift the focus of academic departments disproportionately toward research in the appraisal of faculty performance, with a particular interest in what Backes-Gellner and Schlinghoff (2010) call "prestige-enhancing publications" (p. 27). Consequently, the importance of teaching and community service in professional performance evaluation (such as tenure and promotion standards) has been diminished, crowded out in many instances by a "publish or perish" mentality. The end result of this shift has often been a reduction in the time and effort faculty members dedicate to other professional functions, such as teaching, advising, and community service (Backes-Gellner & Schlinghoff, 2010).

Surprisingly, these trends have not been limited to large, doctoral-granting, or research-intensive universities. Several studies have found this heightened focus on research-based criteria to increasingly be the norm across various institutional types, including those traditionally identified as teaching-oriented or “comprehensive” institutions (Boyer, 1990; Youn & Price, 2009). Youn and Price (2009) suggest that this may be partially due to the presence of strong institutional or isomorphic pressures. Institutional theorists (e.g., DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977) suggest that actors within a given domain tend to adopt the prevailing rules and procedures (such as tenure standards) of the domain’s most influential institutions in an effort to gain legitimacy within the broader social and institutional context. In the field of higher education, this is consistent with the observation that “all types of higher education institutions increasingly emulate research institutions in pursuit of prestige” (Backes-Gellner & Schlinghoff, 2010).

Over recent years, the conditions of tenure have drawn criticism from both inside and outside the academy. External stakeholders, such as political actors and the general public, tend to associate the performance of academic institutions with the quality of local functions (e.g., teaching, skills instruction), and the shift toward research-oriented outcomes in current tenure practices has often created dissatisfaction (Fairweather, 2002; Lemann, 2014). The most vocal external critics have suggested that the current practice of granting tenure is antiquated and out of touch with the goals of higher education, insofar as it undervalues teaching while overemphasizing research (Rotherham, 2011; Schaefer Riley, 2012). In some instances, these criticisms have even resulted in state-level efforts to regulate the amount of time faculty dedicate to teaching (Cage, 1995; Milem, Berger, & Dey, 2000) or even to eliminate tenure altogether (Fairweather, 2002).

At times these criticisms have been echoed from within the academy, where similar concerns have been voiced about the incentive structure created by prevailing tenure norms, particularly with regard to the devaluing of

teaching and service as viable forms of scholarship (e.g., Boyer, 1990; Guillory, 2005). These critiques have led to calls for more broadly defined and engaged forms of scholarship (Boyer, 1990), a sentiment which has been echoed within the field of public administration and its related disciplines (Bushouse et al., 2011; Koliba, 2007; Van de Ven, 2007).

Along with these ongoing shifts in faculty performance standards, the field of higher education has also seen significant changes in faculty composition over recent years. Due largely to budgetary constraints and a desire for more administrative flexibility, institutions have seen a contraction of tenure-track positions with concomitant increases in part-time and non-tenure-track (often identified as “contingent”) faculty. While a number of reasons have been cited for the increased use of contingent faculty (see Cross & Goldenberg, 2002), the primary factors have been economic in nature. In response to funding constraints (especially in state budgets for public institutions) and ongoing budgetary uncertainty, university administrators have used the elimination of tenure lines as a means of covering operational costs and, in some cases, maintaining program offerings (Haeger, 1998).

Over time, the magnitude of this shift has been significant. Citing U.S. Department of Education data, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP, n.d.) reports that in 1975, about 57% of faculty members were in the tenure stream (i.e., they were tenured or tenure-track). This number plummeted to about 32% by 2007. With fewer tenure-track lines, the competition among scholars for tenure-granting positions has grown fierce, allowing departments and institutions to further increase expectations and raise tenure standards. In the aggregate, these labor market trends have served to exacerbate the growing competitive pressures within higher education, contributing to the sense among faculty members that tenure is now harder than ever to obtain.

Against this historical backdrop, the aim of this article is to clarify and describe current standards and norms for granting tenure in public affairs and administration programs.

