

**Re-envisioning and Valuing What We Do:  
Twenty-first Century Liberal Arts Scholarship in a Land Grant University**  
White Paper on Engaged-Scholarship  
College of Liberal Arts  
Colorado State University

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Faculty in the College of Liberal Arts produce scholarly work in a wide variety of fields, representing the diversity of disciplines and approaches within the college. Among them are those whose research programs engage with the community, bringing to bear research and creative expertise on issues and problems important to individual groups and the public at large. While rigorous and valuable, this work is not always reflected in evaluation and in tenure and promotion policies. This creates barriers to further work and impedes the college from participating as much as it might in the university's land-grant mission. CSU has established a notable record for the impact of applied or engaged scholarship over its history; there is a growing understanding in higher education, especially public land-grant institutions that engaged scholarship has a place alongside traditional, discovery-based research.

This whitepaper reviews the national and institutional contexts for engaged scholarship and outlines opportunities and challenges for the College of Liberal Arts. Our aim is to inform and facilitate future conversations within the college and to encourage consideration of the distinctive roles of liberal arts disciplines in this pursuit within each department. We suggest that in order to address how faculty are recognized and rewarded for this work our discussion will have to re-envision four interrelated areas: the interrelationships among the traditional areas of *faculty effort*; how we think about the *peer-review* process; what we mean by *quality* scholarship; and what we *communicate* to internal and external stakeholders.

### **Engaged Scholarship: Values and Definition**

“Engaged scholarship” describes intentional efforts to connect knowledge generated through faculty activity directly to the public in ways that collaboratively address social issues and community needs and concerns. Though the concept of an engaged scholarship is rooted in the original founding missions of the land grant universities, the term arose in the 1990's as part of a larger conversation about the role of higher education in American society. Key constituencies, including some faculty, citizens, and lawmakers called into question the direction, role, and values of American higher education. The Carnegie Foundation for Teaching, under the leadership of Ernst Boyer, emerged as a leading voice in response. While championing the value of the American educational system, Boyer nonetheless challenged the current priorities of public universities and their faculty (Boyer, 1987; Boyer Commission, 1998). Faculty work had become ever more focused on ever narrowing fields of research, he argued, increasingly restricted by disciplinary-derived definitions of exploration and discovery. Boyer

maintained that higher education had turned from public good to a private benefit: “Increasingly, the campus is being viewed as a place where students get credentialed and faculty get tenured, while the overall work of the academy does not seem particularly relevant to the nation’s most pressing ... problems” (Boyer 1996: 14). To reconnect with core constituencies public-serving universities must restore core values.

Boyer developed terminology to describe faculty work as a continuum of scholarly activity, calling traditional discipline-based research “scholarship of discovery” (Boyer, 1990). Alongside these activities, the universities needed to value other forms of scholarship that enriched its purpose, including “scholarship of integration” (work across disciplines), scholarship of “teaching” (understanding how students learn and developing better pedagogical approaches) and the “scholarship of application” (engaging knowledge to social and community-based problems). These four areas are integrally interrelated, tied to the broader and deeper core of the universities purpose: “connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic, and ethical problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teachers, and to our cities, just to name the ones I am personally in touch with most frequently.” (Boyer, 1996).

Boyer later replaced “application” with the term “scholarship of engagement” (Boyer, 1996) as a way to define and explain the importance of this category of faculty work. Following Boyer’s lead, the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities further refines the term, emphasizing that engaged scholarship goes beyond traditional service and extension efforts, attends to the future needs of students, connects research with the curriculum, and put knowledge to work for the public at large (Kellogg 1999). They recommend that an engaged university operate under seven principles, which include responsiveness and respect for community partners, academic neutrality and accessibility, interdisciplinary integration and coordination, and resource partnerships. In 2005, the Committee on Institutional Collaboration (now the Big Ten Academic Alliance), further identified three distinguishing characteristics of university engagement:

1. Engagement is *scholarly*. A scholarship-based model of engagement involves both the act of engaging (bringing universities and communities together) and the product of engagement (the spread of discipline-generated, evidence-based practices in Communities).
2. Engagement *cuts across the mission* of teaching, research, and service. It is not a separate activity, but a particular approach to campus-community collaboration.
3. Engagement is *reciprocal and mutually beneficial*. There is mutual planning, implementation, and assessment among engagement partners.

Emphasizing engaged scholarship as reciprocal and mutually beneficial means that the various community partners play an equal role in defining critical problem. It also recognizes that the community itself is source of valuable knowledge and expertise needed to address the focus of engaged scholarship. These community-based knowledge and skills adds to and complements those derived from academic disciplines; the combination allows faculty and students to learn valuable skills and perspectives that otherwise may not be readily available.

