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Embedding the Scholarship of Engagement at a Regional University

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Abstract

Despite receiving growing international recognition and regard, the scholarship of engagement remains undervalued internally at academic institutions, especially in relation to career development and academic promotion. This form of scholarship presents difficulties relating to evaluation, assessment, and evidencing that are not generally present in the traditional scholarships of learning and teaching, research, and governance and service. Thus, scholarly engagement work is often not valued or rewarded by promotional bodies, and a gap is appearing between the career development opportunities, promotion, and probation outcomes of engaged scholars and those who focus on more traditionally recognized scholarly outcomes. To combat this, the University of Wollongong has undertaken a project that aims to embed the scholarship of engagement as a scholarly *method of doing*. This approach involves applying new and reformulated promotions guidelines to traditional scholarships in a way intended to remove barriers to promotion for "engaged scholars."

Introduction

The scholarship of engagement ("engagement") entails many recognized benefits generally unachievable through more traditional scholarly methods (*Boyer, 1996; Kellett & Goldstein, 1999; McCormack, 2011*). Yet engagement continues to have a slow take-up as an esteemed area of academic work within higher education institutions, being consistently overlooked, undervalued, and unrewarded as an area of scholarship (*Jaeger & Thornton, 2006; Macfarlane, 2007; Maurana, Wolff, Beck, & Simpson, 2001; Rudd, 2007; Ward, 2005*). This has certainly been the case at the University of Wollongong (a large regional Australian university), where a recent review of existing promotion and probation documentation and practices revealed a perceived lack of recognition and understanding surrounding this form of scholarship. Discussions between the authors and academics at other Australian universities, as well as a perusal of relevant documentation regarding reward and recognition across the nation, suggested that this is not an isolated issue.

These findings led to an undertaking by a project team within the University of Wollongong's then Faculty of Health and Behavioural Science (now known as Science, Medicine, and Health) to attempt to change the way that engagement was regarded and understood institutionally, both by the academics that utilized it and the probations and promotions committees that assessed its value. An important aspect of this process was developing higher levels of internal recognition of engagement that would promote it as a legitimate form of scholarship instead of a conception of service or volunteerism. Not only would the work of engaged scholars receive recognition, it would be further advanced by the creation of promotional equality with work in the more traditionally recognized areas of learning and teaching, research, and governance and service. By promoting such equality, the project team aimed for the only criteria for assessing the credibility of applications for probation or promotion to be excellence, creativity, innovation, and impact.

Through research and consultation, the path to academic legitimacy for engagement was ultimately determined to be in embedding the scholarship in new promotions documents as a *scholarly method of doing* the more traditional scholarships of learning and teaching, research, and governance and service. Thus, engagement ceased to be an isolated fourth scholarship and became a scholarly and esteemed method of performing the three traditionally recognized areas of scholarship. This acknowledges that engagement is not a restrictive, separate form of scholarship but instead cuts across other areas, involving different aspects of learning and teaching, research, and governance and service but with a focus on reciprocal and mutually beneficial community relationships and partnerships. This revised approach to the recognition and role of engagement at the University of Wollongong was undertaken during and in conjunction with the creation of an academic performance framework (APF). After an extensive process of research and consultation, the newly implemented APF now articulates engagement as a way of doing scholarly work, thus encouraging engaged scholars to seek acknowledgment of their engaged activities without a sense of disadvantage.

This article describes the process undertaken by the project team, illustrates the format with which engagement has been embedded into the promotions documentation, and identifies useful future areas for improvement and research. It is intended to inform and support like-minded people at other universities who may seek improved recognition for engagement at their institutions.

Background to the "Scholarship of Engagement"

After the initial discovery of the issues facing engaged scholars at the university, a project team was developed to review the scholarship and initiate necessary changes to enhance the legitimacy and recognition of their work. The team's ultimate aim was to increase and expand understanding of engagement at the university—moving away from philosophies of volunteerism, for example, and instead recognizing it as scholarly work, capable of providing demonstrable impact and outcomes. The goal was increasing the likelihood that the work of engaged academics would be recognized formally via reward and recognition systems. As a first step, the project team undertook a broad literature review with the aim of capturing the current philosophies and approaches to engagement and any successful approaches that had been taken to foster recognition and reward for such work (*Smith, Else, & Crookes, 2013*). This literature review would act as the groundwork for later internal consultations and discussions relating to engagement and its role within the university.

