

Laying a Solid Foundation for Institutionalizing the Scholarship of Engagement in a Research Intensive University

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Issue: The scholarship of engagement model of making discoveries and reporting findings differs from the traditional research model. Authentic engagement occurs when faculty, staff, and students use an integrated learning, discovery, and engagement process and work with local stakeholders to collaboratively address a technical or societal issue. By applying research-based strategies, faculty, staff, students, and stakeholders learn together what works most effectively, then evaluate outcomes and track societal impacts. Discovery of new knowledge results from collaboratively learning about actions that effectively address the problems and issues identified. “Scholarship results when these findings are reported, evaluated by peers, and then published and disseminated widely to inform future theory, practice, and public policy.” (Integrating Learning, Discovery, and Engagement through the Scholarship of Engagement: Report of the Scholarship of Engagement Task Force, NC State University, 2010).

Often times, a very narrow definition of scholarship is pervasive in many research intensive institutions. Some institutions equate scholarship with basic research only (discovery) while others include applied research as long as it mirrors basic research. In research intensive universities that are also land-grant, often scholarship is viewed broadly but evaluated narrowly. Many times recognition and reward systems create a definite hierarchy with basic and applied research at the top, research related to teaching somewhere in the middle, and the scholarship of engagement at the bottom. As a result, engaged scholarship is seen as an “add on” by many faculty because they feel/know they will not get “credit” for it during annual performance reviews, promotion and tenure decisions, etc. Therefore, some faculty simply opt out totally, others peripherally engage in outreach and not engagement, and a small few have sustained scholarship of engagement activities that they are passionate about.

What has been done: As part of the FSLI project, I served on the Scholarship of Engagement Task Force that developed the report, *Integrating Learning, Discovery, and Engagement through the Scholarship of Engagement*. I extensively reviewed the literature to develop a *Template for Documenting the Scholarship of Engagement at NC State University (NCSU)*. The template helps faculty show how their engagement work meets the: 1) National Review Board for the Scholarship of Engagement Standards which was developed to assess and evaluate engaged scholarship; and 2) Extension Committee on Organization and Policy Excellence in Extension Task Force criteria to guide extension scholars and institutions. Also, the NCSU Vice Provost for Faculty Development provides leadership to faculty orientation, developing and updating the Tenure and Promotion (T&P) Guidelines, holding information sessions for faculty on T&P, and other aspects of faculty development. The Vice Provost for Faculty Development incorporated the template into the official T&P Guidelines for NC State. In addition to being in the guidelines, the template is shared during T&P trainings and information sessions. I also co-lead the subcommittee that developed the Scholarship of Engagement Institutional Outcomes, Performance Indicators, and Location of Assessment. This is the metric by which NC State will judge how we are supporting, recognizing, and sustaining engaged scholarship in the years to come. In addition, as part of the Task Force team, I presented the report to the university community. For example, I was a part of the team that met with several Department Heads to discuss potential barriers, opportunities, and strategies for implementing the Task Force recommendations.

While quite a bit of progress has been made, there remains much work to do. A cultural shift within any organization is never easy. Scholarship of Engagement advocates are unwavering in our belief that in a land-grant institution in particular, engagement scholarship should be elevated to the level of the scholarship of research. We are committed to continue to work towards that aim.

How has your project been aided by your FSLI experience?

Given my experiences in FSLI over the past two years, I understood the importance of leaders in the area of engagement being able to:

- Redesign or develop new processes, procedures, and products to increase organizational effectiveness in carrying out and documenting engagement work.
- Lead subcommittees/teams of diverse individuals at different levels within the organization, as well as focusing and building that team into a productive and cohesive group.
- Use communication, influence, training and development, and mutual respect to motivate individuals within the organization to strengthen their community engagement work for more impact on the community even though more work on the front end may be required of them.
- Build relationships internally at all levels within the institution.
- Articulate a clear and concise message on engagement to key persons at different levels within the institution that will resonate based on their priorities for the university.
- Expect resistance to change and manage it as best they can with timely communication, transparency, and involvement so that they hear from as many voices as possible to help further shape implementation of the changes around the scholarship of engagement.

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