

PERSISTENCE AND PROLIFERATION: INTEGRATING COMMUNITY-ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP LANGUAGE INTO 59 DEPARTMENTS, SEVEN UNITS, AND ONE UNIVERSITY'S ACADEMIC PROMOTION AND TENURE POLICIES

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Abstract

Choosing how to recognize community-engaged scholarship in promotion and tenure policies so that it is assessed accurately and fairly remains a relatively new and ongoing challenge for institutions of higher education. This case study examines how one US research university integrated text to recognize community-engaged scholarship across all levels of policy, including university, unit, and department. The terms used within and across policies reveal that while some terms were perpetuated across policies, many more terms proliferated across policies. Using organizational change and signaling theories, analysis raises questions and insights regarding the use of both specificity and ambiguity when choosing and defining terms and the use of terms across faculty roles of teaching, research/creative activity, and service to signal and address legitimacy of community-engaged scholarship within a larger context of institutional values.

Introduction

The inclusion of community engagement in promotion and tenure guidelines is widely believed to be a keystone indicator that an institution's faculty has accepted community engagement as a form of legitimate and valued academic work (Saltmarsh et al., 2009). The argument is that policies provide guidelines for evaluating faculty work and, perhaps even more importantly, project important signals about the legitimacy and value of various roles and forms of faculty work and, hence, one's fit as a member of an institution (Connelly et al., 2011; Spence, 1973; Spence, 2002). Promotion and tenure policies are both technical documents that outline the scope of faculty work and how they are to be evaluated, and political artifacts that touch on faculty culture and institutional

identity. Signals sent by promotion and tenure policies are especially salient and important for community-engaged faculty who tend to be especially attuned to institutional signals about the value and legitimacy of their type of scholarship and scholarly identity (O'Meara et al., 2013). In many cases, promotion and tenure remain the strongest barrier for community-engaged scholars as they feel their work is either undervalued, miscategorized, or dismissed completely (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010).

Even as colleges and universities are working to change their guidelines to reflect more diverse scholars and forms of scholarship (Saltmarsh et al., 2009), little is understood about the kinds of textual changes that are taking place or are needed in the policy. What terms are used and how are they conceptualized, framed, and defined? How is community-engaged scholarship recognized in policy across faculty's roles of teaching, research, and service? Ultimately, the question is: What language might be written into policy that would lead to faculty who claim a community-engaged scholarly identity to have their scholarship validated and allow for a full, fair, and equitable review?

Our study joins two others that examine promotion and tenure policies across multiple institutions in order to map the text and descriptively analyze the language used to describe community engagement or other public-facing dimensions of faculty work. Alperin et al. (2019) conducted a review of documents describing promotion and tenure policy and process across 129 higher education institutions across Canada and the United States to understand how "public dimensions" (p. 1) of faculty work are valued in promotion and tenure. They found that the outputs and metrics tend to reward traditional conceptions of research in which faculty work is targeted toward academic audiences. Wendling and Besing (2019) conducted an exploratory study mapping the presence and distribution of community-engagement terms within and across university-level promotion and tenure policies at four institutions of higher education in the United States, including at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), the case study presented here. Comparing the four institutions, they discovered that more so than the other institutions, UNCG integrated community-engagement terms persistently across the teaching, research, and service "buckets," and they found "collab" and "community engagement" terms in each role. The authors concluded this shows "intentional decisions about how and where (in which faculty roles) the institution will value certain work" (p. 30).

This study also extends previous and current scholarship focused on UNCG's community engagement, which were written from an insider perspective, as the lead author wrote from her scholar-administrator identity at UNCG (Janke, 2019a, 2019b). The scholarship on UNCG covers a range of issues, including faculty experiences as community-engaged scholars (Hayes & Janke, 2010); institutional context and drivers for the integration of community engagement into promotion and tenure policies (Brady & Janke, 2011); the development of campus-wide workshops to support school and department policy revisions and lessons learned about faculty concerns to be addressed (Janke et al., 2016); how community-engaged scholarship is structured and supported within a school of health and human sciences (Janke et al., 2020); the ways CES was described, if not defined, in promotion and tenure policy (Janke et al., 2023); and the perceptions of community-engaged scholars choosing to come to and stay at the university based on their sense of individual-institutional alignment (Ward et al., 2023).

This case study delves deeply into the language used within and across 67 promotion and tenure policy documents at a single institution, UNCG. As part of a larger study that examined UNCG's promotion and tenure policies more broadly, this study maps the many different terms used to describe community engagement and other public dimensions of faculty work, as well as the distribution of those terms within policies across faculty roles and across policy levels from university to school to department.

Research Questions

The following questions guided our study: (1) What terms do schools and departments use to describe aspects of public service and community-engaged scholarship?, and (2) How, if at all, are community-engaged scholarship-related terms integrated into the three main areas of faculty work: teaching, research and creative activity, and service? Secondary to these questions, we wanted to know how terms were distributed across policy levels from university to school to department. Perhaps as important as how language differs across policies is the question of how the changes occurred at each of these levels. Understanding the change process to implement the text within and across policies at UNCG will be addressed in a future study.

Theoretical Framework

Our theoretical framework draws on theories that allow us to understand how promotion and tenure policies, as central artifacts of institutional culture, both *reflect* and *project* beliefs, values, and assumptions about what constitutes community-engaged scholarship as an aspect of academic work. To be clear, this conceptual framework describes our study of the policies—they were not used in the construction of the policies themselves over a decade ago. *Institutional identity theory* suggests that leaders may use ambiguous messages about desired future states of the university to create strategic change (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Gioia et al., 2010). *Signaling theory* (Connelly et al., 2011; O'Meara, 2002; Spence 1973; Spence, 2002) suggests that faculty, particularly in moments of change such as promotion and tenure, draw on institutional signals to assess the relative distance between *their* understanding of what the university values and their *colleagues'* understanding of what the university values—and rewards. Both these theories emphasize the fraught and fluid space between policy and perception. It is at these multifaceted and multidirectional intersections where our study lies.

