

Provost Faculty Promotion Dialogue | March 3, 2022

Community Engagement

Overview & Top Lines

63 participants from 12 colleges/schools and 2 divisions



AGNR	6
ARHU	11
BMGT	2
BSOS	8
CMNS	3
EDUC	5
ENGR	5
GRAD	-
INST	5
JOUR	-
LIBR	2
MAPP	2
PLCY	1
SPHL	4
UGST	-
Other	9

Faculty Type



Extension Agent	2
Librarian	2
PTK	25
TTK	23
Other	11

Obstacles to address



- Need to move beyond publication as the default measure, as much of the work of community engagement is applied, and publishing is not the obvious outcome; we *“need civic engagement for civic engagements sake.”*
- It can take years to establish relationships; that time invested frequently does not align with the tenure clock.
- There is a compelling need to broadly define what constitutes community engagement; this is not the case with traditional research, which has much more apparent and traditionally recognized factors.
 - *“My discipline sees no virtue in engagement work; instruments to measure it don’t exist.”*
 - *“We want to do community engagement work and have it recognized. It would be gratifying. And it would open the floodgates for others to do the same.”*

Indicators of success



- Impact, as a suggested indicator of success, was mentioned almost five times as often as the next most mentioned theme. There were six sub-categories of impact:
 - Evaluation by community participants/partners
 - Outcome measures
 - Magnitude and/or longevity of impact
 - Policy changes
 - Physical artifacts/products
 - Impact on UMD students
- Many advocated for including qualitative evidence in evaluating community engagement.
- Some people suggested that, instead of starting from scratch, we look at metrics that have already been developed in some UMD programs and at other universities to see what can be adapted for our broader guidelines.
- There were several discussions about the importance of community involvement in defining what success (and thus outcomes) looks like.

Themes



What makes it difficult to evaluate community engagement?

Consider your own research, teaching, and service as well as the work of your field/discipline. What do you see as obstacles that need to be removed or addressed to incorporate community engagement into the evaluation and promotion process?

A. Both ethical and critical analyses are required to properly engage

- Must have clear and explicit expectations for both faculty and community partners. Research around this exists, and rubrics have been defined for long-term, meaningful engagement.

"How much are you taking advantage of people in the community when you ask them to write letters of support?"

"Just did my faculty reporting and had to put in numbers for how many touches, how many families were contacted at various events, how many t-shirts were given out, etc. and I felt a little bit 'icky', like I was capitalizing on the number of times I talked to someone."

"In my work, many participants are hesitant to share that they have participated in the data collection (fearing retribution). This limits the likelihood that they will vouch for the work."

- There is a need for professional development on how to work equally with communities in a "co-" way.
- *"There is some pushback that you can do harm rather than good. One person's positive outcome is another person's negative outcome."*
- There can be challenging political aspects to community engagement where differing opinions about what constitutes a good or bad outcome exist, making evaluating that type of activity difficult.

Themes



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B. Community engagement is a process, not an event or series of interactions, and it is time intensive

- You have to quantitatively and qualitatively evaluate the whole process of the engagement.

“Part of considering community engagement in decisions is telling the narrative of engagement over time and why it is significant.”

“We are so focused on the end metrics that we don’t even think about the process that was used. Those processes sometimes take a lot more time, developing relationships, developing trust in the communities, etc. How are we going to be addressing that if we really do prioritize this type of work?”

- The impact or results of community engagement may take longer than the tenure process accommodates. Efforts might take a decade or even two before impacts are realized. Wary of short-term success getting in the way of long-term success.
- When the focus is on impact it does not capture the full scope of what is involved with practice. There is an invisible work element to community engagement.

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C. What constitutes community engagement and what counts as “communities”

- We need to determine who our communities are and how broadly we define them, including international communities.

“What qualifies as helping the community and what qualifies as lip service?”

“We need to differentiate between community service and community engagement.”

“It’s key that the tasks of ‘defining things’ be a bottom-up, not top-down, process.”

“Who decides what’s engagement and what’s not?”

- Teaching/administration/mentoring are more significant for many PTK faculty, so “community” might mean students, researchers, colleagues in the department or the field, and not traditional research-based relationships.

