

A US Regional Comparison: The role of Research, Teaching, and Service Activities on Construction Educator Evaluation, Tenure, and Promotion

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how research, teaching, and service activities influence tenure and promotion outcomes for construction faculty across various institutions in United States. Regional variations in institutional priorities and resource availability shaped by regional context and impacts on expectations and evaluation criteria for construction faculty are investigated. Using a quantitative methodology, data was collected through an online survey of construction educators nationwide to document the emphasis placed on external funding, pedagogical innovations, and community or professional service. Particular attention was given to the types of grants (e.g., federal, state, or industry-sponsored) that most significantly impact career advancement and the extent to which teaching excellence and service contributions either mitigate or amplify this influence across regions. Results reveal regional disparities in the perceived value of teaching, research, and service contributions towards best practices for navigating tenure and promotion pathways. Recommendations are provided for faculty, administrators, and policymakers to promote equitable and transparent processes that align with institutional missions and regional contexts. This study contributes to a better understanding of faculty development in construction education, supporting efforts to attract and retain qualified educators in an evolving and competitive academic landscape.

Keywords:

Faculty Promotion, Faculty Evaluation & Tenure, Grant-writing requirements, Teaching assignments, Faculty service requirements

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Evaluation, promotion, and tenure (EPT) processes greatly influence how faculty shape their careers and scholarly growth. Though EPT practices differ across and within institutions and impact various disciplines, ranks, and types of institutions in different ways, certain themes emerge when mapping requirements by regions throughout the U.S. This study explores how grant funding types, teaching duties, and service activities affect EPT outcomes for construction faculty across different regions in the United States.

Regional differences in the U.S. include faculty unions, Carnegie classifications, the number of universities, and the number of students. In the Northeast, there are a greater number of universities, larger population with more students, and a higher likelihood of unions than in the middle of the U.S. These differences may also affect the educators themselves, especially when considering requirements for evaluation, promotion, and tenure. There has been research into university identities built on regional socio-economic factors, population density, or community (Park 2025). Even amongst institutions, there can be multiple campuses (regional campuses), which exhibit these differences and have competing or complementary degree programs (Ulstaad et al. 2019).

To further complicate the situation, construction educators have a variety of educational backgrounds (Hildebrant et al. 2018 and McCuen et al. 2019), differences in degree

accreditations (ABET 2021 and ACCE 2025), and an array of department organizations. Tang and Chamberlain (1997) aptly identified that transition causes an increased workload on the faculty. Within individual programs there can be tension between educators and the administration when expectations for research and teaching are not clear (Tang and Chamberlain 1997). While other majors may have any one of these unique circumstances, construction programs may be the most distinctive.

To determine regional differences, the Associated Schools of Construction Regions (ASC) were used (ASC 2022a). At the time of the survey, there were a total of 8 ASC Regions.

1. *Region 1 (Northeast): Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia*
2. *Region 2 (Southeast): Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia*
3. *Region 3 (Great Lakes): Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin*
4. *Region 4 (North Central): Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota*
5. *Region 5 (South Central): Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas*
6. *Region 6 (Rocky Mountain): Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming*
7. *Region 7 (Far West): California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington*
8. *International (not included in this study): Asia, Australia, Canada, England, Europe*

The research examines how regional differences in institutional priorities and resource availability influence the expectations and evaluation criteria for construction faculty. Special focus is given to the types of grants (e.g., federal, state, or industry-sponsored) which can impact career advancement and how teaching excellence and service contributions can either mitigate or amplify this influence across regions. The study highlights trends in the emphasis placed on external funding, pedagogical innovations, and community or professional service. The findings reveal regional disparities in the balance of teaching, research, and service expectations, providing insights into best practices for navigating EPT pathways. Recommendations are offered for faculty, administrators, and policymakers to develop fair and transparent processes that align with institutional missions and regional needs. This research enhances understanding of faculty development in construction education and supports efforts to attract and retain talent in a competitive academic environment.

