

Promoting an Inclusive View of Scholarship

Universities in the United States and around the world today are experiencing an unprecedented challenge to the formula for success that has driven our actions since the Second World War.

President Ann Weaver Hart
"The Risk to Blossom," November 30, 2012

In her Inaugural Address, President Hart called upon the university community to expand our collaborations with business and community partners. She followed up with a second "call to action" to invite faculty to reassess our traditional conceptions of research. She cited Ernest Boyer's four-fold conception of scholarship from *Scholarship Reconsidered* – discovery, integration, application and teaching – as a potential model, and invited us to consider how we might to give more weight to "integration and application, as well as basic discovery and creative work," in our "reward system for faculty, specifically including promotion and tenure provisions." In short, President Hart has called for a more inclusive view of scholarship.¹

Supporting a more inclusive view of scholarship will require that we embrace what Boyer has termed "the scholarship of engagement," a commitment to outreach, community and business partnerships, and translational research. However, it is not enough to simply embrace "the scholarship of engagement," we must create an institutional infrastructure that encourages and rewards its pursuit. Toward that end, we will need to revise our promotion and tenure requirements to better support our longstanding emphasis on interdisciplinary collaborations and encourage stronger partnerships with community groups, nonprofits, agencies, and businesses.²

To answer the President's "call to action," we suggest continuing and expanding on the College Conversations on Promotion first undertaken in 2011.³ Through these conversations over the spring semester, we will invite faculty to consider the President's call to reassess the weight that our promotion provisions give to applied and integrative forms of research, including patents, commercialization activities, and other collaborations with business and community partners. Input will also be gathered from deans, department heads, and faculty who serve on departmental and college P&T committees. Chair of the Faculty Wanda Howell and Associate Provost Tom Miller will then work with APPC to consider drafting a revision of our university P&T criteria to bring back to the Faculty Senate before the summer break.

Currently the only statement describing our university's promotion and tenure criteria is a single sentence in UHAP: "Promotion and tenure require excellent performance and the promise of continued excellence in teaching, research and service" (UHAP 3.11.02). In order to provide a starting point for deliberations, this statement could be expanded along the lines set out in the President's Inaugural Address, other statements on our "Inclusive view of scholarship," and P&T criteria at peer institutions:

Promotion and tenure require excellent performance and the promise of continued excellence in 1) teaching, 2) service, and 3) research, creative work, and scholarship. The University values an inclusive view of scholarship in the recognition that knowledge is acquired and advanced through discovery, integration, application, and teaching. Given this perspective, promotion and tenure reviews, as detailed in the criteria of individual departments and colleges, will recognize original research contributions in peer-reviewed publications as well as integrative and applied forms of scholarship that involve cross-cutting collaborations with business and community partners, including translational research, commercialization activities, and patents.

¹ This “inclusive view of scholarship” (in terms that parallel Boyer’s four categories) is already manifest in our existing sabbatical policy:

The University prizes an inclusive view of scholarship with the recognition that knowledge is acquired and advanced through research, synthesis, practice, and teaching. Given this philosophy, sabbatical leaves are to be granted to further any of the following objectives: research and publication, teaching improvement (including the creation of teaching materials such as new textbooks, software, multimedia materials, or casebooks), intensive public service clearly related to the applicant's expertise, and integration and interpretation of existing knowledge into larger interdisciplinary frameworks. (University Handbook for Appointed Personnel 8.03.02)

² We are not alone in considering these kinds of reforms. Several of our peer institutions have revised their tenure processes to give broader emphasis to “the scholarship of engagement,” and a number of organizations have been founded to advance these reforms, most notably the Research University Civic Engagement Network and Michigan State’s National Collaborative for the Study of University Engagement (NCSUE).

The Mission Statement of the Research University Civic Engagement Network: *Most universities were founded with a civic purpose. They have a fundamental obligation to apply their skills, resources, and energy to address the most challenging issues in society. Research universities have a special role to play. Through scholarship that combines rigorous academic standards with community collaboration, broadly defined, research universities can deepen our understanding of issues and develop practical solutions that will make a difference. Through teaching that combines deep understanding of issues with engagement in community and global problem solving, they can give students the knowledge, analytical skills, and civic disposition required to address our greatest challenges.*

³ These College Conversations on Promotion engaged over two hundred faculty in a series of university-wide forums to discuss how well our tenure and promotion criteria recognize translational research and collaborations with business and community partners. These dialogues led to revisions in our promotion procedures that were undertaken in collaboration with the Academic Personnel Policies Committee (APPC) of the Faculty Senate.