In 2015, APLU's Council on Engagement and Outreach further developed ideas on the centrality of engagement, focusing on the institutional context. An engaged university, the report argues, reshapes the one-way processes of traditional outreach and service efforts (extension, education, cultural programming, healthcare, etc.) in order to make engagement central to how the institution functions.

### **The Institutional and College Contexts**

As charged through the federal legislation that founded them (Morrill Act, Hatch Act), land-grant universities provide public access to the benefits of education, promoting the welfare of citizens in the states and in the nation more generally. Engaged scholarship has long been a defining part of the identity of Colorado State University, informing both the historical development and current institutional priorities. Faculty at CSU have from its founding established themselves through local, state, national and international leadership in a wide variety of areas: agricultural innovation, and engineering, issues of water resource management, educational programming, climate, sustainability, natural resources environment, and international development. Current initiatives on campus such as the [Powerhouse Energy Institute](#) and the [One Health Institute](#) continue in this tradition. The recent designation of CSU as Innovation and Economic Preparation (IEP) awardee by APLU recognizes the quality of institution's partnership with private partners to develop cutting-edge programs in economic development, innovation, entrepreneurship. Growing out the IEP recognition, Provost Rick Miranda formed the Provost's Council for Engagement, a group of faculty representing all eight colleges and the Library as champions for advancing the practices and recognition of engaged scholarship across all campus units.

There is tremendous opportunity for the College of Liberal Arts to support and lead this institutional initiative. The College has made great strides in the last twenty years in both the quality and quantity of traditional, discipline-based scholarship as measured by publications, books, and peer-reviewed contributions in top journals. Community-oriented and applied scholarship has been a part of the college research effort over this period; indeed, several senior faculty have built pedagogical approaches and significant and impactful research and creative programs that involve public engagement.

As CLA's research profile grows, there is substantial room to strengthen our impact, reputation, and capacity through engaged research. The disciplines contained within CLA will be key in addressing crucial issues and enhancing the quality of life of the diverse people of Colorado, the nation and the world. The 1999 Kellogg Commission report suggests the need for a broad, inclusive approach to engaged scholarship:

the new questions before us involve not only important issues requiring the application of hard data and science, but challenging, and frequently fuzzy, problems involving human behavior and motivation, complex social systems, and personal values that are controversial simply because they are important.

The issues that have over the last twenty years since the Kellogg report reinforce the need for liberal arts perspectives: today's challenges illustrate the need for digital fluency, global literacy, interdisciplinarity, and public engagement. These demands cannot be confronted with technical know-how alone; requiring also the habits of eloquence, empathy, imagination, and critical thinking whose roots run deep in the traditions of the liberal arts and sciences. Those skills and attitudes, coupled with the land grant commitment to crossing disciplinary lines as well as those often separating town and gown, well position the College of Liberal Arts at Colorado State University for the challenges that lie ahead.

We have an opportunity to demonstrate support for existing faculty work and to clearly articulate the value of these approaches that would make CSU an attractive place for new faculty and new initiatives. This, in turn, would add another example of the central role of the liberal arts to the broader university mission. In an era when the worth of the social sciences, humanities and visual and performing arts are being questioned if not outright challenged, we must seize the opportunity to participate in activities where liberal arts are recognized and their societal value made explicit.

### **Liberal Arts and the Challenge of Engagement**

The challenge facing CLA is to demonstrate and communicate how our faculty, students and staff are vital contributors to this aspect of the institutional mission. In a time of increasing concern for the value of the liberal arts, we must clearly demonstrate how the work we do is vital to resolving issues and problems and how involving our students in this work better prepares them for their careers and for productive citizenship. It is in our own self-interest and in the interest of the state and nation we serve to find a better way of recognizing, valuing, and rewarding this work. The place to begin our work must be the written codes governing our evaluation, promotion, and tenure decisions.

Because engaged scholarship traditionally has been *faculty driven* in the College of Liberal Arts, ways to bring engagement into a more central role must be *faculty derived*. Several senior scholars within CLA, faculty who were hired to produce engaged scholarship and whose work has attracted national attention, have been successfully tenured and promoted within the existing criteria. Yet, they report being expected to put forward a full suite of traditional publications, in effect asking them to do double duty. Currently within CLA we have junior faculty and non-tenure track faculty whose work in engaged scholarship has great potential. It is imperative that we clarify for them expectations that reflect the very reasons we hired them and that are appropriate to their discipline.