Specifically, we are interested in identifying if and to what extent the “publish or perish” mentality is dominant in our discipline, or if emerging

calls for more expansive approaches to scholarship (Bushouse et al., 2011; Koliba, 2007) are being heeded. It is our hope that these data will

**TABLE 1.**  
**Characteristics of Survey Respondents’ Public Affairs and Administration Programs**

Characteristic	Percentage (n)
<b>Institutional location of public affairs and administration program (n= 141)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A separate professional school or college</li> <li>• A separate institute or center</li> <li>• Department or program within business school/college</li> <li>• Department or program within a school/college other than business</li> <li>• Program located within a political science department</li> <li>• Program located within a department other than political science</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18.4 (26)</li> <li>2.1 (3)</li> <li>12.8 (18)</li> <li>26.2 (37)</li> <li>34.8 (49)</li> <li>2.1 (3)</li> <li>3.5 (5)</li> </ul>
<b>NASPAA-affiliated master’s degree accredited (n= 141)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>69.5 (98)</li> <li>30.5 (43)</li> </ul>
<b>Degrees offered (n= 144)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachelor’s in public administration/affairs/policy</li> <li>• Master of public administration</li> <li>• Master of public policy</li> <li>• Master of public affairs (MPA)</li> <li>• Executive MPA</li> <li>• Other master’s degree</li> <li>• PhD in public administration/affairs/policy</li> <li>• Doctor of public administration/affairs (DPA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>23.6 (34)</li> <li>83.3 (120)</li> <li>9.7 (14)</li> <li>4.9 (7)</li> <li>11.1 (16)</li> <li>25.0 (36)</li> <li>29.2 (42)</li> <li>2.8 (4)</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional characteristics (n= 144)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public university</li> <li>• Private university</li> <li>• Faith-based/religiously affiliated institution</li> <li>• Land grant university</li> <li>• Urban campus</li> <li>• International (non-U.S.) institution</li> <li>• Historically black college or university (HBCU)</li> <li>• Hispanic-serving institution (HSI)</li> <li>• Carnegie “Community Engaged Campus”</li> <li>• Doctoral-granting/research-intensive university</li> <li>• Unionized faculty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>78.5 (113)</li> <li>16.7 (24)</li> <li>4.9 (7)</li> <li>12.5 (18)</li> <li>27.8 (40)</li> <li>1.4 (2)</li> <li>2.1 (3)</li> <li>5.6 (8)</li> <li>10.4 (15)</li> <li>29.2 (42)</li> <li>17.4 (25)</li> </ul>
<b>Number of faculty/students</b> <p><b>Full-time, tenured/tenure-track faculty in your academic unit (n= 136)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0</li> <li>• 1–5</li> <li>• 6–10</li> <li>• 11–15</li> <li>• 16–20</li> <li>• 20+</li> </ul> <p><b>Students in your NASPAA-affiliated master’s program(s) (n= 139)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1–50</li> <li>• 51–100</li> <li>• 101–150</li> <li>• 151–200</li> <li>• 201+</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.2 (3)</li> <li>27.2 (37)</li> <li>39.0 (53)</li> <li>17.6 (24)</li> <li>7.4 (10)</li> <li>6.6 (9)</li> <li>23.7 (33)</li> <li>25.9 (36)</li> <li>22.3 (31)</li> <li>13.7 (19)</li> <li>14.4 (20)</li> </ul>

provide insight into the tenure decision process for junior faculty as well as for departmental leaders. Our discussion also considers the potential implications of prevailing standards and norms for the nature, scope, and quality of public affairs and administration scholarship.

## DATA AND METHODS

The data reported in this article come from a survey of public affairs and administration academic program leaders (i.e., chairs, heads, and deans of public affairs and administration programs, departments, or schools).<sup>1</sup> The sample for this survey consisted of the 273 NASPAA member institutions.<sup>2</sup> Names and contact information for the member schools were obtained from NASPAA.<sup>3</sup> In those cases where the listed principal representative for a particular institution was not also listed as the department chair (or equivalent), the program was contacted and the correct contact information was obtained. The Web-based survey followed Dillman's (2007) tailored design survey method, including the multiple contacts strategy (i.e., pre-survey notice, personalized emails, etc.).

Similar to a recent survey of political science department chairs (Rothgeb & Burger, 2009), this survey instrument sought to assess how public affairs and administration programs value various forms of scholarship. In the initial set of questions, which is the focus of this article, respondents were asked to rate the level of importance of various forms of scholarship in their own department's tenure decision process. Specifically, respondents were asked to identify the relative importance of research, teaching, and service in the tenure process, as well as their department's specific standards and expectations in these areas. A total of 144 usable responses were obtained for an overall response rate of 54%. Table 1 provides summary statistics on the characteristics of respondents' programs and institutions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides results and analysis for four separate sets of survey questions, which focused on (a) general tenure standards, (b) research standards, (c) teaching standards, and (d) professional service standards. These topics are discussed

separately in the sections that follow. A fifth section examines meaningful differences that emerged across institutional settings.