POINT OF DEPARTURE

This research seeks to determine the critical nexus between regional institutional characteristics and the differences in EPT outcome for construction educators. The study is anchored in the observation that academic landscape, particularly within specialized fields like construction education is not monolithic but significantly shaped by both internal complexity and external regional dynamics. Therefore, the study aims to move beyond a general acknowledgement of regional differences to provide actionable insights into the specific EPT pathway that are either amplified or mitigated by regional institutional priorities. Thus, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. Are there differences across ASC construction regions for research activities with respect to EPT?

2. Are there differences across ASC construction regions for teaching activities with respect to EPT?
3. Are there differences across ASC construction regions for service activities with respect to EPT?

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research method combining both closed- and open-ended questions was employed to examine regional variations in evaluation, promotion, and tenure (EPT) expectations among construction educators across the United States. Data were collected through a structured online survey instrument after approval by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to dissemination, to enhance ethical protection of participants and research integrity. The survey was distributed in 2024 to Construction Educators in institutions affiliated with the Associated Schools of Construction (ASC). Other institutional demographic information was not collected.

The consent statement included a notation that incomplete surveys would be removed. Emails were collected through the ASC online membership directory and sent to approximately 1,000 educators with 239 complete responses representing 23.9%. There were 5 international respondents, who were not included in the analysis. This brought the total number of responses evaluated to 234 which is 23.4%.

Question content was based on previous research into EPT for Construction Management educators (Badger et al. 2006, Burgett et al. 2017, Hildebrant et al. 2018, Tymvios et al. 2020). The questions about research, teaching, and service expectations provided typical responses, but also provided an “other” (open-ended) option for respondents to add their own descriptions. For the research questions, 19 (close-ended) options were offered: “Could you please check all of the research/scholarship products below that count towards tenure/rank promotion in your institution?”. For the teaching question, five typical responses were provided : “Could you please check all of the teaching activities below that count towards tenure/rank promotion in your institution?” and for the service question; “Could you please check all of the service activities below that count towards tenure/rank promotion in your institution?”, the following four responses were provided; 1) University Service, 2) Department, School, or College Service, 3) Industry or Professional Service, 4) Local or Regional Community Service.

Chi-square tests of independence were used to assess the relationship and statistical differences within EPT activities and are appropriate for evaluating the relationship between categorical variables like regions. The use of close-ended options help enables consistent quantification of responses, while open-ended “other” option allows for capturing nuanced perspectives of the participants. This approach ensured both comparability across regions and the opportunity to identify emergent themes in faculty expectations related to EPT.

RESULTS

Construction Management (CM) is unique in the requirements for faculty terminal degrees in discipline, level, and type (Hildebrant et al. 2018 and McCuen et al. 2019), which has prompted a survey into CM Educator EPT. However, as CM requirements vary by region, such as union

versus right-to-work states, there may also be an identifiable regional difference in CM Educator EPT. There was an even distribution of response by region from Region 7 (18) to Region 2 (50).

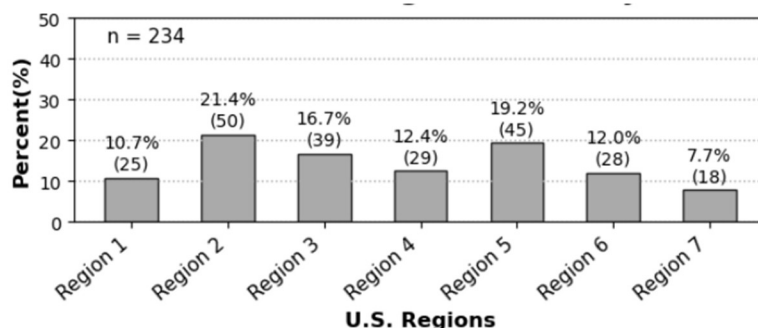


Figure 1: Respondents by Region

Research Activities: Survey respondents were asked to identify which types of research activities would be recognized and valued as part of the EPT process. Overall, there were 2691 separate responses from the 234 educator respondents, from ASC Regions 1-7. There were 19 options (Table 1) for responses, which include: 1) Competitive Federal Research Proposals/Grants, 2) Competitive Non-Federal Research Proposals/Grants, 3) Conference Presentations, 4) Conference Workshop, 5) Educational Proposals/Grants, 6) Funding Graduate Research Assistants, 7) Hosting/ Organizing a Research Event, 8) Invited Guest Speakers, 9) National and /or International Recognition/Award, 10) Non-Competitive Research Proposals/Grants 11) Non-Peer-Reviewed Proceedings Extended Abstract and/or Abstract, 12) Non-Peer-Reviewed Proceedings Full Paper, 13) Paid Presentation (i.e. training/seminar/ etc.), 14) Patents and/or other IP Products, 15) Peer-Reviewed Journal Full Paper, 16) Peer-Reviewed Proceedings Extended Abstract, 17) Peer-Reviewed Proceedings Full Paper, 18) Professional Workshop (not associated with a conference), and 19) Supervise Graduate Students.

