Evaluating Publicly- and Community-Engaged Scholarship: Rutgers' Guidelines and Sample Rubric

This document contains the Rutgers Guidelines for evaluating publicly-engaged scholarship in tenure and promotion.[1] It also contains a sample rubric that any reviewer might use to assess the quality of a candidate's scholarly work. The rubric's eight criteria and some variation of the indicators are commonly used in at other universities.[2] The specific rubric here is from The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.[3]

Rutgers' Guidelines for Evaluating Publicly-Engaged Scholarship[1]

Definition of Publicly-Engaged Scholarship

Publicly-engaged scholarship is characterized by scholarly work directly related to a faculty member's academic expertise, is of benefit to the external community, is visible and shared with community stakeholders, is collaborative, has public and scholarly impact, and reflects the mission of the University. This scholarship includes artistic, critical, scientific, and humanistic work that influences, enriches, and improves the lives of people beyond the academy. It requires the rigorous application of discipline-related expertise, breaks new ground or is innovative, can be replicated, documented, and has significant impact and public consequences. This scholarship integrates engagement with the community into research and teaching activities (broadly defined). Concurrent engagement with the community is a vital attribute of these scholarly activities, not a separate activity. The product of this effort is disseminated in ways that are both rigorous and accessible to audiences beyond the academy.

Criteria for Evaluating Publicly-Engaged Scholarship:

- Is discipline-related expertise used to develop the publicly-engaged scholarship?
- Is it innovative and/or novel?
- Does it use expert knowledge to synthesize information, interpret findings, or outcomes of the scholarship?
- Does it involve translation of new knowledge to the public (such as the creation of policy papers, legislation, etc.)?
- Are the outcomes measurable in terms of impact and public consequences?
- Can the specific products resulting from this scholarship be evaluated by independent experts?
- Has the scholarship been shared with the academic community, and in what form?
- Is the work rigorous in its application of academic expertise?
- Is positive engagement with the community a key component of this research?

[1] Rutgers Guidelines on Evaluating Publicly-Engaged Scholarship.

[2] Here are a few universities that, as of early 2023, explicitly reference these criteria in their tenure and promotion processes or in public documents about ongoing revisions to tenure and promotion policies: Purdue, Portland State University, University of Arizona, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, University of South Florida, University of North-Carolina, Greensboro. CES4Health, an entity that organizes peer-review of health-focused, community-facing products of scholarship, also uses these criteria.

[3] University of Minnesota-Twin Cities: Assessment of Community-Engaged Scholarship

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Examples of matters to be included in the candidate's personal statement:

It is the candidate's responsibility in his/her personal statement to explain how and in what ways his/her scholarship is publicly engaged as defined by Rutgers guidelines on publicly-engaged scholarship.

- Explain how the candidate's disciplinary expertise informed this research.
- Explain the co-creation process of the scholarship in terms of who was involved, what were their roles, and what they contributed to the process. How was the candidate's work and the partners' work blended in the product(s) of the scholarship?
- How is the work innovative, and what about the work is innovative?
- What is the predicted (or actual) impact of the work? Address impact on both the disciplinary field(s) and the community.
- How and when was the work publicly disseminated, and what dissemination process was used?
- How is the work disseminated to academic audiences?
- What new scholarship has this work stimulated?
- What are the measurable quantitative or qualitative outcomes of the work?
- What additional events/scholarship/partnerships did the work stimulate?
- What are the work's implications for policy? Practice?
- Why does this work matter in terms of the community in which the scholarship was conducted (or of broader public or community interests)?
- Like other forms of scholarly activity, how was this effort/work integrated into teaching and/or mentoring?
- Is the work valued by an outside entity? If they received funding, from whom? And if so, how did the candidate contribute to fundraising?
- What are the candidate's concrete plans for future work—either related to this work or something new?

Additional considerations

- Solicit letters from partners—they should be confidential from the candidate, but clearly will not be arm's length.
- Consider soliciting letters from leading public figures, whether or not they have an academic connection.
- May also solicit letters from subject matter experts, such as government agencies, organizations (i.e. the American Cancer Society), leaders in a field (such as museum directors), well-respected practitioners (such as film directors, for example), or community-based organizations.
- If applicable, solicit letter(s) from an organizational representative benefitting from the publicly-engaged scholarship, rather than from a co-author or co-creator.

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[1] All text on this page is copied verbatim from the [Rutgers Guidelines on Evaluating Publicly-Engaged Scholarship](). Formatting has been changed slightly

Rubric for Evaluating PES[1]

Criteria	Indicators	Evaluation ● Does not meet ● Meets ● Exceeds
1. Clear Academic & Community Change Goals Objectives defined Clear purpose and focus of inquiry	*The scholar provides evidence of clear goals such as—* ● Clearly stating the basic purpose of the work and its value for the discipline(s) AND the public good ● Documenting the alignment between the scholarship and the scholar's role, departmental priorities, and university mission ● Defining goals and objectives that are realistic and achievable ● Identifying significant intellectual questions in the discipline AND for the community/external stakeholders with whom the scholar is partnered ● Articulating a coherent program of research and objectives ● Articulating goals for teaching and student learning	
2. Adequate Preparation in Content Area and Grounding in the Community Preparation and knowledge about developments in the field of study and relevant community context	*The scholar provides evidence of adequate preparation and grounding in the community such as—* ● Investing time and effort in developing community partnerships ● Bringing necessary skills to the collaboration ● Participating in training and professional development that builds skills and competencies in publicly engaged scholarship (PES) ● Demonstrating an understanding of relevant existing scholarship and the work is intellectually compelling ● Understanding the norms and expectations of high-quality collaboration and partnership	
3. Appropriate Methods: Rigor and Community Engagement	*The scholar provides evidence of scholarly rigor informed/enriched by engagement such as—* ● Refining a research question, or confirming its validity, through collaboration or co-generation with community/external partner(s) ● Using methods appropriate to the goals, questions, and context of the work and provides rationale for election of methods	

