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Community-engaged faculty activity: A resource guide for department chairs

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Community-Engaged Faculty Activity

A Resource for Department Chairs

Co-authored by: **Derek R. Miller and Lynn E. Pelco**

Fall 2023



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Disclaimer

This document was created by faculty and administrators at the University of Richmond to support community-engaged faculty work. Any suggestions this document provides do not represent official University policy or practice. Faculty and administrators with questions about official University policies or practices should consult with leaders in their departments and schools and read all related University policy documents.

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to share important and updated information about community engagement in higher education with department chairs and other academic leaders who seek to support community-engaged scholars and teachers. The document provides strategies and links to resources these leaders may use to support community engagement in their disciplines, departments, and schools. For chairs who themselves are community-engaged or who are experienced in mentoring community-engaged faculty, this document will introduce the latest best practices and strategies. For chairs who are new to their role of mentoring community-engaged faculty, this document serves as a primer and guide, offering foundational definitions and examples as well as links to helpful resources. Chairs are encouraged to use this information to build their own knowledge, promote discussion within their department, and use their professional judgment in implementing only those suggestions that fit the departmental and university contexts in which they work.

SECTION 1:

Why is Community Engagement in Higher Education Important?



Many, if not most, universities profess a public purpose in their mission and vision statements. For example, the University of Richmond’s vision statement indicates that “the University will be a leader in higher education, preparing students to contribute to, and succeed in, a complex world; producing knowledge to address the world’s problems; and modeling the way that colleges and universities can effectively meet the challenges of our time.” Nationwide, community engagement is gaining importance as a proven strategy for enacting universities’ public purpose.



Further Readings:

A Meta-Analysis

Celio, C., Durlak, J., Dymnicki, A. (2011). A meta-analysis of the impact of service-learning on students. Journal of Experiential Education, 34(2).

Faculty Diversity

Jalehah, A.R. (2016). Faculty diversity and tenure in higher education. Journal of Cultural Diversity, 23(2), 53-56.

Full Participation

Strum, S., Eastman, T., Saltmarsh, J. and Bush, A. (2011). Full participation: Building the architecture for diversity and community engagement in higher education, Imagining America, 17.

The Effects of CBL

Chittum, J.R., Enke, K.A.E., & Finley, A.P. (2022). The effects of community-based and civic engagement in higher education. American Association of Colleges and Universities

Supporting Inclusive Excellence

Miller, D., Dolson, T., Gale, S. and Howard, A. (2018). Supporting inclusive excellence through community-engaged scholarship and teaching. Bonner Center for Civic Engagement, University of Richmond, Richmond, VA.

Additionally, universities that value and support community-engaged teaching, research, and service benefit in two important ways. **First, community-engaged teaching deepens student learning.** Research has shown that, among other benefits, students who participate in high-quality community-engaged learning are more likely to graduate, report higher levels of satisfaction with their college experiences, and continue with community engagement after college (Celia, et al, 2011 and Chittum, et al, 2022).

Second, community engagement is a keystone strategy for recruiting and retaining a more diverse faculty.

Research indicates that to date, women and faculty of color are more likely than their white male colleagues to value and participate in community-engaged teaching and/or research. When a university’s policies and practices explicitly value and support community-engaged faculty work, that university is creating an inclusive culture that is more likely to recruit and retain a diverse faculty, which in turn supports student success (Jalehah, 2016; Miller et al, 2018; Strum, et al., 2011).

SECTION 2:

How is Community Engagement in Higher Education Defined?

Definitions for community engagement in the context of higher education differ across disciplines and institutions. The majority of these definitions emphasize a short list of important **key concepts that include: collaboration and partnership, the exchange of knowledge and/or resources (e.g., space, labor, funding, etc.), mutual benefit, and public good.**

For example, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, a leading national catalyst for innovation to improve higher education, defines community engagement as, “[T]he collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global): for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.”

