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Investigating Open Education and Promotion & Tenure in the United States

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Why this survey? Why now?
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• Little empirical work has been carried out to date that explicitly looks at how open outputs factor into the tenure and promotion (P&T) process.

• The value assigned to open scholarship and service by administrators at colleges and universities throughout the United States is not always clear (Jhangiani, 2017).

• A possible disconnect exists between faculty members’ work in open education and the institutional policies and/or personal views of administrators that may not fully recognize the role and value of open education efforts in higher education contexts (McKiernan, 2017).
Why this survey? Why now?

• Despite growth of the open movement (OER and OA publications), much of the current literature comes from a library perspective and/or outside the U.S. (Reinsfelder 2012; Tenopir 2017; Xia 2010; among others)

  • Some treatment of faculty attitudes in specific disciplines
  • Little research about administrators’ perceptions of open
  • Limited understanding of the role, if any, for open in P&T
Research Questions

RQ1. Do institutions have criteria used to guide P&T decisions regarding scholarship produced in open access (OA) journals and/or the creation of open educational resources (OER)?
   • If so, what are those criteria and how are they used?

RQ2. How do administrators perceive the benefits and drawbacks of OA and OER scholarship with respect to P&T decisions?

RQ3. What are administrators’ personal attitudes regarding open products/outputs?
   • How have their attitudes changed over time (if at all)?
Methods

• A database of Administrators’ (i.e., Deans’, Provosts’, and Vice Provosts’ of Research) contact information was created based on all R1, R2, and R3 colleges and universities listed in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

• A survey was distributed and completed anonymously in summer 2018 by 377 Administrators involved with P&T decisions at their institutions.

• Quantitative and qualitative measures were used to analyze survey responses.
  o For the two of the questions that required an open-ended written response (i.e., reported on today), an initial pass through the data resulted in the creation of response categories. A second pass was carried out by another rater and discrepancies were discussed. Both raters then individually coded the various responses again and inter-rater reliability determined (i.e., for survey question #11, Cohen’s Kappa = 0.80; for survey question #12, Cohen’s Kappa = .93).
Participants

Respondent Titles

- Dean (or Assistant or Associate Dean): 83.1%
- Vice Provost/Vice President of Research: 7.6%
- Other (please specify): 4.8%
- Provost: 4.5%
Participants

College or Disciplinary Representation

- School/College of Liberal...: 84
- School/College of Medicine: 52
- School/College of Business: 31
- University Administration: 29
- School/College of Engineering: 27
- School/College of Science: 26
- Graduate College or School: 25
- School/College of Fine Arts: 13
- School/College of Law: 12
- School/College of Natural Resources: 10
- School/College of Agriculture: 9
- School/College of Architecture: 8
- School/College of Social Work/Public Policy: 8
- Other (i.e., Oceanography, Travel and Tourism): 6
- College of Communication/Technology: 5
- Divinity School: 4
- Other: 4
- Total: 1
Participants

Carnegie Classification (R1, R2, R3)

- Research 1: 57.5%
- Research 2: 27.8%
- Research 3: 9.1%
- Other: 5.7%
Results

RQ1. Do institutions have criteria used to guide P&T decisions regarding scholarship produced in open access (OA) journals and/or the creation of open educational resources (OER)?

• If so, what are those criteria and how are they used?
Results (RQ1, cont.)

Nature of policy and/or how it is applied:

“I have asked each department to adopt standards to accommodate emerging forms of scholarship. Most have, but they are department-specific.”

“The policy's only language re/open materials is that OA scholarly journals are scholarly journals and shall be evaluated as such. However, some departments are still dubious.”

“The reference in annual evaluation guidelines is oblique: "Non-peer-reviewed books: In some cases a book or other scholarly product that is not peer reviewed but which appears in a reputable venue and makes a significant contribution to a field or fields will be considered in evaluating research. The faculty member must document the significance of the work."
“Discussions ongoing around aligning P&T with a Faculty Senate resolution encouraging OA publication.”

“We have discussed and decided against changing our policies to explicitly mention this issue. Instead, we continue to rely on each unit to assess the quality of the work, and the outlet, based on their disciplinary norms.”
RQ2. How do administrators perceive the benefits and drawbacks of OA and OER scholarship with respect to P&T decisions?

