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Whose Job Is It, Anyway? The Place of Public Engagement in the Liberal Arts College

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Abstract

The calls for academics to engage the public have grown, motivated by concerns for civic health and for maintaining public and political support for higher education and academic research. Whatever its value to the public sphere, there is still considerable uncertainty about whether and how public engagement counts–is it valued by colleagues and institutions in promotion and tenure decisions? We sought to provide evidence to assess the value of public engagement with experimental and observational methods set in a survey of faculty from seven liberal arts colleges. We find that public engagement is valued and engaged by these faculty, with variation observed by institution, mode of public engagement, and college division (arts faculty the most supportive and science faculty the least). We recommend institutions communicate clearly how they value public engagement; until that point, academics should tread carefully as they seek public audiences and partnerships.

Keywords: public engagement, liberal arts, experiment, survey

> *A Crucible Moment calls on the higher education community...to embrace civic learning and democratic engagement as an undisputed educational priority for all of higher education, public and private, two-year and four-year.…But...civic learning is still too often random rather than progressively mapped by the institution.… Academic professionals spearheading civic investments too frequently go unrewarded, and, in some cases, are even penalized." (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, pp. 2, 41)*

Introduction

A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future (2012), served as a clarion call to postsecondary institutions to reclaim what the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement unapologetically identified

as "[the institutions'] longstanding mission to educate students for informed, engaged citizenship" *(p. v)*. The call came amidst a flood of concern from educators, employers, and government agencies about the nation's declining civic health. Charles N. Quigley *(2010, p. 1)* wrote, "During the past decade or so, educational policy and practice appear to have focused more and more upon developing the 'worker' at the expense of developing the 'citizen.' " At the same time—and, arguably, as a result—the role of "citizen" in public life has changed from that of producer and "director" of public institutions to mere consumer of their goods and services *(Matthews, 2006, p. x)*.

In response to this "civic recession," higher education has faced increased pressure to intensify its efforts to prepare students for democratic citizenship by actively engaging the communities in which they are situated. From students, who, according to one national survey, "want their colleges to foster a stronger institutional emphasis on contributing to the larger community," to the U.S. Department of Education, which commissioned *A Crucible Moment*, stakeholders across the spectrum have been urging institutions of higher learning to reinvest in a more collaborative educational model—one in which public engagement is not only the norm but a central component of curricula and partnerships between town and gown *(National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 5)*. A considerable number of institutions have heeded this call: 361 campuses were designated with the Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement Classification in 2015, up from just 121 in 2010 *(NERCHE, 2015, Classified Campuses section)*. Nevertheless, 361 is a far cry from the goal set forth in *A Crucible Moment* that "all of higher education" make civic engagement an educational priority.

The sluggish response to the engagement call might be attributed to a number of factors, including an institution's size, financial standing, classification as public or private, religious affiliation, administrative leadership, and governance structure. We consider one factor here: whether or not institutions' tenure, promotion, and reward systems emphasize and reward faculty public engagement. As evidenced by the excerpt from *A Crucible Moment* quoted above, the traditional reward and promotion system at most institutions is largely seen as failing to reward scholarly engagement with the public and, therefore, rational academics have little incentive to engage the public. Although faculty at R1, research-intensive institutions may be particularly constrained by traditional expectations for scholars, we suspect that other institutions of higher

education may potentially provide more opportunities for scholarly public engagement. In this article, we investigate in particular how *liberal arts colleges* and their faculty evaluate engaging the public. We provide a brief historic overview of the purpose of institutions of higher education, discuss the specific aspects of teaching and learning in the liberal arts tradition through which such institutions lend themselves to engaging the public, and then provide the results of a survey with an embedded experiment conducted among liberal arts faculty members on the role and importance of public engagement in their professional life.

The Purpose of the Academy, and the Liberal Arts Tradition of Public Engagement

In his book *Save the World on Your Own Time,* Stanley Fish *(2008)* touches on one of the American academy's greatest conundrums—that of identifying to whom, if to any particular group or interest, it is properly beholden. Fish warns against catering to "interests intent on deflecting the university from its search for truth and setting it on another path" *(p. 99)*. At the same time, Fish seeks to differentiate the values and standards of the academy from those shaping other occupational enterprises—notably claiming that intellectual work is an exception to the ethic that all labor should be aimed at improving democratic society and culture. Fish is particularly concerned about academics who feel compelled to create good citizens, especially engaged ones who respect the values of diversity and moral engagement with society, rather than to focus on teaching the material and relevant modes of inquiry. Public engagement as a way to model good citizenship and as an effort to shape thinking and values among students and the public, he argues, is not an academic's job and too often steps dangerously over the line between what he sees as legitimate "academic activity" and illegitimate "partisan political activity" *(p. 16)*.

Conversely, others, such as Andrew Delbanco *(2012)* and Derek Bok *(2003)*, point to the academy's rich historical commitment to public service as a means for enjoining the university with the collective societal goal of (American) democracy. Contemporary arguments in favor of public engagement often point as far back as ancient Greece, to the rhetorical learning tradition, which, along with the philosophical tradition, served as a progenitor of the liberal arts approach. The rhetorical tradition, engendered by Isocrates and refined by Cicero, emphasizes the development of wholesome character and the "primacy of inter-subjectivity over private thought"

(Schwehn, 2012, p. 33; Kimball, 1986). It "stressed knowledge for the sake of action in the world of public life" *(Schwehn, 2012, p. 33)*.

The American college has long embraced the rhetorical imperative of education for the purpose of public action. The colonial college of the mid-17th century—to which all institutions, regardless of present-day Carnegie classifications, can trace their origins—grew out of an increased demand for trained individuals to serve as civic and religious leaders to, in other words, meet what were then the greatest public needs *(Boyer, 1997; Delbanco, 2012)*. The colonial college mission of training young men to be informed public leaders evolved to support the experiment of American democracy, the success of which to this day depends upon a highly informed citizenry, a point agreed upon by Thomas Jefferson and John Adams both. In discussing what he calls education for "inclusive democratic citizenship," Delbanco *(2012, p. 29)* wrote: "It should be obvious that the best chance we have to maintain a functioning democracy is a citizenry that can tell the difference between demagoguery and responsible arguments." The ability to discern such a difference is greatly expanded by an understanding of the various historical, philosophical, and classical bodies of knowledge that inform the American conception of democracy. In other words, understanding democracy is assisted by crossing disciplinary boundaries, adopting a generalist rather than a specialist spirit, becoming the fox rather than the hedgehog *(Berlin, 1953)*.

