

# An Examination Of Faculty Beliefs Concerning P&T Decisions

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## ABSTRACT

*According to Schuster and Finkelstein (2006) faculty workloads have been increasing dramatically. Besides the additional hours worked by faculty the composition of work has changed as well (Schultz et al., 1989). Studies on research, teaching and service components of promotion and tenure (P&T) decisions at colleges and universities have largely focused on the research and teaching aspects. Research and teaching are consistently given considerably more weight in the P&T decisions (Alshare et al., 2007 and Tripathy and Ganesh, 1996). The purpose of this study is to examine whether faculty believe the perceived weighting of service in P&T decisions is appropriate. A survey was sent to randomly selected business faculty. Participants were asked a series of questions related to the current perceived and desired levels of the significance of service in P&T decisions. The results indicate that in all P&T decisions service should be of greater importance than the current perceived level incorporated into those decisions. Additional analyses revealed that demographic factors appear to affect the significance of the desired level of importance of service.*

**Keywords:** Service; Promotion and Tenure; Faculty Evaluation

## INTRODUCTION

Faculty members are evaluated during the promotion and tenure (P&T) process in three crucial areas: research, teaching and service. Past research has concentrated on the use of the research and teaching components in the P&T decision making process (see Comm and Mathaisel, 1998; Englebrecht et al., 1994; Tripathy and Ganesh, 1996). Overall, the use of service in P&T decisions has been far less researched than the research and teaching components. Possible reasons for the limited research on the role of service in P&T decisions include the following: service is less valued than research and teaching (Neumann and Terosky, 2007) and service is often not well defined (Filetti, 2009; Ward, 2003). The focus of much of the limited prior research on service has been on the actual weight given to service in P&T decisions (for example see Tripathy and Ganesh, 1996).

This study focuses on whether faculty members believe that service at their institution is appropriately weighted in P&T decisions. A survey was sent to randomly selected business faculty across all disciplines. The survey asked faculty to report both the current perceived importance placed on service and the importance they believe should be placed on service for P&T decisions at their current institution. These questions were asked for each of the typical P&T decisions: tenure, promotion to associate, and promotion to full. Demographic information was also collected regarding their institution including size, highest degree awarded, private or public, and accreditation status.

The findings indicated that the current incorporation of service and the preferred levels in P&T decisions are different. Overall, the results of the survey seem to support the idea that faculty believe service is currently undervalued in the P&T process at their institution. In addition, some of the demographic attributes had a significant impact on whether faculty members believe service is appropriately weighted at their institution. The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: the next section provides a discussion of the relevant literature, followed by a description of the methodology and results, and finally the summary and conclusions.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Blackburn and Lawrence (1995) concluded that despite the great number of studies on faculty research and to a lesser extent teaching there is very limited research on service. Prior research studies like Hardre and Cox (2009), Tripathy and Ganesh (1996), Saunders et al. (2006) and Luchs et al. (2011) examines the role of service in the P&T process. The limited amount of research related to service is due to the inconsistent definition of service (Filetti, 2009; Ward, 2003) and its lower perceived value than research and teaching (Neumann and Terosky, 2007). Hardre and Cox (2009) surveyed 120 departments at 23 research universities and found support for both of these reasons. In their study, only 47% of departments provided detailed evidence as to what constituted service, 21% of departments provided vague evidence, and 32% provided no evidence as to what constituted service for P&T decisions. Among institutions that provided specific weightings (or a range of acceptable weightings) for research, teaching, and service the average weights for research and teaching were approximately equal and three times the average weight for service in P&T decisions.

Tripathy and Ganesh (1996) surveyed finance faculty from 44 institutions to determine their current and desired weights for teaching, research, and service for both P&T and merit decisions. Faculty at PhD schools had equivalent desired and current weights for service in P&T decisions but lower desired weight than the current weight of service for merit decisions. Faculty at non-PhD schools had higher desired weights than current weights for both P&T and merit decisions. Overall, faculty at PhD schools had both higher desired and current weights for service in all decisions than faculty at non-PhD schools. Faculty desired and current weights appear better aligned at PhD than non-PhD schools. These results indicate that school demographics may play an important role in whether faculty desire more or less weight to be placed on the importance of service in P&T decisions.