Because a broad base of literature has emerged since Boyer's definitive work *Scholarship Reconsidered: The Priorities of the Professoriate* (*Boyer, 1990*) and his later article "The Scholarship of Engagement" (*Boyer, 1996*), which has in many ways defined the current view of scholarly engagement, it was important that the literature review cover as many perspectives as possible. An initial search yielded 295 sources, which a subsequent review process reduced to 66 that were examined and utilized. Recurring themes in the literature that reflected the issues apparent at the university included concerns that surrounded understanding the actual purpose and concept of engagement, ensuring the availability of mechanisms to achieve legitimate evidencing and assessment of the scholarship, and establishing that engagement work is valued and rewarded.

There has been a great disparity among universities and academics internationally as to what definition of *engagement* should be used in a university's mission. Although different definitions of *engaged scholarship* abound throughout the literature (*Bloomfield, 2005; Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2015; Holland, 2005; Le Clus, 2011; Maurana et al., 2001; Wise, Retzleff, & Reilly, 2002*), it is important that an institution be able to settle on a single definition that reflects its particular context and needs in order to build upon it in a meaningful and structured way. Some authors have also noted that standardizing the definition would benefit the field of engagement more widely (*O'Meara, Sandmann, Saltmarsh, & Giles,*

2011). As a result of the review, the project team eventually settled upon the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's (*2015*) definition of engagement as "[T]he collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities … for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" *(p. 2)*. This is a simpler definition of engagement than many of those currently employed, and its strength lies in its emphasis on organic partnerships between communities and the university for mutual benefit rather than a top-down (from the university) approach. This definition resonates with the type of engagement work the University of Wollongong already undertakes as an engaged local partner, and it reflects the value the university places on knowledge partnerships that help communities (local and beyond) solve their own problems.

The literature identified another significant issue: the hurdles that engaged scholars encounter in relation to measuring, assessing, and tracking their work. As an area of scholarship that is inherently collaborative and based on reciprocal community partnerships, engagement does not generally produce the same recognized outcomes and outputs as more conventional scholarships. This issue has generated substantial barriers regarding promotions for engaged scholars as they struggle to produce the measurable forms of evidence (such as publication and revenue generation) that are widely accepted and valued by recognition and promotions committees (*Lunsford & Omae, 2011*). Many measurement tools and processes have been proposed to help foster academic legitimacy through evidencing (*Boyer, 1996; Furco, 2002; Garlick & Langworthy, 2008; Gelmon, Seifer, Kaiper Brown, & Mikkelson, 2005; B. Holland, 1997; Rudd, 2007*) and have even been put into practice at institutions (*Adams, Badenhorst, & Berman, 2005; Arden, Cooper, & McLachlan, 2007; Bringle, Hatcher, Hamilton, & Young, 2001; Garlick & Langworthy, 2008; Holland, 2001a, 2001b; Wise et al., 2002*). However, no one system has emerged that appears to definitively provide a recognizable process of measuring, tracking, and assessing engaged work. Without any effective, recognized system in place, universities have tended not to acknowledge such work in their promotion processes, leaving engaged scholarship to go unrewarded and in many cases discouraged by senior staff (*Jaeger & Thornton, 2006*), even though the community expects public universities to engage in this type of activity.

This literature review revealed to the project team that if universities cannot reward those who choose to engage with their communities, these institutions will soon be unable to employ such practitioners or encourage any of the existing faculty into engaged

work. Even if they have an interest in engagement, faculty must pay attention to their own career paths and pursue rewarded areas (*Maurana et al., 2001*). Ward (*2003*) suggests that in order to make engagement a more legitimate academic pathway and a viable academic activity, it must be treated "in the same way that research always has been and teaching is increasingly being" *(p. 2)*. However, before engaged work can be recognized and rewarded, it must be institutionalized (*Holland, 2009*) and "embedded as a core institutional value" (*Saltmarsh, Giles, Ward, & Buglione, 2009, p. 25)* so that there is an explicit and irrefutable career path for those who wish to engage with their communities in meaningful scholarly ways. This institutionalization can occur in a variety of ways, and this regional university adopted the approach that has been championed by Professor Barbara Holland—embedding engagement *as a method of doing scholarship* (*Holland, 2009*).