The liberal arts commitment to robust general education is aimed at the cultivation of this generalist spirit. Liberal arts faculty must foster it in their own classroom instruction, broadening their highly specialized graduate training for a nonspecially trained undergraduate audience. This task is not altogether easy, a point captured by the cochair of a Harvard committee that failed in its commission to reform the institution's core curriculum when he said: "We are just not accustomed to thinking about education in general terms. It's not our specialty" *(Delbanco, 2012, p. 91)*. Liberal arts faculty who embrace the challenges of general education cast themselves not as specialists in their particular fields of study but as intellectuals, or those whom Jack Miles *(1999)* claims "must write from the full breadth of a general education that has not ended at graduation or been confined to a discipline" *(pp. 309–310)*. Effective general educators, then, may be best suited for public engagement, which, like general education courses, requires a broadening of scope. Conversely, those struggling to "[think] about education in general terms" might consider using public engagement to help fine-tune their classroom generalization skills *(Delbanco, 2012, p. 91)*.

Regardless of one's avenue into public engagement—whether approached as an extension of one's existing classroom skills or as a means for improving deficiencies—by assuming a public role, one should ultimately seek to enhance the general education experience of undergraduates, the primary beneficiaries of a liberal arts education. That higher education continues to undervalue and underserve the undergraduate is one of the greatest criticisms of the "commodified university," in which institutions are seen as giving themselves over to "market-driven managerial influence" *(Lears, 2003, p. 23)*.

How, then, does one reconcile the merits of public engagement—its capacity to extend education for democratic citizenship beyond the walls of the classroom, its usefulness as an exercise in generalization, and so on—with its potential ills, principally its tendency, according to Fish *(2008)*, to detract from proper undergraduate instruction or to veer inappropriately into the realm of partisan political activity? The key lies partly in how one approaches and reflects on public engagement, a question we revisit in the following discussion of tenure, promotion, and merit evaluation standards. It also lies in the existence and maintenance of accountability measures. The various forms of documentation and observation required by most institutional evaluation committees, including student teaching evaluations, peer-observed teaching, student rank and tenure committees, and the required submission of course materials such as syllabi, writing or project assignments, and reading lists, help to caution faculty whose public engagement is seen to be detracting from their academic scholarship or teaching *(B. Dobkin, personal communication, May 18, 2013)*. Too, additional accountability measures can be developed to gauge the effect of faculty public engagement, particularly forms integrated into students' coursework (e.g., service-learning and community-based participatory research), on student learning outcomes. Indeed, if institutions are to expect students to graduate with certain civic competencies, as *A Crucible Moment* recommends they should, then they will need tools for assessing student civic literacy, which necessarily means assessing service-learning and other teaching models of engagement.

When public engagement on the part of the professoriate is determined by accountability measures to be enhancing the general education experience of undergraduates, it aligns with the liberal arts tradition. The ideal of lateral learning—or learning that is multidirectional, rather than unilaterally transmitted from professor to student *(*see *Delbanco, 2012*)—and the community emphasis of

the rhetorical tradition both contribute to the ongoing mission of many liberal arts practitioners today to open up the liberal arts experience to a wider portion of the population, especially to socio-economic and minority groups that have been or to some extent still are excluded from many liberal arts institutions. At present, students from low-income families constitute the most underrepresented group at private, 4-year colleges, and efforts to counteract the myriad financial disadvantages—and achievement disadvantages that reflect financial deficiencies—abound. In the meantime, many are missing out on the richness of intellect and character development fostered by the liberal arts tradition. Engagement by those inside the academy with those currently outside helps to advance the mission of bringing education to more people, albeit in a small way.

In sum, we believe that the liberal arts tradition and those who are products and/or practitioners of it have much to offer the public by extending the bodies of knowledge that inform American democracy into present-day practice as well as by offering liberal arts scholars fresh methods for improving and enlightening their undergraduate instruction. We are not alone: a number of institutions, including Tulane University, Portland State University, Worcester Polytechnic University, University of Alabama–Birmingham, California State University–Chico, and University of California–Irvine, have embraced higher education's "essential civic mission," integrating curricular programs that teach civic responsibility by actively engaging students in community and project-based learning *(National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, pp. viii, 52–57)*. Senior administrators at still more institutions have sought to prioritize public engagement in their institutions' programming by promoting dialogue about its challenges and opportunities on their campuses, establishing public engagement centers, and evaluating institutional support for faculty who undertake public engagement scholarship *(Bailey, Muse, Todd, Wilson, & Francko, 2013)*. Finally, institutional efforts to elevate public engagement as a higher education priority have given rise to coalition efforts such as the task force that produced *A Crucible Moment*, the multiple journals dedicated to publishing scholarship about public engagement issues, and the multi-institution Imagining America Tenure Team Initiative. Thus, our reading of the literature confirms that public engagement can be an appropriate role for the liberal arts professoriate, but it can hardly be said that this is the universal view; it is perhaps telling that most of the

examples above are non-liberal-arts institutions. Clearly, then, Fish is but one prominent voice reminding us that not all agree.

Faculty Tenure, Promotion, and Merit Evaluation Standards

How does our provisional conclusion that public engagement may be a worthy and positive aim of the liberal arts professoriate compare to present-day academy perceptions of public engagement, as revealed by standards for tenure, promotion, and merit evaluation? Any discussion of tenure, promotion, and merit evaluation standards must necessarily be framed by two principal questions, the foremost of which concerns which activities are to be evaluated. A review of literature evaluating the present state of the faculty reward system suggests loose general agreement both within academic departments and across departments and institutions as to general criteria used to evaluate activities in three categories: teaching, scholarship, and service. The evident consensus is that basic research followed by publication in top-tier, refereed journals is viewed with the weightiest consideration and, in the majority of cases, as the most important criterion for both tenure and promotion *(*e.g., *Green, 2008, p. 122; Kasten, 1984, pp. 506–507; & Rothgeb, 2011, p. 574; Stanton et al., 2007, p. 10)*.