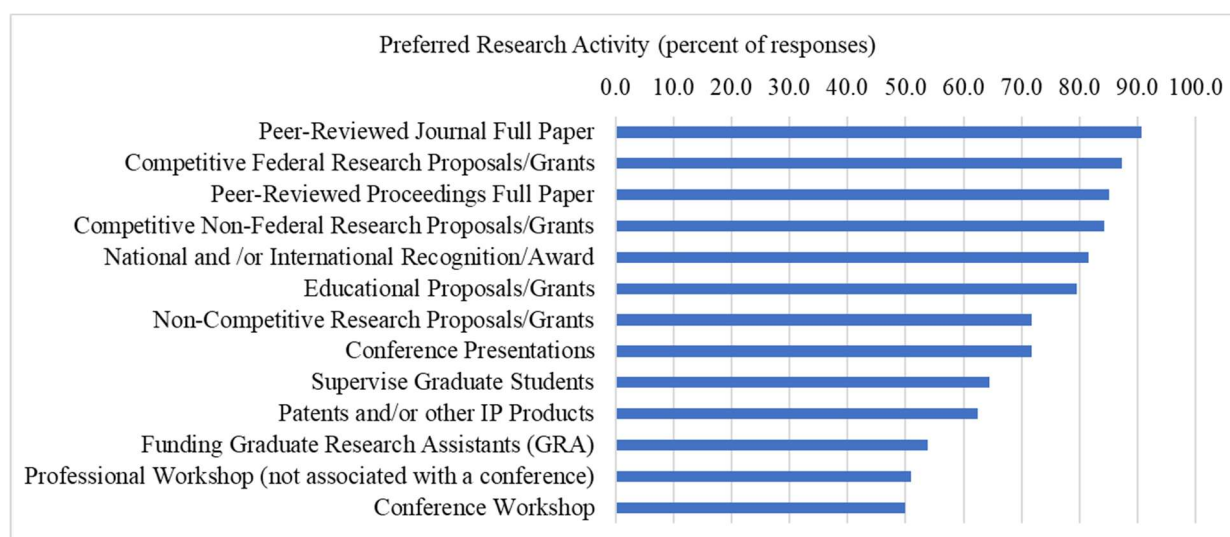


Figure 2: Preferred Research Activity (Percentage)

There were 13 activities that were valued by more than 50% of the respondents (Figure 2). However, there were 5 activities that had statistically significant differences between regions

(Table 1). Those were Conference Workshop, Peer-Reviewed Proceedings Extended Abstract, Peer-Reviewed Proceedings Full Paper, Professional Workshop (not associated with a conference), and Supervise Graduate Students, each of which had a p-value < 0.05. Only Peer-Reviewed Proceedings Full Paper is also ranked highly. This seems to indicate that the activities that are viewed differently by region are also not highly regarded by the educators themselves.

Teaching Activities: Survey respondents were asked to identify which types of teaching activities would be recognized and valued as part of the EPT process. Overall, there were 975 separate responses from 234 respondents in ASC Regions 1 to 7. In the area of Teaching, educators were asked which of the following provided value in the EPT process (Table 2). Curriculum and Course Development, Recognition of Teaching Activities, and Student Feedback as metrics were similarly valued (212, 206 and 204, respectively). Pedagogy Development Activities and Teaching Engagement Beyond the Classroom had the least number of responses (177 and 175, respectively).

