Higher Education Forum:
University Reward Structures and the Homogenization of Scholarship

March 3, 2017

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Life in higher education has changed considerably over the past two decades. In their book The Slow Professor: Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy, authors Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber (2016) describe these changes as the product of a new “corporate university” model where “power is transferred from faculty to managers, economic justifications dominate, and the familiar ‘bottom line’ eclipses pedagogical and intellectual concerns” (p. 77). The corporate mentality has had a number of implications that faculty must navigate, including shifting expectations around research and scholarship. Questions that many art educators in higher education face include: What counts as research? What counts for scholarly activity? How are pedagogical innovations valued? How does the tenure track process shape the choices in scholarly activity that art educators undertake? What is the responsibility of university faculty to the larger community?

The Higher Education Division invites members to submit abstracts on the subject of university reward structures and its impacts on scholarship. Topics can include, but are not limited to, historical examinations of how art educator’s research has evolved in relation to the rise of the corporate university; theorizations for what constitutes scholarship and a scholar identity in the 21st century neoliberal model of education; contextualized narratives of compliance, resistance, and innovation; and theoretically rich case studies of practice.

Universities often identify civic values and practices as core to their educational mission and curricula. Increasingly civic values and practices are being investigated, studied, and interrogated through “public” or “engaged” scholarship/creative activity.

My remarks will focus on definitions of engaged or public scholarship/creative activity and the ways in which such work is being cultivated and recognized within the promotion and tenure process at the University of Oregon (UO). I will speak to the creation of promotion and tenure guidelines supporting such scholarship/creative activity. Associated with the promotion and tenure process at many universities, including the UO, is a peer review requirement. Public or engaged scholarship does not always lend itself to the conventional peer review process. For this reason, I will also speak to an internal to the UO peer review adjudication process that can be used to evaluate public or engaged scholarship/creative activity not easily translatable to traditional peer review.

I will conclude with recommendations for the field of Art Education that support members, working within higher education, engaged in public or engaged scholarship/creative activity.
The (Un)known Risks of Public Scholarship at UT Arlington

Amanda Alexander
University of Texas Arlington

Having worked as a 2013 Faculty Fellow and a 2014 Faculty Scholar for the UT Arlington’s Center for Community Service Learning, I learned a considerable amount about formalizing research dealing with service-learning, community outreach and engagement, and civic responsibility. While engaging my students in the methods and strategies that I was learning, I was also familiarizing myself with other disciplines trying to incorporate service-learning into their courses. For many in the hard sciences, they enjoyed the idea of service-learning as a teaching strategy but would not touch it as a methodology for research. The overwhelming comment from faculty in engineering, nursing, psychology, and others was that it would derail their chances for tenure. While learning about faculty’s concerns, I had been conducting research and publishing it, and although in public scholarship the research was considered valuable, I was starting to have doubts about my tenure possibilities by going down this road.

At the 2014 Gulf South Summit, I met Timothy Eatman, former Director for Research of Imaging America. Through a discussion with him about my concerns with engaging deeper into public scholarship, he provided me with a copy of Scholarship in Public: Knowledge Creation and Tenure Policy in the Engaged University authored by Eatman and Ellison in 2008. The document was written for faculty to form “implementation groups” and use to begin discussions on campuses about how and why public scholarship was important. It outlined a summary of recommendations. There are twelve recommendations total, and I am including six here:

1. Define public scholarly and creative work
2. Develop policy based on a continuum of scholarship
3. Recognize the excellence of work that connects domains of knowledge
4. Expand what counts
5. Document what counts
6. Present what counts: use portfolios

The document was a useful tool for my discussions with UT Arlington’s Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and others until we hired a new President for the university. Although the President is consistent about his messaging in regard to community development, networking, and teaching and learning, he has yet to take Eatman and Ellison’s work into account. UT Arlington’s new strategic plan encompasses many aspects of community engagement with no mention of public scholarship being important or outlining new policies for the university’s handbook of policies/procedures.

Currently, I am up for tenure, and the “risks” that I have taken by engaging in public scholarship are unknown. With no policy valuing public scholarship outlined at UT Arlington, it is difficult to know how the tenure committees, Provost, and President will evaluate my research.
Scholarly Growth and Research at “Striving” Universities

Amy Pfeiler-Wunder
Kutztown University

The expectations for tenure and promotion center on a robust engagement in scholarly growth/research, teaching and service. Depending on the university structure, the hierarchy of expectations varies. This becomes a balancing act as new faculty navigate a multitude of duties. Research institutions emphasize research, a strong grant/funding base, and even a number of expected yearly publications. Teaching expectations are often less with faculty responsible for only one to two courses per semester. At a teaching focused school, expectations are on service and high teaching evaluations. Faculty often teach three or four courses per semester. Drawing from my own experience of teaching at a four-four institution, I share the challenges of navigating my heavy teaching load while also establishing a scholarly record. One’s habitus, or where they studied, also manifests itself as different capital within the institution. For example, if one studied at research institution during their doctoral work but working at a teaching focused school, they may face challenges to meet the university’s expectation of strong teaching evaluations with a desire to conduct research.