Ambiguity and Strategic Change

In their study of organizational identity change, Gioia et al. (2010) suggest that leaders' use of ambiguity can be a useful strategy to generate broad institutional acceptance of a new or newly revised vision for the institution. Embracing a concept that is specific enough to provide some direction and parameters for change, but broad enough to allow many individuals to see their work as included and valued in that vision of change, can serve as a leadership tool toward creating authentic organizational change.

In their grounded theory study of a large research university managing a strategic change effort, Gioia and Thomas (1996) describe the efforts of the executive academic leadership team to formulate and articulate a guiding vision to “better position” the university in the coming decades, including with the development of a new interdisciplinary school, among other structural changes and additions. Choosing the nationally recognized image of a “top 10 university,” the leaders chose an institutional image (i.e., “Others will see us as belonging to an elite group of 10 universities”) as a strategy to encourage faculty to adopt policies and practices that would develop the scholarly and funding profile required to earn such reputation and status. The image of the “top 10” was chosen as a relatively ambiguous image that allowed individuals within the university to interpret what it meant to be top 10 in their own ways. One leader shared, “The top-10 idea? Kind of a vague concept, eh? Yeah, it has to be. It needs to allow room to mean different things to different people and different factions [the president]” (p. 380). Faculty members could read into the term what they valued. In other words, they allow for a big-tent understanding to draw institutional members into the vision of a future desired direction for the institution as it relates to a particular initiative (i.e., the formation of a new college).

While precision and exactness may be needed to establish clarity, standards, accountability, transparency, and the ability to measure progress (Muller, 2018), ambiguous or equivocal images can be helpful in gaining members’ buy-in to the new identity, particularly in times of institutional change, such as strategic change in academic institutions (Gioia & Thomas, 1996), the development of a new college (Gioia et al., 2010), or the merger of two organizations into one (Clark et al., 2010). Gioia and colleagues’ studies suggest that institutional leaders seeking strategic change may choose to adopt ambiguous images that are not specific but rather allow for varied and even conflicting interpretations. This study focuses on understanding the ways in which community-engaged scholarship was interpreted and integrated into the text department and school policies—and whether community-engaged scholarship was defined and operationalized explicitly and comprehensively or whether community-engaged scholarship was left ambiguously defined.

Policy Signaling of Organizational Values

Additionally, we are guided by O’Meara’s scholarship on faculty academic reward systems and her research on faculty gender equity. Her review of the literature (O’Meara, 2011), including her own extensive research, shows that reward systems and perceptions of them are a major source of extrinsic motivation, influencing behaviors and productivity and shaping faculty priorities and decisions with regards to time allocation and workload. In her review, “Inside the Panopticon: Studying Faculty Reward Systems,” she notes that “academic reward systems send a powerful signal to external actors about what the institution has been, is now, and wants to be” (p. 164). Promotion and tenure policies direct and constrain faculty decisions about their work, as well as how faculty should value the work of their colleagues. Colleges and universities send organizational signals about what is valued by the organization and what is valued in the faculty it seeks to hire and nurture as part of organizational culture. “Faculty who are most involved in community-engaged scholarship are likely to be the most aware of signals” (O’Meara et al., 2013, p. 5) sent by the higher education organization about the values of

community-engaged scholarship: by leaders, by strategic plans, by support structures, by investments/funding, and most importantly by faculty reward systems. In our study, we examine how the policy was used to send signals about community-engaged scholarship as faculty work.

Methodology

We chose the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) as our case study because university, school or college (herein referred to as *school*), and department policies for promotion and tenure were revised to include recognition of community-engaged scholarship. This case allows for the examination of which terms were selected and how they were adopted and adapted across the policy levels through textual examination of institutional policies at a single institution. Yin (2003) shares that “case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (p. 1). Characteristics of qualitative case-study methodology include that it is particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic (Merriam, 1998). These characteristics align with the overall goals of our research study.

UNCG is a four-year, public research institution in a metropolitan area of just under 300,000 residents. It is one of a 17-institution state system, is a high research-activity institution, and has held the elective Community Engagement classification awarded by the Carnegie Foundation since 2008. At the time during which the promotion and tenure policies were discussed and modified to include community-engaged scholarship (2008–2012) the institution was growing its enrollment from 18,000 to approximately 20,000 students, of which about 16,000 were undergraduates, and it employed over 2,700 faculty and staff members. Approximately half of the faculty have tenure-track appointments. UNCG was also in the midst of becoming one of the most diverse universities in the state, achieving federal designation as a minority-serving institution (MSI) in 2017 (where students of color constitute at least 25% of total undergraduate enrollment). With 85 undergraduate degrees in over 100 areas of study, as well as 74 master’s and 32 doctoral programs, it has a College of Arts and Sciences and a College of Visual and Performing Arts as well as five professional schools, including Business and Economics, Education, Health and Human Sciences, Nursing, and the Joint School of Nanoscience and Nanoengineering in collaboration with North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University also located in Greensboro.

The case is bounded by the particular context of the university. Part of that context is the policy documents related to faculty promotion and tenure at the university, the school, and department levels. These documents provide definitions of community engagement. An additional part of the context is a document that lies outside the policy documents but which also shaped how community was defined in the policy documents: this was a definitions document created to assist schools, colleges, and departments in their revision of policy to incorporate community engagement. Because a definition for community-engaged scholarship was not included in the university-level policy, a supplemental document was developed the year after the policy was approved (herein referred to as the *definitions document*) to serve as a resource to faculty as they worked on school and department policies. The need for a definition was raised at a meeting the provost held in which academic deans were asked

to initiate efforts to align school and department policies with the university policy. In that meeting, the deans asked: What is engagement? How do we assess it? The language drafted into the university policy, while sufficient for getting the policy through, seemed, to the academic deans, to be insufficient in providing the clarity and specificity needed for policy revision in the schools and colleges.

