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**University of Illinois at  
Urbana-Champaign**

A Faculty Guide for  
Relating Public Service  
to the Promotion and  
Tenure Review Process

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This guide replaces a previous one prepared jointly by the University Senate and the Office of Continuing Education and Public Service in the late 1970s. New material was drawn from a study of faculty views about public service conducted in 1991 by the Senate Committee on Continuing Education and Public Service. The guide also incorporates ideas drawn from the literature on assessment and from the guidelines used by the University of California System; the University of California, Davis; the University of Wisconsin; Michigan State University; and the University of Georgia.

Copies of this guide are available from the Office of Public Service at the University of Illinois, (217) 333-8846.

Reprinted 10/2000

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# A Faculty Guide for Relating Public Service to the Promotion and Tenure Review Process

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## **Purpose of This Guide**

This guide was prepared by the Senate Committee on Continuing Education and Public Service and the Office of Continuing Education and Public Service. It should be used by faculty members whose public service responsibilities are major or minor components of their duties. Department heads also will find the guidelines helpful as they advise faculty members on the preparation of materials for promotion and tenure review.

The guide is in two parts. In the first part, public service is described, examples of public service activities are presented, and potential sources of confusion about public service are identified and discussed. In the second part, suggestions are made for planning, documenting, and evaluating public service.

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## Part I

# Defining the Scope of Public Service

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The campus guidelines for promotion and tenure issued by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs make it clear that:

The three prime missions of the University are teaching, research, and public service. In any promotion process, consideration should be given to performance of the individual in all three of these areas. However, the three should not be treated equally and their application depends upon the definition of the position to which the individual has been appointed and to which he or she is to be promoted. (1992–93 Academic Affairs Communication No. 9)

This guide focuses on public service and also discusses how public service interacts with teaching and research. Much as the research (scholarship) of individuals may positively affect their teaching and public service, so too their involvement in public service may positively serve the purposes of their research and teaching. Such is the case for clinical teaching, where public service and teaching are closely integrated. Public service opportunities may evolve from research projects in fields such as agriculture, business, education, and engineering; in response to external requests; or from needs analyses. Public service may lead to subsequent research activities. This interaction among teaching, research, and public service can contribute significantly to the vitality of the institution, its colleges, units, and departments, as well as to the vitality of its individual faculty members.

### **Distinguishing Characteristics of Activities Considered as Public Service**

The types of public service activities that faculty members engage in reflect the nature of their appointments, their training and experience, as well as specific external needs. This leads to diverse forms of interaction by faculty members with communities, individual clients, industries, agencies, governmental entities, and other constituencies. Although the forms can be diverse, public service activities share the following three distinguishing characteristics:

1. They contribute to the public welfare or the common good.
2. They call upon faculty members' academic and/or professional expertise.

3. They directly address or respond to real-world problems, issues, interests, or concerns.

The first characteristic signifies the importance of determining the purpose of a particular activity. Doing so can help avoid confusing public service activities that are for the common good and those that are primarily of only private interest and benefit. The second characteristic emphasizes the importance of differentiating volunteer community activities, such as that of a professor coaching youth league softball, from activities that require the professional expertise of the professor. The final characteristic reflects a weighting toward applied activities rather than theoretical ones on the perceived continuum between theory and practice. Public service activities tend to focus primarily on the concrete rather than on the abstract.

### **Examples of Public Service Activities**

The diversity of external needs as well as faculty training and experience leads to many different forms of public service. To the extent that they are in keeping with all three of the previously stated characteristics, the following activities are examples of how faculty members, through their academic or professional expertise, can contribute to the public good while directly addressing real-world problems, issues, interests, or concerns:

- Provide services for the public through a University clinic, hospital, or laboratory.
- Make research understandable and usable in specific professional and applied settings such as in technology transfer activities.
- Provide public policy analysis for local, state, national, or international governmental agencies.
- Test concepts and processes in real-world situations.
- Act as expert witnesses.
- Give presentations or performances for the public.
- Provide extension education.
- Conduct applied research.
- Evaluate programs, policies, or personnel for agencies.
- Engage in informational activities (seminars, conferences, institutes) that address public-interest problems, issues, and concerns and that are aimed at either general or specialized audiences such as commodity, trade, practitioner or occupational groups.
- Participate in governmental meetings or on federal review panels.