Saunders et al. (2006) examined the question of how important service should be in P&T decisions by surveying accounting faculty. The authors asked faculty to state how important service is in P&T decisions and how important service should be in P&T decisions using a 5-point scale. Overall faculty stated that service should be more important than it actually is for all three P&T decisions (significant at the 0.01% level). These results indicate that accounting faculty believes additional weight should be placed on service for P&T decisions. Faculty also stated that service should be more important for the promotion to full professor decision than the promotion to associate/tenure decisions (t-statistic was significant at the 0.01% level). The weight faculty believe should be placed on service for the promotion to associate and tenure decisions is significantly different for the following demographic characteristics: faculty at large schools believe service should be weighted less than faculty at small schools, faculty at AACSB accredited schools believe that service should be weighted less than faculty at non-AACSB accredited schools, and faculty at PhD granting schools believe that service should be weighted less than faculty at non-PhD granting schools. There were no significant differences in the weight faculty believe should be placed on service for the promotion to full decision based on demographic factors.

Neumann and Terosky (2007) interviewed 40 recently tenured professors in a variety of fields at four PhD granting schools. They found that 87% indicated their service obligations increased after tenure. This indicates that faculty might desire a higher weighting on service for the promotion to full (or merit) decision than on the tenure and/or promotion to associate decisions. Additionally, faculty reported a wide range of types of service activities with 95% of faculty participating in internal university service and 67% participating in external service.

Luchs et al. (2011) examines the perceived importance of service by business faculty in P&T decisions. The results show that service is given greater weight in the promotion to full professor decision than the promotion to associate professor and tenure decisions. Analyses of demographic factors reveal that only a few types of schools have no statistically significant differences in the current use of service in the various P&T decisions. In a previous study (Luchs et al. 2004) focused their analyses on accounting departments and demographic differences in the use of service in each decision. The results from the earlier study revealed that demographic factors affect the importance of service in each of the P&T decisions.

Alshare et al. (2007) surveyed 130 deans from Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accredited and AACSB candidate schools about their weighting of teaching, research, and service for promotion and tenure decisions. While the deans were not asked about differences in desired and current

weightings, the results do provide an indication of differences based on school demographics (teaching versus research, public versus private, and AACSB accredited versus AACSB candidate). The results indicate that teaching, private, and AACSB candidate schools place more weight on service for tenure decisions than promotion decisions. Research, public, and accredited schools place more weight on service for promotion decisions than tenure decisions.

Overall, the limited prior research on the role of service in P&T decisions suggests that most faculty members (conflicting results for faculty at PhD granting institutions) believe that the weight placed on service should be higher than current actual weights. However, many of the past studies used data from one department (such as accounting or finance), faculty in all areas (including those outside of business), or deans and have focused more on the current use of service. This study adds to the literature in several ways. First, the focus of this study is solely on how service should be incorporated into the P&T decisions. Second, the sample consists of business faculty from all disciplines, eliminating potential departmental biases.

**METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS**

The data for this study came from a survey regarding the importance of service in promotion and tenure decisions for business faculty. The database included responses from 115 faculty members that responded to a questionnaire. A total of 3,453 potential participants were identified from Infogroup USA, an e-mail marketing firm. Their database contains e-mail addresses of business faculty members from all concentrations. Of the original e-mails sent to potential participants, 152 were undeliverable. A total 459 e-mails were opened by potential participants. The overall response rate was 3.48% when including all valid e-mails. The effective response rate was 25.05% when including only opened email messages. The survey instrument contained questions concerning the importance of service and demographic information. Most of the survey responses were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1 and 5 represented “Not Important” and “Very Important,” respectively.