### General Tenure Standards

Table 2 reports survey responses to questions concerning general tenure standards at NASPAA-affiliated public affairs and administration programs. These data provide a descriptive portrait of current tenure standards across the field, and in the aggregate they seem to reflect the broader trends in higher education discussed in the introductory sections. Responses are similar in several ways to those found in previous studies among related disciplines (e.g., Dennis, Valacich, Fuller, & Schneider, 2006; Rothgeb & Burger, 2009). Perhaps the most striking feature of the responses is the extent to which they highlight the preeminence of scholarly research (as compared to teaching and professional service) in tenure and promotion decisions (discussed further in the sections that follow). Furthermore, the data also suggest a continuation of the aforementioned tendency toward increasingly stringent research standards in the tenure process (Rhode, 2006; Youn & Price, 2009). In other words, the respondents anticipate that tenure will continue to become harder to earn going forward, particularly related to research productivity standards.

The importance of scholarly research for earning tenure in public affairs and administration programs is demonstrated both directly and indirectly through the survey responses shown in Table 2. Among respondents, over 71% agree to varying extents that "research productivity is the most important factor in tenure decisions." These responses are consistent with survey results in other fields, where research productivity has consistently been ranked as the most important factor in tenure and promotion (e.g., Alshare, Wenger, & Miller, 2007; Comm & Mathaisel, 1998; Green, 2008). Conversely, 77% of respondents report varying levels of disagreement with the idea that a superior teaching record can compensate for a mediocre research portfolio, while 76% agree that professional service is at best a secondary consideration in tenure expectations. Taken together, these responses strongly mirror the trends

**TABLE 2.**  
**General Standards for Tenure in Public Affairs and Administration Programs**

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements related to your academic unit's expectations for tenure...	Percentage of Responses						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A superior research record can compensate for a mediocre teaching record (n= 143)	7.6	18.8	27.1	4.9	9.7	19.4	12.5
A superior teaching record can compensate for a mediocre research record (n= 141)	1.4	8.4	11.2	2.1	30.1	25.9	21.0
Professional service is a secondary consideration to research and teaching (n= 142)	11.3	33.1	31.7	6.3	7.7	7.0	2.8
Research productivity is the most important factor in tenure decisions (n= 141)	20.6	33.3	17.7	7.1	2.8	14.2	4.3
Tenure decisions are shaped primarily by standards developed in your academic unit (n= 142)	14.1	36.6	26.8	6.3	7.7	5.6	2.8
Tenure decisions are shaped primarily by standards developed at higher (college or university) levels (n= 140)	7.9	20.0	26.4	7.9	20.0	14.3	3.6
Tenure is more difficult to obtain now than it was 10 years ago (n= 141)	18.4	33.3	14.2	15.6	6.4	9.2	2.8
Research expectations for tenure have increased in the last 10 years (n= 142)	22.5	40.1	18.3	4.9	3.5	7.7	2.8
Research expectations for tenure will likely increase in the coming 10 years (n= 141)	16.3	31.2	24.8	12.8	8.5	5.0	1.4
Publications on teaching and learning are valued equally to publications of basic research designed to create new knowledge (n= 142)	4.2	10.6	16.9	10.6	27.5	17.6	12.7
Applied research publications are valued equally to publications of basic research designed to create new knowledge (n= 142)	9.9	28.2	17.6	9.9	16.9	16.2	1.4
Publications in peer-reviewed journals are more highly valued than those in professional, technical, popular, or similar non-peer-reviewed outlets (n= 143)	57.3	27.3	9.8	2.1	0.7	2.1	0.7

and dynamics discussed previously, namely the preeminence of research productivity and the simultaneous crowding out of local functions such as teaching and service in professional performance evaluation (Backes-Gellner & Schlinghoff, 2010; Youn & Price, 2009).