At the University of Richmond, the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) in 2019 crafted advisory definitions of community-engaged faculty work. These definitions, which were created with faculty input, were created to generate dialogue as faculty consider ways to discuss, name, and reward community-engaged teaching, scholarship, and service. The important distinction between ‘community-engagement’ and ‘community outreach’ is emphasized and is shown below in the following quote from the letter. Since there are no official University definitions of community engagement, it is helpful if chairs and the scholars they are supporting have a shared understanding of what they mean by community engagement. **The CCE’s definitions provide one means for starting that conversation. But, we also encourage chairs and scholars to consider what other definitions, particularly within their disciplines, may be important to consider.**

Community engagement describes a spectrum of activities that occur in the context of a reciprocal collaboration between University students, faculty, and staff and partners in our larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources. The purpose of community engagement is to link University knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors in order to enrich curriculum, teaching and learning; enhance scholarship, research, and creative activity; prepare educated, engaged leaders and community members; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good. Not all university-related activities in a community may be best characterized as community engagement; some more accurately fit an outreach paradigm. Community outreach emphasizes the informed sharing of the University’s expertise, resources, and services with individuals, groups, organizations, and/or the public in general. The purpose of community outreach is to cultivate civic participation, to extend liberal arts learning to communities beyond campus, and to be a good neighbor.

*-Key Community Engagement Terms Letter (Jan 2019),
Bonner Center for Community Engagement, University of Richmond.*

Read the full letter here: [Key Community Engagement Terms Letter](#)



Terms and Definitions

Community-Based Learning

Community-based learning refers to a broad spectrum of curricular activity that connects students to communities for the purpose of deepening learning. Community-based learning can include a variety of modes, including but not limited to service-learning; collaborative projects with community partners; clinical education, student teaching, and internships; bringing community collaborators into the classroom; and study trips and immersive engagement with community experts. Across these modes, community-based learning activities further learning by: providing context for conceptual course content; providing an opportunity to apply course methods with an intent to deepen learning; and supporting critical thinking. Some community-based learning classes engage students in community activity as a component of the class; others integrate community engagement across the entire class. When community-based learning classes fulfill pedagogical and community needs in a context of partnership and reciprocity, they may be better termed community-engaged classes. Community-engaged classes require a deep level of commitment from faculty and from community partners, and encourage collaboration among faculty, students, and community members in order to generate new knowledge and further the learning of all involved.

Public Scholarship

Public scholarship is scholarly and/or other creative activity that emerges when faculty use their expertise in order to create new knowledge that serves a public good extending beyond the academic purpose of the work. Public scholarship encompasses different forms of making knowledge about, for, and with diverse publics and communities; the emphasis of public scholarship is on disseminating the work to new audiences and/or in new ways. When faculty engage their expertise with the expertise of community stakeholders in order to co-create new knowledge that serves a public good extending beyond the academic purpose of the work, it is called community-engaged scholarship. Through a coherent, purposeful sequence of activities, both public scholarship and community-engaged scholarship yield artifacts of public and intellectual value, invite peer collaboration and review from a broad group of relevant experts and are presented in a form that others can use, test, and build upon.

Community-Engaged Service

Community-engaged service is faculty activity relevant to a faculty member's profession and discipline that involves the exercise of the faculty member's professional knowledge or abilities, supports the University's mission, and contributes to a public purpose. Faculty may provide community-engaged service in a variety of ways, from authoring op-eds to providing leadership in or making contributions to community development activities. Community-engaged service differs from service to the university community or to one's professional community in that it is oriented towards community organizations or purposes. It differs from consulting in that the activity is not undertaken for financial gain.

SECTION 3:

How do Faculty Members Implement Community Engagement?

Community-engaged faculty members partner with off-campus organizations and members of the public in a variety of ways. In developing their community partnerships, **some scholars integrate their community engagement goals into a comprehensive whole that aligns with the public missions of their institutions.** By having teaching, service, research, and creative **activities as the ‘means’ to a public mission ‘end’ (rather than as the actual ‘ends’ in and of themselves), community-engaged scholars are helping their institutions enact their public missions.**

There are a number of resources currently being developed to help a scholar frame their teaching, research, and service in terms of the public mission and values of a university. One resource is the [Cultivating Pathways of Intellectual Leadership \(Cilano, 2020\)](#) framework developed in the College of Arts and Letters at Michigan State University. A second example from the Association of American Colleges and Universities ([Musil, 2015](#)) helps academic departments explore the public purposes of their discipline(s) – an important first step towards embracing a community engagement focus for faculty work. Musil (2015) provides departmental faculties with discussion prompts that can be used to facilitate conversations that explore the civic or public purposes of academic disciplines.