In an age with increased concern over funding and enrollment, institutions often seek developing a more robust research culture within their schools. These “striving” universities must then negotiate their own institutional script to be research centered while staying true to their original mission. Faculty must then navigate the university’s identity with their professional identity which is also impacted by gender, race, and class.

How then does one’s own professional identity match or resist the university’s identity as faculty navigate tenure/promotion? I will discuss how faculty operationalize, negotiate or resist the university’s new identity on the micro-level (Gonzalez 2014). Operationalizing involves coding and comparing one’s productivity against the institutionalized script. For example, if a university pushes for a new focus on undergraduate research, faculty might then pursue this as a professional goal in order to match the university’s expectations. They may be hesitant of pursuing their own research goals for fear of risking tenure. If the institution was historically teaching focused, faculty may try and negotiate the university’s new identity by focusing on research while also holding back some capital for their own teaching. Other faculty may completely resist the university’s focus on research, deciding to maintain the university’s original mission of teaching. Within these sites of navigation, tensions arise between one’s role in the university and their field of study while also obtaining tenure. Simultaneously, faculty may be balancing department and college expectations that differ from the university.

This has been an ongoing challenge at Kutztown University as administration see scholarly growth tied to research and the number of published articles. According to the contract, scholarly growth includes such things (with no hierarchy established) as designing distance education courses, presenting scholarly papers, presenting on panels, editorial reviews on journals, along with conducting and publishing research. The immediate visibility of providing service vs. conducting research can also matter. For example, faculty often take on service work because their presence on committees shows an immediate engagement.
in university life. One’s gender, race and class also can have profound impact on navigating the landscape of university expectations. For example, research indicates the difficulty of women in academia to establish themselves as researchers due to the demands of home life. Faculty who are first generation college graduates may also maneuver between the social and cultural capital of the institution based on class structure.

I will conclude with recommendations on how to navigate the institution’s script with one’s own professional identity. I also invite participants to share their own stories of traversing the landscape of their habitus within institutional scripts.
Negotiating Institutional vs Individual Identity

Ross Schlemmer
Southern Connecticut State University

Much as the art teachers we train, as artists, researchers, and teachers in higher education, we need to be strong advocates for the field. Quite literally, my first Dean (during my campus interview) said to me, “I have no idea what it is you do?” Equally frustrating was that he didn’t want an answer either. At this, and many other institutions, art education programs exist as a minority in which even many other art faculty are not as aware of its scholarly function. While this often creates barriers, it can equally present opportunities, when you have department chairs, deans, and others that are willing to listen.

As someone who participates in public scholarship, my identity (and my survival) is contingent upon bridging the gap between individual and institutional identity as I navigate the shifting expectations regarding research and scholarship. Thus I continue advocate for the type of work that I do, and at the same time try to conform to (or adjust) the institutional demands of my profession. When you are in a position—as I am now—in which people will listen, it becomes easier to demonstrate the inherent value in your scholarship, particularly with community arts and through more socially engaged perspectives.

Many categories of scholarship—particularly within the arts—are becoming more open and ambiguous. Tenure guidelines look for such things as ‘creative activity.’ While there has always been the strategy to integrate ‘traditional’ research practices into socially engaged work, for many of us who works with communities, it has become easier to blur the distinction between art, research, teaching. And during this current wave of financial uncertainty, more colleges and universities ‘value’ grants over conventional scholarship, again, particularly as they begin to embrace the university’s role within the larger community.

I am also in an institution that favors a more ‘bottom up’ approach, in that they tend to value a faculty member’s colleagues and department chair’s assertions as to what constitutes ‘scholarship’ in their field. This presents another real opportunity to demonstrate ‘value.’ This positionality can be enhanced by looking for other precedents in the field; this is a regular feature of conversations with my colleagues (such as Amanda Alexander) who are a bit further along on the tenure and promotion track than I am.

There are larger institutional bodies, such as Imagining America, that have long advocated for public scholarship. We have been very fortunate to have such leaders in our own field such as Doug Blandy, who not only has changed the tenure and promotion requirements at the University of Oregon, but who has been a tireless advocate for the field through his work with the NAEA Research Commission as an advocate for public scholarship. Consequently, I continue to be encouraged as the field of art education continues to defy convention, and reinvent itself as a means to resist the homogenation of scholarship within higher education.