GUIDELINES ON EVALUATION
OF PLANNING FACULTY
FOR PROMOTION AND TENURE

A Report by the
Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning
Adopted by the Executive Committee
October 9, 1986

Prepared by the
Committee on Promotion and Tenure Policy

Alan Black, University of Kansas (Chair)
Tridib Banerjee, University of Southern California
Judith de Neufville, University of California, Berkeley
John Forester, Cornell University
David Johnson, University of Tennessee
Duane Shinn, Iowa State University
Richard A. Smith, Florida State University
GUIDELINES ON EVALUATION OF
PLANNING FACULTY
FOR PROMOTION AND TENURE

Introduction

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

This is appropriate for two reasons:

1. Planning programs are administratively located in a wide variety of parent units in American universities. A planning program or department may be in a school or college of architecture, environmental design, fine arts, social sciences, business and public administration, or others. In some cases, it may be an independent unit reporting directly to a high-level official such as a vice-president, vice-chancellor, or dean of the graduate school. Consequently, people from a wide variety of academic fields and backgrounds are involved in evaluating planning faculty.

2. Planning faculty are diverse in their education, experience, interests, and abilities—they do not fit a common pattern. Some perform research and publish in the traditional mode of scholars in academic disciplines of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Some create tangible products in the manner common to the fine arts, architecture, and other design fields. Others are largely engaged in professional practice, consulting, and the advising of public bodies and community groups. Many of 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 pegged 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, such as those favoring neighborhood settlement houses and playgrounds, and especially civil service reform and tenement house improvement, contributed to 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 was specifically trained in planning; they had moved into planning from other fields. The 52 charter members included 14 landscape architects, 13 engineers, 10 urban designers, and others. The organization quickly grew in membership and influence and played a major role in shaping the profession of city planning.
5 architects, and 5 lawyers. Thus from the start, planning has been an interdisciplinary field. Architecture was a major contributor in 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 numbers in the 1930’s; after World War II they replaced architects as the most numerous recruits for planning. During the 1960’s the field took a turn toward quantitative analysis and computers. About the same time, advocacy planning emerged and many planners began to specialize in 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 hall.

"the comprehensive arrangement of land uses and land occupancy and the regulation thereof" was defined as the distinctive element of the profession; that phrase was stricken from the constitution of the planners’ organization in 1967 (although the most common activity of planners). As in many fields, the planning profession has had difficulty in setting boundaries on the scope of the field.

Nevertheless, virtually all planners have some key characteristics in common: 1) a commitment to bring about change for the better, 2) an orientation to the future, 3) a comprehensive view that places issues in a broad context, and 4) an analytical approach that assesses the pros and cons of alternative possible actions. These traits have made planning a viable and valuable profession, regardless 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 developed formal offerings in planning. Harvard University offered the first master’s degree in city planning starting in 1929. M.I.T. followed in 1933; then Cornell in 1935 and Columbia in 1937. Several important programs were started shortly after World War II (North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Berkeley). In the late 1960s and 1970s growth accelerated and planning schools were established throughout the U.S. 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 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 dominated by studio courses, where students learned by trying out solutions to assigned problems and having their work criticized. The pedagogical approach has gradually shifted as the social sciences and quantitative methods absorbed larger portions of the curriculum.

Most planning schools employ a mixture of lecture courses, seminars, and studios. Often studios involve off-campus field work rather than just
The Training of Planning Faculty

As in the infancy of most professions, the first teachers of planning were basically practitioners. In son practice to become full-time professors, but often they carried on both careers simultaneously. This situat 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 disc there was a large increase in enrollment in Ph.D. programs in planning. Most of the Ph.D. recipients sou... 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 profes who followed the traditional academic path. Normally, the former have a practical orientation, while the latter highest degree of those in the first group is usually a master’s degree, while those in the second have earn 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 research. Some practitioners who have gone into teaching have proven to be prolific writers. There are considerable practical experience who obtained mid-career Ph.D.’s. The only safe generalization is that the 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 ‘scholar-educator” might involve 1/2 research + 1/2 teaching, while that for a “scholar-professional-edu research + 1/4 practice + 1/2 teaching. Individual faculty members choose such profiles early in their caree... They are subsequently evaluated on the basis of criteria appropriate for their chosen profiles. T in the evaluation process and relieve junior faculty of some of the anxiety associated with the uncertainties

