

# Recommendations from Provost’s Advisory Subcommittee on Community Engaged Scholarship in Promotion & Tenure Processes

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## Advisory Subcommittee Members 2022

1. Sara Goodkind, School of Social Work, [sara.goodkind@pitt.edu](mailto:sara.goodkind@pitt.edu)
2. Patricia Isabel Documet, School of Public Health, [pdocumet@pitt.edu](mailto:pdocumet@pitt.edu)
3. Shannon Wanless, School of Education, [swanless@pitt.edu](mailto:swanless@pitt.edu)
4. Rosta Farzan, School of Computing and Information, [rfarzan@pitt.edu](mailto:rfarzan@pitt.edu)
5. Liz Miller, Pediatrics, [elizabeth.miller@pitt.edu](mailto:elizabeth.miller@pitt.edu)
6. Lina Dostilio, Office of Engagement and Community Affairs, [LDD20@pitt.edu](mailto:LDD20@pitt.edu)
7. Janet Freburger, [janet\\_freburger@pitt.edu](mailto:janet_freburger@pitt.edu)
8. Daniel Shaw, Psychology, [danielshaw@pitt.edu](mailto:danielshaw@pitt.edu)
9. Robin Kear, University Library System, [rlk25@pitt.edu](mailto:rlk25@pitt.edu)
10. Kris Kanthak, Dietrich School, Political Science, [kanthak@pitt.edu](mailto:kanthak@pitt.edu)

## Charge to the Subcommittee in February 2022

“...the Provost has requested that you participate in an ad hoc committee on addressing DEI and CES in promotion and tenure. The goal of the committee is to draft a university-wide policy that will formally acknowledge and reward DEI and CES work in Pitt’s tenure and promotion processes. The draft policy will be forwarded to the relevant faculty committees for approval.” -John Wallace

## Defining Community Engaged Scholarship

In 2020, the Scholarship Committee of the University of Pittsburgh Year of Engagement worked with the Office of the Provost to develop a definition of engaged scholarship: “*Engaged Scholarship seeks to discover new knowledge through activities that collaboratively generate, exchange, or apply academic*

*and community knowledge and practices through reciprocal partnerships among members of the University and members of the broader public. This often includes methods or approaches such as community-based participatory research (CBPR), engaged action research, and research-practice partnerships (RPPs), etc., and results in the public dissemination of new knowledge through academic publications, policy recommendations, technical reports, co-created exhibitions and creative pieces, and joint projects that benefit the community and the university.”<sup>1</sup>*

Not all faculty conduct community engaged scholarship, nor is it a requirement that they do so. The purpose of defining CES is to enable it to be counted alongside more traditional (in the academic sense) forms of scholarship towards tenure and promotion. Community engagement can be part of scholarship, teaching, and service, and should be counted and rewarded in all three categories. For the purpose of recognizing CES in tenure and promotion, this document focuses primarily on scholarship, acknowledging that some projects and activities cut across the three pillars of scholarship, teaching, and service.

Typically, within community engaged scholarship, a community is defined as a group that shares an area of geography (neighborhood, local, regional, national, or global), shares a common identity, shares a common experience, or shares a common area of concern or interest.

## **Context of Community Engaged Scholarship Tenure & Promotion Policies**

The practice of community and university partners working together to make discoveries, create, and solve societal problems is not new within American higher education. The roots of this work are found within the praxis of ethnic studies, within the work of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and minority-serving institutions, and in the frameworks and purposes set out in the Morrill, Hatch, and Smith-Lever Acts which created land grant universities and extension networks (e.g., translational research in the fields of agriculture and economic development). Peer-reviewed presentation and publication about engaged scholarship emerged in the 1980s and over the last forty years has proliferated within mainstream academic disciplinary association meetings, journals, and landmark publications about the purposes of higher education. Noting the rise of community-based participatory research in the health sciences, the national Community-Campus Partnerships for Health was founded in 1997 to support health-science based community-engaged scholars and their institutions. At the same time, in 1997, the National Science Foundation simplified its merit review criteria for scientific grants to be intellectual merit and broader impacts. The broader impacts metric assessed the degree to which proposed scientific projects contributed to achieving societal goals. Since the late 1990s, support for community-engaged scholarship can be found at a number of national agencies and philanthropies, including Annie E. Casey, Department of Defense, Department of Education, Department of Justice, Ford Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Institutes of Health, Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute, Rockefeller Foundation, and W. K. Kellogg Foundation.<sup>2</sup>

In 2006, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching - the body that classifies all accredited institutions of higher education in the United States - created an elective classification for community engagement. This classification provides a systematic and evidence-based framework that documents the degree to which various forms of community engagement (including engaged scholarship) have become rigorous and integrated practices advancing the institution's mission and its civic purpose. The diverse forms of community-engaged scholarship are accepted forms of scholarly work, lauded for their ability to produce immediately relevant benefits for communities and fulfilling the civic purpose of higher education.