While the heightened emphasis on research productivity demonstrated in these findings is consistent with broader academic trends in the latter half of the 20th century (Youn & Price, 2009), these data also suggest that in the field of public affairs and administration, this trend has continued unabated over the first decade of the 21st century. Approximately 66% of respondents expressed some level of agreement with the suggestion that tenure is harder to obtain than it was 10 years ago, while even more (81%) agreed that research expectations have increased over the last decade (Table 2). Perhaps most intriguing, a large majority (over 72%) also believe that research expectations will continue to increase over the next 10 years. This means that despite

numerous calls (from inside the academy and out) for expanded approaches to “scholarship” in the assessment of tenure and promotion (Boyer, 1990; Bushouse et al., 2011; Koliba, 2007), public affairs and administration programs appear to be moving in a consistent direction toward stricter peer-reviewed research requirements, potentially at the expense of teaching and service-based forms of scholarship. Nothing in the responses to this survey suggests that this trend is abating or will lessen over the next decade.

Table 3 reports the levels of association between the ordinal responses to several of these tenure-related questions. In particular, the responses regarding the importance of research productivity are compared to the responses on several other questions. As the data show, weak to moderate levels of association were found between research productivity standards and responses regarding the importance of teaching and professional service. In other words, those who suggested that research productivity was the

**TABLE 3.**  
Association Between Research Productivity’s Importance and Other Aspects of Tenure

<b>Research productivity is the most important factor in tenure decisions...</b>			
	<b>Gamma</b>	<b>Kendall’s tau-c</b>	<b>Somers’ d</b>
A superior teaching record can compensate for a mediocre research record...	-.303*	-.219*	-.240*
Professional service is a secondary consideration to research and teaching...	.389*	.281*	.311*
Tenure is more difficult to obtain than it was 10 years ago...	.110	.082	.089
Research expectations for tenure have increased in the last 10 years...	.120	.084	.094
Research expectations for tenure will likely increase in the coming 10 years...	.159	.116	.126
Publications on teaching and learning are valued equally to basic research...	-.312*	-.241*	-.256*
Applied research publications are valued equally to basic research...	-.195*	-.148*	-.158*
Publications in peer-reviewed journals are more highly valued...	.467*	.261*	.326*

Note. \*  $p \leq .05$ .

most important factor were less likely to value superior teaching in the presence of mediocre research, and were more likely to view professional service as a secondary consideration. While already significant, these associations may still be understated or attenuated by some instances of necessarily small cell sizes in this research.

Significant associations were also found between those who emphasized research productivity and the types of publications most highly valued in the tenure process. Those who stressed the importance of research productivity in tenure were more likely to place greater value on peer-reviewed research, while simultaneously ascribing less value to applied and/or teaching-oriented research.

**Research Standards**

A second set of survey questions looked at specific research standards for tenure among public affairs and administration programs (Table 4). These responses provide a more detailed understanding of what the research requirements discussed in the preceding section look like with regard to the type, quantity, and quality of published products. Nearly 65% of respondents reported that candidates for tenure are expected to publish at least one or more peer-reviewed journal articles per year. At a majority of institutions (55%), candidates for tenure are also expected to present papers at one or more academic conferences annually. However, these quantity-based expectations are not necessarily mirrored with regard to quality (at least as far as

**TABLE 4.**  
**Research Standards for Tenure in Public Affairs and Administration Programs**

Expectations for Scholarly Research	Percentage of Responses				
	None	1-2 total	3-4 total	1 per year	2 or more per year
<b>Journal Articles</b> How many peer-reviewed journal articles are candidates for tenure expected to publish? (n=137)	1.5	13.1	19.7	41.6	24.1
<b>Conference Papers</b> How many paper presentations at professional conferences are candidates for tenure expected to make? (n=138)	10.1	15.2	19.6	36.2	18.8

  

	None	1	2 or more
<b>Books</b> How many books are candidates for tenure expected to publish? (n=139)	83.5	15.1	1.4

  

	None	1-20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	81-100%
<b>Journal Prestige/Publication Quality</b> Approximately what percentage of a tenure candidate's published research is expected to be in PA's most prestigious journals? (n=124)	37.1	17.7	24.2	12.9	5.6	2.4
<b>Scholarly Independence</b> Approximately what percentage of a tenure candidate's published research is expected to be single authored? (n=124)	39.5	14.5	24.2	19.4	2.4	0.0

the results of this survey indicate). For example, a plurality of respondents (37%) reported having no expectation for a tenure candidate's research to be published in the field's most recognized journals in order to meet tenure expectations. In regards to scholarly independence, about two fifths of respondents (40%) reported having no expectations for a tenure candidate's published research to be single authored to meet tenure expectations.

