

Judging Others in the Academy: Implications of Uncertainty and Bias

In this talk I will focus on social science research suggesting that there are two major reasons for us to have far less confidence than we do in our judgments of one another in the academy: (1) the uncertainty associated with forecasting future behavior; and (2) evidence that our judgments are based on many factors other than the criteria we believe are relevant and appropriate. While these other factors are usually discussed as reflecting “bias,” I believe that term does not adequately summarize the several known threats to the validity of our judgments of each other. I will also outline what is known about how to reduce these threats to validity in a variety of contexts in which we judge one another: faculty hiring, faculty evaluation for tenure and promotion, assessment of grant applications, and selection of individuals for a variety of honors.