However, adequate evaluation and reward for community engaged scholarship has lagged behind its implementation. Many universities have encouraged the practices of engaged scholarship but have not provided assurance that CES is valued commensurately to lone-principal investigator work, population

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.yearofengagement.pitt.edu/engaged-scholarship?>

<sup>2</sup> <https://rds.ucmerced.edu/sites/rds.ucmerced.edu/files/event/recces.pdf?>

level research, single-author books, or solitary-led creative works. Between 1996 and 2000, the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land Grant Universities identified the reforms necessary to recapture the public-serving mission of state and land grant higher education. Within the sections focused on community engagement, developing policies that enable the appropriate review of CES within promotion and tenure was cited as a necessary step for institutions that consider themselves engaged campuses. In 2008, the [Imagining America Tenure Team Initiative](#) (TTI) published its report on the integration of engaged scholarship within Review, Promotion, and Tenure policies. Later that year, documentation of promotion and tenure policies for CES was added as a foundational indicator within the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement Framework. Every few years various national bodies (Advancing Societal Impacts of Research, Academy of Community Engagement Scholarship) produce reports advocating for equitable evaluation of CES relative to other forms of scholarship and provide examples of how this has been done at research intensive institutions across the country.

Thus, the proliferation of practice, scholarship about CES, and merit review of CES are common among research universities that consider themselves engaged institutions. Certainly, the University of Pittsburgh considers itself to be such an institution. Featured in the 2020 and 2025 strategic plans, community engagement and engaged scholarship are focal areas of development for the university. Now, more than ever, Pitt embraces its identity as an anchor institution, serving as an asset and partner to the communities in which it is located. Its mission, producing knowledge for society's gain, is increasingly contextualized within partnerships and collaborations that are solving problems and advancing communities through co-created, collaborative forms of scholarship and creative activity. Our promotion and tenure policies need to reflect this emphasis.

## Guiding Principles of Community-Engaged Scholarship

These are guiding principles. In the following section on assessment, we operationalize them with details and examples.

- **CES requires meaningful, trusting, and sustained partnerships, which take time and capacity to develop.** This relationship work is an essential part of the scholarship-building process that incorporates community-based collaborators into all phases of research and creative processes.
- **CES must be mutual and reciprocal in benefits and responsibilities.** The effort that community engaged scholars make to ensure that benefits are equitably distributed among community partners and academics takes time and skill. In addition to traditional academic products, the research must also lead to products useful to the community partner and community more broadly. This process involves extra responsibilities for the scholar and their community-based collaborators that should be acknowledged.
- **CES requires holistic perspective and review.** Community engaged scholarship most often occurs in the context of a project that may have multiple processes, partnerships, products, and impacts. Assessing the products of CES separately from one another and from the larger context of the whole project may reduce and diminish their relevance, rigor, and holistic impact.
- **CES has impact within and beyond the academy.** Its community impacts are tangible, applied, and can occur at a variety of scales - neighborhood, locality, region, nation, global, community of interest or shared identity or experience.
- **CES stands on its own as a form of rigorous scholarship and takes many forms.** Impact, products, and assessment have their own unique kinds of rigorous evidence. CES looks different in different disciplines and spaces and involves diverse knowledge traditions, partners, sources of accountability, funding, and forms of dissemination.

# Suggestions for Assessing Community Engaged Scholarship

## Assessing the Relationship Development and Maintenance Process

“Engaged scholarship necessitates the formation and maintenance of effective partnerships, input and validation from multiple stakeholders, and the dissemination of the work in forms of value to both academic and community audiences.” (Blanchard & Furco, 2021, p. 15)<sup>3</sup>

There are different ways that a relationship between faculty and community partners can manifest, depending on the project and on the discipline. Below is a description of key aspects of CES relationship development processes, which should be documented in relationship-specific ways. Scholars should be instructed to integrate within the research & scholarship statement submitted for promotion a clear description and justification of the role of community partners, along with confirmation of their claims with an external letter from one or more community-based collaborators, if possible. These should include the following:

- Evidence of mutual goal setting among collaborators, time investment, and effort in developing the collaboration
- Evidence of ways community collaborators were involved in jointly developing research questions, research methods, and research materials
- Evidence of appropriate engagement of community collaborators in generating the budget, including engagement of community members as investigators
- Evidence of dissemination strategies that share the results and outcomes of the work among all interested parties, including publications and venues accessible to community members in addition to academic publications
- Evidence of appropriate crediting of community partner’s contributions to the research, including co-authorship
- Evidence of benefits to the public, the community partners, and/or other community members

