



AMERICAN
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ESSENTIAL SCIENCE CONVERSATION:

MODERNIZING TENURE AND PROMOTION: REWARDING TRANSPARENCY, RIGOR, AND THE PUBLIC GOOD (OCT. 1, 2026)

SESSION DESCRIPTION

How can academia reshape its incentive systems to truly reflect the values that make science stronger, more equitable, and more impactful? This essential science conversation brings together leading experts to discuss how academia can modernize hiring, tenure, and promotion systems to better align with core scholarly values. The session explores emerging national and international reform efforts that emphasize transparency, rigor, openness, and public impact in research. Panelists will share practical strategies for reshaping incentives to support high-quality, equitable, and socially relevant science.

Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed by the presenters in this webinar do not necessarily reflect the views, policies or positions of the American Psychological Association.

UNOFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

Shandol Hoover: Hello everyone, and welcome. Thank you so much for joining today's APA Essential Science Conversation, Modernizing Tenure and Promotion: Rewarding Transparency, Rigor, and the Public Good. I'm Shandol Hoover, Senior Director of APA Science Special Projects and Implementation. Before we get started, I'd like to share a few quick announcements. First, today's session is being recorded. Within two to three weeks, everyone who registered will receive a link to the recording, along with a transcript and additional resources.

Please note that any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed by the presenters for today's webinar do not necessarily reflect the views, policies, or positions of the American Psychological Association. We encourage you to visit apa.org/science to learn more about how to engage with APA Science. You can subscribe to our free *Science Spotlight* newsletter to stay current on news and opportunities for psychological scientists and to our *Editor's Choice* newsletter for curated articles from across APA journals. We also invite you to explore the Response Center for updates on policy developments and access to helpful resources and support.

We have an exciting lineup of webinars this fall, and you can explore more than 70 on-demand sessions available for free on our website. Please look for some webinars we have coming as early as next week, and we hope you can check those out. Again, today's program is part of APA's Essential Science Conversation Series, which creates space for open dialogue between experts and the broader community on emerging topics in psychological science. We appreciate everyone who submitted questions during registration. You can also submit questions throughout today's session using the Q&A box. If you experience any technical difficulties, please put them in the Q&A box as well.

With that, I'm pleased to turn things over to Dr. Adrienne Stith, APA Executive Lead Psychologist for Science, who will introduce and moderate today's conversation.

Adrienne Stith, PhD: Thank you so much, Shandol, and welcome everyone to today's APA Essential Science Conversation, Modernizing Tenure and Promotion: Rewarding Transparency, Rigor, and the Public Good. I'm really excited to be joined by three outstanding panelists who are really thinking critically about how academic incentives can be reshaped to better support quality, equitable, and socially meaningful science. I'm really looking forward to a lively and informative discussion.

With that, I'm going to start with introductions of our panelists, and then we'll launch right into your questions. I will start with Jamila Bookwala, who is Provost and Professor of Psychology at Gettysburg College, where she leads strategy and operations on academic and faculty affairs while also continuing her scholarship in lifespan development and aging. Her research has focused on relationships, health, and well-being in adulthood with a strong commitment to advancing student success and inclusive excellence in higher education. I also want to note that Dr. Bookwala served on the Task Force on Promotion, Tenure, and Retention of Faculty of Color in Psychology, which was sponsored by APA's Board on Scientific Affairs and the Council of Graduate Departments of Psychology, or COGDOP. Thank you so much for that service.

Jamila Bookwala, PhD: Thank you.

Adrienne: Next, we have Mike Dougherty, who is Professor and Chair of the Department of Psychology at the University of Maryland and President of COGDOP, where he advocates for graduate education and psychological science. His research examines human judgment and decision-making with a focus on cognitive processes that underlie uncertainty and reasoning. More recently, his work has involved development of departmental and institutional policies that support, incentivize, and reward public impact scholarship, as well as the creation of transparent and reproducible research.

Our third panelist for today is Caitlin Schleicher, who is the Director of Community and Partnerships at the Open Research Community Accelerator. She has deep expertise in building collaborative networks and advancing inclusive community-driven policies and approaches to research and knowledge sharing. She also leads the Modernizing Academic Appointment and Advancement, or the MA3 Challenge, which is a partnership between the Accelerator, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Aspen Institute Science & Society Program.