Based on these responses, questions may emerge regarding the influence of prevailing tenure standards on the quality of public administration research, particularly due to the limited importance attached to publishing in the discipline's leading journals. This may in part be an extension of the institutional or isomorphic pressures discussed previously, wherein traditionally teaching-oriented and comprehensive institutions have begun to require research publications in an effort to establish peer status and legitimacy in the increasingly competitive higher education context (Youn & Price, 2009). If, in response to broader institutional pressures for legitimacy, quantity standards (e.g., required number of peer-reviewed publications) are established without corresponding quality standards, public administration research in the aggregate may not be well served, despite the seeming increase in research productivity. This dynamic raises concerns that warrant further attention insofar as it may threaten to dilute the aggregate quality of research within the discipline, a condition that would serve only to exacerbate external criticisms of the tenure process.

### Teaching Standards

Table 5 reports survey responses regarding specific teaching standards for tenure and promotion. The results suggest that positive student evaluations are the most important factor for tenure-seeking faculty, with over 96% of respondents ascribing them some degree of importance. Other factors that were identified as important by a majority of respondents include well-developed course syllabi (89%), a strong teaching portfolio (88%), teaching required graduate courses (72%), and positive teaching evaluations from other public affairs and administration faculty (68%).

In contrast to these traditional teaching functions and practices, practices of *engaged teaching*, such as those advocated by Bushouse et al. (2011), were ascribed considerably less importance. For instance, out of all respondents, only one third or less ascribed any degree of importance to whether the candidate engages students in community-based projects (34%), uses problem-solving pedagogies (33%), or develops service-learning components (31%) in their public affairs and administration courses.

While these responses are consistent with much of what is known anecdotally about tenure and promotion, within both public affairs and administration specifically and higher education in general, the potential implications of these data should not be overlooked. For example, the dominant emphasis on student evaluations could potentially affect both the quality and integrity of instruction in the field. Some researchers have suggested that placing too much emphasis on course evaluations in the tenure and promotion process can exacerbate problems of grade inflation, and in some cases even reduce the amount of time and effort that faculty members spend on teaching and course development (Love & Kotchen, 2010). Furthermore, the incentives created by tenure and promotion guidelines may contribute to the perceived theory/practice gap in applied fields such as public administration. For instance, Bushouse et al. (2011) argue that "when programs or faculty do not keep materials relevant, a fundamental gap can result between what PA [public administration] students learn in the classroom and their experiences as practitioners" (p. i105). Thus, to the extent that engaged techniques such as service learning and community-based projects are devalued by the field's prevailing incentive structures, the pursuit of tenure may to some extent be at odds with the goals of optimal student learning. These concerns warrant consideration, particularly given the demonstrated value of techniques such as service learning in public administration (Bushouse et al., 2011; Lambright, 2008).

### Professional Service Standards

Table 6 reports survey responses regarding professional service standards in public affairs and

**TABLE 5.**  
Teaching Standards for Tenure in Public Affairs and Administration Programs

When evaluating the teaching record of a candidate for tenure, how important or unimportant is each of the following:	Percentage of Responses						
	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Neither important nor unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Unimportant	Very unimportant
Whether the candidate teaches required courses in your graduate PA program (n= 142)	19.7	23.9	28.9	14.8	2.8	7.7	2.1
Whether the candidate has developed a new course for your graduate PA curriculum (n= 140)	1.4	15.7	20.7	31.4	10.0	14.3	6.4
Whether the candidate has directed theses or dissertations (n= 142)	3.5	9.9	26.8	25.4	8.5	15.5	10.6
Positive student evaluations of all courses taught by the candidate (n= 140)	20.7	45.0	30.7	1.4	1.4	0.7	0.0
Strong teaching portfolio compiled by the candidate (n= 140)	18.6	37.1	32.1	8.6	1.4	1.4	0.7
Well-developed course syllabi (n= 139)	17.3	36.7	35.3	6.5	2.2	2.2	0.0
Positive peer evaluations of the candidate's teaching by other PA faculty (n= 140)	10.7	32.1	25.7	17.9	5.7	5.0	2.9
Whether the candidate develops service-learning components within PA courses (n= 140)	2.9	7.9	20.0	24.3	12.1	26.4	6.4
Whether the candidate member uses problem-solving pedagogies (e.g., teaching cases) within PA courses (n= 139)	2.2	10.8	20.1	34.5	10.8	18.0	3.6
Whether the candidate engages students in community-based research projects (n= 141)	4.3	9.2	20.6	34.0	7.1	19.1	5.7

