

Provost Faculty Promotion Dialogue | March 29, 2022

Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Overview & Top Lines

29 participants from 10 colleges/schools and 3 divisions



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

Faculty Type



Extension Agent	0
Librarian	1
PTK	15
TTK	5
Other	8

Obstacles to address



- Universities may have a “*strategic advantage*” in pursuing entrepreneurship and innovation, in that you can engage without financial risk, and there is infrastructure, such as [UMVentures](#), to support commercialization.
- Research and publication lead with respect to promotion and tenure review. Innovations that lead to start-ups can deviate, for good reasons, from the norms and expectations of a department. This represents the foundation of entrepreneurship and innovation. Often, outside reviewers do not have a good appreciation of what the impact is or can be with a new product or start-up.

Indicators of success



- Two major themes emerged from the discussion about possible indicators of success. More than half of the comments (46 of the 79 total comments clustered under one of these two themes):
 - Financial/commercialization success
 - Impact
- Most of the rest of the other 33 comments clustered together into one of nine small groupings which covered a wide variety of different suggested measures. There was not overwhelming agreement across these other nine categories.

Themes



What makes it difficult to evaluate entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial activity, and innovation (E & I)?

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 E & I into the evaluation and promotion process?

A. There is suspicion and even disrespect of “for profit” activity, which is viewed as running counter to the ethos of academic work in many if not most disciplines.

- Entrepreneurism is poorly understood among most faculty. Many view it as less important, and some even look down on the notion of turning academic work or research into profit-making ventures.
- In disciplines where this is new—humanities, social sciences—this may be an utterly foreign concept.
 - Commercialization is seen as “corrupt.”
 - Resistance to recognizing the value of “professional” experience as opposed to academic experience.
- There may be overall resistance to change as well as cultural bias against newness at both the individual and department level. We could perhaps gain support for entrepreneurial endeavors if we “sell the benefits” that these activities can generate revenue to support programs, not necessarily just create profit.
- If E&I can be placed in the framework of hypothesis–experiment–result, that might increase familiarity and comfort with the concepts.

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B. How do we define entrepreneurial and innovative (which are not the same thing)?

- There are neither clear definitions nor examples that can help faculty see what these practices look like in their own field. There needs to be not only a clear definition of what entrepreneurship is, but also clarity about where the boundaries around it are.
 - *“If I start a business that is outside of my specific area of interest or research, does it count? Or if I create a business that deals directly with operational support for my area of work, do I create a conflict of interest?”*
- Does entrepreneurship exist outside the traditional definition of research leading to IP to licensing to a profitable company? There has been a good deal of innovation and entrepreneurship around teaching and learning during the pandemic, with many taking advantage of what TLTC and DIT are doing. Does that count, or is that part of teaching and learning?
- Sometimes we confuse collaboration and entrepreneurship. Most start-ups require partnering with others. Where does that fall: collaboration or entrepreneurship? Both?
- Tracking innovation is harder than measuring entrepreneurship. Evaluating startups can be based on commercialization outcomes (e.g., job creation, earned capital). Evaluating innovation may involve tracking whether the people who participate embed it into their own teaching and the genesis of their research.

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C. What do we measure when we are talking about entrepreneurial activity? About innovation?

- There should be a fairly precise definition in order to know what is trying to be measured.
 - *“Innovation and entrepreneurship are two different things.”*
- Different disciplines will have vastly different measures.
 - *“There’s no Facebook that’s going to appear in my discipline, no new patented medicine.”*
- Success measures need to broaden beyond profit/money/income/revenue.
 - *“This should allow for—maybe encourage—failure. If ‘success’ is the only metric, there will be less E&I activity, particularly if there seems to be a penalty for ‘failure’.”*
- It is difficult to track less obvious indicators, such as the amount of hard work that goes into starting a company.
 - *“What is most important? The impact or the attempt?”*
- How can you quantify the impact of innovation? Does looking at patent applications and patents issued suffice, or maybe IP use of copyright?
- In fields that are applied science, the innovation might be in how an existing product or process is used, not necessarily an actual new patent.

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D. Needed resources include time, encouragement, incentives/rewards, and support systems.

