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GUIDELINES ON EVALUATION  
OF PLANNING FACULTY  
FOR PROMOTION AND TENURE

A Report by the  
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## GUIDELINES ON EVALUATION OF PLANNING FACULTY FOR PROMOTION AND TENURE

### Introduction

The Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning offers the following information and guidelines to institutions in the evaluation of faculty members in the field of planning with regard to promotion or granting

This is appropriate for two reasons:

1. Planning programs are administratively located in a wide variety of parent units in American universities. A department may be in a school or college of architecture, environmental design, fine arts, social sciences, administration, or others. In some cases, it may be an independent unit reporting directly to a high-level president, vice-chancellor, or dean of the graduate school. Consequently, people from a wide variety of backgrounds are involved in evaluating planning faculty.
2. Planning faculty are diverse in their education, experience, interests, and abilities—they do not fit the mold of scholars in academic disciplines of the humanities, social sciences. Some create tangible products in the manner common to the fine arts, architecture, and other design disciplines. Others are engaged in professional practice, consulting, and the advising of public bodies and community groups. Many use their creativity in more than one of these ways.

### The Field of Planning

Although the activity of city planning has been going on for thousands of years, the emergence of a distinct profession did not occur until the Twentieth Century. In the United States, the origin of city planning is traced to the Columbian Exposition of 1893.

Along with the urban parks and civic arts movements, the Exposition stimulated the City Beautiful movement and the establishment of the first professional practices in city planning. Other streams of Progressive Era reform included neighborhood settlement houses and playgrounds, and especially civil service reform and tenement house improvement in the emergence of the field.

The first national organization of planners in the U.S. was founded in 1917. Of course none of the founders were in planning; they had moved into planning from other fields. The 52 charter members included 14 landscape

5 architects, and 5 lawyers. Thus from the start, planning has been an interdisciplinary field. Architecture v the early years, and it continues to have a strong influence on planning today.

As the planning field matured, it also grew broader. Social scientists entered the field in substantial nur World War II they replaced architects as the most numerous recruits for planning. During the 1960's the quantitative analysis and computers. About the same time, advocacy planning emerged and many planners b professional skills to assist community groups.

Planning today is a diverse field, and planning practitioners do a wide variety of things, ranging from writing computer programs to drafting legislation to negotiating between neighborhood groups and city hail. "the comprehensive arrangement of land uses and land occupancy and the regulation thereof" was defined as the profession; that phrase was stricken from the constitution of the planners' organization in 1967 (althoug the most common activity of planners). As in many fields, the planning profession has had difficulty in setti scope of the field.

Nevertheless, virtually all planners have some key characteristics in common: 1) a commitment to b better, 2) an orientation to the future, 3) a comprehensive view that places issues in a broad context, and 4) a assesses the pros and cons of alternative possible actions. These traits have made planning a viable and valu; of whether its practitioners specialize in the design of shopping centers or of social programs.

### The Education of Planners

As noted, the first planners in this country were trained in other fields. It took time before universities d in planning. Harvard University offered the first master's degree in city planning starting in 1929. M.I.T. fol Cornell in 1935 and Columbia in 1937. Several important programs were started shortly after World Pennsylvania, Berkeley). In the late 1960s and 1970s growth accelerated and planning schools were establ Today, over one hundred programs belong to the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning.

From the outset, planning was generally considered a proper subject for graduate training, as with the medicine, and divinity. It remains true today that the master's degree (requiring two years of study) is the n normal prerequisite for entry into the profession. At a more advanced level, Harvard awarded the first Ph.D. eventually about twenty other universities followed suit with doctoral programs. A few of the first planning degrees, sometimes requiring five years of study. In the past decade the number of undergraduate considerably; there are currently about thirty in the country.

At first, teaching in planning followed the model of architectural education. The curriculum was dom where students learned by trying out solutions to assigned problems and having their work criticized. The gradually shifted as the social sciences and quantitative methods absorbed larger portions of the curricul schools employ a mixture of lecture courses, seminars, and studios. Often studios involve off-campus fi

creating at a drafting table; students may spend their time interviewing people and analyzing data instead of

## The Training of Planning Faculty

As in the infancy of most professions, the first teachers of planning were basically practitioners. In some cases, they went from practice to become full-time professors, but often they carried on both careers simultaneously. This situation persisted for several decades. Eventually it became accepted that a planning faculty member should hold a master's degree.

