Canadian Health Services Research Foundation
Fondation canadienne de la recherche sur les services de santé

The Canadian Academic Incentives Project:

Experiences and perceptions shared by applied health services researchers

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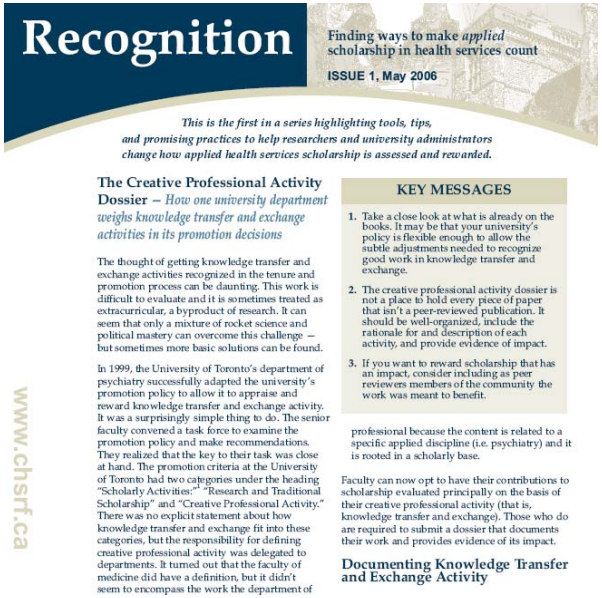
Calgary, Alberta

Making Research Work

Pour que la recherche porte ses fruits

The Canadian Academic Incentives Project

- A part of larger CHSRF initiative aimed at understanding and enhancing academic incentives for AHSR/KT in Canada.
  - Phaneuf, et al. (2006).
  - "Recognition" (2006). Issue series.
  - McCutheson (2007). Incentives for Impact
  - AcademyHealth (2008)



Recognition

Finding ways to make *applied* scholarship in health services count

ISSUE 1, May 2006

This is the first in a series highlighting tools, tips, and promising practices to help researchers and university administrators change how applied health services scholarship is assessed and rewarded.

The Creative Professional Activity Dossier – *How one university department weighs knowledge transfer and exchange activities in its promotion decisions*

The thought of getting knowledge transfer and exchange activities recognized in the tenure and promotion process can be daunting. This work is difficult to evaluate and it is sometimes treated as extracurricular, a byproduct of research. It can seem that only a mixture of rocket science and political mastery can overcome this challenge — but sometimes more basic solutions can be found.

In 1999, the University of Toronto's department of psychiatry successfully adapted the university's promotion policy to allow it to appraise and reward knowledge transfer and exchange activity. It was a surprisingly simple thing to do. The senior faculty convened a task force to examine the promotion policy and make recommendations. They realized that the key to their task was close at hand. The promotion criteria at the University of Toronto had two categories under the heading "Scholarly Activities:" "Research and Traditional Scholarship" and "Creative Professional Activity." There was no explicit statement about how knowledge transfer and exchange fit into these categories, but the responsibility for defining creative professional activity was delegated to departments. It turned out that the faculty of medicine did have a definition, but it didn't seem to encompass the work the department of professional because the content is related to a specific applied discipline (i.e. psychiatry) and it is rooted in a scholarly base.

Faculty can now opt to have their contributions to scholarship evaluated principally on the basis of their creative professional activity (that is, knowledge transfer and exchange). Those who do are required to submit a dossier that documents their work and provides evidence of its impact.

Documenting Knowledge Transfer and Exchange Activity

KEY MESSAGES

1. Take a close look at what is already on the books. It may be that your university's policy is flexible enough to allow the subtle adjustments needed to recognize good work in knowledge transfer and exchange.
2. The creative professional activity dossier is not a place to hold every piece of paper that isn't a peer-reviewed publication. It should be well-organized, include the rationale for and description of each activity, and provide evidence of impact.
3. If you want to reward scholarship that has an impact, consider including as peer reviewers members of the community the work was meant to benefit.

