



Reforming Research Productivity

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Tenure is under siege across the United States, and the debate over whether and how it should endure implicates broad issues about the function of the university and higher education. When it comes to awarding tenure at research universities, research productivity is the primary criterion for promoting faculty members. But this yardstick draws on antiquated traditions that have yielded a deeply flawed apparatus for assessing faculty contributions and guiding scholarship.

For years, with rare exception, research productivity has been measured by the volume of publications in peer-reviewed, costly and difficult-to-access proprietary journals. Redefinition for the promotion and tenure process is now imperative, however, because we have haphazardly landed on a definition that has never quite fit and is increasingly nonsensical. If we started from scratch, we would reward research in the promotion process that is meaningful, equitable and accessible. Such a system would go a long way toward rebuilding trust in scientific inquiry.