Note. PA = public affairs and administration.

administration programs. While professional service was predominantly identified as a secondary consideration in the tenure and promotion process (see Table 2), a majority of respondents

ascribed some degree of importance to 8 of the 10 specific service activities shown in Table 6. The most important service activities were *internal* organizational contributions, including

service on a departmental committee (86%), advising graduate public affairs and administration students (77%), and service on a college or university committee (71%). Service activities that related to scholarly research in the discipline were also considered important, including reviewing manuscripts for public affairs and administration journals (63%), serving on the editorial board of a public affairs and administration journal (57%), and serving as a chair or discussant at a professional conference (54%). External service activities, such as service to professional associations and community volunteering, were ascribed the least importance.

These results are perhaps most interesting and relevant to pre-tenure and aspiring faculty members in public affairs and administration. It has been noted that “service is often the trickiest part of the tenure track, in that it offers the most mysteries about what is adequate and what is too much” (Perlmutter, 2012). In a sense, the survey responses may reflect this ambiguity, as 8 of the 10 specific service activities were identified as important by a majority of respondents (Table 6), despite the overwhelming identification of professional service as a secondary consideration in earlier questions (Table 2).

**TABLE 6.**  
Professional Service Standards for Tenure in Public Affairs and Administration Programs

When evaluating the teaching record of a candidate for tenure, how important or unimportant is each of the following:	Percentage of Responses						
	Very important	Important	Some-what important	Neither important nor unimportant	Some-what unimportant	Unimportant	Very unimportant
Serving on a departmental committee (n=140)	14.3	38.6	32.9	3.6	4.3	5.7	0.7
Serving on a college or university committee (n=140)	7.1	27.1	37.1	10.0	7.9	7.9	2.9
Advising graduate PA students (n=138)	13.8	31.2	31.9	10.1	6.5	5.8	0.7
Holding office in a professional association (n=140)	0.7	13.6	32.9	21.4	11.4	15.7	4.3
Serving as a chair or discussant at a professional conference (n=139)	0.7	15.1	38.1	20.1	8.6	12.9	4.3
Reviewing manuscripts (ad hoc) for PA journals (n=140)	1.4	14.3	47.1	18.6	9.3	7.1	2.1
Serving as member of an editorial board for a PA journal (n=139)	3.6	21.6	30.9	20.1	6.5	13.7	3.6
Serving as member of a public or non-profit board or commission (n=140)	1.4	10.0	38.6	18.6	10.0	12.9	8.6
Providing technical assistance to public or nonprofit agencies (n=140)	5.0	12.9	40.0	12.9	11.4	15.0	2.9
Providing community service or volunteer work not specifically linked to scholarly expertise (n=140)	2.9	5.0	23.6	14.3	13.6	22.9	17.9

Note. PA = public affairs and administration.

**TABLE 7.**  
**Cross-Tabulation of General Standards for Tenure by Type of Institution**

When making tenure decisions...	Percentage of Responses				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<b>A. Doctoral-granting/research-intensive universities</b>					
Research productivity is the most important factor*	33.3	35.7	26.2	4.8	0.0
Superior teaching can compensate for a mediocre research record**	0.0	2.4	33.3	40.5	23.8
Professional service is a secondary consideration***	23.8	38.1	35.7	2.4	0.0
<b>B. Other colleges and universities</b>					
Research productivity is the most important factor*	14.6	31.1	31.1	17.5	5.8
Superior teaching can compensate for a mediocre research record**	1.9	10.7	48.5	19.4	19.4
Professional service is a secondary consideration***	5.8	30.1	51.5	8.7	3.9

Notes. \*  $\chi^2 = 11.637$  ( $p = .020$ );  $\phi_c = .283$  ( $p = .020$ ); \*\*  $\chi^2 = 10.325$  ( $p = .035$ );  $\phi_c = .267$  ( $p = .035$ ); \*\*\*  $\chi^2 = 14.289$  ( $p = .006$ );  $\phi_c = .314$  ( $p = .006$ ).