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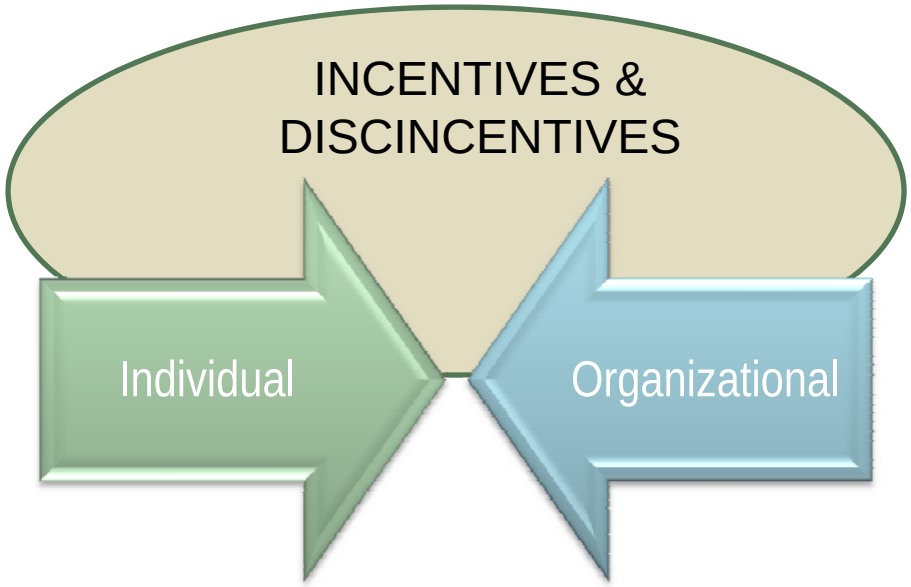
Study Objectives

- Explore incentives and disincentives for applied health services research (AHSR) experienced and perceived by academics actively involved in AHSR.

- Identify examples of innovative practices supporting AHSR in Canada.

Study Question

- What incentives and disincentives do Canadian scholars who work in AHSR encounter?



Defining our Terms

Applied Health Services Research (AHSR)

- Examines how people get access to health care, how much care costs, and what happens to patients as a result of this care (AHRQ, 2002).

Knowledge Transfer (KT)

- The exchange, synthesis and ethically-sound application of knowledge among researchers and users (Anderson, et al, 1999).

Incentives/Disincentives

- Conditions that motivate or impede behaviours - promotions, grants, rewards, recognition (Leslie, 2003; O'Meara, 2006).

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Academic Incentives for AHSR/KT: Framing the Problem

- Scholarship should be reconfigured and evaluated based on separate but overlapping domains – discovery, teaching, integration and application [Boyer, 1996)
- Mechanisms to report, evaluate and reward various forms of scholarship (Glassick, et al, 1997)
- Five domains of organizaitonal factors may be critical to promoting resarchers engagement in KT (Jacobson, et al. 2004).
- Faculty become involved in various types of scholarship if they believe their involvement is expected, valued and rewarded by their institution [O'Meara (2006)]
- Call for structural and process change in the merit, tenure and promotion policies to value all health science scholars' varied forms of scholarship [Hoffmeyer, et al, 2007)
- Recognizing and rewarding Canadian university faculty in international research collaboration for development (AUCC, 2008).