- Engage in economic and community development activities.
- Participate in collaborative endeavors with schools, industry, or civic agencies.
- Testify before legislative or congressional committees.
- Consult with town, city, or county governments; schools, museums, parks, and other public institutions; companies; groups; or individuals.
- Assist neighborhood organizations.
- Conduct studies on specific problems brought to one's attention by individuals, agencies, or businesses.
- Serve as experts for the press or other media.
- Write for popular and nonacademic publications, including newsletters and magazines directed to agencies, professionals, or other specialized audiences.

Such activities usually require (1) a background of significant scholarship, (2) adequate diagnostic skills, (3) use or development of creative and focused methodologies, (4) strong information organization and media skills, and (5) written and oral skills in interpreting as well as presenting information.

## Potential Sources of Confusion

1. Public service may be performed in many different locations: on campus, as when serving in a clinic or hospital; or off campus, as when consulting with a school district or a governmental agency. *Location*, therefore, is not a distinguishing characteristic of public service.
2. Public service typically entails the application of faculty members' areas of expertise in addressing real-world problems, issues, or concerns. Such service may be performed as part of their University responsibilities or in addition to their stated responsibilities, in which case it may be either uncompensated or compensated. In terms of compensation, the nature and extent of all public service work should be in keeping with University regulations. Whether or not *compensation* is received for public service is not a criterion for an activity's being considered public service. At the same time, activities that are engaged in mainly to make money, such as running a business or a consulting firm on the side, are clearly not part of faculty members' University public service activities, even though those activities may benefit the public, organizations, or individuals.
3. *Recipients* of public service may include individuals and organizations, as well as local, state, national, and international governing bodies and agencies. Activities directed primarily to regularly enrolled students would not normally be considered public service. While it is certainly a form of

service to individuals and the state, teaching regularly enrolled students in this University, no matter where their instruction takes place, would normally be considered a form of instruction in promotion and tenure considerations.

4. *Clinical teaching* is clearly a blend of teaching and public service. Although arising from a primary teaching need, the primary obligation during its performance is to patients or clients, and only secondarily to the students. The welfare of the patients or clients must be kept foremost. Experimentation solely for instructional purpose would be unethical.
5. Not all forms of service are *public service*. For example, faculty members can provide service to the University: in an administrative capacity; as members of the senate; or as committee members at the University, campus, college, or departmental levels. Such service, however, is not public service and is referred to as **institutional service** or **internal service**; nor is service to professional organizations and scholarly societies, which is typically referred to as **disciplinary service**.
6. Not all activities engaged in by faculty members in settings external to the University are undertaken to help fulfill the university's or unit's public service mission. (College, unit, and departmental mission statements are important in this regard because the institution's mission is too broad to offer much guidance on this matter.) For example, faculty members may serve as jurors, as youth leaders and coaches, or on the PTA. They do so, however, in their role as private citizens. Therefore, such service is sometimes referred to as **private service**. In contrast, **public service** activities fulfill the mission of the unit and institution and utilize faculty members' academic or professional expertise.
7. The relationships among outreach, continuing education, and public service are potentially confusing. Both public service and continuing education are forms of *outreach* when they go beyond resident instruction and discipline-oriented research and are initiated in response to an external audience or constituency. However, the outreach concept often does not describe the reciprocal nature of the interaction between faculty members and their publics. For example, while faculty members are working with external audiences, they often gain insight into problems and receive knowledge that affects their research and informs their teaching.

Some but not all types of *public service* are accomplished through *continuing education* such as community short courses and continuing professional education. However, some types of continuing education primarily serve the University's teaching mission, such as when graduate programs are offered at off-campus sites. Continuing education that does meet all three of the previously stated characteristics of public service serves the University's public service mission, while continuing education that does not meet all three of the above criteria primarily serves the teaching mission.