Data Collection

The lead author collected promotion and tenure policies from the university as well as 59 departments across the seven schools. These policies had been modified during the 2010–2012 time period for the purpose of adopting community-engaged scholarship into the policy. The provost and chancellor, both of whom had actively supported these efforts, left UNCG in 2014. No repository of all policies could be located; therefore, the lead author emailed and received policies from the provost’s office, as well as deans, department chairs, and faculty members who had been present and had copies of the policies in their own files.

Themes and Codes

This study is part of a larger effort to understand the ways in which a single university addressed community-engaged scholarship as an aspect of its promotion and tenure policies. As part of the initial process, we used open inductive analysis to identify preliminary themes that could be used to guide the review of the full data set of policies. The themes developed in this exploratory phase were drawn from open coding of policies from six departments.

The research team utilized a matrix to record how, where, and with what emphasis community-engaged scholarship has been (or has not been) incorporated into each school’s guidelines and into the university-wide guidelines. In pairs, the research team coded and analyzed each school’s guidelines in order to corroborate and clarify findings. Next the team developed codes with definitions (codebook and data are published in CivicLEADS; see Janke et al., 2022) and then followed the same process to code the policies of 59 departments across the seven schools. In most cases, departments had developed departmental-level promotion and tenure policies. In a few cases, such as in the School of Nursing, some or all departments opted to use the school-level policy in lieu of a departmental one. Researchers met regularly to cull analyzed data and observations in order to develop an overarching analysis of the university’s mandate to integrate community-engaged scholarship across individual schools and departments.

This study focuses on two major themes from within the larger study:

- the *terms* used to describe community engagement and other public-facing work, and
- the *policy section* in which the community-engagement-related term is written (general statement, teaching, research/creative activity, service).

Early theming helped the research team to see that some terms, which were used repeatedly across a number of policies, were not ones that had been used in the university policy. Therefore, the team also included analysis

of the definitions document, which was shared with all faculty in support of school and department-level discussions, in our textual review to understand how, if at all, policies adopted or adapted text from the definitions document, which was concurrent to the policy changes but not a formal aspect of the policy itself (see Appendix B for terms used in the definitions document).

Data Availability

All data, including the codebook for this study, are available in Janke et al. (2022) via CivicLEADS (Civic Learning, Engagement, and Action Data Sharing). CivicLEADS provides infrastructure for researchers to share and access high-quality data sets, which can be used to study civic education and involvement.

Findings

In this section we address the main research question and present the findings of our two areas of study: (1) the *terms* used to describe community engagement and other public-facing work and (2) the *policy section* in which community-engagement-related terms are written (general statement, teaching, research/creative activity, service). First, we display the terms in such a way that one can see how the same or different terms were used across documents. Second, we map the location of the community-engagement terms within the policy sections: the general statement as well as the faculty roles of teaching, research and creative activity, and service. On the whole, we discovered that some terms *persisted*—the same terms were used commonly across documents and, in some cases, across sections that describe faculty roles. We also found that the number of terms *proliferated*—new terms were introduced at the school and department levels and terms—both from the preceding university policy and beyond.

Community Engagement and Public-Facing Terms

Researchers identified 77 terms that described aspects of community engagement and public-facing work (see Figure 1). Terms may have been single words, such as *community*, or phrases, such as *community-engaged scholarship*. Looking across documents, we compare policies to share findings of the perpetuation and proliferation of terms. In the discussion section we analyze the findings using our conceptual framework.

Figure 1 displays the terms used within each level of policy, aggregating all schools and departments in respective boxes. The boxes represent the relative presence of terms across the definitions document and policies at each level—university, school, and department. The boxes do not represent chronology or procedure, as the school and department guidelines occurred concurrently in many instances, and the definitions document was shared with faculty via deans but was never officially adopted as a policy document. Text colors demonstrate which terms are chosen and how these terms are carried from the university and definitions documents to the school and department level. For example, terms noted in red font originated with the definitions document

Dept. Docs: **community-engaged research, community engaged creative and scholarly activities, community-engaged teaching, community service, community-engaged service, community engagement, community-engaged scholarship, external communities and constituencies, service-learning, community-engaged work, community leadership, engaged scholarship, public service, activities benefiting society, applied anthropology, applied creative achievement, applied research, applied scholarship, collaboration with community partners, collaborative work with external partnership entities, community education, community-engaged courses, community engaged projects, community engaged scholar, community focused discipline, community outreach, community outreach activities, community-based, community-based activities, community-based scholarship and research, community-based service, community-based settings, community-engaged, community-engaged instruction, community-engaged research and scholarship, engaged community scholarship, engagement, engagement of students in community systems, engagement with on and off-campus communities, external service, measures of economic impact to the community, outreach programs, partnerships between program and external agencies, partnerships with Triad community, performance art in community settings, public community, public exhibition, public forum, public installations, public performance, reciprocity with community partners, responsible service, service in public sphere, service to society, service to accounting and finance professions and those affected by the practice of accounting and finance (i.e. community engagement), service to the community, social practice, teaching to community partners and the general public, the needs of the public**