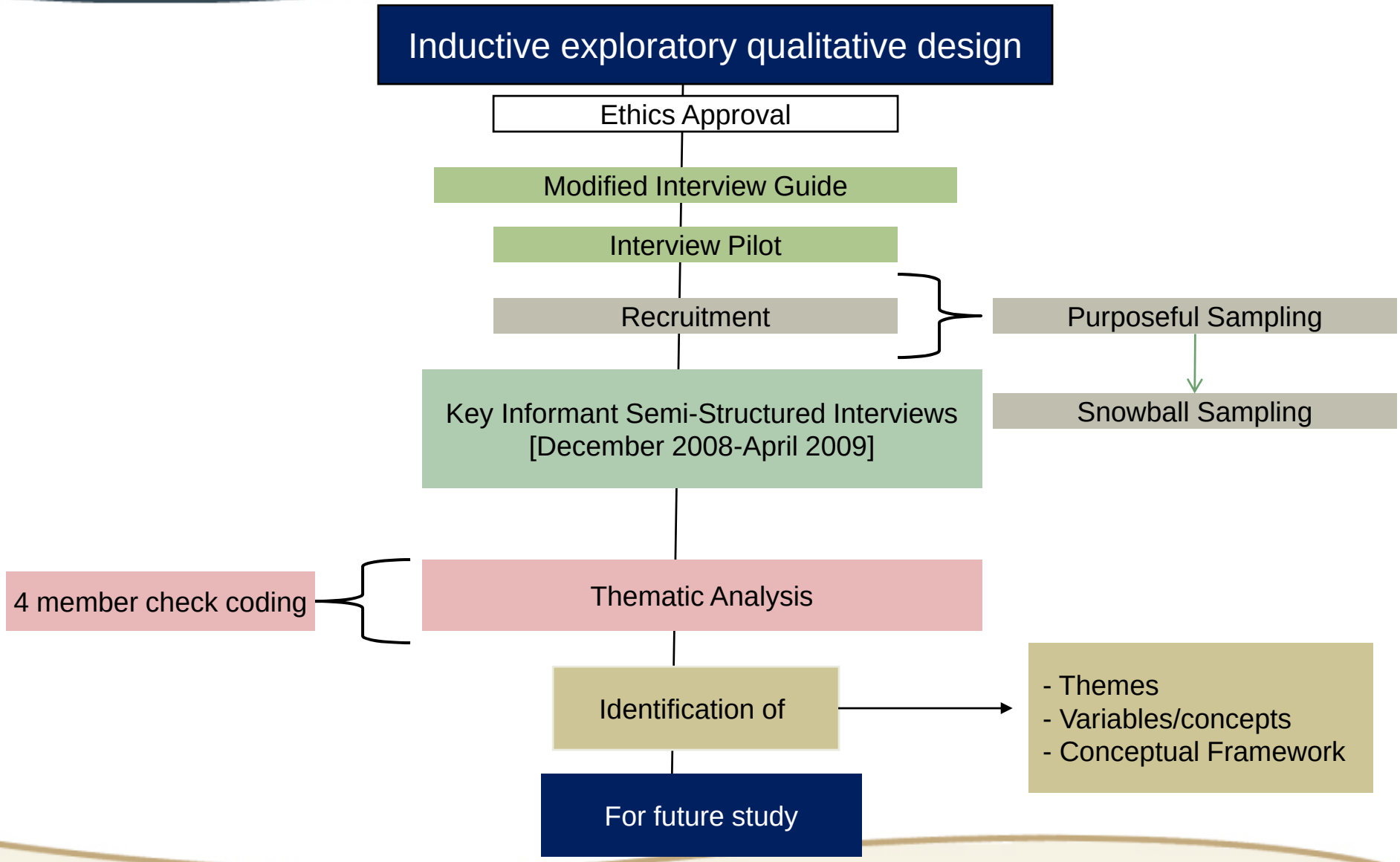
Study Assumptions

1) A Perceived difference between AHS researchers and 'traditional' researchers exists.

1) Challenges experienced by health services researchers are related to reward and recognition.

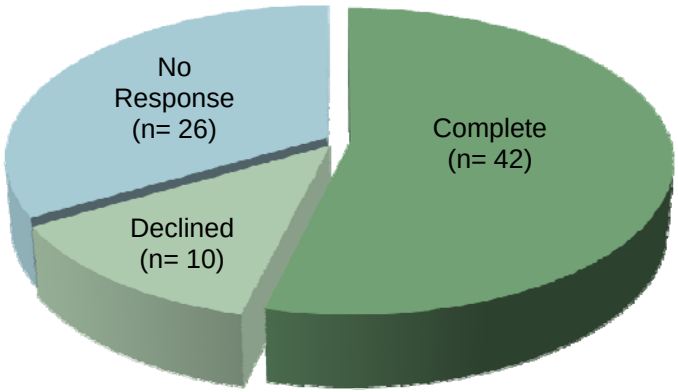
3) Different research activities are rewarded differently amongst committees.

4) Hierarchy of reward and recognition of activities and practices compromise AHS researchers to be fully recognized in their work.