8. Consulting with private companies can be an important form of public service, and interaction with companies can contribute to faculty members' research (scholarship) and/or teaching. To be considered part of one's University public service, consulting should conform to all three of the above criteria of public service and reflect the department's and University's mission objectives. At the same time, the main purpose of consulting should be service rather than financial remuneration.
9. Public service is a complex set of activities reflecting the nature of faculty members' appointments, their training and experience as well as the specific external need. Sometimes, *differentiating these activities from teaching and research* is difficult, and in such cases multiple criteria should be used in assessing the quality of the activity. However, for the activity to be public service it must draw upon faculty members' academic or professional expertise and contribute to the public good, while at the same time directly addressing or responding to real-world problems, issues, interests, or concerns.

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## Part II

# Suggestions for Planning, Documenting, and Evaluating Public Service

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This guide emphasizes the importance of planning early, understanding departmental expectations, designing activities with evaluation in mind, and being sure that any evaluation is consistent with the demands of the promotion and tenure review process. Far too often, faculty members who make an impact through their public service activities fail to receive appropriate recognition because they and their department heads did not pay proper attention to one or more of these considerations.

The first part of this section is intended for all faculty members who perform public service work, regardless of the emphasis placed upon it. However, the final section is addressed specifically to those faculty members whose public service responsibilities constitute a substantial portion of their University-assigned responsibilities.

## Recommendations for All Faculty Members

All faculty members will benefit from the following suggestions for planning, documenting, and evaluating public service.

### Understanding the Institution

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is a **land-grant** and **research-intensive** institution. Therefore, the general criteria applied to the judgment of merit reflect an expectation for excellence in teaching, research, and public service. The specific expectations are reviewed annually and communicated to the colleges by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

### Understanding Unit or Departmental Expectations

The promotion and tenure process begins with the specific academic department or unit; therefore, faculty members' involvement in public service should reflect their position appointments. Departments vary in the emphasis they give to public service activities and those they consider important. Discussions with the department head or chair, other senior members of the

department's faculty, and members of the department's promotion and tenure review committee can help to clarify the following:

1. Departmental expectations concerning the kinds of public service activities that are encouraged
2. How each activity should be documented
3. The criteria for public service to be used in judging performance at the departmental and college level

Questions to be considered:

- In what areas has the department established a history of quality in public service?
- In what ways do the department's faculty members appropriately interact with practicing professionals or meet agency and industry needs for technical information and education?
- What types of public service activities are encouraged as a part of the departmental mission?
- Does the faculty member's position appointment fit within the mission of the department and/or college?
- What balance does the department expect faculty members to maintain among research (or other scholarly activities), teaching (including continuing education), and public service while working toward indefinite tenure?

It is important to establish a dialogue at the appropriate level(s) of the University regarding expectations for professional development and productivity. Dialogues of this type should continue throughout faculty members' careers.

### Preparing Early for Evaluation

Preparing for evaluation of public service work by promotion and tenure committees should begin early in a faculty member's University appointment. As public service activities are planned, conducted, and evaluated, consider how those activities might best be interpreted to promotion or tenure committees. Developing high-quality public service activities takes time and effort. Thoughtful evaluation and reporting of evaluation results also require time and effort. Beginning early will help to avoid a last-minute rush to document work and should result in a clearer and more complete interpretation of accomplishments.

### Seeking Help

Many sources of assistance are available to faculty members as they plan, conduct, evaluate, and report their public service work. Faculty members should seek out a mentor and advocate among the senior faculty members. Many committees do not have experience with evaluating public service

activities; a senior faculty member who understands the public service concept and how to organize a dossier can help a committee evaluate these activities and understand how they fit into the portfolio.

### Planning Public Service with Promotion in Mind

If public service activities are to be used to support a favorable promotion decision, they should be planned with that use in mind. Faculty members should plan their efforts far in advance and design them for qualitative evaluation. Department chairs or heads should be involved in the planning process to ensure that faculty members' proposed public service activities are consistent with departmental expectations. Departmental executive committee members, senior faculty members, and promotion and tenure committee members should also be asked to share their insights regarding the campus promotion process.