Table 1 provides the demographics of the sample. The largest group of respondents is from medium size schools. In addition, public institutions employ 70.3% of respondents, 78.1% of respondents are at AACSB accredited school, and 57.9% of the respondents are at schools that offer as the highest degree a Masters.

**Table 1  
Sample Demographics**

<b>School Size</b>			<b>N</b>
Less than 5,000 students 30.6%	5,001 to 20,000 students 46.8%	More than 20,001 students 22.5%	111
<b>Public versus Private</b>			
Public 70.3%		Private 29.7%	111
<b>Accreditation</b>			
AACSB 78.1%	Other Accreditation 14.3%	Non-Accredited 7.6%	105
<b>Highest Degree Offered by School of Business</b>			
Bachelors 13.1%	Masters 57.9%	Doctoral 29.0%	107

Table 2 presents the responses concerning the use of service in the promotion to associate professor status. Columns 2 and 3 provide the results concerning how important service is and how important service should be in this promotion decision. Overall, the current mean importance of service is 2.7018, which lies between “slightly important” and “moderately important” on the Likert-type scale. The overall mean response to the question as to how important should service be for the promotion to associate decision is 3.0614. This value falls within the “moderately important” and “important” range on the Likert-type scale. Column 4 presents the differences between the two means. The overall difference in the two means for the promotion to associate professor decision is 0.3596. The t-statistics in column 5 for a paired t-test examining the differences of the two means is 3.577. This is significant at a p-value of 0.01, indicating that the respondents felt that service should be of greater importance than it is currently perceived to be valued in the promotion to associate professor.

Table 2 also provides the results of the importance of service in the promotion to associate professor decision based on demographic factors. In examining school size, service is currently valued at 2.7353, 2.7647 and 2.4800 for small, medium and large schools, respectively. The weightings provided by faculty as to the preferred importance of service are 3.1471, 3.1765 and 2.7600 for small, medium and large schools, respectively. The difference between the two means is statistically significant for small and medium schools. This result suggests that unlike the faculty at large schools those at small and medium schools believe that service is currently undervalued in the decision of whether to promote an individual to associate professor. The responses as to how important service should be are 3.0779 and 3.0606 for public and private schools, respectively. The difference between the means for the current value of service (2.6494) and the desired value for service (3.0779) for the respondents from public schools is significant at a p-value of less 0.01. The difference for the means for respondents from private schools is not significant. This finding suggests that service is perceived to be given an appropriate weighting in the promotion to associate professor decision at private schools. The results based on the accreditation status show that respondents from each of the three classifications believe that service should be given more weight than it is currently perceived to be given. Respondents felt that service should be valued at 3.3571, 3.1290 and 2.8333 for the bachelors, masters, and doctoral schools, respectively when the results were examined based on the highest degree offered. In the case of both the masters and doctoral classification, respondents believed that service should be given additional weight in the promotion to associate professor decision than the current weight. The difference for the means of the current value of service and the desired value for respondents from bachelors only schools is not statistically significant suggesting that the value of service currently appears to be appropriate.

**Table 2**  
**Do significant differences exist between the perceived and desired importance of service for the promotion to Associate decision?**

	Means			
	How Important IS Service?	How Important SHOULD Service BE?	Difference In Means	t-statistic
Overall	2.7018	3.0614	0.3596	3.577***
Size of School				
Small	2.7353	3.1471	0.4118	2.074**
Medium	2.7647	3.1765	0.4118	2.820***
Large	2.4800	2.7600	0.2800	1.273
Nature of the School				
Public	2.6494	3.0779	0.4285	3.202***
Private	2.8182	3.0606	0.2424	1.677
Accreditation				
AACSB	2.7284	2.9877	0.2593	2.340**
Other Accreditation	2.7333	3.3333	0.6000	1.871*
No Accreditation	3.0000	4.1250	1.1250	1.938**
Highest Degree Offered in School of Business				
Bachelors	3.0000	3.3571	0.3571	0.836
Masters	2.8387	3.1290	0.2903	2.253**
Doctoral	2.3000	2.8333	0.5333	2.898***

\*\*\* significant at the 1% level,  
 \*\* significant at the 5% level,  
 \* significant at the 10% level.