Teaching is generally viewed as the second most important criterion, still receiving a significant weight in the tenure evaluation process. Kasten *(1984)* writes that "adequate teaching is a necessary but not sufficient condition for tenure" *(p. 507)*, adding that tenure candidates who were exemplary researchers and "inadequate teachers" would often lead to a departmental split at decision time. Similarly, to some degree demonstrated teaching excellence can offset a sufficient but not exceptional research record, particularly at liberal arts institutions, which "seek those who have the potential to become luminous teachers" *(Deardorff et al., 2001, pp. 856–857)*. Even at liberal arts colleges and universities, however, "no one should expect to receive tenure or be promoted without publishing and being professionally active" *(Deardorff et al., 2001, p. 856)*.

Finally, service, like teaching, is expected but not sufficient for achieving tenure status. Unlike teaching, a candidate's service record has very little counterbalancing power. In their study of factors influencing both departmental decisions to deny tenure and higher level decisions to reverse positive departmental tenure recommendations, Marshall and Rothgeb *(2011)* report that "com-

mittee service and community and professional service . . . have no apparent association with either denial or reversal" *(p. 574)*.

Few reports on tenure, promotion, and merit evaluation standards break down general requirements into specific indicators. For instance, "service," when broken down at all, typically includes activities such as service on university committees; membership and leadership in regional, national, and international professional organizations; and consulting *(Park & Riggs, 1993, p. 75)*. Only in rare instances is community or civic service included, and instances in which "community service" is further broken down into individual activities are rarer still.

The question of which activities are evaluated must be considered alongside the question of how those activities are categorized. In reports where public engagement activities (e.g., curating museum exhibits, giving a public lecture, or consultation for government or media officials) are mentioned, they are largely categorized as service activities of tertiary (or lesser) importance. Varying efforts to change evaluation standards for public engagement activities are shaped primarily by differing views as to whether or not public engagement activities *ought to be* categorized as service. Some scholars support the status quo, maintaining that any activity that engages a public beyond the classroom or profession should indeed be evaluated as service. Other scholars suggest a reciprocal relationship between teaching and public engagement. In an article reclaiming the radicalism of the liberal arts tradition, Lears *(2003)* wrote:

> Professors are constantly berating themselves and being berated for withdrawing into the insular world of scholarship, for not connecting with the real world. The real world is right in front of us, in the classroom; it is composed of students, 99 percent of whom have no intention of entering the academy themselves. They are a nonacademic audience, and they require us, however implicitly and imperfectly, to become public intellectuals. *(p. 27)*

In Lears's view, teaching itself is a form of public engagement; because undergraduate students are not a narrow academic audience, but rather an audience defined by a multitude of interests, goals, and futures, teaching undergraduates must be approached from the generalist ideal embodied by Miles's *(1999)* intellectual. Carroll Seron *(2002)* makes a similar comparison when she dis-

cusses the responsibility of teachers "to engage the public in [their] classrooms, especially in undergraduate classes" *(p. 22)*. It follows, then, that if teaching students is a form of public engagement, other forms of public engagement might also be considered part of a professor's teaching dossier.

A final, growing group of scholars proffers that public engagement should in fact be considered a form of scholarship. Ernest Boyer *(1997)* offered the most comprehensive definition of a so-called scholarship of engagement, or what he called the scholarship of application. The scholarship of application encompasses a continuum of scholarly service activities in which scholars engage their specialized knowledge and skills in addressing relevant social needs. As Boyer wrote, this service, when "tied directly to one's specialized field of knowledge and [related] to . . . professional activity . . . is serious, demanding work, requiring the rigor—and the accountability—traditionally associated with research activities" *(p. 22)*. The engagement of applicative scholarship fosters a two-way interaction between theory and practice, enabling theory to inform and renew practice and vice versa *(Boyer, 1997, p. 23)*. Boyer's multidimensional approach to scholarship has been adapted by scholars in and for a variety of disciplines. For instance, Grigsby and Thorndyke *(2011)* described the scholarship of application as it relates to academic medicine, citing as examples such activities as "community-based participatory research, the global health movement, patient safety practices, and quality improvement initiatives" *(p. 128)*. and Khanna *(2010)* comparably wrote of applied anthropology, or "community-based and engaged scholarly endeavors" *(p. 648)*. The idea, originating with Boyer, that scholarship should exist on a continuum has become especially popular among public engagement champions. As Ellison and Eatman *(2008)* put it in the Imagining America Tenure Team Initiative report, *Scholarship in Public: Knowledge Creation and Tenure Policy in the Engaged University*,

> The term continuum has become pervasive because it does useful meaning-making work: it is *inclusive* of many sorts and conditions of knowledge. It resists embedded hierarchies by assigning *equal value* to inquiry of different kinds. Inclusiveness implies choice: once a continuum is established, a faculty member may, without penalty, locate herself or himself at any point. *(p. ix; emphases in original)*

Ellison and Eatman make painfully clear that faculty, particularly untenured and minority faculty, depend on institutional support when taking on public engagement work but often find it lacking. The continuum approach they advocate seeks to address this problem by legitimizing as scholarship and rewarding the many ways in which faculty utilize their academic expertise.

Pervasive as it is, the scholarly continuum approach has yet to become the industry norm, and public engagement has suffered as a result. Echoing the quote from *A Crucible Moment* at the beginning of this article, anthropologist Jeremy Sabloff *(2011)* blamed a competitive job market and the imbalanced priorities of academia for the denigration of scholarly engagement with the public:

> The competition for university jobs and the institutional pressures to publish in enough quantity—particularly in peer-reviewed journals—has led to the academic devaluation of communication with the general public. Such activities do not count or, even worse, count against the candidate. *(p. 411)*

Ironically, while the "institutional pressures" identified by Sabloff *(2011)* put a strain on "communication with the general public," the publishing requirements conflict with other workload demands. In his study of the relative importance of teaching, scholarship, and service in tenure and promotion decisions within social work education, Robert Green *(2008)* wrote:

> Although scholarship is more important for purposes of evaluation than are teaching and service, it appears that a majority of faculty members are required to fulfill their primary responsibility only after completion of their secondary (teaching) and tertiary responsibilities. *(p. 126)*

The underrecognition of the scholarship of application and the incongruity between tenure and workload demands may discourage many faculty from taking part in cross-disciplinary synthesis and public engagement work to the point that they significantly shift their commitment back to work that is rewarded by the academy, namely traditional forms of scholarship and teaching (see, e.g., *Few, Piercy, and Stremmel, 2007*).