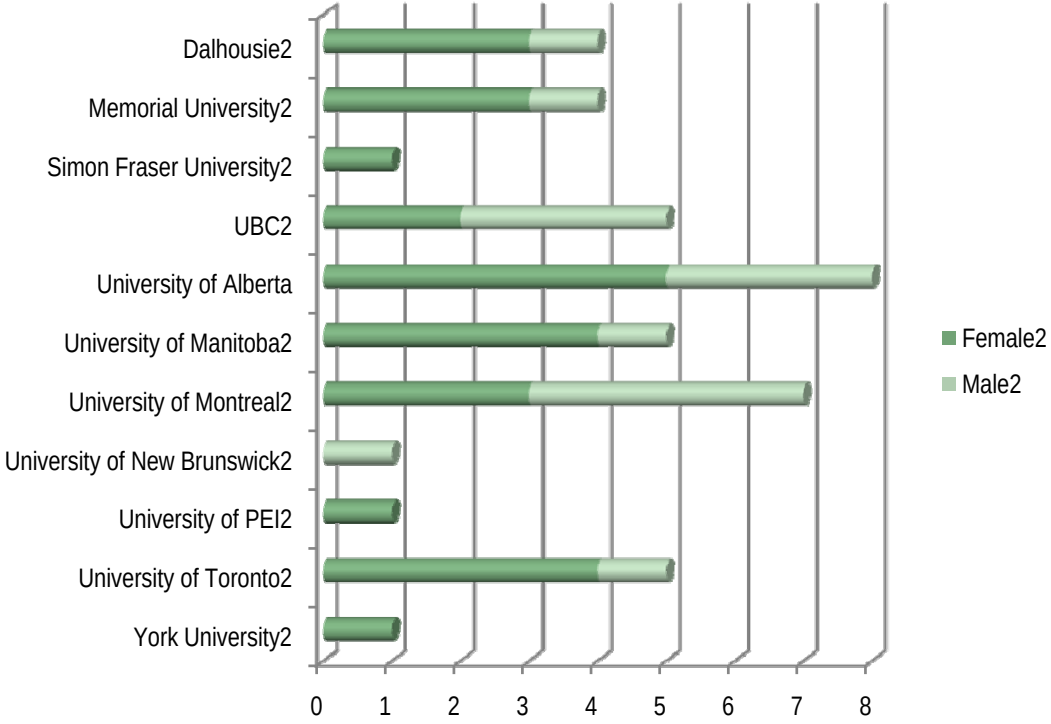

Inductive exploratory qualitative design
Ethics Approval
Modified Interview Guide
Interview Pilot
Recruitment
Purposeful Sampling
Snowball Sampling
Key Informant Semi-Structured Interviews
[December 2008-April 2009]
4 member check coding
Thematic Analysis
Identification of
- Themes
- Variables/concepts
- Conceptual Framework
For future study

