Placing Scholarly Engagement "on the desk"

Lorilee R. Sandmann

University of Georgia

"I want to be of service and connect with community partners and community problems, but I do so 'off the side of my desk.'" Frequent variations of this lament are heard from faculty, particularly those at research universities. While motivated to "engage", they view their community problem-solving involvement as off- or over-load, not part of their budgeted time. It may even be considered a high-risk activity that diverts attention from those tasks "on-load" or "on the desk" that meet the gold standard for publications placed in top-tier, peer-reviewed journals.

Rice (1996) speaks about the distinct role of the American scholar in today's society, that scholar who engages in knowledge activities that address meaningful global and local issues by working in collaborative, interdisciplinary, democratic modes. O'Meara (2008), in her essay for this toolkit, adds that engaged American scholars in research universities are uniquely positioned to contribute not only disciplinary expertise but the "ability to engage (and often enhance others' capacity in) systematic inquiry, critical thinking, reflection, valuing of multiple perspectives, and communication of processes and products."

These voices are joined by others who examine scientific policy and knowledge and ways of knowing in contemporary society. Gibbons et al. (1994) and other academics call for multisided conversations between the scholarly and the practitioner communities to broaden horizons and improve lives.

Community-engaged scholarship fulfills this need: it is heterogeneous, multidirectional, collaborative, highly participatory, and of service to multiple audiences.

What will enable and enhance the work of engaged scholars at research universities? Although the complexity of engagement makes many avenues of approach relevant, two stand out as fundamental: that faculty frame engagement as scholarship and that institutional leaders support faculty in this type of work. When scholarship, the distinctive and important contribution that faculty can make, acts as the frame, it provides a stable architecture that enables faculty and students to collaborate with community partners in ways that produce credible scholarship for enhanced public good and academic outcomes. That is, constructing the architecture of the "frame" involves coupling the standards of scholarship with the principles of engagement to form the foundation of community-engaged scholarship. This scholarship has significant structural parallels to traditional scholarship; however, because it is carried out in collaboration with the community, it reflects a differing epistemological basis and a wider set of values, goals, skills, and results.

From Community Request to Scholarly Work: Community-engaged Scholarship

Not all community-based outreach constitutes engagement, and not all community engagement activities by faculty constitute scholarship. However, in a research university, scholarship can be the basis for conceptualizing, implementing, assessing, and communicating community-based engagement. This type of scholarship, then, engages faculty in academically relevant work that simultaneously fulfills campus missions and goals as well as community

needs. Scholarship is *what* is being done, engaged scholarship is *how* it is done, and for the common or public good is *toward what end* it is done*. So*, rather than simply responding to community or curricular needs, interests, problems, and requests in a just-in-time service-oriented mode, faculty become involved by framing their response as scholarship with the community constituent (Sandmann, Foster-Fishman, Lloyd, Rauhe, & Rosaen, 2000).

Taking this approach to community engagement typically strengthens the work by adding valuable new knowledge from community sources about community issues, problems, and processes. It also promotes the kind of hands-on interdisciplinary approach most conducive to innovation. Expanding scholarship teams to include graduate students, staff, and community partners "adds chairs to the research table," bringing new perspectives to research topics. Involving graduate students also socializes them to participate in engaged scholarship in their turn. Another advantage is that enlisting community partners before the work even starts increases the likelihood that the research, the results, and the partnership itself will find acceptance.

Framing for Scholarship

A number of exemplary expositions exist regarding community engagement as scholarship, but under differing nomenclature: engaged scholarship, community-engaged scholarship, public scholarship, and the scholarship of engagement. Context–institutional type and disciplinary sector– matters, so it is appropriate that the intellectual foundations, implementation, and assessment of community-engaged scholarship are being interpreted in accord with such factors. For example, the report *New Times Demand New Scholarship* (Stanton, 2007) explores community-engaged scholarship within

research universities. For the health professions, Community-Campus Partnerships for Health has developed a set of tools to plan and document community-engaged scholarship and produce strong portfolios for promotion and tenure (Jordon, 2007). For those in the arts, humanities, and design, there is the resource that resulted from Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life's Tenure Team Initiative on Public Scholarship (Ellison & Eatman, 2008). In management, Van de Ven (2007) offers a model most appropriate for engaged scholarship with business practitioners.