Methodology

To better gauge the present landscape of faculty involvement with and institutional support for public engagement at liberal arts colleges, we administered a survey to faculty at seven liberal arts colleges throughout the United States (the survey can be found here: *https://paul-djupe.squarespace.com/s/Public_Engagement.docx*). In this survey, we were interested in discovering faculty perceptions of both how public engagement activities *are* currently evaluated in the tenure and promotion system at their liberal arts institution as well as how they felt such activities *should* be evaluated in the tenure and promotion process. Public engagement activities were defined broadly as activities that engaged the public and included work in *one's area of public expertise* (emphasis in the instructions), such as writing op-eds, giving public lectures, maintaining a professional blog, and advising government officials about public policy.

Moreover, we aimed to gain a behavioral measure (bestowing reward) of public engagement through the use of a survey experiment regarding a fictional candidate up for tenure. Our goal in composing this candidate's dossier was to pitch a marginal candidate so that any boost from public engagement would not be limited by ceiling or floor effects. The candidate in the control condition, either Mary or Martin Jones (we varied the candidate's gender),

> is an assistant professor of Sociology at your college who is up for tenure. Jones has been rated a competent teacher by students and peers, which is an improvement from when she was first hired. Since her appointment, she has presented several papers at regional sociology conferences, amounting to 1 every year and a half. She has published one of those papers—a solo authored article in a mid-tier, peer reviewed journal (impact factor = .73). Jones has served as advisor to several student groups and has served on one university-wide committee.

We then varied the type of public engagement activity that Professor Jones had performed and asked respondents to evaluate whether their particular institution's faculty status committee (or its equivalent) would view such activities favorably for tenure and in what category (scholarship, teaching, or service):

- Jones maintains a blog with regular posts about inequality that is well subscribed; a few of her posts have been repub-

lished at *Huffington Post* (a well-known news and commentary website), and two op-eds have appeared in major metropolitan newspapers, including one in the *New York Times* [labeled "news" below].

- Jones is frequently invited to give public lectures on the topic of inequality at the local Rotary club meetings and has been invited twice to speak at a Smithsonian speaker series on culture and community that aired on C-Span ["lectures"].
- Jones is very involved in working closely with the community on the issue of economic inequality, and her students' work with impoverished communities as part of her Introduction to Sociology course service-learning requirement has resulted in both local and national awards and accolades ["service-learning"].

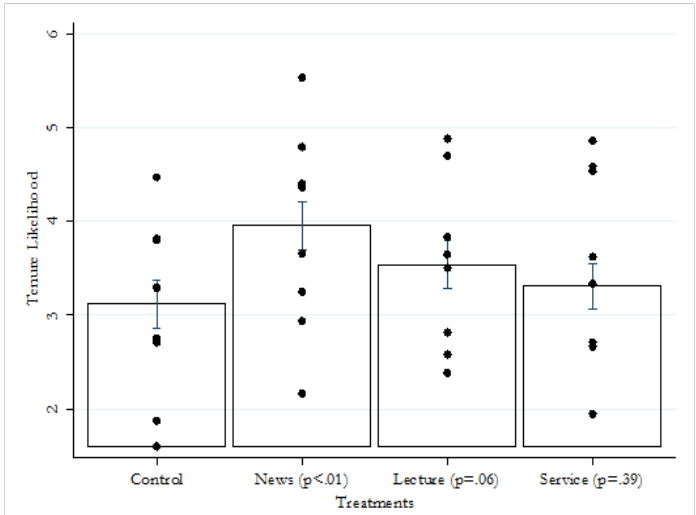
The random introduction of these conditions allows us to assess whether each public engagement package adds value to the tenure case above the "fundamentals" in the control condition, how they are counted (do they count as research, teaching, or service?), and whether they add value differently by candidate gender. The experiment is a 2 x 4 factorial design, as we vary candidate gender and offer four versions of the candidate's record. Participants were randomly assigned to a condition, and randomization was successful—there are no systematic differences across cells in respondent partisanship, gender, rank, or institution.

Results—Tenure Experiment

Our goal for pitching a marginal candidate was achieved, as the results in Figure 1 show. When asked how likely it was that the candidate would achieve tenure on a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely), the control condition (without any public engagement) average was a 3.15 (65% of the responses were 1–3). Figure 1 shows how the average likelihood of tenure changed when the three other versions of public engagement were added (controlling for the institution). In the "news" condition, the mean tenure score jumps up to 3.94—a statistically significant difference ($p < .01$) compared to the control. The other conditions caused the average tenure likelihood to increase as well, though not as significantly—to 3.53 in the "lectures" condition ($p = .06$) and 3.46 in the "service-learning" condition ($p = .39$). At least given this candidate, a program of engagement in the popular (and traditional) media appears to provide a net benefit, as does providing public lectures,

whereas service-learning appears to add little benefit to the tenure case.

Figure 1. Effects of Public Engagement Activities on the Perceived Likelihood of the Candidate's Gaining Tenure



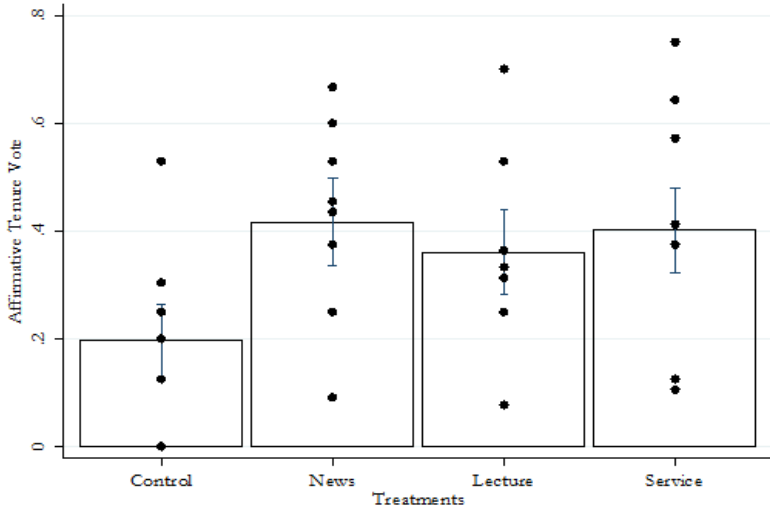
Note: The bars show the sample average score evaluating the perceived likelihood of tenure for the four different candidates (there were no gender differences). The capped lines show 95% confidence intervals. The p values in the x axis labels describe whether the score was significantly different from the control (3.15); the news mean is 3.94, the lecture mean is 3.53, and the service mean is 3.46. The dots show the school average scores.