Participant Characteristics

Recruitment Response

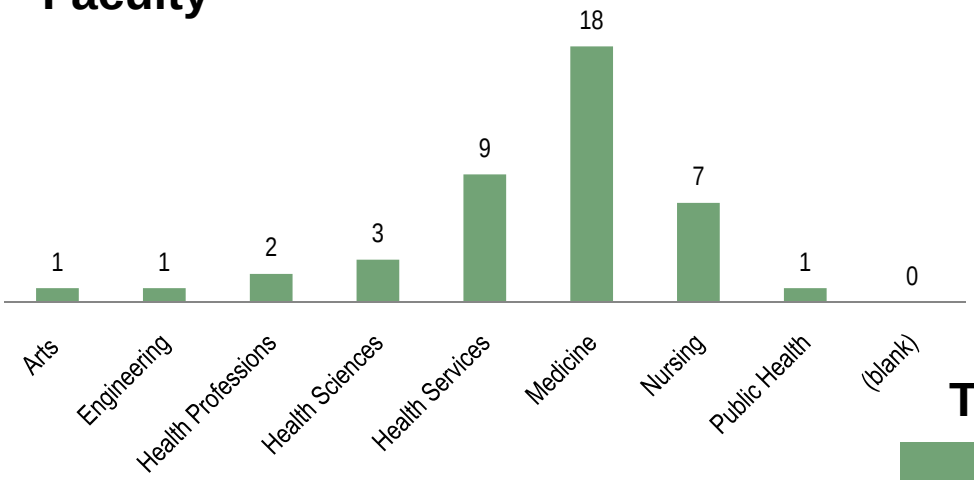


University & Gender



Participant Characteristics

Faculty



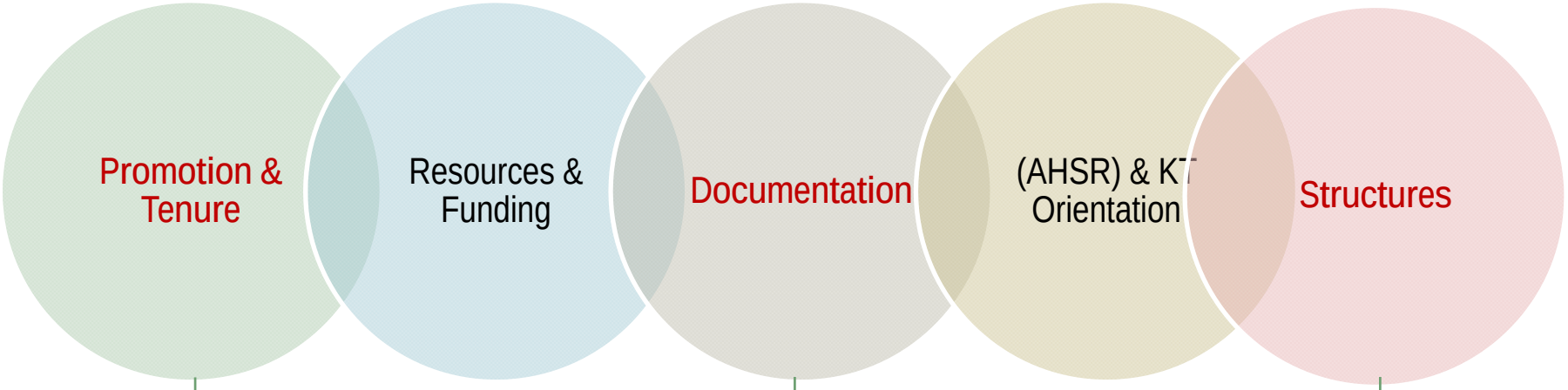
Tenure Type & Job Title

	Full Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Other/IC	Total
Tenure	16	5			21
Tenure Track	1	1	12		15
Other	1	2		2	5
Incomplete			1		1
Total	18	8	13	2	42

Preliminary Analysis

5 Domains of Organizational Factors

(Jacobson,N., Butterill, D. & Goering, P. 2004).



- Academic freedom enables
- Process obstructs
- AHSR vs. KT Output value

- Time and energy not easily visible or measurable

- Autonomy and AHSR innovation in 'unconventional structures'

Academic Incentives Project: Incentives & Disincentives

Promotion & Tenure

Enables AHSR & KT work

*"I see this as important work and **I'm at a stage in my career now where I can afford to do this work** you know because I have been promoted and I do have tenure (um hum) so it's easier for me to do this now. It was less easy earlier in my career you know I couldn't be quite as choosy or spend quite as much time and so I tended to do research more on an individual basis than working with community partners…"*

*"Well I mean as I say as a faculty member who has tenure as a full professor I mean **there is very few people telling me—providing any constraints on what I do so I mean I think that's a huge incentive** to do the work that you want to do."*

Promotion & Tenure

Outdated concept, unproductive and obstructing

"I just think you know it's so archaic. I think the whole concept of tenure is archaic to be honest, I mean what other job in our society do you get a guaranteed position for life if you jump through this hurdle. I think like it's ridiculous. I want to be rewarded based on my productivity and have a job based on merit for my career and have promotion based on merit not you know "oh I passed this hurdle and I have this thing called tenure and now I'm guaranteed a job".

Promotion & Tenure

Value of AHSR vs. KT activities & products

- *I think there needs to be some education in academic institutions about the value of this research. I have actually been told by some basic researchers that this is not research (um hum) This is I don't know what they called it practice 'of interest to people in practice' but you know you are not building on the body of knowledge. (um hum) So that's a problem and part of it is I understand their lack of understanding of qualitative research as what I do. I think that there needs to be some better supports on campus in terms of knowledge of people who are evaluating tenure and promotion for example in terms of the length of time that this—you know as I said before the relationships that you need to build in order to do this work and I guess the fact that sometimes the knowledge transfer piece is not necessarily a research paper.*

Promotion & Tenure

Value of AHSR vs. KT activities & products

*"**Well it's not valued or devalued in my faculty it's as long as you do the things, like so our tenure and promotion criteria aren't content related, like whether you are studying pain or knowledge translation or the neurochemistry of Alzheimer's that you know that isn't what goes into the criteria. What goes into the criteria are research outputs, teaching outputs and service outputs**. (right o.k.) Now it might matter in some faculties but I haven't experienced that it does in mine."*