“Is engaging the student community in long-term, project-based learning a form of community engagement?”

“Arguably participation as a ‘public intellectual’ is a form of community engagement.”

“Everything is lumped into service and we’re always doing it on the side, but it really relates to our profession and expertise, and internationally who is our community. I help out a lot internationally, but it’s not seen as community engagement.”

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D. What metrics should be used

- There is no specific measure; rather each engagement should include the community in the definition of what success looks like and what outcomes to measure rather than the faculty/researcher deciding what it should be on their own.

“Impacts on individuals should count as much as impacts on organizations or institutions.”

“The criteria have to be communicated back to the committee so they understand how success is measured.”

“We need to raise the bar of expectations on reviewers and sweep away the mythology from junior faculty that something won’t count because the committee can’t understand it.”

- The “Grand Challenges” require a multi-disciplinary approach, and each discipline has its own way of measuring the impact of community engagement. This could cause complications for assigning recognition, which could create disincentives for collaboration.

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E. May need new paradigm and language to communicate about community engagement

- Community-based learning takes the default frame of the University's bringing information and resources to the community. It implies we have the solutions and does not account for who impacts what or whom.
- We do not yet have the language to adequately express what goes on in community engagement.
- The concept of being a "Community of Practice" (e.g., [HuMetricsHSS](#)) with two-way communication can make a difference in how the University is perceived and how we create the conversations we have.

"I love this idea about language and share the need to move to a new frame of thinking. Words that capture our relationship might better be 'facilitator' rather than 'knowledge transfer out to the community.' Need to think about shrinking ourselves; serving as a 'conduit' rather than 'knowledge creators.'"

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F. Challenges in building relationships across entire communities

- When working with communities, particularly locally, we need to organize efforts so that community needs are met, and that engagement is with the units across the institution who can meet their needs, not simply the ones that get there first.
- Community engagement is a collaboration challenge. We need to find others on campus to collaborate with, so that UMD is one face to the community, not five different schools. We should know what has been and is being done with a community and it should have a relationship with the institution and not just its parts.
- Towns do not have time/capacity to do multiple projects. There needs to be a way to measure community needs against institutional needs.

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G. May require more institutional support

- There is not sufficient infrastructure at the University to support community engagement, and there is some uncertainty about roles in terms of building community relationships.

"We need some institutional level structure and support for community level engagement within the institution."

"Shifting which section would include community engagement (research versus service) is directly related to the institutional resources. Maybe first determine the buy-in and whose role is it to develop those community relationships."

- On a practical level, a great deal of time and energy can be required in community engagement. Background checks require significant time and money. There should be institutional support to take care of some of this (e.g., a centralized office to run background checks.)
- There is a need for institutional support for work between international communities.

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Community Engagement

Themes



Identifying measures of success

How will we know whether to give someone a high rating in the area of community engagement? What would they be doing or accomplishing if their work demonstrated excellence in community engagement?

Data collected via online brainstorm tool, Ideaboardz

A. Impact

53 unique comments, 70 additional upvotes

Impact was far and away the largest theme to emerge from this session's Ideaboardz suggestions. There were many more suggestions related to impact than to any other theme, as well as an extremely high number of upvotes. Most suggestions grouped into one of six clear subtopics:

- **Evaluation by community participants/partners** (16 comments) – highlighted the importance of gathering feedback from or involving community partners and participants in the evaluation process in some way.
- **Outcome measures** (11 comments) – spoke to focusing on specific measurable outcomes (e.g., behavior change, health outcomes).
- **Magnitude and/or longevity of impact** (7 comments) – suggested measuring the magnitude of the impact (e.g., through numbers of participants or activities) or longevity (i.e., how sustained that impact is).
- **Policy changes** (5 comments) – noted tracking the changes in policy, legislation, and/or adoption of new ideas that result from the engagement.
- **Physical artifacts/products** (4 comments) – related to using physical artifacts and/or products from the community as a means of assessing impact (e.g., art project, solar installation, community meeting, blog posts).
- **Impact on UMD students** (3 comments) – pointed to the impact of community engagement on University of Maryland students.