The black dots in the figure show institutional variance in support for the candidate. It is clear that standards are quite different across these seven liberal arts colleges. At just one is the control candidate perceived likely to gain tenure. That shifts to several schools that perceive the candidate as at least modestly likely to achieve a positive tenure decision when public engagement activities are added. There is more movement when those activities are related to the national mass media.

This conclusion shifts if we consider a different question—whether the individual respondent would vote to tenure the candidate. Those results, shown in Figure 2, indicate more robust and significant ($p \leq .01$) effects of public engagement. Each form of public engagement increases the likelihood that the respondent would vote to tenure the candidate (compared to the control). The control candidate has the support of only 20% of sample faculty, whereas support doubles in each public engagement condition. The black dots in the figure show the institutional variance in support

for this candidate, and it is considerable. This candidate has no chance at some institutions and is likely to pass the bar at others. Each consistently shows some positive movement in response to the public engagement activities, however.

Figure 2. Effects of Public Engagement Activities on the Respondent's Tenure Vote



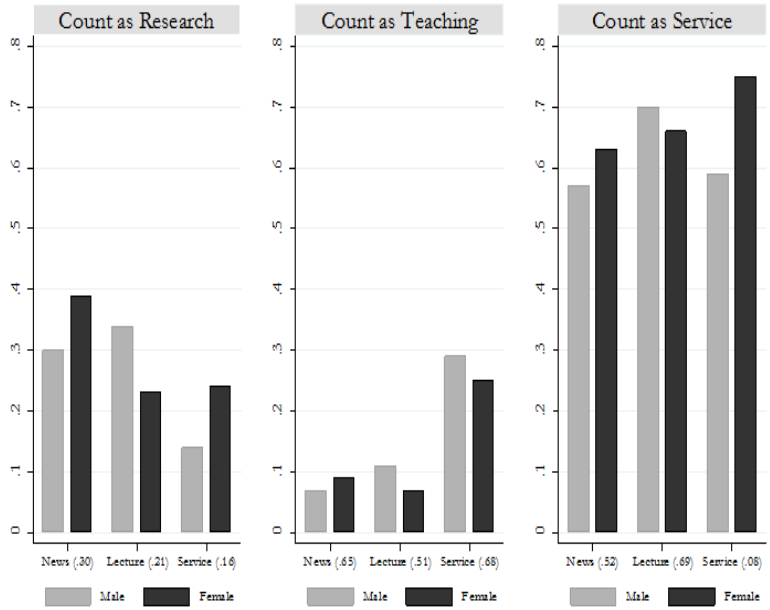
Note: All treatment effects (the bars) are significantly different from the control ($p \leq .01$). The capped lines show 95% confidence intervals. The dots show the school average scores.

The lessons are likely several. There is a disjuncture between perceptions of institutional treatment and individual attitudes toward the fictional candidate. This disjuncture could be the result of an actual division or may reflect uncertainty about how the candidate would be treated (later analysis will show just how much uncertainty there is). However, this may also reflect efforts toward conflict avoidance among individual respondents. Considerable research indicates that people try to avoid providing controversial opinions or simply provide an opinion in line with society's leanings and what the respondent believes the researcher wants to hear. The truth is likely a mixture of uncertainty and avoidance. We suspect it is not a result of a disjuncture in individual versus institutional treatment, given the widespread agreement on how most activities should be treated (as we will see shortly).

The other treatment varied the gender of the candidate. The perceived likelihood of gaining tenure or receiving a given respondent's vote for tenure was not different for male and female candi-

dates across the treatments (results not shown). We then followed up to see how respondents counted the public engagement activities in the treatments. Those assessments are broken out in Figure 3, which also shows any differences in interpretation of public engagement by women and by men. Each bar shows a proportion of the sample that counted the public engagement activities mentioned in the treatment (news, lectures, or service-learning) as either research (panel 1), teaching (panel 2), or service (panel 3). Respondents could choose multiple categories, so the bars may not sum to 100 across the panels. Roughly three fifths of the sample counted the public engagement activities as service, and those amounts do not shift in statistically significant ways across the treatments. News is counted as service at the same rate as public lectures and service-learning. Not surprisingly, the service-learning treatment garners a higher proportion of ratings as teaching (panel 2) and is less likely to be counted as research (panel 1). Throughout, there are small, insignificant differences in how the public engagements of men and women are treated. The exceptions are in the service treatment—they are marginally more likely to be counted as research ($p = .16$) and service ($p = .08$) for women. But the lack of distinguishable results throughout corresponds to the tenure ratings—attitudes toward male faculty are the same as those toward female faculty in this sample.

Figure 3. How Are the Public Engagement Treatments Counted? By Candidate Gender



Note: The figure shows the proportions counting the news, lecture, and service treatments as research, teaching, or service, by gender of the candidate. For example, the first couplet of bars shows that when given the "news" treatment, nearly 40% of respondents counted it as "research" when conducted by the female candidate for tenure (black bar) compared to the 30% who rated it as research for the male candidate (gray bar). This difference was not significant (p = .30).

