

### Overview & Top Lines

#### Obstacles to address



- At the beginning of most academic careers, faculty are taught to be individualistic (e.g., I need to be the author or lead researcher), thus a mindset/cultural shift to embrace collaborative work must occur—and change takes time.
- Junior faculty receive mixed messages about the importance of collaboration vs. individual scholarship and *“making a name for themselves.”*
  - *“You better publish independently otherwise a senior faculty member is going to take the credit.”*
- There are so many different ways to collaborate: Someone starts something—a research project, or a chapter, or an article—and someone finishes it. Or two or more may co-author as they go. Some collaborators may work “behind the scenes” yet be as essential to someone who is out front.

#### Indicators of success



- The four most prominent themes that emerged from the collection of ideas included almost half of all suggestions. These four themes were:
  - Impact
  - Positive working relationships among all collaborators
  - Diversity of people involved
  - Publications/Citations
- There was a general acknowledgement of the need to tailor indicators of success and metrics to the specific context and discipline(s) involved in the collaboration.
- A few shared some slight concern related to the difficulty of assigning credit for collaborative work as part of an evaluative process.

### Themes



#### What makes it difficult to evaluate collaborative work?

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 collaborative work into the evaluation and promotion process?

## A. Correct mechanisms for giving credit or evaluating

- It will be important not to adopt a *“one size fits all”* approach (collaboration is different from discipline to discipline).
  - *“I am in a unique position being compared to my peers; it’s not a one size fits all.”*
- How do you decipher individual contribution when working as part of a team or coalition, or with a grad student? Working in groups is necessary, but how do we get and give credit for the contributions that a particular person makes?
- There is an implied bias against someone who has co-authored but never been a sole author.
- Incentives are needed for individuals to contribute to a whole, so when it comes to recording impact and credit, they are not lost. A fear of not receiving fair credit for collaborating because of a lack of understanding among those evaluating may reduce willingness to collaborate.
  - *“Senior people don’t need another first author in publications. Junior faculty need the support.”* [This comment got several “thumbs up.”]
- Measurability is important and transparency about what those measures are (e.g., grants, number of people served or number of organizations included, Board service, credit for the time it takes to build collaborative relationships, value of impact).
  - *“Most of my work is collaborative, and sometimes it becomes a tension point—who owns the collaboration? Who’s paying?”*
  - *“People don’t put the same value/weight on an activity as you would (making collaboration subjective.)”*
- There are imbalances in valuing contributions, and it can be weighted differently depending on who the collaboration is with. Currently the quality of research is given higher value and less value is given to impact in communities. Likewise, practitioner and researcher contributions might not be weighted equally. The Extension Service is not valued as highly as laboratory work.
  - *“All of our work is collaborative, but junior researchers need to get credit as well as the senior researcher.”*
- Collaborative work should be an opportunity, not a mandate.
  - *“It is good to be rewarded for collaborative work, but you should not be ‘dinged’ if someone doesn’t have it.”*
  - *“Junior faculty should have the opportunity to say ‘no’ to collaboration.”*

## Themes



### What makes it difficult to evaluate collaborative work?

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 collaborative work into the evaluation and promotion process?

## B. Different types of collaboration have different challenges

- Collaboration may not be the traditional writing or publishing, but more practice-based, and program development-based. All forms of collaboration should have an impact on the promotion review.
  - *"We do teaching collaborations occasionally;" "It is definitely not LESS work than solo teaching."*
  - *"Supporting graduate students is a collaborative endeavor."*
- There are two types of collaborative work: scholar to scholar, and scholar to external person or entity. External partnerships and applied partnerships in the community should be valued more in the evaluation process.
  - Outside collaborative work means *"putting your professional life in the hands of people who aren't academics and may not be on the same timeline."*
  - *"Do we distinguish between collaboration as part of our duties, collaboration as part of the review criteria, and collaboration as inherent in providing services to the community?"*
- When working with external communities, faculty often have to step back so as not to appear to be out in front of the local community.
  - *"How do you maintain internal recognition of contributions if we appear to be in back of the external community?"*
- Also, when working with external communities, there is effort expended to make projects sustainable, to go beyond those immediately involved to make sure there is sustainable institutional engagement.

## Themes



### What makes it difficult to evaluate collaborative work?

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 collaborative work into the evaluation and promotion process?

## C. Collaboration varies by discipline

- The expected or accepted level of collaboration varies by discipline.
  - *“In English and humanities, research collaboration is rare.”*
- Differences exist in how grants are handled, a *“great unevenness”* on how collaborative projects are handled.
- In research publication, authorship order and who is included in the list varies. There are different conventions in different disciplines in the ordering of authors. Different disciplines have different criteria; evaluators need to be familiar with the other disciplines and what success or impact means in that field.
  - *“Single author and multiple author publications should ‘count’ the same. The percent of effort is really not reflective of the contribution.”*
  - *“What is the message of who we include in the author list, and does it reinforce the value we place on collaboration if we do not give some (i.e., those who gathered the data) credit?”*

## D. Expanded institutional resources

- There are institutional barriers to collaboration that need to be lowered, and University resources should be used to build mechanisms to enhance collaborative work. A central place for finding potential partners doing related or similar work would be helpful, and incentive structures such as [MPower](#) should be expanded. The software available to manage collaboration can be inadequate.