Institutional Context

The University of Wollongong is a public research university located in one of Australia's largest regional city centers. There are over 2,000 academic staff and as of 2015, there were 31,464 students enrolled, including 12,811 international students representing 143 nationalities (*University of Wollongong, 2015*). The University of Wollongong is ranked in the top 2% of universities in the world, has a five-star QS World University Ranking, and is also ranked as one of Australia's best modern universities *(University of Wollongong, 2014a).* There are five primary "super-faculties" in the institution: Business; Engineering and Information Sciences; Law, Humanities, and the Arts; Science, Medicine, and Health; and Social Sciences. Until recently, probation and promotion processes were centralized at the university. Devolved systems were instituted in 2014, with five faculty-based committees being set up to make decisions about probation and promotion up to the level of senior lecturer and to make recommendations to a central committee regarding promotions to associate professor and full professor.

In terms of engagement, the university has a community engagement team that primarily supports engagement activities across the university. This support includes running the Community Engagement Grants Scheme (which has granted $450,000 across 50 projects since 2005) and the Community Engagement Awards (*University of Wollongong, 2014b*). The university also runs the Collaborative Communities Network (CCN), which is an online community for members to connect with the university "to share ideas, request feedback and engage with issues

of importance to our community" (*University of Wollongong, 2014c, "Collaborative Communities Network," para. 1*). The university's focus of engagement at present is thus essentially on business linkages, its alumni, and the environment, not "engaged academia" more broadly.

Methodology

Discovering the Issue

The issues surrounding engagement at this university did not become fully apparent until the probation and promotion review project was initiated in early 2011. This early project was not based around engagement specifically but had been set up to review wider promotions processes at the university to ascertain what aspects of the documentation and process needed to be revised. Although the interviews undertaken in relation to this review project were not expressly aimed at engagement, they nevertheless captured a stark need for internal review into the issues that emerged around that scholarship.

Initially, 28 academic, professional, and administrative staff at the university were interviewed, including the director of the Dubai campus and the deputy vice chancellor (academic). All of those interviewed had been involved in the central probation and/or promotion committees of the university for some years, and thus were expected to have useful insights into what the university values as a basis for probation or promotion. For consistency, all the interviews were conducted by one of the project leaders. The interviews revolved around a series of open-ended questions regarding the interviewee's expectations and ideas of scholarly performance within each of the four areas of scholarly activity that existed at the university at that time: research, learning and teaching, governance and service, and community engagement (CE). The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each interview was subsequently listened to several times and then analyzed by a pair of people from the project team. In this way, themes and key points of data emerged and were agreed upon collectively. The data was then taken back to groups of the interviewees, wherein they were asked if they felt their views had been represented correctly. They confirmed that this was so. Thus, although this process was not in the strictest sense a research project, it was undertaken in a scholarly and rigorous fashion. This article relays how research can be conducted as part of an organic institutional process, in

this case reviewing promotions and probation guidelines. These moments are organic and important as a means to advance the cause of engaged academia. We chose to seize the moment offered by the probation and promotions review to do this.

It is important to note that at the time, this university structured its promotions processes around a ranking system, which meant that every academic applying for probation or promotion had to assign their work foci a rank of 1–4 based on their level of involvement with each area of work. For example, a heavily research-focused academic would typically rank their work as research (1), learning and teaching (2), governance and service (3), and community engagement (4). As will be seen, engagement was almost always ranked 4 (the lowest).

