Scholarly and Creative Activity Expectations for Special-Title Assistant Professors
Department of Integrated Strategic Communication
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I. Introduction

Special-title assistant professors in the Department of Integrated Strategic Communication typically work under a distribution of effort allocating 70-75 percent of their time to instruction and advising, 10-20 percent of their time to service, and 10-15 percent of their time to research and/or creative activity. Teaching and advising responsibilities include teaching three courses each semester, office hours availability to students enrolled in those courses, and advising senior students assigned to the faculty member on their required ISC 399 internship and their final portfolio.

Assistant professors in the special-title series are expected to devote the majority of their time to instruction, often in skills courses. While instruction and advising comprise more than two-thirds of the special-title faculty member’s DOE, assistant professors in the special-title series are also expected to undertake research and/or creative activities. The Department expects that this activity will increase the visibility of the faculty member and the Department, contribute to knowledge in the field that benefits working professionals and/or academics, and/or help to improve the methods used to teach the subjects that are part of the faculty member’s area of expertise. The Department recognizes that research and/or creative projects will vary depending on the discipline in which the faculty member is working and the interests of that faculty member. Although this document will identify goals to which a special-title faculty member should aspire, it is not a checklist of requirements that must be met for a faculty member to be considered for promotion and tenure.

No single document can cover all of the potential research and/or creative endeavors that might appeal to a faculty member. Instead, with this document, the Department is demonstrating its commitment to encouraging high-quality special-title scholarship, while recognizing the wide range of interests that faculty members might pursue.

One point should be made at the outset: Although this document recommends a minimum level of research and/or creative output that a special-title faculty member should have before being considered for promotion and tenure, it is the quality of the work and the
prestige of the outlets where it is published or otherwise distributed that are the most important factors.

II. Research and/or Creative Output

The Department expects that an assistant professor will have produced a quantity of work commensurate with the portion of the special-title faculty member’s DOE assigned to research and/or creative activity during each year of probation, building steadily over the 5.5 years between the time of the appointment and the time when the promotion and tenure review is well under way.

Below is a list of potential research and/or creative activities and outlets appropriate for special-title faculty members. This list does not cover everything.

- Manuals, booklets, pamphlets, videotapes, Web sites, or other media that are shared with University, local, regional or national audiences
- Papers presented at conferences
- Publications in trade magazines related to the profession
- Publications in peer-reviewed journals or other peer-reviewed venues
- Publications in newspapers such as opinion pieces or commentaries
- Publications in local, regional or nationally distributed periodicals related to the profession
- Publications or creative work that improves the teaching of skills, concepts, or issues related to the profession
- Creation of materials disseminated by print, broadcast, Web-based, or other media to the campus or community that enhances student or community life
- Monographs
- Textbooks
- Textbook chapters
- Maintaining and developing skills by working with in a media organization during the summer or other times as approved by the department chair

Grants

- Publications resulting from research and/or creative activity conducted under a grant***
- The awarding of the grant
- Applying for the grant

***The application for and awarding of a grant will, depending on the prestige of the grant program, be considered a valued part of the faculty member’s research program.
However, the publications and presentations that come from the grant research will be significantly more important than the awarding of the grant itself. Grant activity that does not result in work being disseminated by publication or in some other venue will be considered a lesser contribution to the overall research and/or creative program as compared to grants that lead to public dissemination.

*Other factors*

- The number and location of citations of the faculty member’s work
- Awards or other forms of recognition
- The “visibility” of the faculty member within the discipline

**III. Discussion of Research and/or Creative Output**

Generally, a publication or creative endeavor that goes through some review or competitive process will be considered more valuable than a work that does not undergo such review. A publication or creative endeavor that results in national distribution will count more than work that is distributed locally or regionally.

**IV. Assessing the Quality of the Research and/or Creative Activity**

- In general, the quality of an individual piece of research and/or creative activity can be evaluated through such characteristics as: the theoretical and/or practical importance of the questions driving the work; the competent execution of the work; the significance of the findings produced by the work; and its overall contribution to the scholarly or professional field. Presumably these benchmarks of quality are met when the work has been accepted for publication by a reputable outlet. The quality of an assistant professor’s work is also addressed in the promotion and tenure process itself through the letters written by the external evaluators, who are distinguished scholars or practitioners in the assistant professor’s area of expertise. Essentially, the more that one’s peers in the field are in agreement about the merits of the work, the less “subjective” is the overall judgment of quality.
- Some work may be eligible for awards given by professional associations; however, these awards are relatively few in number and shouldn’t be considered a principal means of evaluating quality.
• The quality of books, including textbooks, should be evaluated in terms of the important questions (or issues) the work seeks to explore; the execution of the scholarship and writing; the significance of the findings (or the originality of its analysis, if it’s not a conventional empirical study), and its contribution to the field. In addition, a book is often reviewed. Thus, the overall tenor of the reviews can provide important evidence of quality. However, because of the lag time between a book’s release and the publication of reviews, it may not always be possible to use this benchmark to the fullest extent. It is also important to note that the number of copies sold is not necessarily an indicator of a book’s quality.

Appendix – Recommendations for assistant professors

I. A sustained program of research and/or creative activity

It is important that special-title faculty members get started immediately on their research and/or creative agenda. He or she will usually undergo a tenure review beginning in the fall of the sixth year. Thus, the faculty member has only five and a half years to establish a program of research and/or creative activity, and that time goes by quickly.

The promotion and tenure committee needs to see a sustained effort over the probationary period. Assistant professors, although busy with classes, advising, committees, and other work, cannot afford an extended break from research and/or creative activities.

Faculty members should also take advantage of the various grant programs that the University offers in providing money to help fund research and/or creative activity. Those programs are at both the College and University level.

II. Coherence of the Research and/or Creative Program

Faculty members are granted substantial discretion to pursue the scholarly efforts that most interest them. The individual pieces of work do not need to be on the same subject. But the overall program has to have some coherence. Within a fairly broad outline, it has to be clear in what aspect of the field the faculty member is developing his or her expertise and
what approaches are being used. In order to have an impact on the discipline, demonstrate the likelihood of continued productivity after tenure, and reflect positively on the Department and the University, the faculty member must develop a high level of knowledge and skills in a particular area. The research and/or creative projects should have some relation to each other, even if they employ different approaches and are disseminated through a variety of outlets.

III. Mentoring

It is in the best interest of the Department for special-title faculty members to be encouraged to pursue high-level research and/or creative activity and to be supported in those efforts. A mentoring system for assistant professors can help, but it cannot replace the initiative and hard work that must be undertaken by the faculty member. No assistant professor can justifiably argue that his or her tenure bid failed because of inadequate mentoring. The faculty member is responsible for pursuing a successful research program.