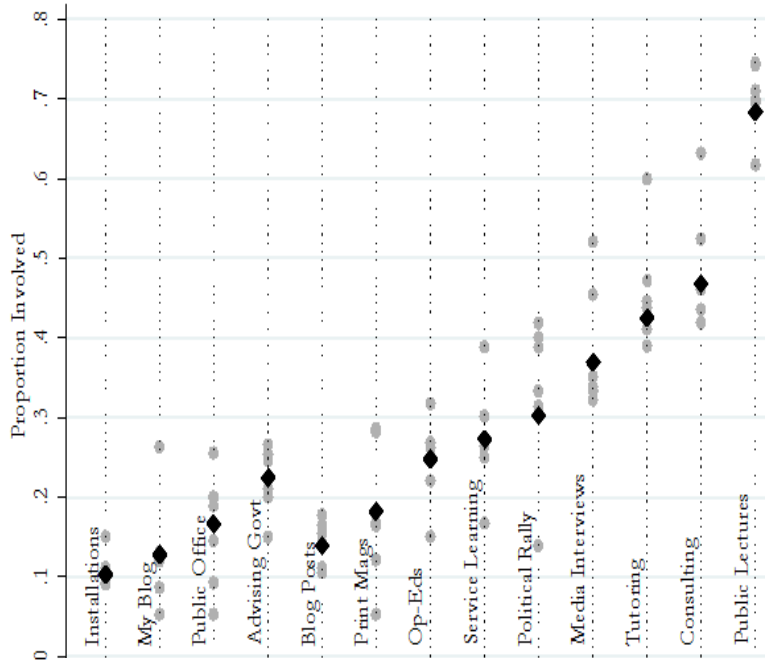
Support for Public Engagement

Now we move from the experiment to traditional survey questions about respondent faculty members' degree of public engagement, as well as their support for it. We asked about 13 different activities that cover a wide range of ways faculty could (arguably) engage the public in line with their expertise. Figure 4 shows the proportion of respondents who said they engaged in each activity at least once in the past year (the survey actually captured the number of times they performed each activity in the past year, which we collapse to 0 or 1 for this analysis). The average faculty member engaged in 2.5 of these activities, though the distribution is heavily skewed toward 0. Just over 40% engaged in none of them, and only 9% in more than six of them.

Figure 4 shows the proportion engaging in each type of activity—the sample mean is shown as a black diamond, and the

institutional proportions are shown as gray dots. The most common were public lectures, consulting, and tutoring; the least common were museum/gallery exhibits, maintaining a blog, and running for office. Only public lecturing was engaged in by a majority of the sample, and most activities were engaged in by less than a third of the sample. Variation by institution tends to be small—about 10% in either direction from the sample mean.

Figure 4. The Proportion Reporting Each Form of Public Engagement, by Institution

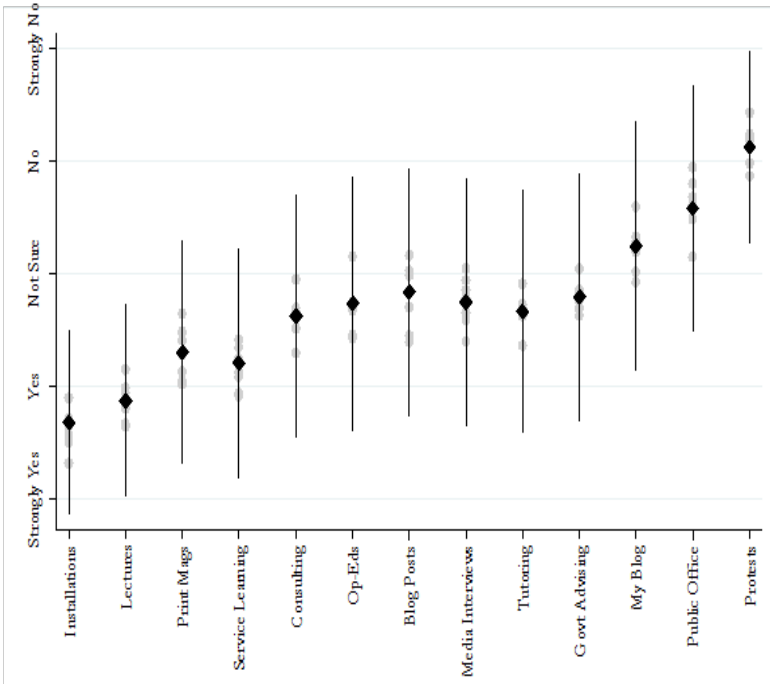


Note: Black diamonds represent overall averages. Gray dots represent individual peer institutions. Respondents could indicate how many times in the past year they engaged in each activity. For this display, we collapsed all values above 0 to 1.

As Figure 5 shows in comparison with Figure 4, support for counting those activities for tenure and promotion decisions does not appear to be correlated with the amount of activity in which faculty are generally engaging. Showing exhibits and giving public lectures occur at opposite ends of the activity scale in Figure 4, but both activities anchor the high end of support for counting toward tenure/promotion, as shown in Figure 5. It remains to be seen if one's own involvement in public engagement activity is systemati-

cally related to support. In the meantime, the results here show a lack of widespread opposition to factoring in public engagement for tenure and promotion, but also a lack of widespread acceptance. Only four activities that are perhaps the most traditional sustain an average of "yes." Most activities average something close to "not sure," and there is not a significant bifurcation on those items, either; faculty are, on average, not sure what to make of those activities. There is widespread agreement that the most explicitly political activities should not be counted toward tenure.

Figure 5. Support for Counting Each Public Engagement Activity by Institution



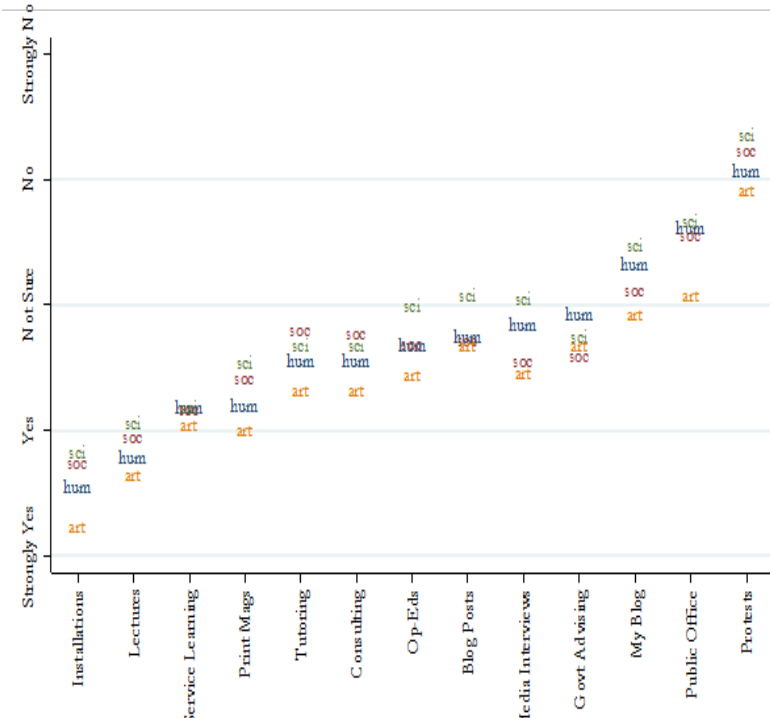
Note: Black diamonds represent the sample mean; gray dots show institutional means. The line shows two (+/-1) standard deviations from the mean.