Based on this promotions structure, the interview questions given to the academics were related to what references to scholarly activities they would generally expect to see from someone who wanted to rank a particular area of their work as a 1 or 2 (meaning this was one of their primary foci). Despite the endemic understanding at the university that engagement would never be ranked higher than 3 or 4 in a promotional bid, each interviewee was asked, "What sort of scholarly and professional activity would you expect to see if someone wanted to rank engagement as 1 or 2 at the various levels?" The responses to this question alerted the promotions review team to the serious issues that needed to be considered around the role of the scholarship of engagement and how it was regarded, understood, assessed, and ultimately rewarded at the university.

Although some of the interviewees expressed an interest in making engagement "more than just a mention at the end of a career development form or promotion application," they exhibited a significantly negative response regarding the likelihood of promotional success for an individual with an engagement focus. Out of the 28 interviewees, 15 openly expressed a belief that there was a "scholarship of research bias" within the university (expressing opinions that research, as it is traditionally conceptualized—i.e., original discovery and related outputs—was most highly valued in promotions), and 13 participants also stated that non-traditional scholars, such as those who would consider ranking engagement higher than a 3 or 4, struggle to get promoted. One of the higher level management academics stated that engagement "is not recognized or rewarded; it is appreciated, which is not the same thing." Another eight participants revealed a belief that engagement was not internally recognized by probation or promotion committees,

with three individuals stating that they felt engagement work was not encouraged in the university by senior staff.

Six participants explained the lack of support for engaged scholars by arguing that both the probation and promotion committees and those attempting to base their own promotions case on engagement manifested a general misunderstanding of the actual purpose and function of the scholarship. One interviewee stated, "I think it is nonsense how it is described. You know, it is really the filler, I mean some people put that they are members of the Guide Dog Association." There was also the perception that the scholarship of governance and service overlapped with engagement, with six participants stating that this made it difficult to understand either as an area of scholarship. Another eight interviewees acknowledged "evidence" as a key concern related to engagement work, stating that they felt engaged scholarship needed to produce visible impact and outcomes, with one individual claiming that engagement needs to provide "some hard evidence."

Despite these issues, the general attitude toward actual engagement work was positive, with six participants arguing that engagement should be encouraged because of the benefits that it produces in relation to the community, staff, and students. One academic interviewed argued that a greater involvement in engagement created "better teaching academics"; another stated that engagement is in fact "why staff are at the University."

From the results of these interviews, it was starkly apparent that the scholarship of engagement at the university was perceived as unclear, undervalued, unrewarded, and lacking esteem. Lack of clarity also appeared to compound the latter three issues as it led to poor evidence being generated by individuals, which in turn led to reduced promotional outcomes and low academic esteem. Drawing on the evidence from these interviews and the literature review, the project team decided to develop an "embedded" approach to engagement for academic promotion as a way to overcome the existing tokenistic approach and to demonstrate the real value with which the university should regard this work.

Embedding Engagement

An internationally recognized engaged scholar, Barbara Holland, was a major contributor to the project surrounding the reinvigoration of engagement at the University of Wollongong. Her institutionalization approach was chosen in view of the extensive literature highlighting its effectiveness (*Smith et al., 2013*). This

method, which involved bringing the work of engaged scholars into the core of university work, was highly applicable to the University of Wollongong, as the evidence had shown that engagement was often sidelined due to being seen as an extraneous or "add-on" activity. Acting as a consultant, Holland illustrated that the clearest path to the institutionalization of engagement was through embedding it within the other three existing scholarships. She stressed that engagement is not a third-stream activity and is instead *a way of performing* such existing university activities as research, learning and teaching, and governance and service. In her published work, she argues that when engagement becomes successfully embedded within research, teaching, and service, it is an indication of the successful diffusion of an idea, which shows that it "has moved from the margins of the institution to its core" (*Holland, 2009*, *p. 85)*. In relation to achieving institutionalization, Holland has recognized the need for intentionality within already existing university documents and processes, both formal and informal, that embeds engagement within core academic work. She has stated that "recognition of the role of engagement in both teaching and research is important to faculty achievement and professional recognition and therefore would be valuable in advancing institutionalization" (*p. 95)*.