The MA3 Challenge, which I'm sure we'll hear more about, provides institutions with \$250,000 awards to implement values-aligned changes to tenure, promotion, and hiring. Welcome to the three of you. I'm really excited for the dialogue today. I'm going to start with a question that I am going to first pose to Caitlin. That is, what do you think is the appetite for reform across disciplines, across higher education?

Caitlin Schleicher: That's a great question. I'm going to speak from actually having a little bit of initial data with the first round of the MA3 Challenge, which launched last year. This was a brand new re-granting effort. I first want to say thank you to our core funders, who are the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the Dana Foundation, the Rita Allen Foundation, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Again, just a little bit more about that before I talk about the stats. We asked US colleges and universities to apply for \$250,000 grants to pitch implementation of durable changes in academic appointment and advancement, so hiring tenure policies, that are in line with their stated values, like public impact, open scholarship, community engagement, et cetera. We really wanted them to strengthen their capacity to do this work, and so the funding went to that.

From our launch, I've done this work a lot on a volunteer basis with volunteers of higher ed administrators, faculty at the grassroots level, at the leadership level, who all have an interest but not a lot of ability to actually start making the changes. We had no idea how this would go. Across disciplines, all represented in the application pool and across the United States, we had, I think, 300-plus institutions we engaged with. We had almost 200 formal expressions of interest with almost 100 full proposals submitted, and half of those were very sound and moved forward.

We unfortunately were not able to fund any of the discipline-specific or departmental awards. I can talk about that later on because psychology, I think, has done a lot in your space to make these kinds of changes that we're looking for. Appetite was really high, and it inspired our funders to do another round. That is now open. I know a link will be shared at the end. If there's institutions, faculty members, leaders here who might be interested, there is another round of awards.

Adrienne: Great. Very exciting. Thank you. I think that that link has been put out for folks. I might ask maybe Mike and also Jamila to comment on what do you think are the main barriers to implementing change, and what barriers are real versus perceived?

Michael Dougherty, PhD: Go ahead, Jamila, if you want to start.

Jamila: No, go ahead. Adrienne called on you. I will suddenly add.

Michael: First, just to reinforce some of the things that Caitlin said, I think there's an enormous appetite for change, but there's a difference between appetite and action. I think we see a lot more on the appetite side. People are hungry for change, but they don't know where to start and what to do. The barriers to this, I think, are a couple, and I'm glad that we have Jamila on the call here because one of those barriers is the perceptions of what higher administrators think of the process.

It's interesting: if you walk into a room with provosts and deans and university presidents, the majority of them will say, "Yes, we are interested in transforming. We will do what the faculty tell us to do." Then you go into a room with faculty, and it's the complete opposite. They'll say, "Well, but we need to be told what we're allowed to do." There's resistance to moving forward from the faculty level because they don't think they're going to have support of the provosts. There's resistance on the end of the provost for dictating what faculty need to do, which is completely understandable. This disconnect means that nothing gets done.

This is a perception, a perceived barrier that I think is easily overcome with simple conversations with your provost or whoever's leading your faculty affairs office. I think there are other barriers as well that are more disciplinary-focused. One barrier might be, "Well, if we do it, we will look different than everybody else," or "What will people think of our department if we're the ones doing it?" There's this issue of being the first mover. I think that's also a perceived problem because a lot of people want to make change, and they're just waiting for someone else to take the lead to lead those efforts.

I think this is, again, where the appetite's there, but the action isn't. Jamila, I'm going to cede the floor to you because I think you probably have a few things to add.

Jamila: Thank you, Michael. What I would say is, I want to first explain that I'm at a liberal arts college. We're a smaller college, but very important work to be done, obviously. We don't have separate schools. We don't have deans who are determining this for different schools. At a college like ours, and I've been at a liberal arts college my entire career, I'm at Gettysburg College now.

I've been here for three years, but I haven't been provost before this. I take this as a very important responsibility for a provost to bring to bear the need and the importance for change.

I want to talk a little bit about appetite. I would say that appetite, it really varies depending on who you're talking to. I think there's a large appetite among younger faculty. By younger, I don't mean age; I mean early career. Faculty members who are early or mid-career, they're probably open and very willing to make changes because their fields have transformed. Types of research that we value have gone through considerable transformation, but there are generational divides because you do have faculty members who may have been on the faculty for 30 years and are used to doing things in their own way.