Table 1. Regional Distribution of Research/Scholarship Requirements

	Table 3. Regional Distribution of Research	Competitive Federal Research	Competitive Non-Federal Research	Conference Presentations	Conference Workshops	Educational Proposals/Grants	Funding Graduate Research Assistants	Hosting/ Organizing a Research Event	Invited Guest Speakers	National and /or International	Non-Competitive Research	Non-Peer-Reviewed Proceedings Extended Abstract	Non-Peer-Reviewed Proceedings Full	Paid Presentation (i.e.	Patents and/or other IP Products	Peer-Reviewed Journal Full Paper	Peer-Reviewed Proceedings	Peer-Reviewed Proceedings Full	Professional Workshop (not	Supervise Graduate Students
1	(n=25)	19	18	21	15	18	11	14	13	23	16	8	11	13	14	23	13	23	16	12
2	(n=50)	48	47	35	22	43	32	25	27	46	42	8	12	17	41	49	22	47	27	42
3	(n=39)	35	33	29	23	32	18	16	21	30	27	6	10	17	24	35	20	32	22	21
4	(n=29)	24	24	25	21	24	12	15	12	24	22	8	13	14	18	27	18	27	20	19
5	(n=45)	37	34	27	20	31	23	15	16	32	27	4	9	12	26	36	11	30	14	25
6	(n=28)	26	26	17	9	22	20	8	15	21	23	4	7	6	14	26	6	24	14	21
7	(n=18)	15	15	14	7	16	10	10	12	15	11	3	5	4	9	16	7	16	6	11
Total	n=234	204 (87.2)	197 (84.2)	168 (71.8)	117 (50.0)	186 (79.5)	126 (53.8)	103 (44.0)	116 (49.6)	191 (81.6)	168 (71.8)	41 (17.5%)	67 (28.6)	83 (35.5)	146 (62.4)	212 (90.6)	97 (41.5%)	199 (85.0)	119 (50.9)	151 (64.5)
	Chi ² Statistic	9.05	10.57	10.13	13.82	6.60	9.43	8.79	7.33	10.15	10.38	8.40	9.14	11.55	12.06	9.68	17.95	18.03	15.45	16.24
	p-value	0.1709	0.1028	0.1194	0.0317	0.3596	0.1507	0.1857	0.291	0.1184	0.1096	0.2106	0.1661	0.0728	0.0606	0.1386	0.0064	0.0062	0.017	0.0125

Table 2. Regional Distribution of Teaching Requirements

Region Classification & Sample Size	Curriculum and Course Development	Pedagogy Development Activities	Student Feedback	Teaching Engagement Beyond the Classroom	Recognition of Teaching Activities
1 (n=25)	23	21	23	23	24
2 (n=50)	47	42	47	36	49
3 (n=39)	36	28	32	27	32
4 (n=29)	28	23	26	25	27
5 (n=45)	39	29	35	31	36
6 (n=28)	23	21	25	20	24
7 (n=18)	16	13	16	14	14
n=234	212 (90.6%)	177 (75.6%)	204 (87.2%)	176 (75.2%)	206 (88.0%)
Chi² Statistic	5.31	6.55	7.39	7.93	12.95
p-value	0.5052	0.3643	0.2859	0.2434	0.0438

There is a statistically significant difference between regions for Recognition of Teaching Activities where $p=0.0438$ when evaluating against $p<0.05$. This indicates that these activities, which can also be defined as Awards, are not valued equally in all regions. This is an interesting outcome, as this activity would include national awards. Although this activity varies in value across regions, it is still highly ranked overall and should therefore still be considered.

Service Activities: Survey respondents were asked to identify which types of service would be recognized and valued as part of the EPT process. Overall, there were 800 separate responses across 4 categories (Table 3). University and Departmental service were similarly valued (222 and 223, respectively) and this was consistent throughout the regions. Local or Regional Community Service had the least number of responses (171).

Table 3. Regional Distribution of Service Requirements

Region Classification & Sample Size	University Service	Department, School, or College Service	Industry or Professional Service	Local or Regional Community Service
1 (n=25)	24	25	23	22
2 (n=50)	49	49	45	37
3 (n=39)	35	36	35	25
4 (n=29)	28	27	27	23
5 (n=45)	41	41	37	30
6 (n=28)	28	28	24	18
7 (n=18)	17	17	16	16
n=234	222 (94.9%)	223 (95.3%)	207 (88.5%)	171 (73.1%)
Chi² Statistic	6.18	6.31	3.02	9.35
p-value	0.4038	0.3893	0.8058	0.1549

There are no statistically significant differences between regions. This indicates that identified service activities are valued similarly across regions.