In order to achieve this at the University of Wollongong, engagement had to be explicitly and clearly embedded in the new APF—the university guideline document that expressly lays out the expectations of scholarly activities and performance by academic staff at different career levels. This document is now used by staff as the basis for probation or promotion applications and thus is intimately related to the way they structure and evidence their work, as well as the way that they understand how the areas of scholarship are recognized and valued by the university. Embedding engagement in the APF documentation consequently involved extensive consultation and drafting in order to achieve an outcome that upheld the academic legitimacy of the scholarship and maintained it as *a method of doing* that could be usefully employed by engaged scholars at the university.

As a first step in the embedding process, the project team had to decide on a definition of engagement and (as discussed previously) settled on that created by the Carnegie Foundation (*Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2015*). This decision was based on the clarity of the definition and its applicability to the university and its existing mission statement, which asserts an inten-

tion to "enrich all our regional communities through a strong and connected presence" (*UOW, 2012, "Our Purpose"*).

To come to a greater understanding of how engagement could be embedded within the existing scholarships, it was necessary to establish what sort of work and activities (within the different areas of scholarship) are considered as employing an *engaged* method directly relatable to the definition of engagement. Articulating and outlining such activities was considered necessary to support faculty in differentiating between engaged work and non-engaged work, as a lack of clear articulation would compound the confusion that already generally abounded around engagement. The following are some of the activities that were identified as scholarly engaged work through a process of internal consultation with selected faculty in a workshop with Professor Holland (along with input from the existing literature):

- *Engaged learning and teaching:* Structured learning activities that help students develop skills of the discipline/profession; teaching and learning activities that meet identified community needs; the creation and/or maintenance of sustainable community partnerships; the creation of teaching resources and curriculum design related to local issues and communities; student involvement in the education experience; publishing on issues, outcomes, and research related to engaged teaching and learning.
- *Engaged research:* Engaged research on topics and questions related to community needs and opportunities (local, national, international); the creation and/or maintenance of sustainable community research partnerships; the involvement of students in research projects; disseminating information on issues, outcomes, and impact of community-based research.
- *Engaged governance and service:* Engaged leadership within the university, external engagement representing the university, representation and organizational work (both internal and external) in the discipline and profession, external communication such as public lectures and interaction with the media, clinical placement coordination, service to the discipline through engaged partnerships, collaborative project administration, and engaged program and initiative development.

These scholarly activities were used to inform the changes to the APF that have now been implemented. These changes in the fields of research, learning and teaching, and governance and service have embedded engagement within the format of each remaining scholarship, effectively moving engagement from an isolated fourth stream to *a method of doing*.

Results

The Academic Performance Framework

The new and revised APF was approved by the vice chancellor on January 30, 2014. Within the new APF are several specific changes regarding embedding engagement that aim to increase promotional equality of outcomes among scholars at the university and address key barriers in promotions for "engaged academics."

The first and most obvious change relating to engagement is that the rankings methodology (as discussed previously) was amended to include three options instead of four, thus removing engagement as a separate fourth scholarship. In the new documentation, engagement has been embedded as *a method of doing* within the Performance Evidence outlines of the three remaining scholarships. The introduction to the APF states:

> Embedded within each of the core areas of academic work is the dimension of engagement. Staff should provide evidence of how their work in each area connects actively with industry, professional groups, or community partners for their mutual benefit. (*UOW Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor, 2014, p. 2)*

In this new framework, there are three core scholarship areas: *research, learning and teaching,* and *governance and service*. Within each of these sections, the expectations of performance for academics, from Level 1 to Level 4, are outlined individually. In this new system, applicants for probation or promotion no longer rank their activities; instead, they are expected to demonstrate that they meet criteria commensurate with the grade in which they are seeking confirmation or the one to which they are seeking promotion. Within each level, there are a number of expectations that illustrate the types of activities that should be undertaken within that scholarship, as well as explicit expectations that applicants demonstrate the impact of their engaged work. This is where the scholarship of engagement can effectively be found to have been

embedded. Engagement is now embedded across all four levels in *research, learning and teaching,* and *governance and service.* Figure 1 illustrates where engagement can be found within the APF for a promotion applicant at a certain level.

