May 22, 2018

From: USPIP faculty

To: POLS department faculty

Re: Memo of shared understanding research as a component in the evaluation of faculty in the USPIP field.

The question to be addressed is the following: What are our research standards for promotion with tenure?

On May 7, 2018, the US Politics Institutions and Policy group met to discuss this question. The following points were agreed upon.

1. A tenure record that includes more than 8 single-authored refereed articles, or a single-authored book and 2 or more refereed articles is likely to be successful in the process. However, there are several considerations that should be taken into account.
   1. The external reviewers should indicate that the body of work, taken as a whole, establishes a credible research agenda that is likely to be sustained in the future
   2. It will be helpful if a small number, perhaps 2, of the article publications are in “top tier” journals, including the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, or the *Journal of Politics*.
2. An assistant professor who publishes only material drawn from the doctoral dissertation will face difficulty in the review process. In order to earn promotion with tenure, the accomplishments should reveal a scholar’s growth beyond graduate training. Hence, a publication record based only on a book that is based primarily on the doctoral dissertation may not be sufficient. However, a book based on the dissertation along with articles reflecting subsequent research may be sufficient if it establishes a credible personal research agenda. In that sort of case, the advice of the external reviewers is especially influential.
3. There is a minimum amount of productivity in publication that is necessary to establish a credible tenure record. During the time of service at KU, an assistant professor who publishes fewer than one item per year (on average, where *item* means a refereed journal article or a substantial book chapter) will face difficulty in the tenure review process.
   1. Cases in which the amount of published material is low may still succeed if quality is extremely high. If just a few articles are published, but they are all single-authored pieces in the *American Political Science Review*, it seems the sheer quantity might not be harmful to the tenure case. In a situation like that, we would depend on the advice of the external evaluators. The candidate’s personal statement about the research record will likely be carefully inspected in a situation like this. It should persuade the higher-level reviewers that a productive research agenda has been established.
4. Receipt of a research grant from the National Science Foundation or similar competitive granting agency is not necessary for promotion. However, it will help. All external grants significantly enhance a tenure file. Grant resources contribute to the accomplishment of research. Apart from helping scholars to generate publishable research, grants serve as external validation of a research agenda, much in the same way that the external review letters constitute external, neutral evaluations.
5. Some amount of “single-authored” publications will enhance the chances of success. Candidates should anticipate the possibility that external reviewers may be skeptical of records that lack a significant amount of single-authored research activity. Obviously, a sole author will have less difficulty persuading external reviewers that the personal research agenda is clear and compelling. Professors who only appear as co-authors will have difficulty providing “evidence of an active and productive scholarly agenda.” (Promotion and Tenure Procedures, Political Science Department, 2012, p. 3)
6. While publications in the top tier political science journals are highly prized, we do not intend to discourage faculty from seeking other publication outlets where appropriate. Contributions in interdisciplinary journals, or in subfield-specific political science journals, are valuable. Similarly, the emphasis on top tier journals is not meant to disparage the publication of longer research monographs with academic presses.
   1. We do not employ a “point scale” to calibrate the value-toward-tenure obtained from various publication outlets. We instead rely on our assessment of the originality, clarity, rigor, and importance (theoretical and empirical) of each publication. Similarly, we decline to quantify the value of an article versus a book or a book chapter. We hope the originality and quality of the research accomplishment will speak for itself.
   2. We are aware that some political science departments have adopted quantitative formula to weight books and articles in various outlets. Junior professors should expect that others will review their work in light of those frameworks, even though we do not ask external reviewers to employ them. It is likely that reviewers will use evidence from rating systems like Academic Analytics, Google Scholar, and various journal rankings.

Finally, we hasten to emphasize that departmental standards for tenure are only one part of the puzzle with which an assistant professor should be concerned. Even if the department gives signals of endorsement on an annual basis, or in the third year review, it is still possible that the external reviewers or the review committees of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and/or the University might differ in their evaluations of a tenure file.