Unit Docs: **community-engaged research, community-engaged research and creative activities, community-engaged teaching, community service, community-engaged service, community engagement, community-engaged scholarship, application of knowledge, community-based instruction, service-learning, community-engaged work, community leadership, engaged scholarship, public service, applied work, broker for implementing change through scholarship, community activities, community scholarship, community-engaged institution, engaged citizens, engagement services to the regional community, external professional service, industry engagement, partnerships with industry, professional citizenship, responsibility to the community, service programs**

University Doc: **community-engaged research, community-engaged research and creative activities, community-engaged teaching, community service, application of knowledge for the benefit of society, community-based instruction, community-engaged outreach, external communities and constituencies, service-learning, community-related service**

Definitions Doc: **community-engaged research/ creative activity, community-engaged teaching, community service, community engagement, community-engaged scholarship, community-engaged service, reciprocity**

Present across all documents: **community-engaged research/ creative activity, community-engaged teaching, community service**

Figure 1 Community Engagement and Public-Facing Terms across Schools and Departments.

and several are carried across into the university, school, and department documents. Terms in blue font originated with the university policy document, terms in purple font originated in school-level documents, and terms in black font were unique to department-level documents. Terms in bold red font were present throughout all documents: community-engaged research/creative activity, community-engaged teaching, and community service.

University-Level Terms

The university-level policy describes what community-engaged scholarship looks like, providing extensive lists of outputs. It uses the terms *community-engaged teaching*, *community-engaged research and creative activity*, and *community service* (see Appendix A) in the university-wide policy. The university-level policy suggests a degree of ambiguity in defining community-engaged scholarship influenced by the recognition that other forms of scholarship were only referenced and not defined in the policy. The university-level policy did not specifically define other forms of scholarship, so it does not create more specificity for community-engaged scholarship.

The university policy was the first of all policies written. It includes 10 unique terms describing community engagement or public-facing work. Three of these terms are section subheadings: *community-engaged teaching*, *community engaged research and creative activity*, and *community service*. Seven additional terms included *the application of knowledge for the benefit of society*, *community-based instruction*, *community-engaged outreach*, *community-related service*, *external communities and constituencies*, and *service-learning*.

Definitions Document

We coded only eight of the terms in the document; they were specifically presented and purposefully defined and included *community engagement*, *community-engaged scholarship*, *community-engaged research/creative activity*, *community-engaged teaching*, *community-engaged service*, *community service*, *community*, and *reciprocity*. We did not code the entire document, which also included other words such as *civic engagement*, *prepare educated*, *engaged citizens*, or *the learning and teaching be multidirectional and the expertise shared*. We chose to follow a different coding process because the nine-page document was developed specifically to articulate and explicate community-engaged scholarship as it related to promotion and tenure, and we wanted to focus on how those terms and definitions influenced (or did not influence) the choice of terms and the ways they were defined (or were not defined) across the school and department policies.

School- and College-Level Terms

Across the seven school policies examined, 18 new terms were used that had not been previously referenced in either the university policy or the definitions document, such as *engaged citizens*, *professional citizenship*, and *broker for implementing change through scholarship*. Four schools adopted language from the university policy whereas three did not. The terms that were perpetuated from the university to the school policies included *application of knowledge for the benefit of society*, *community-based instruction*, and *service-learning*. Three of the seven schools adopted the terms *community-engaged scholarship* and/or *community-engaged service*, which were never used in the university policy but which were introduced in the definitions document. Hence, while some of the terms established in the university policy were perpetuated into school policies, even more terms were introduced, increasing the total number across policies. To see the full list of terms used within school policies, see Figure 1.

Department-Level Terms

Across the 41 department policies examined, terms proliferated with the addition of eight new terms that had neither been previously referenced in either the university policy or the definitions document nor concurrently referenced in school policy. Newly introduced terms included

- *service to the community* (10 departments),
- *community-engaged research and scholarship* (five departments),
- *community outreach* (four departments),
- *community engaged* (four departments),
- *outreach programs* (three departments),
- *collaboration with community partners* (two departments),

- *community-based activities* (two departments), and
- *partnerships (such as internship programs) between the program and external agencies* (three departments).

Department policies also perpetuated the use of terms introduced in the university policy and/or the definitions document. For example, several department policies referenced terms previously introduced by the university policy (i.e., *service-learning* as well as *external communities and constituencies*) as well as terms previously introduced by the definitions document, including (i.e., *community-engaged scholarship* [20 departments] and *community engaged service* [six departments]). Department policies also referenced terms that showed up in both the university policy and the definitions document, including *community-engaged teaching* (13 departments), *community-engaged research and creative activities* (seven departments), *community engagement* (six departments), and *community service* (five departments). Looking across department policies, some did not refer to community-engaged scholarship at all (e.g., English) while others included 10 terms (e.g., Human Development and Family Studies). See Figure 1 for the full list of terms used within department policies.

Frequency of Terms across Policy Levels

Beyond identifying the number of terms, we also examined the policies to identify which terms were used by the greatest number of policies (see Figure 2). Which terms seemed most relevant and useful to faculty in describing community engagement as an element of faculty scholarship? The term that showed up the most (24) was *community-engaged scholarship* (with and without the hyphen). In fact, approximately half of all department policies included this term (21 of 41). Interestingly, *community-engaged scholarship* was first introduced by the definitions document, not the university policy. This indicates faculty use of the definitions document in their policy revisions. *Community-engaged teaching* was the second most frequently referenced term (university policy, three schools, 13 departments), a term that was included in both the university policy and the definitions document.

