Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Civic Engagement and the Tenure Review Process

March 20, 2013
12:00 – 1:30 PM EST
Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Civic Engagement and the Tenure Review Process

*Jordan Karubian*
Recipient, 2012 Ernest A. Lynton Award

Assistant Professor for the Scholarship of Engagement for Early Career Faculty
Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
Tulane University

NEW ENGLAND RESOURCE CENTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
Where the Rubber Meets the Road:
Civic Engagement and the Tenure Review Process

If you get disconnected and are having problems getting reconnected, you should call

617-287-7740

and George Luke will guide you.

If you are successfully connected and need technical support, you should use the "CHAT" function to send a message to the NERCHE WEBINAR HOST.
Where the rubber meets the road: civic engagement and the tenure review process

NERCHE Virtual Think Tank Series
March 20, 2013
Jordan Karubian
Outline of presentation

• Overview of contemporary trends in engaged scholarship

• The importance of, and challenges associated with, promotion and tenure procedures

• Case study from Tulane University

• Points for further discussion
Overview

• A growing sentiment that U.S. colleges and universities should and must aggressively and creatively engage society’s most pressing challenges.

• In response, there is an increased focus on civic engagement and engaged scholarship in many institutions of higher learning, and the groups that fund and evaluate them.
Attributes of Engaged Scholarship

- **Two-way street:** Scholarship serves a community need and is done *with* rather than *for or on* a community.

- **Value added:** Often *improves the quality* of scholarly activity by embracing and building on the organic and iterative nature of knowledge generation.

- **A rich history:** Not a new concept – used to be an integral part of the university mission (e.g., Agricultural extensions at land grant universities).
A renewed focus on engagement

• **Federal funding agencies** (e.g., National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health) ‘broader impacts’.

• **Institutional accreditation boards** and groups that classify higher education institutions (e.g., the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching).

• **Colleges and universities** have undertaken innovative efforts to reinvigorate civic engagement and promote engaged scholarship among their faculty.
A Core Challenge: Promotion & Tenure

• How to expand our understanding of the traditional review categories of research, teaching, and service to reflect achievements and successes in the area of public engagement?

• How to weight faculty engagement relative to more traditional scholarly activities / approaches?

• These are difficult questions with no easy answers.

• In my opinion, the way in which they are addressed will ultimately determine the degree to which universities respond to the perceived need for increased engagement.
A case study: Tulane University

• A private university with 6,000 undergraduates and active graduate and professional programs.

• Traditional focus has been research excellence

• Post-Katrina Mission: “To create, communicate and conserve knowledge in order to enrich the capacity of individuals, organizations and communities to think, to learn and to act and lead with integrity and wisdom.”

• Branding: “Giving back to the community isn’t just a slogan at Tulane – it is part of our DNA.” (from university website)
Tulane: The times are a changin’...

- **Top down:** President, Provost, and University leadership are committed to engagement.

- **Bottom up:** Students choose Tulane because of the commitment to engagement; quality of students has increased significantly.

- **Curriculum:** Public Service Graduation Requirement, Social Entrepreneurship minor, student grants and opportunities

- **Investment:** Center for Public Service (CPS), Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching (CELT), Endowed Social Entrepreneurship Professorships
...Or are they?

• Active resistance or indifference from many Associate and Full Professors

• These individuals sit on Promotion and Tenure Committees and play a lead role in hiring decisions and mentoring incoming faculty, as well as graduate students, post-docs, etc.

• This leads to mixed messages and may dis-incentivize pre-tenure faculty to pursue engaged scholarly activities.
Tulane Today

• Tulane is currently involved in an effort to establish P&T guidelines that acknowledge engagement.

• The following statement is being debated at the University level:

• Tulane University is committed to engagement across scholarship, research, creative activity, and teaching. Engagement lies at the core of the university’s mission and catalyzes the accomplishments of its faculty. Therefore, the university is committed to supporting all scholars, including those who participate in publicly engaged knowledge generation that advances community and other external partnerships, addresses critical societal issues, and contributes to the public good.
Considerations & Points for Discussion

• The “excellence” of all scholarship/creative activity should be assessed on the basis of general attributes (clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, significant results, effective presentation). In what ways does our evaluation of engaged scholarship differ from more traditional activities?

• Do we need to expand our definition of what constitutes an academic product (e.g., a report to a community group) in order to adequately accommodate engaged scholarly? If so, how to evaluate the quality of these products?

• Solutions will need to be discipline-specific: Engagement in scholarship/creative activity will inevitably take different forms in various schools and disciplines, making it unlikely that a single “one-size fits all solution will emerge”.

Acknowledgements

• Tulane Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Review and Engagement: Michael Cunningham, Psychology/CELT; T.R. Johnson, English; Nghana Lewis, English; Ana López, Communication/Office of Academic Affairs and Provost; Susann Lusnia, Classics; Beretta Shomade-Smith, Communication

• Tulane colleagues: Michael Bernstein (Provost), Agnieszka Nance and Vincent Ilustre (Center for Public Service)

• John Saltmarsh and NERCHE staff
Readings


Where the Rubber Meets the Road:
Civic Engagement and the Tenure Review Process

Thank you for your participation!

For a recording of today’s session and information on future webinars in the 2013 NERCHE Virtual Think Tank Series, please visit our website at:

http://www.nerche.org