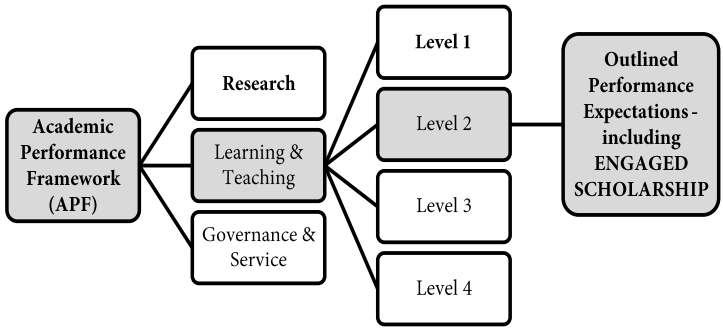

Figure 1. Relational hierarchy position of embedded engagement in APF. Darker gray tones outline a pathway example for a scholar applying for promotion at Level 2 based on learning and teaching/engaged learning and teaching focus.

The performance expectations within the APF illustrate a non-restrictive range of engaged activities and work, as well as claims regarding the impact of that work that could be reflected upon by an engaged scholar in their field at different career levels. Below is a reproduction of the "embedded engagement" portion of the outlined performance expectations across Level 1 (lecturer).

> Research—Level 1
>
> *Demonstrated evidence of active participation in the facilitation of research projects and research-related activities in collaboration with the wider community for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity, for example:*
>
> - Local or regional collaborative relationships and opportunities developed regarding research
> - Participation in collaborative local or regional research projects
> - External networks of contacts around the interests of the school/discipline have been built
> - Involved in activities designed to ensure that appropriate impact of the research (particularly outside academia) has been achieved

Learning & Teaching—Level 1

Evidence of active participation in collaborative learning and teaching related activities with the wider community, for mutual benefit in a context of partnership and reciprocity, for example:

- Facilitating input from external stakeholders regarding the conduct and content of educational programmes
- Participating in partnerships that contribute to improving learning and teaching practices and student outcomes
- Assisting with running service learning, work-integrated learning and/or placement programs and processes
- Active involvement in programs aimed at improving student experiences of learning, teaching and assessment
- Active involvement in collaborative internationalisation projects regarding learning and teaching

Governance & Service—Level 1

Demonstrated evidence of active participation in the governance of collaborative projects or activities with the wider community for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity, for example:

- Participation in work integrated learning/placement activities
- Active participant in school and/or faculty level community engagement, marketing and recruitment activities
- Active involvement in relevant projects with community/industry/professional bodies
- Active membership of committees within the University and of relevant professional bodies
- Maintenance of personal professional accreditation appropriate to the discipline and the PD *(UOW Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor, 2014)*

The length of the APF document prohibits a full reproduction of all engagement sections across all the levels. Nevertheless, these

examples show the nature and scope of the engaged activities that the promotions and probations committees may consider esteemed and valuable. The chosen definition of engagement is embedded in the statement that precedes the description of performance evidence.

Discussion

Functional Embedded Engagement

The APF documentation stresses that any claim to performance at any level must be supported by reliable and auditable evidence as outlined in the *Impact Catalogue*, a document that the project team developed after a substantial review of the literature on impact and promotion (*Smith, Crookes, & Crookes, 2013*). This emphasis on evidence was viewed as integral because although claims for promotion reliant on more traditional scholarship areas at the university have always been relatively successful, claims with a heavy reliance on engaged activity have often been considered weak due to lack of sufficient credible evidence. This was a fault heavily criticized in the initial interviews and was therefore a significant consideration in the development of the APF. It was also imperative to stress that staff must be able to share reliable evidence of the impact of their work without being prescriptive as to the form that evidence should take.