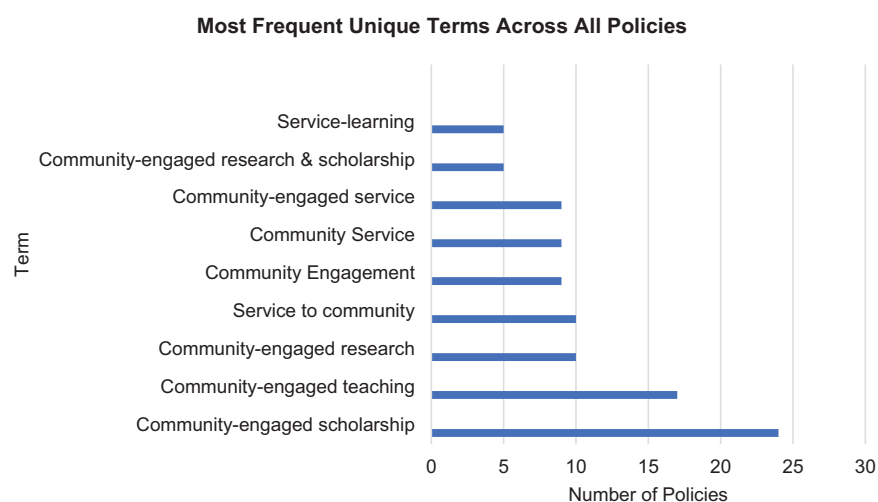


Figure 2 Most Frequent Unique Terms across All Policies.

On the whole, we found that schools and departments tended to use terms from the university policy and/or the definitions document. Five or more policies used the terms *service-learning*, *community-engaged research*, and *community engaged-teaching* from the university policy; five or more policies used the terms *community-engaged-service*, *community engagement*, and *community-engaged scholarship* from the definitions document; five policies adopted *community-engaged research and scholarship*, an amalgamation of two terms introduced in the university policy and definitions document. In contrast, *service to community* was used in 10 department policies but was not found elsewhere.

Root Terms

Many of the terms used to describe community-engaged-scholarship-related activities tended to use several of the same root words. In brief, the root word *community-engaged* (with and without the hyphen) was adopted into the overwhelming majority of policies (42) and into the greatest number of terms (16 unique terms), such as *community-engaged directed professional activity* or *community-engaged faculty work*. *Community-engaged* was used in both the university policy and the definitions document. The root term *engaged* was used in seven additional policies. The next two most frequently used root terms were *service* and *community*, both of which were cited in just under half of the policies. Other recurring root terms included *applied*, *community-based*, *public*, *external*, and *partnerships*, each of which was used in seven or fewer policies.

Academic Work Roles

Where in the policies were the terms referenced? Specifically, were they included in a general statement or within more specific sections focused on teaching, research/creative activity, and/or service? Knowing where in the policy terms are included provides some sense of what aspects of faculty work in which community-engaged

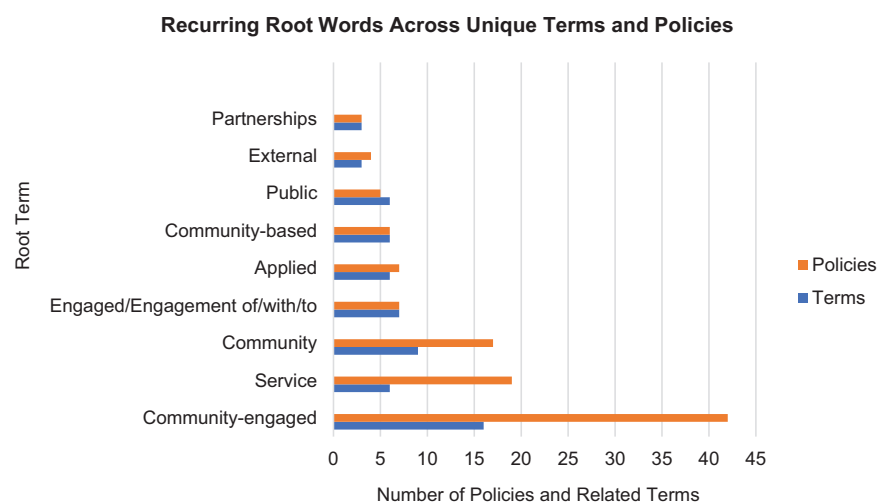


Figure 3 Recurring Root Words across Unique Terms and Policies.

scholarship is recognized and supported. As stated previously, the university policy used subheaders to describe community-engaged scholarship within the three sections of faculty roles (teaching, research/creative activity, and service). While all policies had three sections outlining the three areas of faculty work, not all policies included a general or introductory statement about scholarship. We examined the teaching, research/creative activity, and service sections of all policies to identify the community engagement-related terms referenced and the type and number of policies with references in those three sections describing faculty roles. Across all policies, we found variation with regards to which sections policies tended to reference community-engaged-scholarship-related terms, as follows (in order in which sections appear in the policies):

- General statement: 20 policies
- Research and Creative Activity statement: 39 policies
- Teaching statement: 22 policies
- Service statement: 34 policies

Hence, community-engaged teaching was referenced in fewer than half of all of the policies included in this study while community-engaged research and creative activities and community-engaged service were both referenced in the majority of policies. Just less than half of the policies referenced an aspect of community-engagement-related work outside of the three sections (teaching, research/creative activity, service), such as in a general statement about department context.

Beyond frequency across policies, we examined the number of unique terms used to describe community-engaged-related activities. In other words, How many different terms were used within each of the sections? This shows how policies ranged with regards to describing community-engagement-related activities across faculty roles:

- General statement: 15 terms
- Research and Creative Activity statement: 24 terms
- Teaching statement: nine terms
- Service statement: 29 terms

Hence, community-engaged teaching was described across policies using the least number of unique terms (nine), followed by general statement sections (15), compared to community-engaged research and creative activities (24) and community-engaged service (29).

On the whole, we found that community-engaged scholarship was explicitly named in each of the three sections in the university policy but was not included using the same structure across other policies. For example, department policies may have included statements about community-engaged teaching in a section outlining expectations for teaching but not include any mention of community engagement (or related terms) in the research/creative activity and/or service sections of the department policy.