Nationwide, university policies for faculty evaluation, tenure and promotion in the disciplines comprising the liberal arts have difficulty keeping pace with the evolving nature of faculty interests and work. Policies have traditionally attended to discipline-based criteria focusing on the scholarship of discovery, emphasizing individually-produced work, such as the number of articles in traditional academic outlets for publication or performance, alongside the importance of peer-review. Work that is collaborative, work that is interdisciplinary, work that

is community and/or stakeholder led, work whose results or impact fall outside of traditional venues for publication (online and digital publication) are oftentimes difficult to account for in this system.

Colorado State has as an institution been ahead of the national conversation. The CSU *Faculty Manual* already specifically supports the inclusion of outreach/engagement efforts as part of faculty teaching, research, and service. In terms of research, the *Manual* makes clear that important criteria include the quality of the work as judged by peers as well as impact and outcome assessments, according to the standards of the applicable discipline (E.12.2).

The Faculty Manual also requires that “responsibilities for all tenure-track faculty members must be established so as to provide sufficient opportunities to demonstrate that they meet performance expectations for tenure, promotion, and merit salary increases”, as specified in Section E.12 (E.9).

Within this institutional context, however, it is not clear that the CLA College Code or all department codes within the college meet the expectations of Section E.9 when it comes to faculty who participate in engaged scholarship.

### **The Work Ahead**

Over the next academic year, the college will invite faculty to discuss how we can collectively reinforce the growth of robust creative research agendas within the college while aligning that work with existing university standards for evaluation, promotion and tenure. We will continue to show that we prize traditional, scholarly effort while creating a more inclusive research environment for scholarship across the college that paves a different path to quality, value, and impact.

There are at least four main themes involving how we measure and value faculty scholarship and creative activity that will require deliberation and attention.

#### **1. Re-envisioning how we interrelate areas of faculty effort**

At its heart, engaged scholarship is *integrative*, bridging disciplines as well as the “activity-silos” of research, teaching and service. It can bring together effort in these three traditional areas of work in a systematic way, and makes more visible the full value of faculty effort. For example, engaged scholarship can and should lead to new methods and approaches to teaching as the faculty seeks to link student learning and competencies to the new knowledge produced through work with the public. This is clearly related to research and has enormous benefits to the students, yet is time-consuming. Similarly, engaged work requires intense interaction with the community; the results of this work is often the adoption by the community of new practices, the solution to a pressing issues, or mutual work to write and receive a grant or funding to produce a desired result. As an integrative process, the results of engaged scholarship are difficult to measure and parse out faculty activity into the traditional, discrete buckets of faculty effort. While tradition publication in peer-reviewed publications can and

should result from engaged research, the question remains how to measure and reward the other kinds of work accomplished by the engaged faculty member and his/her students.

## **2. Re-envisioning *peer-review***

The significance of peer-review for how we think about scholarship warrants its own focused discussion. The *Faculty Manual* makes clear that departments are within their rights to specify peer-reviewed publications as crucial criteria in the assessment of faculty scholarship. As the concept appears in many of codes, it offers another opportunity to reflect upon what we do and value without necessarily injecting entirely new practices into the T&P and annual merit processes. Disciplines are founded upon communities of practices, out of which arise norms and expectations that inform departmental expectations around tenure and promotion as well as annual merit review. The suggestion here is not to unmoor our departments from these important communities. But instead to engage in conversations about how else peer evaluations might be generated, thus creating a mechanism to subject non-traditional (engaged) scholarship to this venerable process. In terms of peer review, are quality, peer-reviewed publications devoted to scholarship of engagement included in any departmental list?

## **3. Re-envisioning *quality***

A review of department codes also shows uniformity on the subject of valuing “quality” scholarship when stating expectations for tenure and promotion and the annual merit review processes. As traditionally understood, quality is often synonymous with, at a minimum, peer-review, though other methods to gauge this attribute are available, depending on the discipline in question (e.g., journal impact factor, citation rates). A point for discussion should be what do we as a college, and what do individual departments, mean by quality scholarship? A related term that should enter this discussion ought to be “impact”. A second point arises from the *Faculty Manual*. The text of Section E.12.2 recognizes the value of “grants obtained in open competition” and “impact and outcomes assessment as indicated by adoption of results by clientele.” How are these measures of the *who* and *what* are we hoping to impact through our scholarship captured in our department codes? One answer to this query ought to be others in our respective disciplines (the *who*) and the scholarship nested therein (the *what*). But should that be where our collective answer ends? While contemplating this, we need to also keep in mind the broader social and political environment and external (even existential) threats to the arts, humanities, and social sciences.