These and other sources often compare the differing conceptualizations of scholarship. Ramaley observed that community-engaged scholarship "'varies' from other kinds of scholarship in some ways but it is 'no different' in others" (Ellison & Eatman, 2008, p. 9). Accepting community-engaged scholarship does not negate the value of traditional research. In many situations traditional scholarship done in local communities is an appropriate approach; however, its procedures and findings are often limited to the academy with research as the primary paradigm, separate from other forms of scholarship. While the questions in planning, implementing, and assessing are the same in traditional scholarship and community-engaged scholarship, the answers are different because the two types of inquiry are constructed through different approaches. (For detailed comparisons between traditional scholarship and community-engaged scholarship as well as principles and practices of framing engaged scholarship, and a case example, see Sandmann, 2006).

In community-engaged scholarship, the keystone is engaging *with* community in defining the purpose of the scholarship, in arriving at the questions driving the scholarship, and in the design, analysis, and

dissemination of the scholarship. In this cocreation of knowledge and problem solving, community stakeholders (broadly defined) and faculty members, students, and staff are collaboratively involved in framing the "driving intellectual questions," in generating and interpreting the evidence, and in using the evidence for diverse purposes. In this way, the scholarship takes the form of an engaged pedagogy that is contextual and social, problem-based and collaborative, drawing on local and cosmopolitan knowledge (Barker, 2004).

Studies of the practice of engaged scholarship in research universities have found that community-engaged scholarship is "boundary-crossing": it crosses disciplinary and functional boundaries. That is, it can manifest itself as engaged scholarship in teaching, engaged scholarship in research, or engaged scholarship in professional service. Even more commonly, it is integrated *across* teaching, research, and service (Colbeck, 1998; Fear & Sandmann, 2001/2002; Moore, 2006; Ward, 2003). It is scholarship guided by an engagement ethos that results in work connected in coherent, thematic, and scholarly ways.

Of significance for scholars and the leaders supporting them is that participating in authentically engaged partnerships to produce mutually beneficial outcomes is not easy. While university and community partners may be committed, developing trans-organizational relationships and multidisciplinary teams takes time. Typically, leadership evolves as the partnership develops. The need to bridge organizational structures across partners requires boundary—spanning roles. Specific projects must be developed, and obtaining funding can be a major hurdle. Existing academic or community cultures may inhibit participation. Real-life concerns such as

logistics, academic calendars, and students' workplace preparedness can present difficulties.

Another challenge is working with community partners to help them understand and appreciate scholarship as the scaffold of the collaboration. Community members can be wary of being subjected to traditional scholarly research. However, community-engaged scholarship allows for a collaborative, engaged partnership of the university and community. A growing body of literature indicates the promise that this type of collaboration holds, and increased institutional support will give scholars a stronger foundation for framing their work in ways that make community members *participants* rather than subjects. Disseminating research to the community can create a constructive feedback circle to support further collaboration.

Framing Leadership for Engaged Scholarship

When Donald Schön (1995) wrote that "the new scholarship requires a new epistemology," he observed that Boyer's (1990) reconsideration of scholarship opened the door to a new look at what constitutes legitimate knowledge. Analyzing differences between traditional scholarship and community-engaged scholarship can oversimplify and dichotomize diverse, complex, and often messy processes. However, examining parallels in the structures of community-engaged scholarship and traditional scholarship illustrates how both these methods frame scholarly inquiry and generate legitimate knowledge. The aims of community-engaged scholarship differ from those of traditional scholarship, but community-engaged scholarship can function in the academy as a productive architecture, one in which community participants act as co-architects and co-researchers to enhance both theory and

practice in the field. Whatever the form and whatever the other components of the endeavor, scholarship stands as its guiding principle.

Institutional leaders can support and enhance the work of faculty who frame their engagement as scholarship in at least two critical ways. First, higher education must provide for the development of "apprentice" and "master" architects of community-engaged scholarship. In addition to disciplinary expertise and foundational research skills, faculty at any career stage, including future faculty, need support to cultivate an understanding of the underlying epistemology and values of engagement, as well as the necessary skills, such as:

1. Having a fundamental belief system about the role of the university as a partner engaged with the community in scholarly ways

2. Seeing scholarship as the defining structure when beginning a collaborative project with the community

3. Being open to interdisciplinary ways of thinking and framing scholarship

4. Having skills necessary for partnership, collaboration, and facilitation, such as being a good listener, adaptable, and patient.