It is remarkable to see the degree of agreement across campuses on how these activities should be treated—see the gray dots in Figure 5. They do not vary much around the sample mean. The general rank of items holds across campuses, certainly at the top and bottom. We could claim that there is a consensus about how these activities should be treated, except that most faculty are

simply not sure, and a consensus of uncertainty is perhaps not a useful conclusion.

Figure 6 uses the same questions, but instead presents the differences in support by division of the college. There are systematic differences in support for the activities—faculty in the arts are the most supportive of public engagement of all kinds, followed by the humanities and social sciences. Faculty in the sciences are, perhaps not surprisingly, the least supportive, reflecting their strong support for traditional research activities. The order shifts in a few places—social scientists are more supportive of advising government, and humanists the least. Overall, however, it is notable that the differences across the divisions are not larger. The essential ordering of the activities does not change from the institutional picture in Figure 5.

Figure 6. Support for Counting Each Public Engagement Activity by College Division

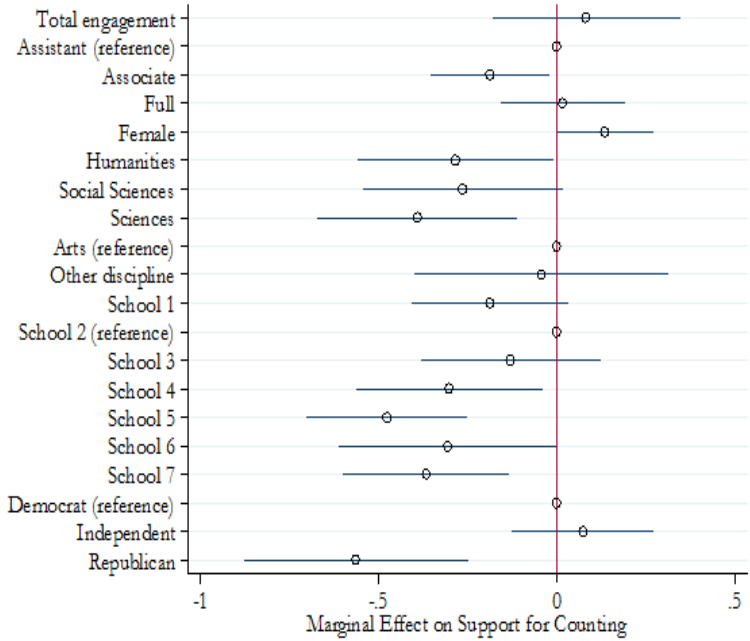


The decision of whether to count an activity or not is a complex one, likely governed by personal investment conditioned by the norms of the discipline, the values of the institution, and faculty rank that may shift risk and priorities. To assess the contribution of these various factors on support for public engagement, we estimated an OLS regression model of a composite index of support for the 13 activities (α = .88). The estimates, shown in Figure 7, highlight some interesting findings. Personal involvement in public engagement activity has no effect on support, which may reflect the tension that we discussed connected to Figure 4—some activities with low and some with high engagement engendered high support. Associate professors are less supportive than assistant or full professors, and female faculty are more supportive than male faculty. As we saw in Figure 5, faculty in all other fields are less supportive than faculty in the arts, though there is wide variance among the social scientists.

Given the sustained dialogue about public engagement on one school's campus, it is not surprising that faculty there are the most supportive—faculty at every other institution show equal or lesser support. All institutions with a first letter higher in the alphabet by happenstance show lower support for public engagement. It is also notable that, compared to Democrats, Republicans have considerably lower support for public engagement. The very distribution of this variable highlights the political dimension to campus politics—fully 5% of the sample identified as some kind of Republican, whereas 49% were strong Democrats (14% were pure independents).

There is a considerable amount of variation that is not explained by this simple model—it explains only 12% of the variance. This is not surprising since there is considerable movement across the types of activity that is not accounted for here (see Figures 5 and 6). The model does indicate, however, that there are some systematic differences on our campuses between individual faculty.

Figure 7. OLS Regression Results of Support for Counting Public Engagement Activities in Tenure/Promotion Decisions

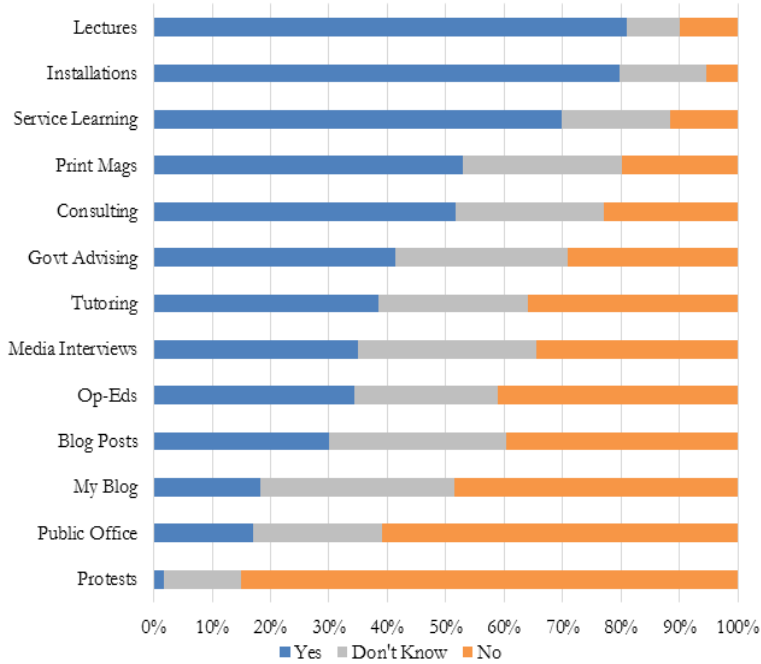


Model Statistics: N = 348, Adj. R2 = .12, RMSE = .62

Note: The "reference" category means that the other effects in that group are shown in comparison to the values of this category. For instance, the effect of an associate professor is to be .19 points less supportive of including PEAs in tenure decisions than assistant professors. The excluded category is shown to have a zero effect. Any effect with a confidence interval (the line) that overlaps with the vertical line at zero has an insignificant effect (at 90% confidence).