By 1960, there were also some planning faculty with doctoral degrees, either in planning or allied disciplines. There was a large increase in enrollment in Ph.D. programs in planning. Most of the Ph.D. recipients sought to become full-time professors. Sometimes they went directly into teaching without any substantial practice experience.

Thus today there are two broad groups of people who teach planning: those who came up through practice and those who followed the traditional academic path. Normally, the former have a practical orientation, while the latter have a more theoretical orientation. The highest degree of those in the first group is usually a master's degree, while those in the second have earned a Ph.D. Faculty of most planning programs include both types of people, and such a mix is often considered desirable.

These generalizations admit many exceptions in practice. Some individuals who do not have doctorates have made significant contributions to research. Some practitioners who have gone into teaching have proven to be prolific writers. There are many individuals with considerable practical experience who obtained mid-career Ph.D.'s. The only safe generalization is that the traditional academic path by which people have entered the academic side of planning.

One university formally recognized this by adopting several alternative profiles for planning faculty. For example, a "scholar-educator" might involve 1/2 research + 1/2 teaching, while that for a "scholar-professional-educator" might involve 1/4 research + 1/4 practice + 1/2 teaching. Individual faculty members choose such profiles early in their careers based on their talents and interests. They are subsequently evaluated on the basis of criteria appropriate for their chosen profiles. This system is used in the evaluation process and relieves junior faculty of some of the anxiety associated with the uncertainties of the traditional path. This concept has proven to be helpful, and other universities might consider it.

## Evaluation of Faculty

Each academic institution establishes its own criteria and standards for the advancement of its faculty. The Association of Planning Schools considers efforts in the three broad areas of teaching, research or other creative activity, and public and university service. Different universities put different weights on the three areas: some institutions emphasize teaching, while at others research is given more weight. Further, different universities have different standards: what is considered a good publication record at one school may be considered weak at another. The Association does not intend to promulgate criteria or standards, but it does provide information that may assist in evaluating faculty members in the planning field.

It is important that the expectations of the university be made explicit to junior faculty members. Problem misunderstanding: a young professor believes he or she is “on track,” while colleagues and superiors recommended that every planning program have a formal procedure for periodic evaluation of faculty during which they are advised of possible deficiencies and given suggestions on how to remedy them.

The major factor in deciding whether a planning faculty member should be promoted and/or granted tenure is the quality of individual’s work. Excellence should be rewarded and mediocrity should not. The Association is just as interested in assuring that planning programs have faculties with superior ability and high productivity.

Whether quality is high or low is a relative matter, and planning faculty should be judged by criteria appropriate to their field, rather than the criteria of other professions or disciplines. This is pertinent because key decisions on the hiring and promotion of planning faculty are often made by people from other fields. Many disputes have occurred because planning faculty are judged by the criteria of traditional disciplines in which the nature of academic work is quite different.

Peer review is the guiding principle in determining the quality of a planning professor’s performance. It involves the evaluation of research or professional practice, which is heavily weighted by many universities. It is recommended that reviewers be selected from outside the candidate’s university who are disinterested in the result. Peers should be knowledgeable in the area of specialization and understand his or her approach to planning. The Association is willing to assist in the selection of who are recognized experts in particular aspects of planning.

Despite the diversity, some expectations for planning faculty are generally held in the field. They follow three areas in which faculty are usually evaluated.

### Teaching

The teaching activities of planning faculty resemble those in other fields. Most faculty teach lecture courses in the same way as instructors in traditional academic disciplines. Often planning faculty also teach studio or workshop courses similar to instructors in architecture and fine arts.

What is different about the teaching of planning is that the faculty are often required to teach in a variety of settings: large classes, to lead small discussion groups, to organize studio projects, and to supervise individual students. Therefore, the teaching of planning can be more challenging than in many other fields: it calls for a broader range of skills.

Another consideration is that most planning programs focus on the graduate level and typically have a high student-faculty ratio. Therefore, planning faculty are seldom able to repeat courses in the same year; usually each course of a semester is taught by a different faculty member. Versatility may be more valuable than narrow expertise. Furthermore, the relatively low student-faculty ratio usually expected to engage in intensive personal interaction with students.

Teaching contributions are not necessarily limited to effective performance in the classroom. Improving the new courses, serving on thesis and dissertation committees, and supervising independent study are other ways to enhance students' learning experience.

The importance of effective teaching should not be underestimated, even in an institution that sees research. Student evaluations of teaching can provide very useful input, but they should not be used as the sole source of teaching.