I think socializing the idea of change is really important. I think the provost and senior leaders can actually play a very important role in socializing the need for change. I can share with you that we've been doing this for three years, and I've started very slowly. I think the barriers become very real if you try to do too much too quickly. We've been approaching changes in terms of transparency, in terms of consistency. You may have an institution that has lots of different ways of doing this, and it varies by department or by school or by college. That kind of inconsistency, or what some would call flexibility, only adds biases into the process.

Something we've been doing on our campus is I've been working with our faculty personnel committee. Every year, the composition changes, but every year we're taking small bite sizes of the faculty handbook that pertain to tenure and promotion processes to try to make important changes that will augment transparency because there's a lot that can be very muddy. I often say that tenure and promotion review processes should not be shrouded in mystery. That's not good. We really want clarity because it's an anxiety-producing endeavor anyway. We don't need to make it more anxious as a process by making it murky and opaque. I'll stop there.

Michael: Can I just follow that up? Because something you said was about essentially rolling out the change in a slow fashion. I think information is key. We transformed all of our evaluative processes in my department. I started that in 2017, and we finalized it in 2022. A big portion, and I think probably the most important part of that, was educating faculty on, A, it's possible that the provost was actually supportive of one of my first questions: "Are we allowed to do this?" The second issue is you have to get people-- they have to know what the literature says about evaluation.

The way we do things currently isn't necessarily supported by the data. When you lay that out in front of people-- I'm speaking specifically about the use of bibliometrics, which weigh heavily in the way people do evaluations. The bibliometric literature is not favorable to their use in evaluating faculty. That comes out in the APA Task Force Report. It comes out in almost every bibliometric article that looks at this. It was a key feature of the Declaration on Research Assessment statement on the use of bibliometrics.

Once you show faculty to the data, then they start to think, "Oh, well, maybe the way we've been doing it isn't the best way." Sharing that information out in little bite-sized pieces over time, we can use the psychology of attitude change as a way to change attitudes. That, I think, is a necessary thing that we have to do. We have to convince people over time by showing them the data and just staying persistent.

Adrienne: Mike, can I ask how you started the process?

Michael: We started this in 2017. If you go back to 2017, there was a report that came out a couple of years prior to that in *Science Magazine* on the reproducibility issues in psychology. There was a lot of conversations at that point in time about the problems with psychological science. This is nothing new to anybody on this call. We all are aware of the dirty laundry that's been hung out there. I'll just say that we've, I think, made a lot of really important changes in psychology, and I think we're moving in the right direction.

Those reports, and also a number of other reports that came out about the same time: one was the Stapel Report that came out of the report on Diederik Stapel's vast fraud operation, and then some issues that were highlighted by Uri Simonsohn in his P-Hacking paper, which is also very well known, highlighted the fact that there are things that have been instilled within our discipline that are not the best scientific practices.

If you trace back what the origin is of why we got to where we are, and this is not data-supported necessarily, but my hypothesis is that a lot of it has to do with the incentive structure. If we're going to incentivize people to maximize quantity, we have to recognize that there is a trade-off in quality. There's a reason that Boeing doesn't pump out 10 times more planes than they do already, because they know if they do, they're going to fall out of the sky. We need to really think about that quantity-quality trade-off.

If we are serious about understanding the changes in human behavior, when you maximize one thing, it's going to come at a cost of something else; we need to fix the underlying mechanisms or problems with that. I got into this when I signed up to be chair. I made it very clear that one of my first things I wanted to do was to fix our tenure and promotion criteria, in part inspired by these issues that had bubbled up in our discipline. It ultimately transformed into something much larger. We tackled a whole bunch of issues simultaneously that came to the fore in 2020 and beyond.

What we ended up having is, I think, a policy that incorporates all the recommendations that came out of the Task Force Report, but we had them in place before the Task Force Report came out, and a whole bunch of other things that needed to be addressed. It really came about by virtue of looking at what was happening in the literature and not being willing to stand by idly and let it happen. We have a role to play. All of us do in making our science better. That was my role. I took it on as part of my duties as chair to really fix what I saw were misaligned values.

Adrienne: Thank you. Caitlin, I'm wondering what your thoughts are about-- if you think institutions are thinking about promotion and tenure reform as a larger culture change? Are they thinking about that? How are they thinking about that?

Caitlin: I think yes, and I hope more begin to, or start articulating that publicly. We talked about it as a systemic issue. There are systemic barriers, and there are a lot of opportunities. We talk about carrots and sticks and counting and grant funding and all these things and requirements. All of these build the culture in academia. Especially in our awardee pool, but throughout the applications, we know that modernizing tenure, hiring, promotion, et cetera, is one layer of a larger systems-level effort.