Based on Perceptions at your Institutions, OA and OER are considered:

- Viewed as more important/impactful than research published in traditional journals: 0.3%
- Not considered/not relevant in P&T cases: 9.0%
- I don't know/it is difficult to characterize my institution’s perspective on this: 21.9%
- Viewed as important/impactful as research published in traditional journals: 33.2%
- Viewed as less important/impactful than research published in traditional journals: 35.6%
Results (RQ2, cont.)

Does your institution have an open access mandate?

- Yes: 82.1%
- No: 17.9%
RQ3. What are administrators’ personal attitudes regarding open products/outputs?
   • How have their attitudes changed over time (if at all)?

Survey question #11: Personal views regarding benefits of open outputs on P&T process: OA publications

1. Availability of research (39%)
2. Should be considered in P&T (15%)
3. Time/quick turn-around of OA publications (11%)
4. OA has great(er) impact on P&T (7%)
5. Quality concerns (7%)
6. Cost (7%)
7. OA doesn’t impact P&T (6%)
Availability of research (39%)
“Publishing in open access journals increases the potential impact of the scholarship as it is available broadly to more people throughout the world.”

Should be considered in P&T (15%)
“Their open status inherently expands their accessibility and potential impact on higher education and the world at large. This should be valued by P&T committees, especially at public universities, and land grant universities.”

“They serve the growing legislative mandates for reduced costs in higher education. Regardless of the ultimate format, publishing most anything remains a major accomplishment. Open source materials are likely more useful to the field than many peer reviewed articles.”

Time/quick turn-around of OA publications (11%)
“The right open access journal is critical. Ones with strong reputations and well-defined peer review process provide a nice venue for rapid publication and easy dissemination which is especially strong for discipline relevant to emerging countries.”
Results

RQ3. What are administrators’ personal attitudes regarding open products/outputs?
   • How have their attitudes changed over time (if at all)?

Survey question #11: Personal views regarding benefits of open outputs on P&T process: OER

1. Cost (18%)
2. Viewed as service (2%)
3. Viewed as positive in P&T (2%)
4. Same quality as publisher resources (2%)
5. Other/not related to P&T question (2%)

“OERs are critical to meeting goals for increasing learning effectiveness and financial efficiency.”

“I perceive there are few benefits to the faculty member though others likely find benefits from access to these sources. It’s more like Service to the discipline than scholarly submissions.”
Survey question #12: Personal views regarding drawbacks/challenges of open outputs on P&T process: OA Publications

1. Perceptions of quality/value/prestige/credibility (42%)
2. Limited peer or editorial review (27%)
3. Predatory publishers/pay-to-publish (12%)
4. Low (or no) impact factor (4%)
5. Cost (< 1%)
6. Other or not related to P&T question (< 1%)
Survey question #12: Personal views regarding drawbacks/challenges of open outputs on P&T process: OA Publications

Perceptions of quality/value/prestige/credibility (42%)
“Some, perhaps a majority, of referees view open-access material as frivolous. It may take a generational change to move forward.”

Limited peer or editorial review (27%)
“On the research side, the key is being refereed. The referee process (if double blind) enhances quality. Often, open journals are not refereed (in my field) so they are perceived as lower quality.”

Predatory publishers/pay-to-publish (12%)
“Drawback is the proliferation of predatory journals.”
Results (RQ3, cont.)

Survey question #12: Personal views regarding drawbacks/challenges of open outputs on P&T process: OER

1. Perceptions of quality/value/prestige/credibility (15%)
2. Other or not related to P&T question (4%)

“To me, they are potentially very different things depending on the peer-review and editorial process of each. Open educational resources may be less likely to be peer-reviewed than an open-access journal with a rigorous review process.”
Results (RQ3, cont.)

• Have their attitudes about OA and OER changed over time?

Yes: 54.5%

“I am more sympathetic to it than I was before I became a dean, in large part because I see work from emerging/early career scholars across a wide range of disciplines. That exposure has helped me better understand and appreciate the benefits of open access.”

No: 45.5%

“I've still not observed any benefit to suggesting open access as an option for publishing scholarship that counts toward P&T at a top tier institution.”
Discussion/Conclusions

• The rapidly changing scholarly publishing ecosystem and higher education affordability crisis, coupled with increasing demands for scholarly productivity at many institutions, require a better understanding and more fully integrated role for all things open.

• Administrators are key to influencing/implementing policy changes related to P&T decisions at their institutions. Raising awareness among administrators regarding the value of open outputs is paramount, especially given the common misconceptions that we found about open outputs.

• While over 90% of institutions don’t have a formal policy in place regarding open outputs and the P&T process, our data suggest that discussions are ongoing regarding this issue.
Thank you

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