## **4. Re-envisioning what we *communicate***

Tying this all together is the matter of how and what we communicate to internal and external stakeholders. If we celebrate engaged scholarship then we need to acknowledge its value in our codes and the other documents that we generate, from offer letters to newsletters, website content, and awards. As just suggested, the matter cannot stop at re-envisioning how to communicate engaged-scholarly outputs. This conversation must also be about how we communicate our commitment to engaged scholarship *itself*. Do we include commitment statements in our job descriptions and offer letters? Do we offer awards that celebrate this form of scholarship? Doing all this not only helps communicate the value of liberal arts,

especially at a time when that value is being questioned. It also helps reinforce and build a culture of scholarly inclusivity.

### **Timeline of events and discussions**

This bottom-up conversation will parallel broader discussions happening at the Provost-level (e.g., Provost's Council for Engagement), with input from faculty across colleges, and out of VPR Office (i.e., One Health Institute). Having this college-wide discussion will allow our faculty and students to be co-leaders in the process of shaping the University's vision of what engagement scholarship means, ensuring that understanding articulates a vision informed by the values of liberal arts.

The results of this college-wide conversation should include direct answers to these questions:

- How do we communicate clearly to faculty involved in engaged scholarship that there work is a valuable and activity;
- What is the intersection of engaged scholarship with other aspects of the faculty workload such as teaching and service;
- How do we understand and define the performance of engaged activities across units?

This conversation will begin earnestly in August, with the

- Council of Chairs Fall 2017 retreat. The aim here will simply be to introduce the topic; the expected outcome is that chairs will continue this conversation at their respective fall semester retreats and/or during their fall department council and executive committee meetings.
- Department and discipline specific conversations as determined by faculty and chairs.
- College-wide discussions later in the fall semester hosted by the Dean and Associate Dean Carolan. The specific content and format of these events will be determined by early conversations with chairs and in consultation with CLA representatives on the Provost's Council for Engagement (Dr. Martín Carcasson, Communication Studies, and Dr. Tobi Jacobi, English). Options include: town halls, which would assist in facilitating meaningful conversations around pressing issues between and within town and gown; workshops, to assist in creating a space where our engaged scholars (and aspirational engaged scholars) can talk and learn from each other's experiences; and panels, where internationally recognized engaged scholars can be brought in to not only talk substantively and passionately about the value of liberal arts but also about their trials and tribulations as they negotiate doing engaged scholarship in an academy culture that privileges discovery-based research. For the college's part, we will begin in the fall to promote features of engagement in college communications; something we hope departments also do.

By the spring semester, departments will be expected to have begun reviewing and revising their codes to better reflect not just the spirit of engaged scholarship but also the reality of what is already stated in the Faculty Manual, specifically those elements highlighted above. It is hoped that each department will commitment to develop their own, discipline specific criteria

for the more holistic evaluation of faculty. This criteria may be informed by the “Six Categories of Assessment and Evaluation of Scholarship” (Glassick, et. al; see appendix). Framing the discussion in this way should help place engaged scholarship in a continuum with traditional research and teaching terms of quality and communities of practice.

The goal is to have revised codes in place for the start of the 2018-19 academic year. By the 2018-19 academic year, the college also hopes to have awards in place to recognize engaged scholarship. At that time we also expect to have our commitment to discovered-based *and* engaged scholarship communicated in faculty job postings and offer letters.

## Appendix: **Six Categories of Assessment and Evaluation of Scholarship (Glassick, et. al 1997)**

### **1. Clear Goals**

Does the scholar state the basic purposes of his or her work clearly? Does the scholar Clear Goals define objectives that are realistic and achievable? Does the scholar identify important questions in the field?

### **2. Adequate Preparation**

Does the scholar show an understanding of existing scholarship in the field? Does the scholar bring the necessary skills to his or her work? Does the scholar bring together the resources necessary to move the project forward?

### **3. Appropriate Methods**

Does the scholar use methods appropriate to the goals? Does the scholar apply effectively the methods selected? Does the scholar modify procedures in response to changing circumstances?

### **4. Significant Results**

Does the scholar achieve the goals? Does the scholar's work add consequentially to the field? Does the scholar's work open additional areas for further exploration?

### **5. Effective Presentation**

Does the scholar use a suitable style and effective organization to present his or her work? Does the scholar use appropriate forums for communicating work to its intended audiences? Does the scholar present his or her message with clarity and integrity?

### **6. Reflective Critique**

Does the scholar critically evaluate his or her own work? Does the scholar bring an appropriate breadth of evidence to his or her critique? Does the scholar use evaluation to improve the quality of future work?

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