A couple of our awardees in particular: I'll shout out Philander Smith University, Stanford Medicine, and University of Northern Colorado; they are developing things alongside their tenure, promotion, hiring work. They are doing micro-grants, seed awards to stimulate some of the types of activities that they want to see. In some cases, it's open science or reproducibility. In others, it's translational research or work with the community, work that leads to policymaking.

That is something that they are setting up seed awards for and also rewards programs to say, "You are practicing in this area, and you are doing so great; you have a reward on top of your tenure, promotion, hiring package." There's also faculty fellowship opportunities that University of Northern Colorado is putting together. Those are paid. That's something that the institution's investing in for their faculty to get involved in developing the type of incentives that they want to see.

Adrienne: Thank you. Other thoughts about how our institutions are thinking about this as part of maybe larger reforms?

Michael: At Maryland, I can say with some Maryland pride that our provost, as part of her strategic plan, is highly supportive, and I think pushing reform. One of the main bullet points of our new strategic plan is we're here to serve the public. We're a public land-grant institution. Even as an institution of higher education, no matter whether you're a public land-grant institution or not, we have a role in solving and addressing society problems. Faculty will do those if they're incentivized to do that. If the tenure processes don't support those types of behaviors and those types of research projects to the same degree as they do basic science, then faculty will tend to shy away from those.

She's really leaned into this mission of the university as being there to solve problems and being able to energize and support faculty to do their best high-quality work. It's very much part of the culture change is to move from this idea of, "I'm here for my career," to "I'm here to address problems." From that perspective, I think universities more and more, especially in this day and age as higher ed is coming under attack, are shifting their stance more towards really emphasizing the public good that we bring to the table.

Adrienne: Which actually makes me think if you think that this time that we're in, whether this is a moment that might allow or make changes happen perhaps more readily.

Michael: Yes. What's the saying? Never let a good crisis go to waste. We can all resonate with that. I do think that there are certain things happening in society, and also the issues facing higher education, that I think necessitate that we really look at ourselves carefully and about what we stand for, and really starting to walk the talk. We can say we're here for the public good, but unless people see it, we aren't really showing it. I think this is a good time to look inward and start thinking about how we can shift some of our priorities. There's a whole bunch of things that are coming together.

It's never a good time to make massive changes. It's never a good time to criticize ourselves. If anything, I think we're at a point in which we probably have to. Change has to come sooner rather than later if we're going to come out of this on the other end.

Adrienne: Jamila, on the topic of public good, how can public impact and community engagement be more fully recognized from your perspective, recognized and rewarded?

Jamila: Thank you, Adrienne. I hope, frankly, that this question was more relevant 20 years ago in the sense that I think, at least psychology, certainly, but I've seen other disciplines even within our own campus recognizing the value of community-engaged research, community-based research, doing research that has public impact that does not show up in the form of number of citations, to speak to what Michael was saying about bibliometrics. We need to really reframe what we value in research and how it's actually making a difference in society. It could be the local level, could be regional, could be national or international.

I do think that this needs to come from senior leadership, from the provost, from deans, from department chairs. We need to have a process of doing that. In other words, we can't let this happen organically. We need a review process of our own tenure and promotion processes periodically. What are our scholarship and creative work guidelines? What are our teaching guidelines? How important is it to actually bring the community into the classroom and the classroom into the community? Do we value that kind of teaching? Do we value that kind of scholarly work?

I think leaving it to the devices of individual smaller units simply means you have unevenness across campus. I think it's really important for the provost or the dean to lean into this, to make it a priority, to make it a known priority, and then to bring in faculty governance. I do think that faculty governance is not something we can ignore at any of our campuses. Faculty, in the end, have a very strong voice, understandably and assuredly, to shape and reshape tenure and promotion processes. Bringing in the value of community-engaged scholarship into the faculty personnel committee, for example.

When I arrived here three years ago, I would say that there was a little bit of a struggle in terms of recognizing the value of such research. I like to think we are past that, in that we all recognize that this is important, different departments at different levels, but there is no department on campus that would say, "We do not value that kind of research." I think what becomes tricky is in prioritizing. We very often see that departments are still prioritizing the more traditional kinds of scholarly work more highly than community-engaged scholarly work. That's where I think the work remains, where we need to make sure that we are not ranking these based on traditional metrics or traditional approaches.