Overall, the results from Table 2 show that faculty members believe that service should be given more weight in the promotion to associate professor decision. However, analyses based on demographic factors do reveal a few contradictory results. Faculty from large or private schools and those that offer only a bachelors degree school believe that service is currently valued at the proper level. Additional analyses on the desired level of service in the promotion to associate professor decision based on demographic factors revealed limited differences. According to Kruskal-Wallis tests (not reported in the tables), only the accreditation level of the university resulted in significant differences for the preferred importance of service in the promotion to associate professor decision between demographic levels. This result suggests that respondents from AACSB schools believe that service should be given more weight in the promotion to associate professor decision than those respondents from non-AACSB schools.

Table 3 presents the data concerning the use of service for the promotion to full professor decision. Overall, the current mean value for service is 3.1913. That value suggests that service is between “moderately important” and “important.” When asked how important service should be in the decision of whether to promote an individual to full professor status, the mean is 3.5739. The t-statistic presented in column 5 is 3.636 denoting significance at a p-value of less than 0.01. This result suggests that more weight should be given to service in determining the merits of promotion to full professor than the current perception of its importance. Columns 2 and 3 also report the means for the current perceived importance and desired importance of service based on demographic factors. The means for responses for how important service is in the full professor decision are 3.2353, 3.1538 and 3.2400 for small, medium, and large schools, respectively. The means for how important service should be are 3.5588, 3.6154, and 3.5600 for small, medium, and large schools, respectively. The only statistically significant difference between the two sets of means occurs at medium size schools, suggesting that respondents from medium size schools believe more importance should be given to service in the full professor decision than it is currently perceived to be given. The lack of significance for the differences between the means for small and large schools suggests that faculty believe service is appropriately valued in the full professor decision. The means for how important service is for public and private schools are 3.0513 and 3.5455, respectively. The means for how important service should be are 3.5513 and 3.6667, respectively. Only the difference between the two means for public schools is statistically significant. This result suggests that respondents from public schools felt that additional importance should be considered for service in the promotion to full professor decision. The results for comparing the means as to how important service should be based on accreditation level revealed that respondents from accredited schools believe service should have greater importance in the promotion to full professor decision than its current level of importance. The differences in the means are significant at a p-value of less than 0.05. Analyses of the responses based on highest degree offered yielded significant differences in the mean responses from both masters and doctoral granting schools. In both cases, respondents believe that greater weight should be placed on service than they believe is currently placed on it. For respondents from schools where the highest degree offered by the department was a bachelors degree resulted in no significant differences in the current and desired importance of service.

**Table 3**  
**Do significant differences exist between the perceived and desired importance of service for the promotion to Full professor decision?**

	Means			
	How Important IS Service?	How Important SHOULD Service BE?	Difference In Means	t-statistic
Overall	3.1913	3.5739	0.3826	3.636***
Size of School				
Small	3.2353	3.5588	0.3235	1.608
Medium	3.1538	3.6154	0.4616	2.996***
Large	3.2400	3.5600	0.3200	1.355
Nature of the School				
Public	3.0513	3.5513	0.5000	3.487***
Private	3.5455	3.6667	0.1212	1.000
Accreditation				
AACSB	3.2927	3.5610	0.2683	2.304**
Other Accreditation	2.8667	3.6000	0.7333	2.128**
No Accreditation	3.1250	4.1250	1.0000	1.673
Highest Degree Offered in School of Business				
Bachelors	3.3571	3.6429	0.2858	0.718
Masters	3.3387	3.6613	0.3226	2.197**
Doctoral	2.9355	3.4839	0.5484	3.179***

\*\*\* significant at the 1% level,  
 \*\* significant at the 5% level,  
 \* significant at the 10% level.