While a growing number of community-engaged faculty are integrating their teaching, research, and service activities into a comprehensive whole that prioritizes a public mission, **many scholars focus their community engagement activities within just one faculty activity – teaching, research, or service.** The Bonner Center for Civic Engagement provides definitions for each of these faculty activities (see Section 2). These definitions can serve as a starting point for creating shared language around a faculty member’s or department’s specific community-engaged work. Moreover, many disciplines have developed definitions for community-engaged faculty teaching, research, or service that may be useful.



Further Readings:

Civic Prompts

[Musil, C.M. \(2015\). Civic prompts: Making civic learning routine across the disciplines. Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges and Universities. ISBN: 978-0-9961404-1-6.](#)

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Jc_bcpqfgn](#)

[Cilano, C., Fritzsche, S., Hart-Davidson, B. & Long, C.P. \(2020\). Staying with trouble: Designing a values-enacted academy. LSE Impact Blog.](#)

SECTION 4:

**How Can I Equitably
Assess the Work of
Community-engaged
Faculty?**

One of the most important roles a department chair plays is supporting and guiding departmental faculty members through their university's tenure and promotion processes. For community-engaged faculty members, that support and guidance is even more critical because community engagement methodology includes components that may not be understood, recognized, or valued in the institution's existing faculty evaluation process.

Identical to other faculty scholars, community-engaged scholars are assessed on the impact and significance of their work as well as on the rigor of their theoretical approach and methodology. For example, this [evaluation criteria for the scholarship of engagement](#) includes criteria categories (i.e., theoretical context, methods, results, dissemination, and reflective critique) that apply equally well to both community-engaged scholarship and most other scholarship methodologies (*Clearinghouse and National Review Board, 2022*).

Too often, however, an institution's existing faculty assessment norms and common practices are not explicitly written and do not incorporate criteria that are inclusive of community engagement methodologies. Nevertheless, these unwritten norms and practices are implicitly understood and strongly shape the behavior of faculties and administrators alike.



Further Readings:

Evaluation Criteria for the Scholarship of Engagement

[Clearinghouse and National Review Board for the Scholarship of Engagement \(2002\). Evaluation criteria for the scholarship of engagement](#)

Community Partner Review

[Bonner Center for Civic Engagement \(n.d.\) Community partner review of community-engaged scholarship. University of Richmond, Richmond, VA.](#)

A number of universities are working to clarify promotion and tenure assessment policies and processes in specific ways so that they support, rather than hinder, community-engaged faculty work. These changes include:

- broadening the concept of scholarly impact to value local impact;
- making the peer review process more inclusive by involving and valuing community partners, public partners from outside academe, and disciplinary faculty who understand and utilize engaged scholarship methodologies; At the University of Richmond, the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement can help identify potential community experts to provide reviews and has developed a process for soliciting community partner feedback.
- valuing scholarly products and dissemination mechanisms beyond peer-reviewed journal articles and H-index rankings; and
- valuing multi-disciplinary products and joint-authorship as highly as single-discipline and sole-authored products.



The work of O’Meara and her colleagues provides more explanation about these recommended changes and examples from universities around the country.

- O’Meara, K. (2018). Accurately assessing engaged scholarship. Inside Higher Education, Aug 22, 2018.
- O’Meara, K., Eatman, T. & Petersen, S. (2015). Advancing engaged scholarship in promotion and tenure: A roadmap and call for reform. Liberal Education 101, no 3, 52-57.

SECTION 5:

**What Roles Can I Play
in Supporting
Community-Engaged
Faculty?**



As with all innovative scholarly methodologies, community-engaged teaching, research, and service involve risks. Department chairs are in an ideal space to share what those risks at their institution and department may look like, while also having access to a number of concrete strategies and levers of influence to support individual faculty members, their department, and the university in promoting community engagement. O'Meara, Lounder & Hodges (2013) describe these strategies as uses of 'episodic power' (e.g., skilled social actions, organizational influence).

Below is a list of key touch points, inspired by the work of O'Meara and her colleagues, where department chairs and other university leaders can exercise episodic power to support community engagement. We invite you to consider these within the specific context of your department, school, discipline, and university context and identify which, if any, of these strategies may be helpful in supporting the faculty within your department.

As a department chair, you have significant knowledge and experience with the various policies related to faculty life, including those targeted toward tenure and promotion. **This experience can help junior faculty identify resources as they explore a non-traditional faculty route rooted in community engagement.**

Help to raise the community engagement profile in your department and on campus.