It is important to note that in all of the embedded engagement sections in the APF (including the Level 1 performance expectations quoted above), the term "expectations" is not meant to indicate "requirements." These are not checklists that must be religiously followed; rather, they are intended to act as a guide representative of the kinds of achievement expected at the different levels of academia. Due to the unique and constantly evolving variety of engaged scholarly work and the complex nature of engaged scholars themselves (*O'Meara et al., 2011*), it was important that the APF encourage academic creativity and innovation, with the only boundary being scholarly excellence. The APF states:

> The criteria highlighted within the APF are viewed as reasonable expectations of performance for an academic staff member. However, these should not be used as an absolute but rather as an indication of performance that

> must be contextualised based on relative opportunity.
> *(UOW Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor, 2014)*

Clearly, individuals in different faculties will follow different career paths, with different foci and opportunities, and this is to be accounted for in all cases. The APF outlines that the achievement of outcomes and measures in each category will be subject to relative opportunity based on the discipline and/or organizational context in which academic work is carried out.

The guidelines contained within the APF are intended to set the bar of expectation from which individuals must measure their own achievements in order to make an informed decision as to whether they wish to submit an application for promotion. Due to the intellectual and emotional effort that goes into these applications, it is important that faculty understand what sort of work is expected in order to apply for promotion to a certain level. By clearly setting out expectations, disappointment and distress may be avoided in some cases where promotion was never achievable, both for traditional and non-traditional scholars.

The APF was formally introduced as the basis for applications for probation and promotion at the university in 2014 and has been used in one round of promotions hearings to date. It is thus too early to say whether the APF truly supports the work of engaged academics being recognized and valued. However, supervisors and academics are already giving feedback suggesting that the APF is indeed making discussions about whether someone is ready for promotion more transparent and evidence-based. The project team has also been centrally involved in rolling out the APF via staff training for applicants and assessors alike. Participation in these sessions gives a clear sense that the APF is seen as a way of expanding the range of useful scholarly activities for which staff can receive recognition, including (but not limited to) "engaged academia."

Future Directions

Though the APF documentation with a newly embedded scholarship of engagement has only recently been implemented, it is already apparent that some issues related to engaged scholarly work will need to be addressed at this university in the near future. Core among these will be the collecting and collating of data that can be shared with staff, many of whom believe that the only form of scholarship that is valued is the "scholarship of discovery" (i.e.,

research). Only data to the contrary will contradict that view. Time will tell, but as a university, we have a track record of changing perceptions in other areas—most notably with respect to staff being promoted for their excellence in teaching.

It should also be noted that the university has for some time assisted its staff in documenting their research outputs via its Research Information System (RIS). Thus, there is a mismatch between the quality of support available when comparing nontraditional and traditional scholarly activities in the university. This extends to systems that help staff document evidence of the effectiveness of their engaged scholarly activities.

Although the APF textually recognizes equality between engaged scholarly work and other areas, it requires (and refers explicitly to) evidence of "outputs and outcomes (impact)" produced by activities for a successful outcome. Promotion and probation committees' reliance on traditional outputs such as journal publications, awards, grants, and peer reviews will undoubtedly continue to cause difficulty for engaged scholars who do not produce the same standardized evidence. Due to the unique nature of engaged activities, the success of such work often lies in the collaborative benefit achieved through the successful development of a community–university partnership, making traditional evidencing practices problematic. Some scholars in the literature have even gone so far as to say that engagement is overlooked in promotion because its proper evaluation is more difficult than mere counting (*McDowell, 2001*). Despite stressing the need for legitimate evidence, the new APF does not specifically advise scholars how to effectively collect evidence of engaged scholarly work or how different evidence forms will be measured or assessed by probation or promotion committees. Such insight was never the task of this form of documentation. Nevertheless, these remain significant questions that may affect promotional accessibility for engaged scholars. Therefore, for this APF to effectively achieve the aim of increasing recognition and reward of engaged scholarly work (with a view to overcoming promotional barriers), it must be combined with other new initiatives that address these identified evidencing issues.

One such initiative has already progressed at the university via the creation (and hoped-for future university-wide promotion) of an online tool that will facilitate the collection and collation of engaged activity evidence. The Measuring and Tracking Engagement (MaTE) tool *(Crookes, 2014)* affords university faculty members the opportunity to enter details of their engaged projects and partnerships and link this work to scholarly outputs via an

online data-entry portal. Not only can this tool generate an evidence portfolio for the individual scholar, but it also allows the level and types of engaged projects and partnerships currently being undertaken at the university to be monitored and reported on centrally. One of the key benefits of such a program would be its application across the university to create a system of uniformity of evidence produced by engaged scholars that would offer reward and recognition bodies reliable, accessible, and assessable portfolios of evidence.