Second, there must be consolidation of institutional leadership and support for this type of architecture. Much research on the institutionalization of engagement indicates that leadership matters. Without such centralized support, community-engaged scholarship may be driven by the interests of particular faculty members; its focus and thus its effectiveness become diffused. Mission, strategic priorities, and resource allocations are indicators of substantive institutional support for engaged scholarship. Ideally, it is espoused and enacted by the academic leadership, reflected in institutional

communications and publications, and embedded in the curriculum and in faculty roles and reward systems. Evidence of institutional change includes affirmative hiring of engaged scholars and adding positions to promote further engagement. Institutions can create incentives such as funding and international collaborations to attract faculty interested in taking on engagement. Such steps build organizational support for the integration of pedagogy, scholarship, and community engagement. Through this process, institutions can achieve rich and rewarding collaborations to effectively anchor scholarship to the "particularities of place."

Engaged Scholarship: On the Desk

Because the field is still in its infancy, wide-ranging opportunities remain for developing community-engaged scholarship as architecture. As inquiry continues into the philosophical, conceptual, and technical aspects of community learning and scholarship, participants from town and gown alike will gain a deeper understanding of the approaches and practices necessary to make the field both more compelling and effective.

Engaged scholar Phil Nyden, Loyola University, calls community-engaged scholarship "messy work and messy research, but…neat results." To achieve these neat results, we must anchor engagement firmly *on the desk* of our institutions and faculties as community-engaged scholarship.

References

Barker, D. (2004). The scholarship of engagement: A taxonomy of five emerging practices. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 9*(2),123-137.

Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: The priorities of the professoriate*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Colbeck, C. L. (1998). Merging in a seamless blend: How faculty integrate teaching and research. *Journal of Higher Education, 69*(6), 647—671.

Driscoll, A., & Lynton, E. A. (1999). *Making outreach visible: A guide to documenting professional service and outreach.* Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.

Ellison, J., & Eatman, T. K. (2008). *Scholarship in public: Knowledge creation and tenure policy in the engaged university*. Syracuse, NY: Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life, Tenure Team Initiative on Public Scholarship. http://www.imaginingamerica.org/TTI/TTI.html

Fear, F., & Sandmann, L. R. (2001/2002). The "new" scholarship: Implications for engagement and extension. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 7*(1&2), 29-40.

Gibbons, M., Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., Schwartzman, S., Scott, P., & Trow, M. (1994). *New production of knowledge: Dynamics of science and research in contemporary societies*. London, UK: Sage.

Jordon, C. (Ed.). (2007). *Community-engaged scholarship review, promotion & tenure packages*. Peer Review Workgroup, Community-Engaged Scholarship for Health Collaborative, Community—Campus Partnerships for Health. http://www.communityengagedscholarship.info/

Moore, T. L. (2006, November). Whole, seamless, vital: Portraits of an integrated scholarly agenda. Paper presented at the Annual Association for the Study of Higher Education Conference, Anaheim, CA.

O'Meara, K. (2008). Making the case for the new American scholar. Scholarship of Engagement Toolkit, Campus Compact.

Rice, R. E. (1996). *Making a place for the new American scholar* (Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards. Working Paper Series 1). Washington D.C.: American Association for Higher Education.

Sandmann, L. R. (2006). Scholarship as architecture: Framing and enhancing community engagement. *Journal of Physical Therapy Education, 20*(3), 80-84*.*

Sandmann, L. R. (2008). Conceptualization of the scholarship of engagement in higher education: A strategic review, 1996-2006. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 12*(1), 91-104.

Sandmann, L., Foster-Fishman, P., Lloyd, J., Rauhe, W., & Rosaen, C. (2000). Managing critical tensions: How to strengthen the scholarship component of outreach. *Change*, *32*(1), 44-58.

Schön, D. (1995, November/December). Knowing-in-action: The new scholarship requires a new epistemology. *Change,* 27-34.

Stanton, T. K. (Ed.). (2007). *New times demand new scholarship: Research universities and civic engagement: Opportunities and challenges. A conference report.* Retrieved Dec. 3, 2008, from www.compact.org/resources/research_universities/

Van de Ven, A. H. (2007). *Engaged scholarship: A guide for organizational and social research.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Ward, K. (2003). *Faculty service roles and the scholarship of engagement* .ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, 29 (5). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.