In this regard, these results may reflect other recent research findings, which have identified service as more important to tenure than conventionally believed (Luchs, Seymoure, & Smith, 2012). At the very least, these results should suggest caution on the part of pre-tenure faculty members who may otherwise be inclined to overlook the importance of professional service in the promotion process. These findings also suggest that the most important acts of service are those situated closest to home (departmentally speaking). Service to the department and college or university (such as advising graduate students and serving on committees) was rated as more important than activities that serve the discipline more broadly (such as reviewing articles for academic journals and chairing discussions at professional conferences). While service to the discipline may be more exciting for junior faculty members and may develop better professional networks, it appears to not be as highly valued as departmental and institutional service, at least when it comes to awarding tenure.

**Differences Across Institutional Settings**

The magnitude of the emphasis on research productivity in public affairs and administration tenure standards (see Table 2) seems to provide at least a degree of support for the aforementioned trend toward stricter research requirements even in non-research-intensive institutions (Backes-Gellner & Schlinghoff, 2010; Lagon, 1995). However, the data do also show some moderate distinctions across institutional types and settings, particularly with regard to those institutions classified as doctoral or research intensive (see Table 1). In terms of general tenure standards, a higher percentage of respondents at doctoral or research-intensive institutions emphasized the importance of research productivity in granting tenure ( $\chi^2 = 11.637$ ;  $\phi_c = .283$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ), while among respondents from non-research-intensive institutions, a slightly larger number suggested an openness to emphasizing professional service ( $\chi^2 = 14.289$ ;  $\phi_c = .314$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ) and superior teaching ( $\chi^2 = 10.325$ ;  $\phi_c = .267$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ) in the tenure decision (Table 7). These results are consistent with previous findings that have also

noted a trend toward stricter research standards at doctoral and research-intensive institutions (Alshare, Wenger, & Miller, 2007).

Specific research expectations also differed significantly across institutional settings (Table 8). In particular, at doctoral and research-intensive universities, expectations were significantly higher for both peer-reviewed journal articles ( $\chi^2 = 23.248$ ;  $\varphi_c = .412$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ) and academic conference presentations ( $\chi^2 = 15.443$ ;  $\varphi_c = .335$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ). Quality-related standards also appear to differ across settings. An independent samples *t*-test showed that doctoral-granting, research-intensive universities required a significantly greater percentage of a candidate's research to be published in the field's most prestigious journals ( $t = 2.771$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ). The presence of stricter research standards at doctoral-granting institutions is consistent with previous research in political science (Rothgeb & Burger, 2009).

Differences in professional service expectations also appeared across institutional settings (see Table 9). In particular, statistically significant

differences were found between doctoral-granting institutions and other institutions with regard to the importance of serving on a college or university committee ( $\chi^2 = 23.482$ ;  $\varphi_c = .410$ ;  $p \leq .01$ ), the importance of serving as a member on a public or nonprofit board ( $\chi^2 = 12.167$ ;  $\varphi_c = .295$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ), and the importance of performing community service outside of one's professional areas of expertise ( $\chi^2 = 15.562$ ;  $\varphi_c = .333$ ;  $p \leq .01$ ). In each case, doctoral-granting and research-intensive universities seem to place less emphasis on these service activities. This finding may be a reflection of their predominant focus on research productivity, and it may suggest that public affairs and administration programs at non-doctoral-granting and non-research-intensive institutions are still preserving more of their community- and practitioner-related roots despite adoption of heightened research requirements over recent years.

**CONCLUSION**

The data contained in these survey responses confirm much of what is anecdotally believed about tenure standards within the field of

**TABLE 8.**  
Cross-Tabulation of Research Standards by Type of Institution (%)

When making tenure decisions...	Percentage of Responses				
	None	1-2 total	3-4 total	1 per year	2 or more per year
<b>A. Doctoral-granting/research-intensive universities</b>					
How many peer-reviewed journal articles are candidates for tenure expected to publish?*	0	0	7.5	47.5	45.0
How many paper presentations at professional conferences are candidates for tenure expected to make?*	4.9	7.3	7.3	51.2	29.3
<b>B. Other colleges and universities</b>					
How many peer-reviewed journal articles are candidates for tenure expected to publish?*	2.1	18.6	24.7	39.2	15.5
How many paper presentations at professional conferences are candidates for tenure expected to make?*	12.4	18.6	24.7	29.9	14.4

Notes. \*  $\chi^2 = 23.248$  ( $p = .000$ );  $\varphi_c = .412$  ( $p = .000$ ); \*\*  $\chi^2 = 15.443$  ( $p = .004$ );  $\varphi_c = .335$  ( $p = .004$ ).