Discussion

Our study demonstrates that the process of aligning school and department policies to university policy resulted in a proliferation of terms and inconsistent approaches to describing and defining community-engaged

scholarship, if included at all. Is it a problem that so many terms exist? Does this indicate confusion, objection, or simply expected disciplinary differences? Exploring the patterns of the ways terms were adopted and adapted across policies is helpful to understand how and the extent to which community-engaged scholarship became embedded within the policy or not.

Exactness versus Ambiguity

We argue that the use of ambiguity played a role in the faculty champions' and executive leaders' abilities to get the votes needed to pass changes to the university policy, which was an essential first step. As the university policy was the only one that required a faculty senate vote, the school and department policies could later follow as a matter of due process to ensure policy alignment. However, we found that an outgrowth of ambiguity was a proliferation and inconsistent use of terms. That is, the number and variety of terms expanded beyond the community-engaged scholarship terms used in the university policy. Hence, the absence of a precise definition of community engagement in the university policy may have helped organize policy change but additional work may be needed to ensure that the original intentions that motivated the change are, in fact, effectively operationalized.

Our study also suggests that ambiguity may later thwart progress toward the transformational culture change in which community-engaged scholarship is supported and rewarded in practice. It seems that as school and department policies were revisited, faculty held different views about the key elements that distinguish community-engaged scholarship as an aspect of scholarly work, evidenced by the large number of different terms used and the inconsistency in which they were used. New questions arise such as: Is there sufficient information in the policy to provide clear, common, and consistent understanding of what community-engaged scholarship is such that one may sufficiently document and fairly evaluate it? When in doubt as to its legitimacy as scholarship, faculty tend to be more likely to dismiss community-engaged scholarship as service, which is typically the least regarded faculty role. Hence, if reviewers do not have a clear understanding of or have different ideas about what community-engaged scholarship looks like, requires, or produces, then community-engaged scholars' reviews—and future at the university—may be in jeopardy.

Future studies will examine how, if at all, the lack of any community-engagement terms in a department policy affected the experiences of community-engaged scholars. Does an omission mean it is not supported at all? One might compare departments that did not include process characteristics in their policies to those that did. How, if at all, are the specific choices, such as purpose-centered language, meaningfully different and useful for cultural change? Further, what is the “weight” of the department review compared to other policies? Will community-engaged scholars reference not only their department policy but also the school- and university-level policies to articulate their case for community-engaged scholarship? The departmental review is arguably the most important level of review as it reflects how colleagues most familiar with the faculty members' work see them. It is the first review of the series that a faculty member will go through, setting the bar, so to speak, for whether the dossier is seen as lacking or problematic, or meritorious of promotion and/or tenure.

Disciplinary Differences

The number of terms grew across department policies as various departments articulated their own ideas about community-engaged scholarship as an aspect of faculty work. It is well documented in the community-engagement literature that different academic disciplines hold different views on community-engaged scholarship. Zlotkowski (1998) edited a 21-volume series in the 1990s called *Service Learning in the Disciplines* (for an overview of the series, see Zlotkowski, 1998) in which each volume was written by scholars within a discipline offering theoretical backgrounds and practical pedagogical examples and guidance on the implementation of curricular community-engaged scholarship. Battistoni's (2002) *Civic Engagement across the Curriculum* lays forth 13 distinct views held by different academic disciplines in the social sciences alone, not even including the humanities and natural sciences. Some disciplines are more engaged than others. Social and behavioral sciences, health, and business disciplines tend to have more engaged faculty than the humanities, arts, and math (Glass et al., 2011; Vogelgesang et al., 2010). Most recently, in Blanchard and Furco's (2021) *Faculty Engaged Scholarship: Setting Standards and Building Conceptual Clarity*, the authors study how community-engaged scholarship is presented in promotion and tenure guidelines at their respective universities. They too found that each discipline has its own unique way of understanding, valuing, and engaging with communities for public good.

The departmental context is critical to shaping a faculty members' experience through promotion and tenure. At UNCG, it is the first level of review that a candidate must pass through in order to be promoted and/or tenured, followed by the school and then university reviews. This creates an opportunity for department policies to carry more "weight" than other policies in terms of influencing how candidates represent their scholarship and how review committees deliberate and the final recommendations they may make. In some cases, we saw departments use up to 10 different terms from across all sections of the policies, whereas some departments made no mention at all. Hence, special attention must be paid to how language is incorporated into department policy—as it can help or thwart support. As departments and schools adopt language to recognize and evaluate new forms of scholarship, it is important that changes to policies are reviewed to ensure that they are truly aligned to the university policy.

Signaling Legitimacy through Faculty Roles

This study focuses on how community-engaged scholarship is integrated across the three traditional faculty roles that are evaluated for promotion and tenure: teaching, research, and service. Turning to signaling theory, attention is drawn to what messages may have been advanced by faculty, intentionally and perhaps unintentionally, about the ways in which community-engaged scholarship is valued as faculty scholarly work. What are the signals being sent by the institution, via the text in the policy changes, about the role and legitimacy of community-engaged scholarship as a form of valued academic work? Signaling theory suggests that faculty make assessments of what is valued by the university. To make those assessments, they observe and consider conversations

they have with administrators or peers and examine policies, procedures, and practices for how they align with their own values and expectations for academic work.

While the university-level policy specifically names community-engaged scholarship in each of the three sections of faculty work—teaching, research/creative activity, and service—most attention in the revised documents was given to the research section (39 policies), followed closely by the service section (34 policies). In other words, community-engaged scholarship was described in twice the number of sections on research/creative activity compared to teaching. Institutional efforts to strive toward increased prestige measures such as rankings, publications, and external awards have increased significantly in the recent decade (Janke et al., 2016). Study findings show that faculty discussions to revise promotion and tenure policies tended to focus more directly and heavily on recognizing community engagement as an aspect of research and creative activity rather than on teaching and service.