## Themes



### **Identifying measures of success**

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

Data collected via online brainstorm tool, Ideaboardz

## **A. Impact**

- The largest grouping of comments centered on measuring the impact of a collaborative project. There were variations in the methods people suggested for measuring impact, which included comparing results to the stated goals, soliciting community and/or peer evaluations, and noting products developed, among others.

## **B. Positive working relationships among all collaborators**

- The second largest theme that emerged highlighted the importance of strong working relationships among all people involved in the collaboration. Some specific indicators mentioned in this group of comments were established feedback processes, effective teamwork, strong relationships, and trust, among others.

## **C. Diversity of people involved**

- This collection of comments focused on the diversity of collaborators involved in the project, promoting the significance of involving people with a breadth of backgrounds, experiences, areas of expertise, etc.

## **D. Publications and citations**

- This group of suggestions promoted tracking the number of co-authored publications and citations. Some comments specifically mentioned valuing publications outside one's own discipline.

## Themes



### Identifying measures of success

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

Data collected via online brainstorm tool, Ideaboardz

## E. Depends on the context and discipline

- This theme acknowledged the need to tailor indicators of success and metrics to the specific context and discipline(s) involved in the collaboration.

## F. Inclusion of mentoring relationships with students and/or junior faculty

- The comments in this theme concentrated on mentoring relationships and promoted the idea of tracking the degree to which faculty members mentored students and/or junior faculty as part of the collaborative process.

## G. Sustained partnership

- This group of comments focused on the longevity and sustainability of collaborative partnerships and argued for giving more credit to those that are longer lasting.

## H. Funding for collaborative projects

- Funding was the focus of this collection of ideas. Participants suggested looking at successful collaborative grant applications, specifically mentioning joint pursuits of external funding.

## I. Clearly defined goals

- These comments centered on the extent to which the collaborators have worked to articulate clear goals together.

## Themes



### Identifying measures of success

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

Data collected via online brainstorm tool, Ideaboardz

## J. External review

- This theme promoted the practice of external review as a means for determining the level of success of a collaboration. Participants argued that collaborators and partners should be involved in the evaluative process.

## K. Leadership in collaborative projects

- This group of suggestions pointed to faculty members' role in collaborative projects and tracking whether they have leadership roles with the group of collaborators.

## L. Relevance

- These comments related to the relevance of the collaborative project. Specifically, participants noted the relevance to community needs and challenges, to strategic priorities at the University, and to the goals of the research, among other things.

## M. How will we assign credit?

- These comments spoke to the concern some faculty have about how credit will be assigned as collaborative work is evaluated.

## N. New collaborations

- This collection of ideas concerned how many new connections are forged through a collaborative effort; building new relationships and expanding existing networks was the focus here.

# Provost Faculty Promotion Dialogue | March 8, 2022

## Collaborative Work

### Themes



#### Identifying measures of success

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

Data collected via online brainstorm tool, Ideaboardz

### Notes

- There were additional comments that did not fit into any of the listed themes.
- Overall, there was general enthusiasm for the concept of including collaborative work in the evaluation and promotion process, coupled with a realization that deciding how to assign credit and measure these types of partnerships will be complex and difficult.
- Several groups discussed the importance of focusing on different elements of the process of building and sustaining collaborative partnerships, not just focusing on the outcomes.

# Provost Faculty Promotion Dialogue | March 8, 2022

## Collaborative Work



### Themes from Chat

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

Many expressed excitement and positivity that collaborative work is being discussed and recognized. Additionally, several referenced challenges and raised questions such as:

- *"What is the definition of collaboration? What is the scope?"*
- *"It is hard to unpack participation and impact, especially for difficult and complex projects."*
- *"Collaborative work is how anything BIG gets done, but how to share the credit is tricky."*
- *"Important goals. Reward systems are often disciplinary rather than transdisciplinary/multidisciplinary."*

#### **What is something that caught your attention today?**

Some noted an awareness of differences across disciplines:

- *"Thinking about collaboration is a bigger leap in some disciplines than in others."*
- *"Some of the suggestions being made were things that were already the norm in my unit; so maybe much of what is needed is for departments that already have a strong history of collaboration to share best practices."*

Cautions were raised:

- *"I worry that this may bring on more work to track and keep track of all these additional metrics."*
- *"It is difficult to consistently characterize, quantify, and compare different collaborative projects."*
- *"Collaboration is a value but not a requirement."*

Finally, several referenced the need for infrastructure and resource support:

- It is *"critical to the sustainability of interdisciplinary research centers"* that we outline *"how research centers can contribute to these collaborations and be included in DRIF allocation."*
- *"A lot of us feel limited by existing structures, facilities such as the annual review software etc. Hopefully the silos, hierarchies, structures can change...."*