The Scholarship of Engagement

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<u>Scholarship of Engagement Defined</u>

The National Review Board for the Scholarship of Engagement defines the scholarship of engagement as that which "engages faculty in academically relevant work that simultaneously meets campus mission and goals as well as community needs. Engagement is a scholarly agenda that incorporates community issues and which can be within or integrative across teaching research and service. In this definition, community is broadly defined to include audiences external to the campus that are part of a collaborative process to contribute to the public good." (retrieved from **http://schoe.coe.uga.edu**).

This definition expands upon Boyer's (1996) earlier definition for the Scholarship of Engagement as "connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic and ethical problems" (pg 11). The engagement, through a sequence of activities, "yields artifacts of public and intellectual value" (Elison & Eatman, 2008, pp iv).

Michigan State University (MSU) has been a leader in the movement towards a scholarship of engagement and has differentiated engaged teaching, research and service.

a) Engaged teaching occurs when *credit bearing learning opportunities* are presented to students in online and community-based settings to address *community questions*.
b) Engaged research occurs when collaborative college-community partnerships are used to address community problems or questions and results *are reported back or "owned" by the community.*
c) Engaged service occurs when college *faculty, staff and/or students are involved in community based efforts* to address community generated concerns, questions or problems.

From this perspective, engagement efforts are viewed as scholarly activities. Work is tied to the faculty area of academic expertise, makes a contribution to the public good and, has the capacity to show a demonstrated impact through assessment of outcomes. Outcomes specifically are seen via generated artifacts of the engagement. These artifacts can demonstrate a continuum of engagement to include the generation of new knowledge related to community challenges, a potential change in methods to address those challenges and ultimately a rise in the public good.

The scholarship of engagement is gaining traction at colleges and universities challenging institutions to review their evaluation criteria for tenure and promotion and to consider artifacts of public and intellectual value. The Imagining America consortium has been encouraging colleges to avoid hierarchal value setting and to make artifacts meaningful across disciplines (Elison & Eatman, 2008).

At Nazareth College, there is a strong emphasis on civic engagement and many faculty contribute their time to the community. For that reason, it is useful to distinguish engaged scholarship from community service and service learning. In community service, the focus is on providing a service (e.g. serving food at a homeless shelter, providing therapy to an underserved population, building houses in storm destroyed communities). In service learning, the activity involves students in the community with a primary emphasis on student learning and student learning outcomes, in short it is intentional, active and connected to the curriculum. In engaged scholarship, the focus is on collaborating and partnering with members or organization in the community to address community questions, problems or concerns for the public good.

Some scholarly activities may combine elements of service and scholarship such as when a new community program is developed (the artifact) and students or faculty are involved in implementing the program through a service learning project. Following the CIC/Committee on Engagement (2005) draft, engagement is seen as a scholarly act of bringing the college and the community together such that it generates an artifact that is useful to the community. This CIC report includes excellent exemplars of engaged scholarship.

In the table below, Barker (2004) describes a "taxonomy" of five distinct practices of engaged scholarship.

Table 1: A taxonomy based on five practices of engaged scholarship

Practice	Problems Addressed	Artifacts/Methods
Public scholarship	Complex "public", problems requiring deliberation	Face to face, open forums
Participatory research	Participatory democracy	Face to face collaboration with specific publics
Community partnership	Social change, structural transformation	Collaboration with intermediary groups
Public information networks	Problems of networking, communication	Databases of public resources
Civic literary scholarship	Enhancing public discourse	Communication with general public

These five practices reflect the core ideas that engaged scholarship must:
   a) Relate to a public problem.
   b) Be reciprocal and collaborative with the "public".
   c) Address problems that are broadly public in nature.

d) Extend the boundaries of discipline-specific knowledge.
e) Require the faculty to demonstrate a leadership role.
f) Focus in increasing public knowledge.
g) Involve discovery, integration, and application of knowledge.

Evaluation Criteria for the Scholarship of Engagement

The National Review Board of the scholarship of engagement has defined a set of assessment and evaluation criteria for such scholarship. It is important to note that the criteria recommended for judging the quality of publicly engaged scholarship will not differ fundamentally from those used to judge traditional scholarship. A faculty member should address each of the questions listed below in tenure and promotion portfolios to provide evidence of engaged scholarship.

Goals/Questions

- Does the scholar state the basic purpose of the work and its value for public good?
- Is there an "academic fit" with the scholar's role, departmental and college mission?
- Does the scholar define objectives that are realistic and achievable?
- Does the scholar identify intellectual and significant questions in the discipline and in the community?

Context of theory, literature, "best practices"

- Does the scholar show an understanding of relevant existing scholarship?
- Does the scholar bring the necessary skills to the collaboration?
- Does the scholar make significant contributions to the work?
- Is the work intellectually compelling?

Methods

- Does the scholar use methods appropriate to the goals, questions and context of the work?
- Does the scholar describe rationale for election of methods in relation to context and issue?
- Does the scholar apply effectively the methods selected?
- Does the scholar modify procedures in response to changing circumstances?

Results

- Does the scholar achieve the goals?
- Does the scholar's work add consequentially to the discipline and to the community?
- Does the scholar's work open additional areas for further exploration and collaboration?
- Does the scholar's work achieve impact or change? Are those outcomes evaluated and by whom?
- Does the scholar's work make a contribution consistent with the purpose and target of the work over a period of time?

Communication/Dissemination

- Does the scholar use a suitable style and effective organization to present the work?