In efforts to make community-engaged scholarship a valued and legitimate aspect of faculty work, faculty champions may have emphasized, or signaled, its value and legitimacy as a way of conducting research and creative activity by anchoring text in the research sections. There is evidence of this research prestige, as a new academic regime at UNCG, eclipsing an earlier focus on teaching as the primary faculty role. Perhaps, also, the faculty were responding to pressures of prestige culture in focusing on research metrics more so than virtues. For example, Alperin et al. (2019) found that “on the one hand, public engagement and serving the public good are explicitly recognized and valued while, at the same time, the emphasis on metrics demonstrates how faculty are beholden to an accountability culture that relies predominantly on measurable and quantifiable outcomes” (p. 16).

The need to legitimize community engagement as a form of research is a well-documented issue (O’Meara, 2007). In a prestige-oriented culture, higher education values research over teaching and teaching over service, and traditional scholarship tends to be held in higher regard and community-engaged scholarship much less so (Alperin et al., 2019; Saltmarsh & Wooding, 2016). Emphasis is placed on eminence measures such as publishing and presenting in top peer-reviewed journals and contributing to one’s disciplinary community. The maxim “publish or perish” conveys the sense that while other roles may be important (i.e., teaching and service), one will not be tenured without sufficient traditional measures of research productivity and eminence. This maxim becomes manifest in policy as community-engagement terms and concepts show up most frequently in relation to service, and policies tend to make “significant mention” of traditional research outputs such as peer-reviewed journal articles and books from academic publishers as well as citation-based metrics (Alperin et al., 2019). Community-engaged scholars find that traditional metrics often do not fairly represent community-engaged scholarship when the aims and outcomes for public audiences are meaningfully different and distinct (Wendling, 2021). The policies often do not specify metrics and products aimed at public audiences. In failing to name such metrics and products, the policies, effectively, disregard these contributions (Alperin et al., 2019). Hence, community-engaged scholarship may be both misunderstood or misappropriated (i.e., seen or categorized erroneously as service) and undervalued (service is the least valued of faculty roles).

Therefore, analysis of the tenure and promotion policies at UNCG and the revisions related to community-engaged scholarship may reveal a number of cultural shifts that were unfolding, only one of which was directly related to community engagement. The findings further indicate that, for campuses interested in specifically articulating language about community engagement in institutional-level policies related to rewarding faculty research, teaching, and service, the terminology used and where it is inserted into the policies is important but not sufficient to address the core elements of academic culture. The institutional-level policies at UNCG, while incorporating community-engaged scholarship across the faculty roles, did not specifically address elements of peer review, scholarly products, rigor, or impact (the subject of a future study). It was at the level of the school, and more often at the department, where these elements appeared in the revisions. It is these elements of academic culture that are the lens through which academic scholarship is valued and legitimized.

Overall, we found that the policies tended to spend more time and attention addressing community engagement as a form of research and service and relatively less time on teaching. This may signal the importance of gaining legitimacy of community engagement as a research measure in an institution that was also aimed at raising its research profile. The relative fewer mentions of community engagement as an aspect of teaching may not mean that teaching is not valued, but relative to research, one must gain legitimacy as a community-engaged researcher more so than as a community-engaged teacher. This is an area of research that warrants further study to examine faculty members' interpretations.

Implications

At least three implications can be drawn from this study that will be helpful to scholars working to revise promotion and tenure guidelines so that they recognize community-engaged scholarship accurately, fairly, and equitably. First, the language used in university policies may be broad and relatively ambiguous in order to get approval at the university level, but they may become more descriptive when moving into the school and department levels. As faculty work to create support for community-engaged scholarship, the use of terms that are somewhat broad may be a helpful first step, setting the stage for future conversations and changes to policies. Further, champions of policy change ought to scaffold ambiguity with supporting materials, definitions, professional development, and the like in order to help faculty leaders as they move from the broad to the more specific application in school- and department-level policies.

Second, it is clear that documents that are provided by staff to support the deliberations of faculty as they revise their guidelines, particularly at the school and department levels, are likely to influence their work. Following the approval of the university-level policy, UNCG staff and faculty worked to develop a definitions document to support faculty work—and the terms from this definition document were, ultimately, more commonly used across school and department policies than the terms from the university policy. This speaks to the importance of the various products that may result from the process, such as internal papers, public documents, reports, policy recommendations, and the like. In many cases, such documents can be curated, created, and contributed by community-engaged professionals in support of tenure-track faculty.

Third, our study shows that even when the university policy describes community-engaged scholarship across each faculty role of teaching, research and creative activity, and service, school and department policies may, nonetheless, stray from this integrated approach. In institutions that may be striving toward more externally funded scholarship, as in the case of UNCG, they may find that faculty focus on legitimizing community engagement as a form of research and creative activity, differentiating it from service. This may lead them to write more in the sections pertaining to research and creative activity than in the teaching sections. As faculty and staff evaluate their progress in making revisions, they want to consider whether and how community-engaged scholarship is represented across each faculty role.

Limitations

This study looked specifically at what policy revisions were made to incorporate community-engaged scholarship. Perhaps as important as what changed in policy is the question of how the changes occurred at each of these levels. Understanding the change process at UNCG will be addressed in a future study. It is also important to understand not only what policy revisions were made and how they were made but what difference the policy changes made in the evaluation of faculty who undertake community-engaged scholarship. This is also being addressed in a future study.

