



Aligning Tenure and Promotion Procedures for Community-University Engagement: Dialogue for Action

Edward T. Jackson, Karen Schwartz and Peter Andree
Carleton University

Introduction

One of the major challenges to the growing movement for community-university engagement is the nature of traditional academic tenure and promotion (T&P) procedures, which tends to reward disengagement. In Canada, it is time for a thorough discussion by those most affected by this barrier—university faculty members and their community allies—to examine the various dimensions of this challenge, and of potential ways forward.

Levering New Networks and Publications

For new and mid-career academics seeking tenure or promotion, it is helpful that there is an array of new academic networks that organize conferences and sponsor peer-reviewed publications on the substance of community-university engagement. The Community University Exposition (CUExpo), the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning, the pan-Canadian Community-Based Research Network, *the Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, Action Research* and *Manifestation* offer engaged scholars and activists new collaborative, presentation and publishing opportunities.

Applying the Two-Track Approach

And, at the same time, some potential models exist already with regard to the T&P process *per se*. In some extension, medical and public-health schools in the United States, a two-track approach is employed: one for more traditional scholarly production and the other more attuned to community outreach activities and results (see, for example, Jones & Gold, 2001). More generally, in the professions—notably, health, education, law, and social work—engagement with external constituencies carries a higher value in T&P assessments. However, many disciplinary-based departments and faculties in the social sciences, as well as in the natural sciences and engineering, remain almost entirely driven by the more traditional T&P criteria of publications in what are deemed “high-quality” scholarly journals and book presses.

Re-conceptualizing Scholarship

At a more fundamental level, efforts are underway in some quarters to re-conceptualize scholarship itself. Boyer (1996; 1990) argues that scholarship entails four inter-related dimensions: discovery, integration, application and teaching. For its part, community-based learning integrates, rather than isolates, all four aspects (Ahmed et al, 2004). Likewise, community-based research is a collaborative, cross-disciplinary, integrating process (Maurana et al, 2001). In the field of public health, a new term—*community-engaged scholarship*—is being actively applied by some schools for T&P purposes. In fact, the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health initiative has published the Community Engaged Scholarship Tool Kit to guide universities in assessing academic performance that generates new knowledge, advances professional practice or achieves a balance between the two. Originality of thought and effective dissemination of knowledge are essential criteria in any assessment of these three streams of production. The Tool Kit helps faculty members to prepare a portfolio to showcase their service-engaged scholarship for promotion.

Broadening the Peer Review Process

In addition, new ways of broadening the peer-review process have been developed, again with the health field leading the way. Portland State University, for instance, requires the evaluation by peers—and validation through other credible sources of information—of all community-based activity outcomes presented by professors in the T&P process. Community participation in the peer review process is viewed as essential in judging the quality, productivity and impact of outputs from community engagement. Taking this issue to a higher level, the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (2005) proposes that a *national board* be established in the US to facilitate a peer review process of community-engaged scholarship by faculty members seeking promotion. A similar recommendation has been advanced for Canada (Flicker and Savan, 2006).

Recognizing the Specificity of Institutional Contexts

Each institution has its own organizational model and culture, resulting in a unique set of challenges and opportunities in the recognition and valuation of community-engaged teaching, research and service. In the case of Carleton University, policy-document review and interviews with key actors in T&P processes indicate that the collective bargaining agreement is a central factor in faculty career advancement. While the Carleton approach provides for considerable flexibility for individuals in a range of disciplines to speak to their strengths in community-engaged performance, there are, nonetheless, concerns about how those efforts are evaluated by the relevant committees at the departmental, Faculty and university-wide levels. For example, community-service learning may be welcomed as a pedagogical innovation, but the extra time CSL requires can reduce the time available to the applicant to, say, produce peer-reviewed journal articles, which has been more highly valued by T&P committees. One solution to this would be to attach a higher value to CSL courses in evaluating a teaching dossier. However, excelling beyond a “baseline” of teaching performance does not necessarily help a candidate applying for tenure or promotion. Another option is to focus on the issue of workload. The collective agreement at Carleton already has an appendix that recognizes the added workload associated with teaching televised courses. This appendix could provide the framework for negotiations over the added workload involved in undertaking CSL.

Conclusion

There is much, therefore, to be done at the level of the individual institution (see Stein, 2007). An ongoing community of practice on community university engagement and tenure and promotion would enable faculty members and their community allies to learn from each other and disseminate effective innovations and practices. At the national level, many networks should be mobilized to examine possible solutions, including CACSL, CBRN, CUExpo, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and others. The challenge of tenure and promotion procedures should not be permitted to unduly limit the growth of the movement for community-university engagement in Canada. A dialogue for action on this issue should be launched and sustained until this obstacle is permanently removed.

References

- Ahmed, S. M., B. Beck, C. A. Maurana and G. Newton. (2004). Overcoming barriers to effective community-based participatory research in U.S. medical schools. *Education for Health*, 17(2), 141-151.
- Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship Reconsidered*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Boyer, E. L. (1996). The scholarship of engagement. *Journal of Public Service and Outreach*, 1(1), 11-20.
- Community-Campus Partnerships for Health. (2005). *Linking Scholarship and Communities: Report of the Commission on Community-Engaged Scholarship in the Health Professions*. Seattle, Washington.
- Community-Campus Partnerships for Health. (Undated). *Community Engaged Scholarship Tool Kit*. Seattle, Washington. (depts.washington.edu/ccph/toolkit.html).
- Flicker, S. and B. Savan. (2006). *A Snapshot of CBR in Canada*. Wellesley Institute, Toronto.
- Jones, R. F. and J. S. Gold. (2001). The present and future of appointment, tenure, and compensation policies for medical school clinical faculty. *Academic Matters*, 76(10), 993-1004.
- Maurana, C. A., M. Wolff, B. J. Beck and D.E. Simpson. (2001). Working with our communities: Moving from service to scholarship in the health profession. *Education for Health*, 14(2), 207-220.
- Portland State University. (Undated). *Promotion and Tenure Code*. Portland. (oaa.pdx.edu/PromotionAndTenureGuidelines).
- Stein, J. G. (2007). The university as citizen. *Academic Matters*, October, 6-8.