

Ten Strategies to Mitigate the Impact of Reduced or Lost External Grant Funding on Tenure and Promotion

This document outlines ten strategic approaches universities and academic units can adopt to mitigate the effects of reduced or lost external grant funding on tenure and promotion evaluations. These recommendations are derived from the analysis of 60 academic units across disciplines and ranks (Associate and Full Professors), as reflected in the dataset analyzed earlier.

I. Structural and Evaluation Adjustments (Strategies 1–5)

1. Recalibrate Evaluation Metrics to Emphasize Research Quality and Impact Over Funding Volume

Prioritize demonstrable research impact—citations, innovation outcomes, or community engagement—over total funding amounts. Encourage peer assessments of research influence and recognize collaborative grant participation as evidence of excellence.

2. Expand Recognition of Alternative Funding and Institutional Support Mechanisms

Acknowledge smaller or internal funding sources, such as foundation awards, artist residencies, and internal seed grants, as valid indicators of scholarly activity and investment in research.

3. Reward Sustained Scholarly Output and Mentorship as Alternative Evidence of Research Vitality

Value consistent scholarly productivity, mentorship, and collaborative outcomes as evidence of an active research program, even without ongoing external funding.

4. Formalize Recognition for Collaborative, Open, or Applied Research Contributions

Credit collaborative and applied projects, co-investigator roles, and public engagement outcomes as equivalent to externally funded projects.

5. Institutional Bridging and Validation Programs for Research Continuity

Establish internal bridge funding, research continuity funds, and options for candidates to include 'Research Resilience Statements' demonstrating adaptation during funding shortages.

II. Cultural and Procedural Adaptations (Strategies 6–10)

6. Emphasize Interdisciplinary and Cross-Unit Achievements in Evaluation

Recognize cross-departmental or interdisciplinary collaboration as a strong indicator of scholarly leadership. Include 'Collaborative Impact Statements' in tenure dossiers.

7. Reframe External Validation Beyond Grant Success

Accept alternative indicators of reputation—such as keynote talks, editorships, fellowships, and leadership roles in professional organizations—as valid substitutes for grant-related prestige.

8. Create Structured Internal Review Panels for Research Continuity

Develop internal peer-review systems to validate research quality and trajectory when external grant-based feedback is reduced or unavailable.

9. Weight Service, Teaching, and Leadership Roles More Heavily When Funding Diminishes

Adjust tenure criteria to recognize excellence in teaching, mentoring, and service leadership as compensatory forms of scholarly contribution.

10. Institutionalize Narrative-Based Evaluation in Tenure Dossiers

Adopt narrative statements where faculty articulate the intellectual significance and societal impact of their research, emphasizing originality and sustained engagement rather than funding totals.

Summary Table: Ten Mitigation Strategies

Strategy	Core Focus	Applies Most To	Expected Effect
1. Recalibrate metrics	Research quality & impact	STEM, Social Sciences	Reduces dependence on grant volume
2. Recognize alternative funding	Inclusive evidence of support	Humanities, Arts, Education	Legitimizes smaller or internal grants
3. Reward sustained output	Productivity & mentorship	All disciplines	Supports fairness across units
4. Recognize collaboration	Applied & cooperative research	STEM, Social Sciences	Captures collective impact
5. Bridge & resilience programs	Financial continuity	STEM, Health Sciences	Prevents lab/staff collapse
6. Value interdisciplinary work	Cross-unit collaboration	STEM, Education	Rewards innovation & breadth
7. Expand external validation	Non-grant prestige markers	Humanities, Fine Arts	Maintains recognition equity

8. Internal peer review panels	Institutional validation	All disciplines	Fills gaps left by grant loss
9. Elevate teaching/service	Holistic evaluation	Humanities, Arts	Balances workload & merit
10. Narrative-based evaluation	Contextualized excellence	All disciplines	Promotes inclusive, holistic review

Conclusion

These ten strategies collectively aim to safeguard research quality, faculty development, and institutional equity in an era of constrained external funding. By diversifying evaluation metrics, recognizing a broader array of scholarly outputs, and strengthening internal validation systems, universities can maintain rigorous standards of excellence while ensuring fairness and sustainability in tenure and promotion processes.