Criteria	Indicator	Evaluation ● Does not meet ● Meets ● Exceeds
(3 – Rigor cont.) Rigor is evident in research design, data collection, interpretation, and reporting of results. Rigor is maintained, or even enhanced, through community-engaged approaches.	● Modifying procedures in response to changing circumstances ● Engaging the community/external partner as a partner/collaborator(s) in developing and/or improving the study design, the collection/ analysis/interpretation of data, and/or the recruitment and retention of study participants ● Developing policy recommendations and application/intervention ideas, based on study findings, in collaboration with external partners ● Extending and broadening the dissemination of study findings through partnership with community members and organizations ● Enhancing curriculum by incorporating updated and real-world information from community members critical to student learning of course material ● Deepening and contextualizing the learning experience in a course by involving community experts in design and implementation ● Revising curriculum and community placement with community partner based on student feedback and community partner observation	
4. Significant Results: Impact on the Discipline/Field and the Community Beneficial impact in the communities in which the scholarship is conducted. Assessment of knowledge created (in field, discipline, community).	*The scholar provides evidence of significant results/impact such as—* ● Achieving the intended or notable goals, impact, or change consistent with the purpose and target of the work over a period of time ● Contributing to new knowledge in the field/discipline through publication in peer-reviewed journals and other scholarly outlets ● Contributing to and benefiting the community/ external partner ● Making progress towards social equity and/or systemic change that promote the public good ● Securing increased funding for additional research, program implementation, and/or community partners ● Increasing capacity of community to advocate for themselves ● Adding consequentially to the discipline on issues that matter to the external partners and the community ● Opening up additional areas for further exploration, inquiry, and/or collaboration ● Advancing knowledge/understanding for the community in which the work is situated, and discussing its generalizability/transferability to other populations or as a model that can be further investigated in other settings ● Enhancing the ability of students to assume positions of leadership and community engagement	

Criteria	Indicators	Evaluation • Does not meet • Meets • Exceeds

5. Effective Presentation and Communication to Academic and Community Audiences
 	
Scholars effectively communicate with appropriate audiences and subject their ideas to independent review.
	The scholar provides evidence of effective presentation and dissemination such as—
	
	• Communicating with/disseminating to appropriate academic and public audiences consistent with the mission of the institution
	   o Publishing research results or teaching innovations in peer-reviewed, practitioner, or professional journals
	• Using appropriate forums and presenting information and materials in forms that community stakeholders and external partners find accessible and understandable
	   o Disseminating information through media used/read by community members
	   o Producing documents directed towards service providers, policy makers, or legislators
	• Communicating outcomes of community engaged work in collaboration with community/external partners
	• Presenting information with clarity and integrity	

6. Reflective Critique: Lessons Learned to Improve the Scholarship and Community Engagement Reflective critique of community partnerships. Evaluation of partnership successes and failures.	*The scholar provides evidence of reflective critique such as—* • Critically evaluating the work with appropriate evidence • Seeking evaluations from community members and using those evaluations to learn from and direct future work • Changing project/course design or line of inquiry based on feedback and lessons learned • Being involved in a local, state, national, or international dialogue related to the work • Engaging in personal reflection concerning, for example, issues of privilege or racism	

Criteria	Indicators	Evaluation ● Does not meet ● Meets ● Exceeds
7. Collaborative Leadership and Personal Contribution The scholar's work has earned a reputation for rigor, impact, relevance, and the capacity to advance the discipline or community agenda.	*The scholar provides evidence of leadership and personal contribution such as--* ● Describing how the work has been recognized, used, or built on by academic peers ● Describing how the work has been recognized, used, or built upon by community members, practitioners, professionals in the field, and external experts ● Providing comments or reviews (solicited/unsolicited, formal/informal)from academic and non-academic colleagues, peers, and experts ● Receiving awards or letters of appreciation from community-based organizations for contributions to the community ● Receiving invitations to present to professional society meetings and conferences, to present to community audiences, to testify before legislative bodies, to appear in the media, or to serve on advisory or policymaking committees ● Mentoring students, early career faculty, and community partners	
8. Socially and Ethically Responsible Conduct of Research and Teaching The work is conducted with honesty and integrity. Scholar's work is conducted in a way that fosters respectful relationships with students, community participants, external partners, and peers.	*The scholar provides evidence of consistently ethical behavior such as—* ● Socially responsible conduct of research, teaching, and outreach in writings, discourse, approach to scholarship, and nature of collaboration. Cultivating the conduct of "good science", sound research techniques and appropriate engaged pedagogies that result in meaningful and beneficial contributions to communities ● Following the human subjects review process and all other policies concerning the responsible conduct of research when conducting research projects, and specifically subjecting work to a community IRB or a university IRB committee focused on community-based research ● Approaching communities as mutual partners to foster trusting, equitable relationships ● Engaging communities in a respectful manner ● Recognizing and valuing community knowledge systems and incorporates them into the research process and courses as appropriate ● Appropriately involving community/external partners in writing and reviewing products and acknowledging their work	