

OSTROM WORKSHOP COLLOQUIUM SERIES

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“Selling Science: New Insights into
Measuring Research Productivity”

Monday, February 12, 2018

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Ostrom Workshop, 513 N. Park



This paper focuses on assessing productivity in basic research programs, and on how the ability to make these assessments insulates these programs from political interference. The enormous sums spent on these projects are often justified by predictions about their contributions to knowledge, the economy, or innovation. But at virtually any point in the lifecycle of such programs, it is not easy to explain to the public or elected officials why the program is a compelling investment, given that the benefits will emerge only over time—if at all. Our focus here is on how evaluators might use the interim outputs of scientific work-in-progress (“waypoints”) to revise their judgements about the merits of a research proposal. As a first step in the analysis, this paper develops a two-player game between a principal investigator and a program officer. The goal is to identify the characteristics of waypoints that make them useful tools for assessment and to assess the trade-off between waypoints that minimize the rate of false positives and those that minimize the probability of false negatives.



William Bianco is professor of political science at IU and affiliated faculty at the Ostrom Workshop. His work on selling science is an extension of research on the politics of US-Russia space cooperation conducted while a Fulbright Senior Scholar in Russia. His other research program focuses on linking party systems, majority rule, and policy outcomes with an analytic tool known as the uncovered set, with the goal of contributing to theories of government formation, the policy implications of electoral and party systems, and regime stability ([website](#)).

Presentations are open to the public and are live streamed (see our website for URL and papers). You are welcome to bring your lunch. For questions, contact Allison Sturgeon (sturgeon@iu.edu; 812/855-3151).