DISCUSSION

Within all three categories for construction educator EPT, research, teaching, and service, there are regional differences in activities which are perceived to be valued by the institution. The activities which varied the most amongst regions are for Research: Conference Workshop, Peer-Reviewed Proceedings Extended Abstract, Peer-Reviewed Proceedings Full Paper, Professional Workshop (not associated with a conference), and Supervise Graduate Students, and for Teaching; Recognition of Teaching Activities.

For Teaching the activity which varies the most is also highly valued by educators. Of the 5 Research activities which varied by region, only the Peer-Reviewed Proceedings Full Paper was highly valued. Of the Research activities which varied significantly, Peer-Reviewed Proceedings, Extended Abstract, and Professional Workshop (not conference-associated) are not typically associated with high-impact research requirements. However, Conference Workshops might be a requirement for grant-funded research dissemination and Supervise Graduate Students are more likely to be associated with grant-funded research and Carnegie Classifications of R1 or institutions with a high level of research and doctoral programs. As CM programs are not required to be accredited and are frequently undergraduate only, the difference may have more to do with the wide variety of programs than the value placed on the activities.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE WORK

The study findings provide actionable practical application insights for CM faculty, department chairs, and administrators seeking to navigate or improve EPT processes. Understanding expectations for research, teaching, and service differ significantly by regions, would enable institutions to align faculty development with their own strategic and external benchmarks. Administrators and policymakers may use these results to inform the design of more equitable and transparent EPT policies that acknowledge institutional type, resource availability, and institutional pressure. Moreover, the research findings support mentoring strategies that help early-career faculty adapt to the unique need with the CM program, particularly those in teaching-focused or undergraduate environments.

The study is limited by the reliance on self-reported survey data, which could be subject to participant bias or misinterpretation of institutional policies. Additionally, only construction educators affiliated with ASC were used for this purpose, excluding other program outside this network. The size of university, size of program and Carnegie classification were not used as a determinant. Further, the location of the program within the university, within an Engineering, Business, or other School or College, was not used as a factor for analysis. Not including the international responses also limits the generalizability of the findings to U.S. based programs. Future research should expand the scope to include qualitative interviews or case studies that explore institutional culture, mentorship, and informal expectations affecting faculty evaluation. Comparing accredited and non-accredited programs or exploring how dual-role faculty (research and administration) experience EPT differently could yield further insights. As CM discipline

continues to grow, future studies could examine how digital scholarship, interdisciplinary collaboration, and evolving accreditation standards influence promotion criteria.

CONCLUSION

The study provides a comprehensive examination of how evaluation, promotion, and tenure (EPT) expectations for construction management (CM) faculty vary across U.S. regions and how the variation influences faculty development, career progression, and institutional culture. There are regional differences which may affect how Construction Management Faculty are evaluated for EPT. Variations were found, especially in Research, which might be attributed to regional factors or may also be attributed to institutional needs. It is important to note that CM faculty have differing backgrounds, terminal degrees, expertise, and accreditations. Due to these differences, it is incumbent upon the institution and educator to identify which EPT activities have the most value with the EPT system. Therefore, it is important for institutions to shape faculty workload priorities and advancement opportunities. Faculty at predominantly undergraduate serving or teaching focused institutions may face a different fundamental EPT landscapes compared to peers at research intensive institutions even with operating in the same discipline. Such disparities can exacerbate challenges in faculty recruitment, retention, and equitable evaluation particularly in the CM program that varies widely in accreditation requirement, departmental structures, and resource availability.

From an administrative and policy makers perspective, the study emphasizes the need for transparent, regionally responsive EPT criteria that reflect institutional mission and resource capacity while maintaining fairness and comparability across peer institutions. Mentoring programs, workload adjustments, and clear communication of expectations could help reduce ambiguity and facilitate a better faculty experience. Finally, these findings contribute to the broader dialogue on faculty evaluation in applied disciplines, illustrating how regional, institutional, and disciplinary characteristics intersect to shape academic career trajectories.

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