## Assessing Products

“Distinction in public engagement for the granting of tenure [and promotion] must include scholarly products of public engagement, such as publication, dissemination, and broad impact on the community, applying the familiar standards of excellence and peer review. But public engagement work may involve additional forms of documentation, each of which are also evaluated for impact and collaborative skills. Such additional documentation may be different than for traditional disciplinary scholarship, but evaluation of these products is not held to lower standards.” (Blanchard & Furco, 2021, p. 13)<sup>4</sup>

In addition to traditional academic products,\* the evaluation committee should consider a broader range of products that are appropriate for the expanded array of audiences central to community engaged scholarship as well as products that drive change outside and inside the academy. Products associated with community-engaged scholarship have involved some degree of community input (up to and including co-production) prior to their release. The production of sole-authored products often conflicts with the principles of CES. Some non-exhaustive examples include:

- Public-facing products in a diversity of formats such as blogs, websites, multimedia materials, exhibitions, installations, murals, curriculum, policies and policy reports, place-making plans and zoning, or technical reports

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<sup>3</sup> Blanchard, L., & Furco, A. (2021). Faculty engaged scholarship: Setting standards and building conceptual clarity. East Lansing, MI: Academy of Community Engagement Scholarship. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.17615/0xj1-c495>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

- Translational products which demonstrate how academically informed discovery has been translated into community-based practice such as newly developed curricula, patents, new creative genres, or treatment protocols
- Translational products which demonstrate how community-informed discovery has been translated into academic practice such as newly developed theories, interventions, research protocols, or innovations in teaching
- Educational resources or learning materials that can be used by and replicated across diverse communities
- Published, open-access reports that are accessible to a breadth of readers and can be used to inform changes to systems and policies

\*Evaluation committees should instruct candidates to indicate products - both traditional peer-reviewed academic products as well as public-facing products - that are co-produced with community-based collaborators, including where within the authorship those collaborators are placed.

## Assessing Impact

CES is aimed at having impact within and beyond the academy, generally aiming to benefit diverse communities, from local to global. Assessing impact of CES should:

- Review faculty projects in a holistic fashion that also incorporate the ways they often contribute to teaching, scholarship, and service. This integration within projects is an innovative outcome of CES, and is distinct from the faculty member's more explicit contributions to service
- Require that community engaged scholars describe how their work reflects reciprocity and building trust with the communities they seek to impact when elucidating the impact of their work
- Ensure that impact is measured not only through traditional academic metrics (e.g., citations, impact factor of journal) but also through altmetrics, including readership of published records and other measures of attention, such as number of downloads, saves, views, traditional and social media mentions, and participation in public presentations
- Encourage community engaged scholars to describe how their work impacts the broader society: this may include changes to systems delivery, policy implementation, enhancing access for historically excluded communities, and increased public scientific literacy and public engagement with science and technology (also defined by the National Science Foundation as Broadening Impacts)
- Ensure that community engaged scholars do not neglect to describe their impact within the academy, including potential innovations in interdisciplinary and integrative research (including collaborative team science)

## Specific Recommendations

- Require academic units to develop policies for incorporating CES into tenure and promotion
  - Revise promotion and tenure guidelines to demonstrate that CES is valued commensurately to other forms of scholarship undertaken at the University of Pittsburgh
  - Revise promotion and tenure guidelines to account for the fact that it takes time and resources to appropriately build partnerships and conduct impactful community engaged scholarship. Thus, expectations around the number and timing of publications and other products should be adjusted for faculty conducting CES, and the emphasis when evaluating CES products should be on rigor, quality, and impact rather than number and timing.
  - Develop guidelines to specify that the rigor and quality of CES is dependent upon mutual benefit, sustainability, and impact within and beyond the academy.

- Create a system of holistic review for CES projects so that the diverse processes and products that a CES project yields can be understood in relationship to each other and the project's overall social and academic impacts.
  - Ensure that at least some external letter-writers or external reviewers for faculty who do CES are community engaged scholars themselves.
- Require academic units to disseminate their CES policies
  - To all new hires at the point of onboarding, demonstrating that community-engaged scholarship is valued and providing clear guidelines on how the rigor, quality, and impact of CES will be evaluated at the point of tenure and/or promotion review.
  - To external reviewers at the point at which they are asked to review a candidate, to clarify the University of Pittsburgh's expectations for community engaged scholars.
- Create university-level infrastructure
  - Create a university-level committee of promoted or tenured scholars who are versed in CES who can provide input on a CES dossier when there is not a critical mass of community engaged scholars within a school or department able to assess a colleague's CES.