Adrienne: Yes. Thank you. That also makes me think-- a question for you, Caitlin, is why do you think that it's so important for this kind of change work to be funded?

Caitlin: When, Mike, you were speaking earlier, and Jamila, too, about just the barriers within a campus, I always think of that *Spider-Man* meme that people are always familiar with, or show, where they're all pointing at each other about whose challenge it is to take it on. At the end of the day, institutional change work is hard, and changing culture is hard. When it's funded, and with those four, in particular, funders, and we're talking to new ones every day, not every day, but about joining in in this effort, I think that's a huge signal that whoever is interested in taking this work forward has relied on, and can rely on, at least that's what we've heard from folks in the higher ed community, to really start to get things done.

If you have the backing of the Moore Foundation, Dana Foundation, Rita Allen, and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, that has taken this work to another level and given them that ability to start doing things. I hosted some calls with any candidates that were unsuccessful. They could come and receive feedback. I hosted about 60-some calls with applicants. They all pretty much seemed really inspired because it let them believe that they could do this work, that it is achievable, and that their plan would be successful. Funding helped to really build the capacity on their campus.

It's, again, a carrot-and-stick approach, but also, a lot of folks were pitching things like course releases or hiring staff to really project-manage this type of change work, institutional change on campus, and to lead it, to have time to get your faculty together at a retreat and have it funded, to really focus in on this topic. For the most part, in terms of why the funding was so important, even when they said that they wanted to continue doing the work because it's so important to them and that they now had the buy-in on campus to do it, it seemed like it would be much more scaled back.

Adrienne: Thank you. I'm going to actually ask a question that's come in. I don't know whether folks have suggestions for where to find this information, but there's a question about if there are any reports that identify the number of new faculty hires who are tenure-track versus on short-term renewable contracts. Is there any place where that data lives? I don't know that there is.

Jamila: I do believe we used to have counts from NSF and even the Department of Education. These were lag data, so I don't think they were for the current year or even the previous year. I don't know that those data are still available, but there was a way to find out what proportion of faculty hires were on the tenure track. We do know that that proportion has been declining. A number of institutions have been favoring termed contracts. Of course, in some states, tenure is out of the question now altogether. I think this is a changing landscape, but until recently, we certainly could at least get a feel for what proportion of faculty lines were tenure-track lines, or at least hires were tenure-track hires.

Adrienne: Thank you, Jamila. Maybe that's a first place to look to see if it's still available. There's discussion about the sorts of metrics that have been traditionally used; number of publications, citation counts, general impact factors, that are used as proxies for evaluating research productivity. Maybe I'll start with you, Mike. What are some of the problems with these indicators, and then how do you get evaluators to think more holistically in their evaluations?

Michael: I'll start with the second half of that. How we can get people to think more holistically is to point out the problems with the indicators that we're currently accustomed to using. What are some of those problems? Number one, there's this assumption that better research, however you want to define better, appears in higher-impact-factor journals. I think maybe the best way to characterize that is different research shows up in higher-impact-factor journals. In fact, if you look at the relationship between various types of metrics or definitions of research quality, things that we aspire to, they don't necessarily correlate with the general impact factor.

Some work that I've done personally, and this was part of my effort to change in my department, and we ended up publishing it, but we looked at the relationship between replicability and Journal Impact Factor, and guess what? It's a negative. Lower-impact-factor journals were more likely to replicate. You might say, "Oh, well, maybe that's because the things in higher-impact-factor journals are more novel than lower-impact-factor journals. Turns out that relationship is negative too, depending on what metric you use for novelty. These assumptions that "Oh, the higher-impact-factor journals are publishing more novel and better research" just don't hold up to the data.

I think the most charitable way of describing that is that there is no relationship. I gave you examples of two negative relationships, but the relationship is just not there. In terms of citation counts, it's the same story. There's really no meaningful relationship between what we tend to think of as quality and citation counts. In fact, there's some evidence, and this isn't my work; this is some work that was, I think, published in the proceedings of National Academies of Sciences, that showed that research studies or research papers that tended to later be not replicated accrued more citations than papers that eventually did replicate. Again, not my research. Someone else's research.

When we've looked at similar processes, we find basically no relationship between replicability and citation counts and other types of indicators of quality. The assumption that these represent something about quality or the person's skill at doing research just doesn't seem to be supported by the data. Then on top of that are the potential for really serious biases. This came out in the APA Task Force Report.