Evaluation of Faculty

Each academic institution establishes its own criteria and standards for the advancement of its faculty. consi... universities put different weights on the three areas: some institutions emphasize teaching, while at others weight. Further, different universities have different standards: what is considered a good publication record school may be considered weak at another. The Association does not intend to promulgate criteria or stan 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. Problems sometimes arise through 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 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 the 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 the field, rather than the criteria of other professions or disciplines. This is pertinent because key decisions on the promotion or tenure of planning faculty are often made by people from other fields. Many disputes have occurred because planning 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 is especially important in evaluating research or professional practice, which is heavily weighted by many universities. It is recommended that “peers” 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 who are recognized experts in particular aspects of planning.

Despite the diversity, some expectations for planning faculty are generally held in the field. The following sections discuss the 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 and seminars in the same way as instructors in traditional academic disciplines. Often planning faculty also teach studio or workshop courses in a manner 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 modes — to lecture to large classes, to lead small discussion groups, to organize studio projects, and to supervise individual research and internships. 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 relatively low student-faculty ratio. Therefore, planning faculty are seldom able to repeat courses in the same year; usually each course of a term is unique. 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 curriculum, developing new courses, serving on thesis and dissertation committees, and supervising independent study are other ways in which faculty can enhance students’ learning experience.

The importance of effective teaching should not be underestimated, even in an institution that sees research as its primary mission. 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 planning faculty. Some faculty pursue scholarly paths virtually indistinguishable in style from those in traditional academic disciplines. Their work 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 may publish in the journals of allied fields, such as geography, sociology, economics, public administration, regional science, at the planning is an interdisciplinary 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 in 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 for 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 editor of the planning field may be biased against non-traditional topics. It would be appropriate to submit non-refereed publications for evaluation by recognized scholars.

Many planning faculty do not contribute to scholarly publications, but devote their creative energies to professional practice. This may take the form of consulting for private firms, public agencies, or community organizations. Often this work results in professional reports and planning documents that are not formally published, but may still represent creative achievements comparable to publication of journal articles. For example, an outstanding plan or technical report may become a model for used by instructors at other universities. A new piece of legislation may be copied by many communities. Outstanding practice achievements may be disseminated to other practitioners through non-scholarly publications (such as Planning 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 (i.e., the application of standard techniques to produce a product typical of the field) should not be considered equivalent to scholarly activity. However, innovative professional work can involve a high level of creativity and should be accorded due credit. This might involve the development of new methodology, application of methodology from another field to a planning topic, proposing a unique solution to a problem, or synthesizing ideas in a new format. A planning professor engaged in practice should be expected to contribute to the intellectual advancement of practice.

Outstanding professional work in planning is sometimes recognized with prizes and awards, such as those given by the American Planning Association. However, the number of such awards available to planners is small. Without denigrating these awards, it is true that some outstanding professional planning work never receives formal recognition. It is recommended that the products of 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 practice-oriented field, association with the profession represents a valid contribution to an academic planning program. This may take the form of involvement with planning agencies, consulting firms and community groups. (Of course, such activity may also count as professional practice. What is meant here is that the contacts developed in such activity can be very useful.) Another common form of service is participation in professional and academic organizations such as the American 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 evaluating a faculty member’s professional practice, and not just an avocation.

It is not uncommon for planning faculty to serve as members of local planning commissions or other public bodies, or even to run for elective office. Since planning practice is so closely tied to government, such activity should be considered an important form of public service.

Due credit should be given for a professor’s entrepreneurial talents. Many planning programs rely on outside funding to provide financial support for students and to undertake special activities like visiting lectures and field trips. The ability to raise money from outside the university is an important asset and evidence of a faculty member’s reputation. This may come as research grants or 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 should be to rely on peer review as much as possible. This might involve contacting references familiar with the candidate’s professional practice, or even including a representative of the profession on the evaluation committee. Where the service has involved identifiable clients, 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 a faculty member believes that he or she was harmed by unjust or improper procedures and the grievance cannot be resolved within 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 intrinsically related to job performance, such as discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, gender, physical handicap. The Association supports the policies of AAUP in this regard. Any faculty member who believes she or he was the victim of discrimination is urged to contact the appropriate public agencies or AAUP.