### Research or Creative Activity

The assessment of research or other creative activity usually presents the most difficulty in evaluating faculty who pursue scholarly paths virtually indistinguishable in style from those in traditional academic disciplines. This activity appears in refereed journal articles, books, and papers presented at scholarly and professional conferences.

The number of refereed journals in the planning field per se is quite small. Therefore, planning faculty should look to journals of allied fields, such as geography, sociology, economics, public administration, regional science, and anthropology. In the planning field, these outlets are quite appropriate.

The planning field is dedicated to intervening in matters of public policy; this is an essential part of the professional planner. Many planning faculty behave in the same way, and their writings frequently influence public policies and programs and recommendations for changes. This is considered in the planning field to be commendable. Therefore planning faculty should not be expected to adopt the same stance of neutrality and objectivity that is expected of academics in the natural and social sciences. The issue should be the quality of argument and of the work.

Innovation is also given a high premium in the planning field. Planners are often in the forefront of emerging movements. An incidental result of this is that planning faculty sometimes publish their best work in non-refereed journals. While peer review is essential in evaluating faculty, it should be recognized that the editing of non-refereed journals may be biased against non-traditional topics. It would be appropriate to submit non-refereed publications to well-recognized scholars.

Many planning faculty do not contribute to scholarly publications, but devote their creative energies to projects that may take the form of consulting for private firms, public agencies, or community organizations. Often this work results in reports and planning documents that are not formally published, but may still represent creative achievements. For example, an outstanding plan or technical report may become a model for other practitioners. A new piece of legislation may be copied by many communities. Creative achievements may be disseminated to other practitioners through non-scholarly publications (such as *Planning Perspectives* magazines).

As with research, it is the quality of the faculty member's professional practice that should count. The key professional work represents an original contribution to the art and science of planning. Routine professional work (the application of standard techniques to produce a product typical of the field) should not be considered equivalent. However, innovative professional work can involve a high level of creativity and should be accorded due credit. This includes the development of new methodology, application of methodology from another field to a planning topic, practical application to a problem, or synthesizing ideas in a new format. A planning professor engaged in practice should be evaluated on the basis of intellectual advancement of practice.

Outstanding professional work in planning is sometimes recognized with prizes and awards, such as those of the International Planning Association. However, the number of such awards available to planners is small. Without denigrating the quality of that some outstanding professional planning work never receives formal recognition. It is recommended that outstanding professional practice be submitted for peer review.

### Public and University Service

Contributions by planning faculty in the area of public service may also be difficult to evaluate. Since planning is a public-oriented field, association with the profession represents a valid contribution to an academic planning program. This includes a form of involvement with planning agencies, consulting firms and community groups. (Of course, such a contribution is also a part of professional practice. What is meant here is that the contacts developed in such activity can be very useful to the university. Another common form of service is participation in professional and academic organizations such as the International Planning Association, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, and the Planning Accreditation Board.

As with the other areas, the quality of the service should determine how much weight it receives in evaluation. It is difficult to judge, but activities that typically deserve credit include serving as officer in an organization, chairing a committee, preparing a report of interest to the profession, editing a journal, and organizing a conference.

It is not uncommon for planning faculty to serve as members of local planning commissions or other public bodies in elective office. Since planning practice is so closely tied to government, such activity should be considered as a part of public service, and not just an avocation.

Due credit should be given for a professor's entrepreneurial talents. Many planning programs rely on a faculty member's ability to find financial support for students and to undertake special activities like visiting lectures and field trips. The ability to find support outside the university is an important asset and evidence of a faculty member's reputation. This may include finding sponsors for class projects or individual student research. Assisting students in finding employment after graduation is also a creditable contribution.

Assessing the quality of many of the activities mentioned above is admittedly difficult. Again, the principle is to evaluate as much as possible. This might involve contacting references familiar with the candidate's professional work or even including a representative of the profession on the evaluation committee. Where the service has involved the public, they should be asked to comment on the candidate's performance.

## Academic Freedom and Discrimination

The Association strongly supports the concept of academic freedom and endorses the principles of the University Professors as set forth in its *1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*. If that he or she was harmed by unjust or improper procedures and the grievance cannot be resolved within the institution, AAUP is an appropriate external authority from which to seek assistance.

The Association is firmly opposed to discrimination against faculty members on any basis not in performance, such as discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, gender, physical handicap, or sexual orientation. The Association supports the policies of AAUP in this regard. Any faculty member who believes she or he has been discriminated against is urged to contact the appropriate public agencies or AAUP.