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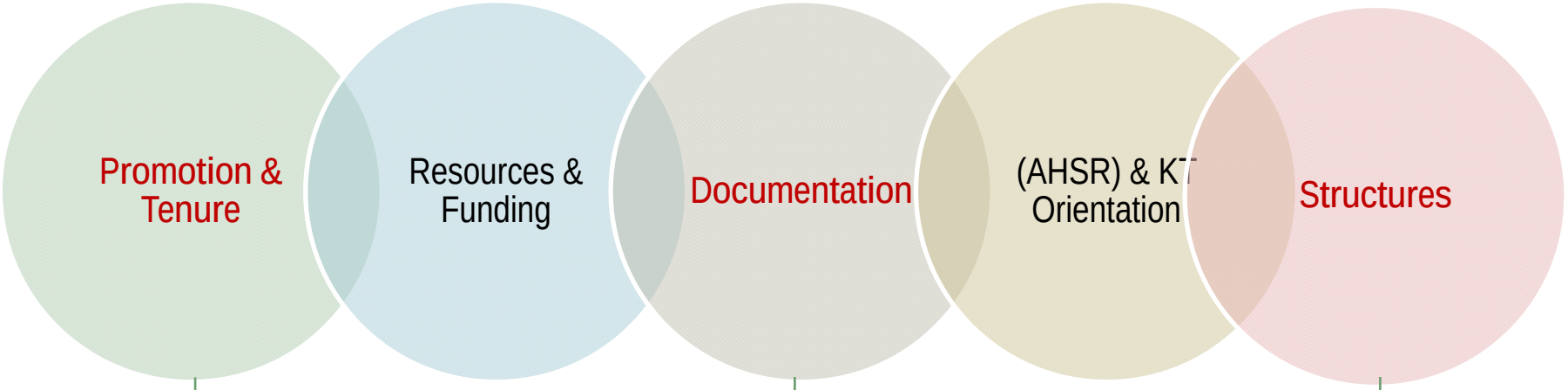

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Academic Incentives Project: Incentives & Disincentives

Documentation

Time and energy are not easily visible or measurable

- I think that we need to do a better job of helping the faculty to conceptualize and document their work. So that's a big issue trying to help them think through what it is they are doing and also how do they make sure that what they are doing is properly documented and appraised and packaged so that going forward a lot of work needs to be done there and so including it in the funded training programs helping their trainees thinking early on so it's not when people just start to think about promotion that they start developing their thinking about this throughout their career.

- So my sense is that people will need to have a portfolio of research and if they do applied scholarship they will need to make sure that they document it in a rigorous manner that can be judged as scholarly when they get to tenure and promotion.

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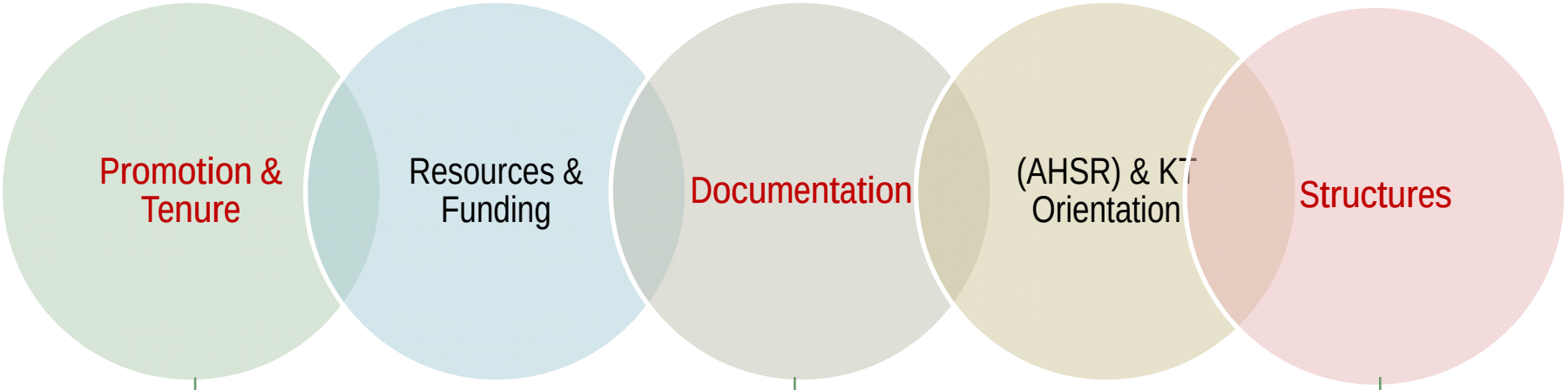