Conclusion

Promotion and tenure policy is an important tool for effecting change in academia. Therefore, “every higher education leader with a serious idea about reform, at some point has to address the academic reward system in order to institutionalize that reform” (O’Meara, 2011, p. 165). Understanding the textual level of adoption into policies (What happened?) is an important step in studies that examine the change processes that produced the adaptation (How did it happen?), and to then examine the effect of language in promotion and tenure policies on faculty culture and practices (To what end did the changes make a difference?). For example, scholars have called attention to the importance of recruiting and retaining diverse faculty, and faculty of color and women are disproportionately likely to practice community-engaged scholarship as their primary approach and scholarly identity (Antonio, 2002; Antonio et al., 2000; Baez, 2000; Turner et al., 2008; Vogelgesang et al., 2010). How, if at all, do promotion and tenure policies influence their decisions to seek, take, and continue employment at institutions of higher education? What aspects of the policy helped them to shape their view of the institution—an institution where they can not only persist and survive but thrive as scholars—as being welcome to and supportive of community-engaged scholarship?

This study provides an important and foundational step toward addressing questions about the role, relevance, and significance of promotion and tenure policy change as a mechanism to solidify and, perhaps, even increase faculty acceptance of community engagement as legitimate and valued academic work. This study suggests that changes to the university policy may serve as an important first step to changing school and department

guidelines to the extent that it may drive and catalyze subsequent school and department policies—but only to the extent that alignment to university policy is required by administrative leadership. Supplemental documents, such as explications of key terms describing community-engaged scholarship, facilitated discussions, and workshops, support and influence how faculty, when writing school and department policies, choose to label and characterize community-engaged scholarship. Therefore, terms used within a university policy may inform, but will not precisely or exactly guide, those used in subsequent school and department level policy—the number of terms will proliferate across policies as faculty across disciplines choose language that signals the values and standards of their respective fields.

When engaging in policy change, faculty tend to aim, primarily, on articulating community engagement as a form of research and creative activity. The research role is a primary aim for policy change because of the essential and central role of research/creative activity productivity, more so than either teaching or service. In this way, university efforts must be attuned to other cultural shifts and contexts. Ultimately, if the goal of policy revisions related to community-engaged scholarship is to shift the academic culture of the institution (culture change), then adding language, while important, is not enough. The policy elements that are at the core of academic culture, and which are central to the school and department levels at the organizational locations where faculty live, must be addressed in policy revisions if community-engaged scholarship is going to be fully and fairly valued in faculty review.

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Appendix A. University Policy Terms

Community-Engaged Teaching

- Developing and delivering community-based instruction, such as service-learning experiences, on-site courses, clinical experiences, professional internships, and collaborative programs
- Developing and delivering off-campus teaching activities, such as study-abroad courses and experiences, international instruction, and distance-education courses
- Developing and delivering instruction to communities and other constituencies

Community-Engaged Research and Creative Activities

- Writing papers for refereed journals and conference proceedings
- Creating exhibits in educational and cultural institutions
- Disseminating community-engaged research through public programs and events
- Conducting and disseminating directed or contracted research
- Conducting and reporting program evaluation research or public policy analyses for other institutions and agencies
- Developing innovation solutions that address social, economic, or environmental challenges (e.g., inventions, patents, products, services, clinical procedures, and practices)

Community Engagement (Service)

- Consulting and providing technical assistance and/or services to public and private organizations
- Writing position papers for the general public
- Collaborating with schools, businesses, advocacy groups, community groups, and civic agencies to develop policies

Appendix B: Community Engagement Terms and Definitions in the “Definitions Document”

Community Engagement	<i>Community engagement</i> (sometimes also referred to as <i>civic engagement</i>) is the “collaboration (among) 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.” In the context of university documents and policies regarding faculty work, community engagement refers to research/creative activities, teaching, and service activities that are collaboratively undertaken by faculty members <i>with</i> community partners, staff, and/or students through processes that exemplify reciprocal partnerships and public purposes.
Community-Engaged Scholarship	The term <i>community-engaged scholarship</i> (sometimes also referred to as the <i>scholarship of engagement</i>) refers to research/creative activities, teaching, and service undertaken by faculty members in collaboration with community members (and often students) that embody the characteristics of both <i>community engagement</i> (i.e., reciprocal partnerships, public purposes) and <i>scholarship</i> (i.e., demonstrates current knowledge of the field/discipline, invites peer collaboration and review, is open to critique, is presented in a form that others can build on, involves inquiry).
Community-Engaged Research/ Creative Activity	Community-engaged research and creative activity is the collaborative generation, refinement, conservation, and exchange of reciprocally beneficial and societally relevant knowledge that is generated in collaboration with, communicated to, and validated by peers in academe and the community.
Community-Engaged Teaching	Community-engaged teaching describes those activities that (1) honor principles of community engagement (reciprocal partnerships, public purpose) and (2) provide opportunities for students (both enrolled and not enrolled at UNCG) to collaborate with faculty and community members for the dual—and integrated—purposes of learning and service.
Community-Engaged Service	Community-engaged service describes those activities that (1) honor principles of community engagement (reciprocal partnerships, public purpose) and (2) “enable the University to carry out its mission, contribute to the function and effectiveness of the faculty member’s profession and discipline, and reach out to external communities and constituencies, such as government agencies, business, and the arts.”
Community Service	Community service describes activities that are provided <i>to</i> , intended <i>for</i> , or done <i>in</i> communities.
Community	The “community” in community engagement is not defined by sector, such as private or public, for profit or nonprofit; rather, community is broadly defined to include individuals, groups, and organizations external to campus that use collaborative processes for the purpose of contributing to the public good.
Reciprocity	Reciprocity is recognizing, respecting, and valuing the knowledge, perspective, and resources that each partner contributes to the collaboration.