- We must create a culture where people are willing to accept risk and embrace failure. Rewarding only success inhibits experimentation and exploration.
 - *"Metrics should consider smart failures."*
 - *"We need to nurture confidence in trying something different and not fear failure."*
- Entrepreneurship takes a lot of time and is not easy. Most start-ups fail. Time is a barrier when trying to start and grow a successful business and still take care of administrative responsibilities, teaching, and research.
- Support such as course releases, peer group access, and demonstrated endorsement by leadership are critical to enable bold moves.
- Entrepreneurial activities on campus are new activities and many policies and procedures that have been created over time are traditional and not well designed for the activities of today.

Themes



Identifying measures of success

How will we know whether to give someone a high rating in the area of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial activity, and innovation? What would they be doing or accomplishing if their work demonstrated excellence in E & I?

Data collected via online brainstorm tool, Ideaboardz

A. Financial/commercialization success

29 unique comments, 27 additional upvotes

- Financial commercialization/success was the largest theme by far to emerge from this session's Ideaboardz suggestions. Almost all of the suggestions grouped into one of six subtopics:
 - Funding/support brought in (8 comments) – focused on the amount of money a faculty member's venture brings in – either as investment raised or through sales.
 - Patent(s) applied for and/or received (6 comments) – suggested tracking the number of patents a faculty member applies for and receives.
 - Job creation (4 comments) – highlighted the economic impact of a venture; specifically, how many jobs are created as a result of the undertaking.
 - Number of inventions/products (3 comments) – suggested focusing on the number of inventions or products developed.
 - Creation of startups/companies (3 comments) – suggested focusing on the number of startups or companies a faculty member starts.
 - Viable business model/plan (2 comments) – highlighted the importance of a viable business plan or model.

Themes



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B. Impact

17 unique comments, 39 additional upvotes

- Impact was the second largest category of comments and focused on the extent to which a faculty member's entrepreneurial and innovative efforts have an impact on others. About half of the comments grouped into one of two subtopics:
 - Impact on students (5 comments) – spoke to what students would be able to accomplish as a result of the faculty member's venture.
 - Community/societal impact (5 comments) – pointed to impacts of a project on the larger community.

C. Involvement of or collaboration with students, colleagues, outside partners

5 unique comments, 5 additional upvotes

- This theme highlighted the importance of collaboration in entrepreneurial activities. Several comments mentioned mentoring, involving, and collaborating with students. Some comments also included collaboration with and mentoring of other faculty members, units, and outside partners.

D. Outside assessment/evaluation

4 unique comments, 5 additional upvotes

- These comments focused on outside assessment as a primary measure. One example given was letters of support from collaborators.

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E. Grants or sponsorships obtained

3 unique comments, 7 additional upvotes

- This theme suggested tracking the amount of money brought in through grants or sponsorships.

F. Recognition/visibility

3 unique comments, 5 additional upvotes

- This grouping of comments centered on the visibility of a faculty member's project (e.g., press coverage or awards earned).

G. Embedding innovation into teaching

3 unique comments, 2 additional upvotes

- This theme focused on the degree to which faculty members integrate innovation into their teaching and curriculum.

H. Success of implementation

3 unique comments, 1 additional upvotes

- This theme suggested that faculty members be evaluated on how successfully they implement their project (i.e., were objectives met?).

I. Metrics will need to be context and discipline specific

2 unique comments, 1 additional upvotes

- This group of comments expressed a sentiment that metrics will vary, depending on context and discipline, and units should be given the opportunity to define their own measures.

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J. Degree of risk

2 unique comments, 1 additional upvotes

- This small group of comments suggested evaluating the degree of risk a faculty member is willing to take in an entrepreneurial venture.

K. Scope/reach

2 unique comments, 0 additional upvotes

- These comments pointed to the scope and reach of a faculty member's work.

Notes

- There were 6 additional comments that did not fit into any of the listed themes.
- There was some conversation about the idea that innovation and entrepreneurial activity are not always tied together; some of the comments refer to both, others to one or the other.

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Themes from Chat

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

Several participants expressed appreciation and excitement for prioritizing E & I, tying it to APT and other incentives, and a broad conception including artists and a community focus.

Some highlighted challenges such as E & I *“are often the furthest afield from our traditional norms of scholarly culture”* and *“hard to define what constitutes I & E for everyone.”*

What is something that caught your attention today?

Comments here echoed sentiments of the need for definitions of these terms and their similarities and distinctions.