### Planning Activities with Evaluation in Mind

As faculty members become involved in public service, evaluation should be included as part of the planning of any such activity. The best way to assure that public service efforts will be assessed at the end of an activity is to develop evaluative mechanisms that will track those efforts from the beginning.

Assessment can be helpful both to improve work along the way and to determine its quality at the end of an activity. These two types of evaluations should be performed separately. Evaluation of quality should consider the kinds of evidence and the outcomes that will be meaningful to promotion and tenure committee members at the departmental, college, and campus levels. *Simply listing activities without attention to assessment of quality does little to enhance a case for promotion or tenure.* Assessment of quality should include evidence of excellence, innovation, and impact. Faculty members should be able to identify relevant evaluative criteria and check their judgment against that of colleagues.

Public service needs to be visible, evaluable, and improvable. Public service activities typically occur outside the view of other faculty members. Therefore, it is important that tangible products result from public service activities and that they can be evaluated by others. Writing up public service as a form of scholarship is one way to permit evaluation of the work.

### Making a Case

Make a case for the quality of the public service work and how it relates to research and/or teaching. Relate the case explicitly to the terms of the appointment with the University. Promotion and tenure committees judge how well the case has been made either for the granting of indefinite tenure or promotion. They do not evaluate the specific work itself; this is done by the external referees. Therefore, it is not the quality of any one piece of work but



the overall quality of the dossier and the accompanying documentation that will lead to a successful outcome.

### Being Selective

Not everything undertaken as a public service will be or should be considered in promotion and tenure review. For example, routine talks to service clubs or repeated consultation on the same topic with similar information may not be considered as significant for review. Consider the following questions as a way of relating public service activities to the promotion and tenure process:

- Do the public service efforts draw upon the faculty member's disciplinary or professional expertise?
- To what extent do the activities represent potential new interpretations and applications of knowledge for use in specific settings?
- Is there potential for the activities to generate new research questions or make more understandable the current body of knowledge?
- Does the outreach activity make an impact on public policy, on the improvement of practice among professionals, or on those involved in agriculture or business?
- Is there continuity among program ideas, or do they present a "shotgun" array of activities?

### Making Quality Evident

Participants in public service activities conducted by University faculty members are often active professionals in various fields. They are in an appropriate position to assess the impact of such activities when the primary focus is on applying current knowledge to practical problems. They may also be able to provide evidence of the contribution of scholarly endeavors to any increase of their awareness of the practical implications of theory or to any improvement of professional practice. In summary, documentation of the impact of public service activities and their contributions to professional improvement may be the most potent single manner in which comments by professionals can support the case in the review process.

Senior faculty members from comparable institutions represent a valuable source of evidence regarding the excellence of faculty members' public service efforts and related scholarly endeavors. In particular, they may be able to comment on the extent to which faculty members have made a substantial contribution to their discipline or profession and the extent to which they have been recognized by other scholars, public policy makers, or practitioners.

The qualifications of referees asked to comment upon leadership in the field or contributions to theory through public service efforts *must* be made explicit in promotion papers. Although faculty members from comparable institutions

are preferred, it is imperative that review committee members be able to identify why the particular referees are to be viewed as highly qualified to assess the faculty member's standing. Referees' comments should be specific and concise. The context in which the faculty member is being judged and the evaluator's qualifications and background are all critical to the ultimate impact of the reference. The more familiar the referees are with the particular public service effort, similar efforts, and the field in general and the more focused their evaluative comments, the more helpful will be their evaluations.

### Recommendations for Faculty Members Whose Public Service Constitutes a Substantial Portion of Their University-Assigned Responsibilities

Faculty members whose University-assigned responsibilities entail a significant amount of public service work are strongly urged to develop with the department head or chair and the dean at the time of hiring any *special criteria* for judging the quality of public service activities to be used in evaluating the quality of performance. Such criteria should then be made available to candidates in writing at the time of their appointment. Subsequent modifications in official appointment papers should likewise be documented and become part of their official personnel records.

