

COGDOP Principles for Modernizing Hiring, Tenure, and Promotion in Psychological Science

Council of Graduate Departments of Psychology (COGDOP)

While psychological science holds extraordinary potential to advance human welfare, and provide solutions to many of the world’s most pressing challenges, the systems by which psychological scientists are hired, promoted, and tenured profoundly shape the discipline’s direction, and often limit its ability to realize its potential. Traditional evaluation models—focused narrowly on publication counts, journal prestige, and grant totals—fail to capture the full range of scholarly contributions that make psychological science credible, inclusive, and responsive to society’s needs. In some cases, these systems may even undermine the integrity of the field by incentivizing expediency and visibility over rigor, transparency, reproducibility, and lasting broader impact. Moreover, traditional evaluation practices often undervalue public engagement, societal relevance, and the positionality of the communities we serve, both in helping to identify socially responsive research questions and as the beneficiaries of psychological science.

It is within this context that COGDOP urges departments of psychology to modernize their academic evaluation systems. Our recommendations build upon the APLU Report on *Modernizing Scholarship for the Public Good*, the *San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)*, the National Academies’ *Roundtable on Aligning Incentives for Open Scholarship*, the *APA Task Force Report on Tenure and Promotion for Faculty of Color*, COGDOP-sponsored workshops, workshops hosted by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, Medicine (*Rethinking Researcher Assessment and Incentives at U.S. Academic Institutions: A Workshop*), the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (*Modernizing Academic Appointment & Advancement*). We are additionally inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 27)—which affirms that “everyone has the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits”—and the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science (2021)—which calls on institutions to make knowledge “a global public good”. Based on the recommendations and supporting evidence provided in these and other national and international reports, and with input from the 2025 Open Research Community Accelerator (ORCA)/COGDOP working group on aligning incentives, COGDOP offers the following guiding principles for modernizing research evaluation practices for hiring, promotion, tenure, and annual/merit review.

Enable Multiple Pathways to Academic Success

COGDOP encourages departments to recognize that excellence takes many forms. Moving beyond the traditional research–teaching–service model, evaluation systems should allow multiple pathways to success. Faculty may contribute to institutional and societal goals through public engagement, open pedagogy, methodological innovation, community collaboration, excellence in teaching, or leadership activities. Diverse academic profiles strengthen the field and reflect the breadth of psychology’s impact.

Reward Scholarship that Serves the Public Good

Psychological science’s value lies in its capacity to understand, explain, and improve human behavior and well-being across individual, communal, and societal contexts. In alignment with the APLU report and the values-based framework informed by COGDOP members (McKiernan et al., 2024), departments should recognize and reward faculty whose work advances the public good through translational research,

education, policy engagement, and community collaboration. Evaluation systems should adopt an expansive view of research and scholarship that goes beyond **(and incorporates)** basic science and **knowledge production** to explicitly value scholarly contributions that benefit individuals, communities, and society, or that address tangible social and global challenges.

Embrace Open Science as an Institutional Responsibility

The UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science and Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirm that access to knowledge is a universal human right and that providing such access is a shared responsibility of the global scientific community. Faculty who share data, code, and educational resources; preregister studies; contribute or use open education resources; and disseminate their work through open-access venues embody the ethical imperative to make science accessible and reproducible and improve the accessibility and affordability of higher education. Departments should integrate these practices into evaluative criteria as evidence of research integrity, rigor, social responsibility, and public impact.

Incentivize Transparency, Reproducibility, and Integrity

Drawing on reports from the National Academies' Roundtable on Aligning Incentives for Open Scholarship, consensus statements on addressing publication bias, and global efforts such as CoARA and HELIOS Open, COGDOP supports integrating principles of transparency, reproducibility, and research integrity into evaluation criteria. Departments should explicitly value the following as markers of research quality and credibility:

- Open data, materials, and code
- Transparent and reproducible methodologies
- Collaborative and team-based research
- Complete reporting of results, including null findings
- Communication of findings in accessible and publicly beneficial ways

Embedding these practices in hiring and promotion standards strengthens public trust, promotes good research practices, and ensures that psychological research remains reliable, replicable, reusable, and accessible—barrier-free to all people.

Traditional systems of scholarly communication, which focus on peer-to-peer exchange among disciplinary specialists, often exclude the very communities whose lives are most affected by research outcomes. Broadening dissemination, providing access to all of the research artifacts, and ensuring that the work is shared publicly in a form appropriate for community members is therefore essential to fulfilling psychology's public mission.

Move Beyond Journal-Based Metrics to Holistic Evaluation

Consistent with DORA and related global reform initiatives, COGDOP endorses moving away from journal-based metrics such as impact factors, h-indices, and citation counts. Departments should adopt qualitative, context-sensitive assessments that focus on the substance of the scholarship and that capture research rigor, reproducibility, transparency, and influence. Faculty should be recognized for producing open data and materials, preregistered studies, replication work, and dissemination through public and open-access platforms, as well as for research practices and communication strategies that build credibility and public trust in psychological science.

Advance Understanding of Human Variability and Opportunity and Access for All

The **APA Task Force Report on Tenure and Promotion for Faculty of Color** underscores the importance of precision and fairness in academic evaluation. COGDOP reaffirms that research, mentorship, and leadership activities focused on expanding the field’s understanding of **human and social variability across different contexts and populations** are essential forms of scholarship. These contributions are critical to the scientific accuracy and long-term vitality of psychological science. To ensure that all scholars are evaluated on the full scope of their professional impact and merit, departments should:

- Explicitly recognize scholarship that addresses gaps in our understanding of human behavior, particularly research involving demographic groups and settings that have been historically underrepresented in the scientific literature.
- Formally account for high-impact mentoring of students and junior scholars – an essential activity for developing the next generation of scholars poised to advance psychological science into new frontiers
- Elevate important service activities that build and support the human and community infrastructure necessary for sustaining a healthy workforce open to all
- Recognize and credit leadership in activities that strengthen professional ties to local and global communities and for initiatives that translate psychological science into practical community-based settings, and
- Ensure evaluation procedures are transparent and that every scholar’s contributions are evaluated fairly and without bias.

Recognizing these contributions as central to institutional excellence aligns evaluation practices with both ethical imperatives and the discipline’s long-term vitality.

Resources

- APLU Report on Modernizing Scholarship for the Public Good: <https://www.aplu.org/our-work/modernizing-scholarship/>
- San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA): <https://sfdora.org/read/>
- National Academies’ Reports and Roundtable on Aligning Incentives for Open Scholarship: <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/roundtable-on-aligning-incentives-for-open-science>
- APA Task Force Report on Tenure and Promotion for Faculty of Color: <https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/inequities-academic-tenure-promotion.pdf>
- McKiernan et al. (2024), “A Framework for Values-Based Assessment in Promotion, Tenure, and Other Academic Evaluations”: <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/Z9XSR>
- UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science (2021): <https://doi.org/10.54677/MNMMH8546>
- National Academies Report on Reproducibility and Open Science: <https://doi.org/10.17226/26308>
- Curry S, Mercado-Lara E, Arechavala-Gomez V, Begley CG, Bernard C, et al. (2025) Ending publication bias: A values-based approach to surface null and negative results. PLOS Biology 23(9): e3003368. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3003368>