Another aim of the MaTE tool is to enable the monitoring of partnerships between the university and the community, creating a greater understanding of the relationships held by the university and promoting continued reciprocity and mutual opportunities. One of the greatest failings by universities in relation to their engaged community partners is the frequent lack of care to nurture these relationships in a sustainable manner, especially after the conclusion of a project. As stated by Holland and Gelmon *(1998)*, "This 'one-sided' approach to linking the academy and the community is a deep-seated tradition that has, in fact, led to much of the estrangement of universities and colleges from their communities" *(p. 105).* One way to avoid this estrangement is to ensure that there is adequate infrastructure to support the partnership and to maintain a focus on sustainability (*Holland & Gelmon, 1998*). A key to sustainability of engaged partnerships by the university is an understanding of what relationships exist, along with their goals, size, duration, and key contact points. The MaTE tool will ensure that partnerships can be monitored and accounted for university-wide, while simultaneously promoting the collection of legitimate engaged activity evidence and indicators of demonstrable outputs and impact. Another activity that is central to the intent of the team is to promote a broader sense of what academic work is, what academic work is valuable, how the university recognizes its breadth, and how such work can be effectively disseminated. The MaTE system will obviously facilitate this.

Conclusion

Although these changes to the concept of engagement at the university will not solve all equality issues surrounding this unique form of scholarly work, this process has been a notable step forward by the university in recognizing its engaged scholars. With some arguing that engagement is critical for the future of the university as an institution *(Watson, 2004*), this promotional documentation review and implementation is an important statement by the

University of Wollongong that engagement has an essential future embedded within its core work.

As with all approaches to change, this university's adoption of Holland's *(2009)* institutionalization approach to engagement has both strengths and weaknesses. By incorporating engagement into the core work of the university, the executives of this institution are making a statement that engagement work is considered both vital and valuable. This approach allows those engaged scholars whose work previously fell on the periphery of traditional performance expectations to be rewarded through the same frameworks and at the same level as more traditionally focused scholars. This approach is not without faults, as it fails to address the problematic issue of effectively providing evidence of engaged activities; however, with the support of future projects such as the MaTE tool, addressing these issues continues to be a key aim of the project team.

In undertaking this process, the authors have learned a great deal about embedding engagement in university policies and can make some brief recommendations for those wishing to adopt a similar approach. First, ensure there is executive support behind the initiative. Without adequate support from high levels, any promotion of engagement or alternative forms of scholarship is likely to encounter significant difficulties at the implementation stage. Second, establish that there are adequate support policies and documentation in place for the initiative. There is likely to be little value in embedding engagement in one set of policies if they sit in opposition to wider promotional or probation documentation or policies. Third, ensure there is clarity around engagement at your institution. If you do not have a definition, seek one that supports the work of the university and its constitution. Finally, think ahead as to how scholars at the institution may be able to evidence their engagement work once equalized reward frameworks are implemented. The value of any of these recommendations will obviously be restricted on the basis of institutional context.

Even this early in the implementation period, there is good reason to hope that this new approach to engagement as a method of doing will help to shed light on the work being performed by engaged scholars and further facilitate equality in promotions and reward structures. Breaking out of old debates about the importance of one scholarship over another, the new APF aims to enhance the original views of Boyer *(1990)* by defining in more creative ways what it means to be a scholar. Through widening the formerly superficial and narrow conceptions of engagement, it is anticipated that the APF will provide engaged scholars with oppor-

tunities to present their work for recognition without the barriers that existed previously, although future research will be required to establish the degree to which these changes ultimately achieve this. Other universities in Australia and overseas are already showing an interest in the APF, including (but not limited to) what it offers to "engaged academics." It is slowly dawning on universities that if they want their staff to engage in certain types of activity, they need to incentivize those activities, including the valuable work performed by engaged scholars.

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