I'll just say one thing is that across multiple disciplines, everywhere they've looked for this, they've found evidence that men tend to be cited more than women and that there tends to be variation based on racial or ethnic group in terms of the number of citations. White men tend to be overrepresented in citations compared to women. When I say overrepresented, they tend to have benefits from that.

If we're using citation counts for our proxy for judging whether someone should be given tenure or not, not only is that not a reflection of quality, it also has the potential to create adverse impact where we're promoting people inadvertently on this other variable that we don't really want to factor in. There are serious potential biases. Then, on the other hand, it doesn't really reflect what we've long assumed that they do reflect. Jamila, I see that you have unmuted.

Jamila: Yes. You've touched on a couple of really important points, Michael. You've talked about biases that are inherent in the so-called flagship journals or journals that have been around for decades and have very strong prestige value associated with them and therefore citation value, et cetera. There's also the very real recognition, at least for me, and I try to promote this on campus, that we have fields that are changing. We have disciplines that are changing. A number of scholars have had to actually establish new journals as outlets for their work. There is no way that those journals have had enough time to own up impact factor values.

I think we have to be really mindful that there are entire fields that have never been represented in the traditional journals that now need to also create an outlet for their research that is respected, that is valued, and we need to give them a chance to do that. If the quality of the research is good and in any tenure dossier, we have access to the papers, we should be reading the methodology, we should be reading the results and determining the value and the quality and the rigor of that research without worrying about where that research is showing up, because there may not have been an outlet for this kind of research up until now.

I think we have to be mindful, and we have to remind ourselves about this. Something I do is we have a Chief Diversity Officer on campus, and I invite her to come and talk to our faculty personnel committee every year. It's important for us to remember the kinds of biases that may exist, some of which are structural. We didn't have journal outlets for certain fields. If I was doing research that was really novel or really groundbreaking in a particular sub-discipline but have nowhere to publish it, maybe I get together with some of my colleagues at other institutions, and we think, "Well, let's start a journal."

I think we have to give these things time. Talking about time, citations take a long time. There is a long time lag between something being published and then being cited enough to show up in your tenure dossier, which is typically over a six-year period. To me, it's almost artificial. It's an artificial metric because there hasn't been enough time that has gone by to look at impact.

Something I encourage in our conversations here on campus when I talk to faculty is to really think about impact in different ways. Are schools using educational research right now that is coming from our faculty who are doing educational research? Are community organizations using health science research that is coming out of our health sciences department? There's immediate impact. Isn't that important as well? Because they're using what is being learned from this scholarship and applying it right away. To me, that is also impactful. We really need to rethink how we define impact. I think it's a very narrow way that we typically have operationally defined it.

Michael: If I can just follow up on some of those comments, Jamila. The idea that citations reflect impact, I think, is something we've created and we assume. If you just say, "Okay, this person's

been cited 10 times, 15 times, 25 times," we don't know that it's because the people who actually cited the article read it or not; there's evidence that people tend to cite things without reading. I'll just leave that there, or whether those are positive or negative citations. We leave those as some assumption that, "Oh, it must be important based on the number of citations it has."

The citations themselves are oftentimes perfunctory, there for making some rhetorical argument, not necessarily there for any important reason. Everybody loves to be cited. That's great. Whether it is a reflection of true impact, I think, is the question. I agree 100% with what Jamila said about this. We need to be looking at different ways of conceptualizing impact above and beyond reputation or how much attention. We talk about living in the attention economy. Just because you do work in a novel area shouldn't undermine the assessment that you get, because you're not going to get the attention if you're working in a new groundbreaking area where no one else is working. By definition, people won't be reading and citing that work. Yet, if it's truly novel, that's the type of stuff we say we want to value.

Adrienne: What are some other ways-- [crosstalk] Oh, sorry. Go ahead, Caitlin.

Caitlin: No, just quickly sharing an example to demonstrate these two points here. Columbia Climate School is one of our awardees, and it's a somewhat brand new school. They don't have an entrenched culture currently that they're relying on in terms of their structure, tenure, promotion, how do they value research, teaching, and service.

This speaks to, Jamila, your point about the outlets. They might not be there for the type of interdisciplinary and community and civically-engaged work that the Climate School faculty are doing. Not only that, and I'm not saying it will be for them, but if this work is then incentivized in the service category, our colleague that Mike and I have worked with for a long time, she's my coworker, my colleague at ORCA, but she's also a researcher on the ScholCommLab's Scholarly Communication Project, where they looked at 900 tenure and promotion policies across North America.