- Discover and publicly recognize the community engagement activities already happening in your department.
- The important key concepts of community engagement include collaboration and partnership, the exchange of knowledge and/or resources (e.g., space, labor, funding, etc.), mutual benefit, and the public good. Chairs may want to create opportunities to discuss how these key concepts are enacted within disciplinary faculty work and to compare these approaches and how they are described with the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement's community engagement definitions provided in Section 2 above.
- Lead department faculty members in discussions of the role of community engagement in their discipline(s) and in the civic or public purposes of their discipline(s) (Musil, C.M., 2015).
- Promote community engagement on your departmental web page and through other marketing outlets.

Offer encouragement and advocacy to community-engaged faculty members.

- Deepen your understanding of the community-engaged teaching, research and service activities of the faculty in your department and school.
- Connect community-engaged scholars in your department with others on campus doing similar or overlapping work.
- Speak publicly about the work of community-engaged scholars in your department, particularly within the department and to University leaders.
- Encourage and support faculty members, particularly pre-tenure faculty members, in identifying resources to support their community-engaged teaching, research, and service.

Consider ways in which you can use existing funds to support or spotlight community-engaged scholarship in the discipline.

- Invite accomplished community-engaged researchers in the discipline to give talks to the departmental faculty.
- Encourage faculty to attend conferences focused on community engagement. The Bonner Center for Civic Engagement also has funds to send faculty to such conferences.
- Consider creating awards to honor students who have been particularly community-engaged.

Connect community-engaged scholars with available resources that exist on campus, in the community and in the discipline.

- The Bonner Center for Civic Engagement’s website has numerous resources for faculty including research funds, grants to support community-based learning, and funds to send faculty to conferences related to community engagement.
- Meet with Bonner Center staff to deepen your understanding of the supports available to your faculty and department.
- Learn who the community-engaged leaders on campus are, including other department chairs, and arrange to meet and talk with them.

Include community engagement as part of conversations around campus surrounding faculty life.

- In discussions about merit pay consider how community engagement may be recognized.
- In discussions about annual review letters and promotion and tenure criteria, consider what this means from the lens of a community-engaged faculty.
- Encourage and support faculty members, particularly pre-tenure members, in identifying resources to support their community-engaged teaching, research, and service.



Further Readings:

The Use of Episodic Power

O’Meara, K., Louder, A., & Hodges, A. (2013). University leaders’ use of episodic power to support faculty community engagement, Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning, 19(2), 5-20.



A Meta-Analysis

Celio, C., Durlak, J., Dymnicki, A. (2011). A meta-analysis of the impact of service-learning on students. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 34(2).



The Effects of CBL

Chittum, J.R., Enke, K.A.E., & Finley, A.P. (2022). The effects off community-based and civic engagement in higher education. *American Association of Colleges and Universities*.



Supporting Inclusive Excellence

Miller, D., Dolson, T., Gale, S. and Howard, A. (2018). Supporting inclusive excellence through community-engaged scholarship and teaching. *Bonner Center for Civic Engagement, University of Richmond, Richmond, VA*.



Full Participation

Strum, S., Eastman, T., Saltmarsh, J. and Bush, A. (2011). Full participation: Building the architecture for diversity and community engagement in higher education, *Imagining America*, 17.



Civic Learning Routine

Musil, C.M. (2015). *Civic prompts: Making civic learning routine across the disciplines*. Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges and Universities. ISBN: 978-0-9961404-1-6.



Staying with Trouble

Cilano, C., Fritzsche, S., Hart-Davidson, B. & Long, C.P. (2020). Staying with trouble: Designing a values-enacted academy. *LSE Impact Blog*.



Accurately Assessing

O'Meara, K. (2018). Accurately assessing engaged scholarship. *Inside Higher Education*, Aug 22, 2018.



Advancing Engaged Scholarship

O'Meara, K., Eatman, T. & Petersen, S. (2015). Advancing engaged scholarship in promotion and tenure: A roadmap and call for reform. *Liberal Education* 101, no 3, 52-57.



Key Community Engagement Terms Letter

Gale, S. and Howard, A. (2019). *Key Community Engagement Terms Letter*. *Bonner Center for Civic Engagement, University of Richmond, Richmond, VA*

Conclusion

The University of Richmond's stated vision aligns with the goals of community engagement, and this document provides department chairs and other University leaders with strategies and resources for deepening their understanding of community engagement methodology and for encouraging community-engaged faculty work within their departments, schools, and at the University.





Bonner Center for
Civic Engagement