Table 3 provides evidence of the importance of service in the promotion to full professor decision. Based on the results shown in Table 3, overall, it appears that faculty would prefer to have greater importance placed on service in the promotion to full professor than its current level of importance. Analyses of demographic factors revealed that faculty from small and large schools believe that service is currently given the proper level of importance. Similarly those from private schools, without accreditation or those that offer only a bachelors degree believe that service is currently valued at an appropriate level. Analysis of how important service should be in the full professor decision reveals no significant differences among the demographic factors. This result suggests that respondents from various types of schools believe the desired level of importance of service for the promotion to full professor decisions is similar.

Table 4 presents the statistics for the responses concerning the use of service in the tenure decision. Overall, the current value of service is 2.7043. Faculty respondents suggest that service should be valued at 3.0870. The difference between the means is significant at the p-value of 0.01. Analyses based on demographic factors reveal a belief that service should be given more weight in the tenure decision for all but one demographic factor. The only demographic factor where there is not a significant difference between the two sets of means is for faculty from schools where the highest degree offered is a bachelors degree. Additional analyses were conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in how service should be used in the tenure decision based on demographic variables. The only significant result from the Kruskal-Wallis test for the tenure decision was the accreditation level. This indicates that based on the type of accreditation level at of the respondent’s school the desired importance of service may differ. The overall results from Table 2 are similar to those of Table 4. This similarity suggests that not only does the promotion to associate and granting tenure often occur at the same time for most schools but also service is valued in a similar fashion.

**Table 4**  
**Do significant differences exist between the perceived and desired importance of service for the Tenure granting decision?**

	Means			
	How Important IS Service?	How Important SHOULD Service BE?	Difference In Means	t-statistic
Overall	2.7043	3.0870	0.3827	3.714***
<b>Size of School</b>				
Small	2.7647	3.1471	0.3824	2.077**
Medium	2.7885	3.2500	0.4615	2.610**
Large	2.4800	2.7600	0.2800	1.769*
<b>Nature of the School</b>				
Public	2.6667	3.1282	0.4615	3.330***
Private	2.8182	3.0606	0.2424	1.759*
<b>Accreditation</b>				
AACSB	2.6951	2.9512	0.2561	2.230**
Other Accreditation	2.9333	3.6000	0.6667	2.092*
No Accreditation	3.1250	4.3750	1.2500	2.376**
<b>Highest Degree Offered in School of Business</b>				
Bachelors	3.0000	3.5000	0.5000	1.202
Masters	2.8226	3.1290	0.3064	2.174**
Doctoral	2.2903	2.8065	0.5162	3.102***

\*\*\* significant at the 1% level,  
 \*\* significant at the 5% level,  
 \* significant at the 10% level.

**CONCLUSION**

The objective of this study is to examine how important service should be in the P&T process relative to the current importance in P&T decisions. Prior studies have tended to focus on the research and teaching components and how they are used in the P&T process. This study adds to the emerging research on the value of service in P&T decisions by exploring the relationship between the current importance of service in P&T decisions and the preferred value of service.

A survey was sent to randomly selected business faculty. Survey responses were analyzed using both a paired t-test and non-parametric tests to determine whether there were differences in the current importance of service in P&T decisions and the preferred levels. Overall, findings indicate that faculty members believe the service component should be given more weight for each of the three P&T decisions. However, analysis of the results based on demographic factors reveals some cases where the current level of importance of service is appropriate. In the promotion to associate decision, results from large, private and bachelors only schools suggest that service is currently weighted at an appropriate level. For the full professor decision the results show that small, large, private, non-accredited and bachelors only schools believe that service is properly weighted. The results of the tenure decision reveal that only bachelors only schools are currently valuing service at an appropriate level.

Prior studies have explored the research and teaching components of P&T decisions, but few studies have explored the relationship between service and the P&T decisions. Overall, the results from the current study indicate that while service is perceived to be important to promotion and tenure decisions, the respondents felt that a greater weight should be placed on service most decisions regardless of the demographic position. The implications of this study are two-fold. First, P&T committees should consider increasing the value of service in their decisions. Second, administrators should consider reevaluating the current service requirements of faculty members if the importance of service is not increased.

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