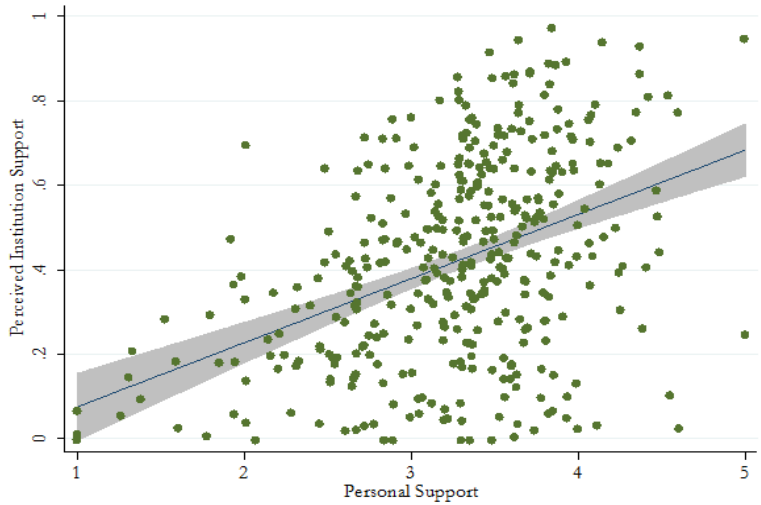
Perhaps more important than simply gauging support is gaining some measures of what faculty think their institution will support. It is worth exploring these by individual respondent and by institution, given the importance of institutional context, though we show results only for the entire sample here. Figure 8 shows the percentage perceiving that an activity would be counted, the percentage perceiving that it would not, and the percentage claiming not to know. For most activities with a lower "yes" percentage than the top three, there is considerable uncertainty in how the institution would evaluate the activity—roughly 30 percent claim not to know how each activity would be treated. For eight of the 13 activities included on the survey, less than half of respondents claim their institution would count the activity.

Figure 8. Perceived Institutional Support for Counting Public Engagement Activities (Total Sample)



Where do these attitudes come from? Do they vary by rank and institution? By division? Or are they a function of the projection of personal views? Regression estimates (not shown) suggest that perceptions of institutional support (saying yes versus the other two options) are almost wholly a function of personal support. That relationship is shown in Figure 9, which shows that perceived institutional support climbs monotonically with personal support. The effect is statistically crisp, to which the tight confidence bands attest. Although this may show that individuals are projecting their attitudes onto the institution, it may also reflect a nascent democratic feedback loop as faculty talk to one another and offer feedback about the worth of their professional activities.

Figure 9. The Tight Relationship Between Personal Support of Counting the Activity and Perceived Institutional Support (90% confidence intervals)



Note: Institutional support is the percentage of activities that the respondent perceives the institution would count for PMT ("yes" in Figure 8). Personal support is shown also in Figures 6 and 7.

One institution in the sample held a campus wide conversation about public engagement and there is statistical evidence that individual attitudes have a stronger effect among this institution's faculty than at the other schools (p = .05 on an interaction term between attitudes and a campus dummy variable). The gap is more apparent among those more in support of counting these activities. We suspect that their conversations clarified opinions such that those in support recognized that there was institutional support. That is, the effect works through reducing uncertainty.

Conclusions and Questions for Further Consideration

Where do all of these results leave us? Through both our literature review and survey, we hoped to determine whether liberal arts faculty can, without professional penalty, engage publics outside their classrooms; we also sought to discern how liberal arts institutions evaluate and reward faculty who choose to do so. In regard to whether public engagement is perceived to be a legitimate role of liberal arts professors, our initial review of literature on the liberal arts tradition renders this question largely inconclusive. Although

many authors support public engagement on behalf of the liberal arts professoriate, others are wholly against it. The primary question that remained was whether there is support among liberal arts faculty for public engagement.

The preliminary findings presented above suggest that, as was seen in the literature, a great deal of uncertainty and some disagreement exist among faculty as to the value of public engagement activities in the liberal arts. We found that perceptions of value are affected by the particulars of one's situation, including one's rank, discipline, institution, and level of personal involvement in such activities. We also found a great deal of uncertainty among faculty members regarding whether their institution values public engagement activities, although perceptions were colored in part by people's personal involvement in such activities. The experimental evidence found no dramatic effect, either positive or negative, on tenure decisions when a candidate was involved in public engagement. These results generally held true whether the candidate was a man or woman.

Perhaps what we can safely conclude at this early stage in the research process is that, despite the national dialogue evidenced by reports such as *A Crucible Moment* and *Scholarship in Public*, still more discussion may be needed on local campuses as to the role and value of public engagement. Anecdotally, we know that institutions sometimes celebrate and often encourage engagement in public (for example, these authors' institutions regularly organize faculty lectures for the public, and our marketing/PR teams encourage interviews with the media). We also know that a majority of faculty members (60%) that we surveyed were spending at least some of their time (and, for some, a lot of their time) on public engagement activities. However, such activities may pose threats not only to the participating faculty member but to educational institutions themselves. Faculty members may encounter criticism such as that made by Fish *(2008)* opposing such activity as inappropriate; they may also face backlash from unsupportive colleagues. Similarly, universities may be considered culpable when the engagement is met with resistance by the public or alumni. At the same time, calls to use real-world engagement as a primary means for lifting the country out of its civic slump, failures by the media to convey scientific knowledge adequately (consider the climate change denial discussion), and the survival of higher education itself all suggest that faculty must find a way to share what they have learned through years of careful study with those outside the ivory tower. Indeed, if the hyperpolarizing tone and unstudied

content of much of today's political rhetoric are any indication, a wide-reaching democratic education is needed more desperately than ever. Whether the public engagement of liberal arts professors will be how this education reaches communities is a subject meriting further consideration.

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