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Academic Incentives Project: Incentives & Disincentives

Structures

Unconventional structures provide greater autonomy for AHSR/KT work

- Research Centres
- University based Research Units
- Job designs
  - F slot
  - Joint appointments
  - Status only appointments
  - Post doc's & award based positions

Non-traditional work design

- One of the things you have to understand is that I'm situated in a teaching hospital research institute and hospital. My affiliation with the university is what's called a 'status only' appointment and that my primary appointment is in the Department of {___}which is the Faculty of {___} at the {___} University. When you talk about my university um it really is my department in that faculty that we'll talk about and there's a totally separate administrative structure in the teaching hospital which has it's own promotion criteria and policy so both myself and my staff move up through the ranks in the university and also move up through the ranks in the hospital and those are 2 separate sets of decision criteria (o.k.) so it gets kind of complicated for health academics (um hum) or the kind of position I'm in but there are a lot of us so it's not inapplicable to the large project but it's just what you need to understand in terms of our _____. Promotion is important in the university but it does not result automatically in a change in salary or in launch to a tenure track and we don't necessarily move in a lock-step fashion through the ranks at our teaching hospital. (o.k.)

Non-traditional work design

- Yes there are 2 awards you can apply to one is the CIHR Young Researcher Salary Award which funds you for 5 years and the other is FRSQ *Chercheur Boursier* (right researcher grant) yes and it's for 4 years and in both cases the funding institution pays the university about the amount of your salary and the university then pays you a salary as any other teacher, any other *professeur* so basically this allows the university to have a free researcher. It doesn't cost the university anything (oh) so for the university it is great because if you have the award they have some probably it's that because you have an acceptable level of training and capacity to do research and at the same time you are free so that's only a benefit. The problem is that you are also disposable. If you are not successful they can send you out and find someone else who was able to get the funds so there is a little tendency to just not put those people in full-time tenure-track positions because you can replace them with always new free researchers.

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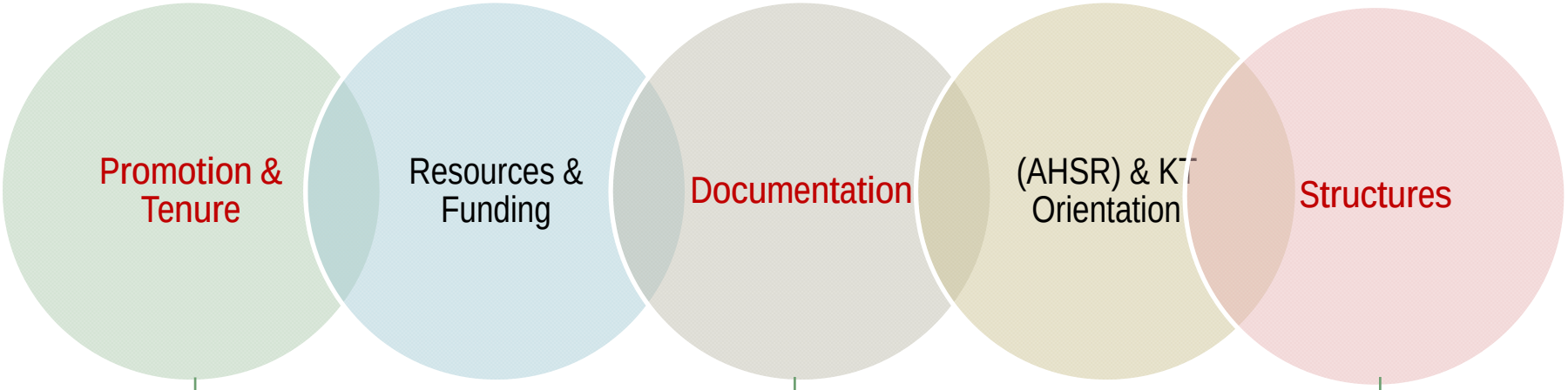

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Lessons for Future Research

- Need to better define a typology for incentives and enablers.
- Promotion and tenure as a reward and recognition process experienced varied amongst participants.
- The problem is not AHSR it's the KT output.
- Many experts in AHSR don't work in traditional university tenure track positions.
- Need a better understanding of structure and its relation to reward systems.

Thank you~

Questions?

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