**TABLE 9.**  
Cross-Tabulation of Professional Service Standards by Type of Institution

When evaluating a candidate for tenure, how important is each of the following...	Percentage of Responses				
	Very important	important	Neither important nor unimportant	Unimportant	Very unimportant
<b>A. Doctoral-granting/research-intensive universities</b>					
Service on a college or university committee*	4.8	45.2	7.1	35.7	7.1
Service as a member of a public or nonprofit board or commission**	0.0	31.0	19.0	33.3	16.7
Community service or volunteering not specifically linked to scholarly expertise***	0.0	16.7	7.1	42.9	33.3
<b>B. Other colleges and universities</b>					
Service on a college or university committee*	8.2	72.4	11.2	7.1	1.0
Service as a member of a public or nonprofit board or commission**	2.0	56.1	18.4	18.4	5.1
Community service or volunteering not specifically linked to scholarly expertise***	4.1	33.7	17.3	33.7	11.2

*Notes.* \*  $\chi^2 = 23.482$  ( $p = .000$ );  $\phi_c = .410$  ( $p = .000$ ); \*\*  $\chi^2 = 12.167$  ( $p = .016$ );  $\phi_c = .295$  ( $p = .016$ ); \*\*\*  $\chi^2 = 15.562$  ( $p = .004$ );  $\phi_c = .333$  ( $p = .004$ ).

public affairs and administration. In particular, they suggest that earning tenure in the field is predominantly a matter of research productivity, with far less emphasis placed on the scholarship of teaching or professional service, despite numerous calls for such consideration. Furthermore, the data also suggest that tenure has not only become more difficult to attain over the past 10 years, but that it will become even more difficult going forward, as research standards are expected to continue rising over the next decade. What these data are yet unable to demonstrate is how these trends compare to those in other fields over the same time period. For instance, it is unclear whether these shifts represent an attempt on the part of public affairs and administration programs to “catch up” or “keep up” with trends in other disciplines. While these practices appear to be common across the field at large, they are somewhat more pronounced among doctoral and research-intensive universities, as would generally be expected.

Based on these results, a more robust discussion about goal congruence within the discipline may be worthwhile. Specifically, public affairs and administration programs may want to consider how prevailing tenure standards create incentives (or disincentives) for desirable faculty behaviors, such as the pursuit of excellence in research, teaching, and scholarly engagement with the field of practice. Prior research has shown that the criteria associated with tenure and promotion serve as crucial signals to junior faculty. For instance, drawing in part on the work of Latham (2007), Hardré and Cox (2009) note that “institutional policy influences individual faculty members’ perceptions of what is valued in their workplaces and those perceptions affect and inform performance” (p. 386). From a rational choice perspective, this means that if research is more heavily weighted than teaching in the tenure decision process (as our survey results indicate), then junior faculty seeking tenure will tend to limit the time spent

on teaching preparation and other teaching-oriented behaviors (Backes-Gellner & Schlinghoff, 2010; Lagon, 1995). It is our hope that the results of this survey will help to promote these types of important considerations and conversations, both within individual programs, departments, and schools and across the field at large.

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## NOTES

- 1 We surveyed academic program leaders specifically, as opposed to NASPAA principal representatives, who may or may not be charged with overseeing the tenure and promotion process within their respective academic units. When compiling the survey mailing list, it became clear that there is often, but not always, overlap of the two roles (i.e., the principal representative and department chair being the same person).
- 2 At the time of the survey, in 2012, NASPAA's membership roster included 273 schools. NASPAA's current institutional membership approaches 300 (see [http://www.naspaa.org/about\\_naspaa/about/overview.asp](http://www.naspaa.org/about_naspaa/about/overview.asp)).
- 3 It is important to note that NASPAA did not sponsor or endorse this survey, but simply provided the contact information for its institutional members.

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