### Special Criteria for Judging Public Service

When special criteria are being negotiated, the following topics related to how they will be evidenced in the final portfolio should be covered:

1. Quality of public service work
2. Impact of the public service work
3. Dissemination of the public service contribution as expressed through scholarship
4. Interaction with a community of scholars
5. Integration of research (scholarship), teaching, and public service

For purposes of promotion and tenure decisions, well-stated cases should be based on the overall public service activities, not on a single instance of public service. Faculty members will want to stress the nature and extent of interaction with society. Most committees will encourage that only those public service activities that are exemplary and can clearly demonstrate impact and innovation be put forward. Well-stated cases will also argue effectively how the efforts to bridge between theory and real-world problems, issues, or concerns have not only enhanced faculty members' careers, but have also contributed to the vitality of the University and larger community.

Long lists of public service activities do not necessarily indicate anything about the quality of those activities. Indeed, high-quality activities may be obscured or invisible when buried in a lengthy list of unevaluated activities. Only the best efforts should be included in the dossier. The activity should be described briefly, along with its impact and outcomes, the evaluation procedures used, the context in which comparisons were made, and the qualifications of evaluators.

It is advisable to contact relevant professional and discipline-oriented associations and societies to obtain their statements, if available, about specific criteria for evaluating public service in their fields.

Public service is generally regarded of high quality when there is evidence that it has resulted in the following outcomes:

- A beneficial impact attributable at least in part to the application of relevant and up-to-date knowledge to the real-world problems, issues, or concerns addressed by the public service (Examples: favorable effects upon public policy or upon professional, agricultural, or business practice)
- Honors, awards, and other forms of special recognition such as commendations that have been received in the execution of public service
- Election to office or undertaking important service to professional associations and learning societies, including editorial work or peer reviewing for a national or international organization, as related to public service
- Selection for special public service activities outside the state and invitations to give talks within the faculty member's field
- Election or appointment to departmental or institutional governance bodies or to academic policy or procedure development committees related to public service
- Participation in professional or scientific associations and meetings, and presentation of papers

### Evidence of Scholarly Excellence

Tenure-track and tenured faculty members whose main responsibility is providing public service are generally expected to engage in scholarly endeavors that result in innovations, advancement in knowledge, or contributions to their disciplines or professions in their service to society. Efforts to improve public service can be a form of scholarly activity related to research and can result in publication. In addition, public service that is truly innovative can advance a discipline or profession and attract external support. Evidence of scholarly excellence in these endeavors may include:

- Publication in books, journals, and monographs; creation of videotapes, computer programs, and fact sheets; syllabus reprints; development of program materials; authored newspaper articles; exhibits, shows, and

concerts; writing for business, trade, and community publications and technical reports. (In such publications, for example, the results of innovative links made between theory and practice may be described.)

- Evaluative statements from clients or peers of quality and impact of reports and other documents produced by the faculty member that evidence creativity and scholarship in public service.
- Receiving grants and contracts to fund the development and delivery of public service innovations, when such grants and contracts are competitive and subject to peer review and approval.
- Being sought out by individuals from outside the state or nation who want to study the public service provider's work and innovations.
- Development of instruments and processes adopted by others for solving persistent problems.

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## Summary

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Public service work is an important part of the mission of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. However, its form of expression is influenced by a faculty member's particular department and college. Engaging in public service activities is a role all faculty members can and should perform from time to time, but the importance of doing so tends to vary by the different stages of an individual's academic career.

The first part of this guide describes the diversity of public service opportunities and clarifies some of the confusion that can arise in their evaluation relative to promotion and tenure considerations. The second part of the guide provides important information regarding how to make a case that an individual's performance is of high quality, that it is integrated with teaching and research (scholarship), and that it makes an impact on the quality of life. Use of this guide by faculty members, department heads, and committees should lead to better-supported promotion and tenure documents, more successful cases, and more fulfilled and appropriately rewarded faculty members.