They found that so many institutions value public, of the vast majority, but when that type of work is actually incentivized, it's often relegated to the service category. Then, in that case, the individuals who are undertaking that work are minority faculty and women. That's another form of bias that, throughout all these entrenched structures and policies, we have to be aware of as we're figuring out where to value different and non-traditional aspects of our work.

Adrienne: Thank you, Caitlin. People might be wondering, what are some other ways that impact can be measured?

Jamila: I shared a couple of ways about immediate impact: who is using this information? How are the results being used to transform what is happening on the ground more immediately? Locally, or regionally, I think there are ways to think about that. Pretty much, I think, every school relies on external evaluators to share their views on scholarly work that has been produced by the candidate. It's important for those individuals to be informed of what our guidelines are, what we value as an institution, and to select external reviewers who do recognize the importance of this kind of work.

There are ways in which we can structurally ensure that all work, even work that is non-traditional, is being valued. I think there are ways in which we can build in mechanisms that allow that kind of impact to be appreciated.

Michael: This is something we've done in my own department. We've replaced the word impact with potential for impact, because if you think about it, whether someone picks up a piece of scholarship is outside the control of the candidate. What the candidate has control over is the quality of what they do, how well they've conducted the study, and the degree to which they've made that work available to the public through whatever venue. We've replaced this with potential for impact. Does the work have a potential for impact?

By potential, we can define that as: have they granted access to that material? This relates to the principle of accessibility or the value of accessibility. If we value accessibility, are we making our work openly and publicly available to the extent possible? We can define metrics that meet the potential for impact without then worrying about the attention economy influencing how that impact is realized. Then there are other, I think, really important ways where we can operationalize. I think, Jamila, this is what you were getting at, like policy impacts.

There are places where some of our scholarship gets picked up, and it's used in policy. It's really important. What we'll never know is the really, really important research that languishes at the bottom of the stack that no one ever sees because it never becomes visible. There's a lot of work that takes place in science that is really high-quality, would be transformational if only it got into the right hands or that it became visible. Right now in the attention economy, what gets visible is what's already visible. That may be because of who you are, where you're at, your history, your reputation, or whatever it was. We know that those things are going to fuel the attention economy.

By the way, with AI coming online, all bets are off with regard to what's going to happen with citation indices and how they're going to be reflected and how impact really is playing out.

Adrienne: Very true. I'm going to ask this question from a person who is now on the faculty job market. The question is: with the now-changing landscape of tenure in some institutions that are eliminating tenure altogether, meaning that being awarded tenure doesn't seem to have the same security and status, what advice would you give for folks who aspire to be faculty members?

Jamila: I'm going to jump in here. I think Michael will have more to say. I would say, certainly think about liberal arts colleges. They are important. We value tenure here. Most of us are private institutions. We are not subject to some of the pressures that we are seeing in other parts of the country. More importantly, I would say, as you do your search, ask important questions about how tenure is valued. Ask about the tenure and review processes. Ask about transparency. Ask about mentorship for you as a pre-tenure, early-career colleague.

This is an important decision; what place you will make your professional home. I would say this is the right time to think about it. I personally don't think tenure is going anywhere. Tenure is valued by faculty members. I think it allows us to do the kind of scholarly work and creative work that we want to do. That's what academic freedom is about. Tenure safeguards that. I would say, regardless of what you may be hearing, don't despair. Keep at it. Certainly, apply to liberal arts colleges as much as you would apply to large universities like Michael. I'll turn it over to Michael.

Michael: You probably don't want to hear my answer. I'll just reflect on one aspect of what Jamila said, which is asking about the tenure processes at these places. I will say, since we've made changes in my own department, it's become a recruiting tool that people come into my office when they meet with me at the end of their closing interview with the department chair. It's a conversation that they've already had with other faculty. They're coming in asking really good questions, and they are energized. Some of them are, quite frankly, surprised that we've made the types of changes we have.

I think we attract people to our department who want to be here, in part because they see that we allow people to be themselves. If you're doing community-engaged work, the last thing I want to do is sit there when we're talking about the tenure policy and say, "Oh, that's great. We love that type of work, and that's why we want to recruit you, but the advice is, don't do that work until you get tenure." I think, unfortunately, for people who do community-based research, sometimes that's the message they get: "Really important work, but don't do it until you get tenure."