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B. Sustainability of partnerships

11 unique comments, 15 additional upvotes

This theme focused on how sustainable and long-lasting partnerships with community entities are.

C. We should look at how this is already being measured

10 unique comments, 15 additional upvotes

This group of comments expressed a sentiment that we should not be starting from scratch in determining what indicators to use and how to measure them. There are programs and universities who have already developed metrics for evaluating community engagement; these comments suggest that we should start by looking at what is already been developed. Several specific departments, programs, and schools were suggested as places to start.

D. Inclusion of community partner(s) in design and decision-making

7 unique comments, 9 additional upvotes

This set of comments centered on the value of including community partners in project design and decision-making processes and suggests measuring the extent to which this is happening.

E. Visibility

5 unique comments, 14 additional upvotes

This theme proposed measuring how visible a community partnership is (e.g., by noting press coverage, social media campaigns, invitations to sit on advisory boards).

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F. Number of people involved

5 unique comments, 8 additional upvotes

This group of comments focused on numbers, advocating for tracking the number of partnerships and/or the number of people involved.

G. Metrics will differ depending on context

4 unique comments, 3 additional upvotes

This small group of comments pointed out that metrics will (and should) differ based on context (i.e., different disciplines will engage in different types of community partnerships, which therefore, will need to be evaluated using different metrics).

H. Meeting stated outcomes

3 unique comments, 3 additional upvotes

These comments focused on the degree to which clearly defined outcomes for the project exist and whether they have been met.

I. Relevance

2 unique comments, 6 additional upvotes

This pair of comments centered on relevance, and the degree to which the focus of a community partnership is relevant to the discipline, or to the community.

J. Peer review

2 unique comments, 5 additional upvotes

These comments suggested some sort of peer review as a method of evaluation.

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K. Diversity of community partners

2 unique comments, 3 additional upvotes

This pair of comments highlighted the diversity of partners as a possible measure, both the types of organizations and entities involved, and the geographical diversity of communities served.

L. Funding secured

2 unique comments, 2 additional upvotes

These two comments both centered on the amount of funding secured as an important measure of success. One noted the importance of writing community partners into grants.

Notes

- There were 18 additional comments that did not fit into any of the listed themes.
- A number of people noted the importance of considering qualitative evidence in measuring community engagement and considering *“the intangibles”* more seriously (e.g., process, strength of relationships, trust, cultural competence).
- *“The notion that there are measurable deliverables may be contrary to the nature of community engagement.”*
- There was discussion in several of the breakout rooms about the importance of community involvement in defining what success (and thus outcomes) looks like.
- There was also conversation about the difficulty in gauging true impact. It is difficult to measure because sometimes the impact is visible only over time (and not immediately).

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Themes from Chat

In a few words, share your reaction to the comments you just heard from the Provost.

Many participants expressed being excited, positive, and hopeful for the attention to community engagement as it relates to faculty promotion. Also present was an acknowledgement of the *“devil is in the details”* reality.

A few mentioned appreciation for the connection to the land grant mission (e.g., *“refreshing to think of the future of a land grant university”*)

Several referenced that community engagement is critical to our mission: *“Definitely at the core of our identity and mission, glad it is becoming more visible and rewarded.”*

Finally, some resonated with the comment from one participant that *“Finding the solution to APT/AEP is the most important element of moving forward.”*

What is something that caught your attention today?

A large number of respondents highlighted the *“amazing work”* done by UMD’s [Office of Community Engagement](#) and its Director, Gloria Aparicio-Blackwell, calling for more resources for that organization and/or creation of a Vice President for Community Engagement position.

A theme emerged about the workload intensity of community engagement and the need to properly resource the endeavor:

- *“This work is VERY heavy logistically and there is a big difference in resource/support. Some folks are doing this solo, some have whole centers supporting them.”*
- *“Essential to establish support, both staff and funding, to assist those engaging in these activities.”*

Several were pleased to learn that *“there are best practices out there for consideration”* such as the principles of practice put forth by the [Community-Campus Partnerships for Health \(CCPH\)](#).