I can't, in good faith, have that conversation, which was one of the motivations, again, for changing our policy. When they come here, they know that they're going to be supported to do that type of work. It's embedded in our policies, so they can see that. I think having those conversations, and quite frankly, part of the change will come about when faculty are coming on the job market and they choose someplace that has a better tenure policy. The other places that don't have those policies will get the message that if they're going to be competitive for the best, they're going to have to recognize that people want to be their own person and want to be able to do the best work possible.

Adrienne: Thank you both. There are a couple of questions that have come in that I want to get to before we end today. The first is, if you have a sense whether tribal colleges, and maybe I might expand that to MSIs, have similar dilemmas with determining faculty tenure and promotion, and that the impression is that social and cultural impacts may be part of the metrics there. Any sense of that? [silence] Perhaps not. It's a good question. It's a very good question.

Jamila: Yes, it's a good question. I don't know that landscape well enough to say anything. I'm sorry.

Adrienne: Oh, no. No worries. Maybe that's a report part 2. The other question is about AI, and whether you can discuss how AI use and its impact on tenure and promotion incentives for publications-- what do you foresee in that area?

Michael: I foresee a bloody mess. I don't really know what to anticipate here. I think it's hugely problematic. Just reading the tea leaves and hearing some of the things that graduate students are thinking, they're really worried about what was already a publish-and-perish culture becoming one in which that is now fueled with an accelerant that's going to just light everything on fire. It's already the case, if you just look at the growth in publication rates over time, that they are accelerating at a rate in which we can't keep up with the literature. That's already a problem.

If we allow AI to get hold of this process, I think we really have to worry about the literature becoming overblown with-- I don't want to call it bad science, but it's going to grow at such a rate that nothing will be useful because we'll be drowning in information. That's assuming that all the work is good quality, which is questionable in itself. I don't know. I don't have a good answer for that. I do worry that this is going to cause huge problems. It's not necessarily a tenure and promotion problem. I think it's a science problem and a society problem.

Jamila: What I will add is, we at Gettysburg College talk about enduring skills that we want our students to have, but these are certainly enduring skills for all of us and that are important, whether it's communication or leadership, whatever it may be. I think one of the newer ones is that we need ourselves to be discerning. I think that the kind of discernment we're going to need as scholars and as evaluators of dossiers and portfolios will become really important. We're going to have to discern really good science from mass-produced science, from AI-produced science.

I think this is going to be trial and error. This is not an environment any of us is familiar with. Let me just say, I have confidence and optimism that we will be able to come up with processes and practices that allow us to separate signal from noise.

Michael: Can I just throw out a potential solution; this is just coming to mind, to the question of how are we going to limit or address this flood of information coming in? If people are publishing 200 papers a year using AI, the solution might not be in slowing that down. Maybe the solution is in what we put on CVs. One thing that we've done here in my own department is we've moved away from a traditional CV to what we call an annotated CV. People have to document things that might otherwise be invisible in the scholarship. It goes on at a paper-by-paper. If someone's doing community-engaged work, it shows up with that article.

Another thing we can do is we can say, "You know what? You can only have 12 things that you put on your CV, 12 pieces of scholarship, and that will be the substance of which you will be evaluated." It doesn't matter if you published 500 things or 12 things; you're still evaluated on the same 12 things. We already limit the number of things we send out to external reviewers. Again, I think, Jamila, you mentioned this earlier, really leaning in and focusing on the quality of the scholarship people have done means we might need to start limiting what we evaluate to a subset of what people are producing.

There are other arguments to be made for slowing down the pace of science, which those arguments have been made for years, but this might be one way to use the incentive structures as a way of saying, "Okay, you have to select your 12 best pieces of scholarship, and that's all we're going to look at." That's just a random number. It could be four; it could be six.

Jamila: I like that. I think, Michael, you've already solved the problem.

Adrienne: It's true. I like that idea. Look, you ended our hour with the solution to the problem. Thank you, Michael. [laughs] Thank you so much. This hour went quick. We are just about at the top of the hour. I will say to the three of you, thank you so much for your time and for participating today. For everyone who joined, thank you for joining, and hope that you enjoyed the conversation. You will receive a one-minute survey to complete after today's broadcast. We really value the feedback, so please do let us know what you think.

We also like to hear from you on topics that you'd like us to cover. You can feel free to email science@apa.org with your suggestions and recommendations. Then finally, we'll send a link to this recording and a transcript in a couple of weeks, and I think also including some of the information that folks have talked about today and resources. Thank you all again. We hope to see you at future events. Thank you.