

Scholarly Outreach and Engagement Reported by Successfully Tenured Faculty at Michigan State University, 2002-2006

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Introduction

In the 1990s, reappointment, promotion, and tenure policies were cited as a major barrier for tenure track faculty at research universities to collaborate with external audiences on scholarly outreach and engagement. In 2001, based on recommendations from a committee composed of faculty and academic staff from University Outreach and Engagement, Academic Governance, the Office of the Provost, and the faculty at large, Michigan State University significantly revised its Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure form, commonly known as Form D. Starting in 2002, faculty members had the opportunity to report their scholarly outreach and engagement in every section of the form.

The purpose of this research study was to determine if and how Michigan State University faculty members reported scholarly outreach and engagement on the revised promotion and tenure form. By scholarly outreach and engagement, we mean “a form of scholarship that cuts across instruction, research and creative activities, and service. It involves generating, transmitting, applying, and preserving knowledge for the direct benefit of external audiences in ways that are consistent with university and unit missions” (Provost’s Committee on University Outreach, 1993).

Scholarly outreach and engagement activities do not include community service or volunteering (which lack a scholarly component); service to one’s profession or discipline (which does not directly benefit external audiences); service to one’s department, college, or university (which does not directly benefit external audiences); or private consulting (which does not directly benefit external audiences).

Please note: This report does not represent the totality of the scholarly outreach and engagement activities at Michigan State University during the period 2002-2006. For example, it does not include scholarly outreach and engagement conducted by non-tenure faculty, academic staff, graduate students, or undergraduate students; by faculty who did not consent to have their information included in the study; or by faculty who were not up for promotion and tenure review between 2002 and 2006, such as full professors, who fell outside the scope of this study.

These findings, instead, portray how scholarly outreach and engagement activities were reported on promotion and tenure forms by 224 faculty members included in the study.

Who was Included in the Study?

In 2006, researchers at the National Center for the Study of University Engagement received approval from MSU’s institutional review board to conduct this institutional research study. We sought informed consent to access and analyze Form D data from tenure-track faculty who successfully underwent promotion and tenure review between 2002 and 2006. With a focus on successful faculty, we purposely excluded Form D data from those who underwent third year reappointment reviews, were unsuccessful in promotion and tenure, were no longer employed at the university, and/or were no longer in tenure-track positions. We received consent from 46% of the faculty members who fit the study’s criteria—with a final count of 224 forms to be included in the study. Table 1 summarizes the demographics of the faculty members whose Form D data were included in this study.

TABLE 1
Demographics of Faculty Members whose Form D Data
Were Included in the Promotion and Tenure Study

<i>Personal Data</i>	<i>MSU Primary College</i>
Gender	26% Agriculture & Natural Resources
69% Male	12% Arts & Letters, including Music*
31% Female	4% Business
Ethnicity/race	2% Communication Arts & Sciences
80% White	5% Education
20% Nonwhite:	5% Engineering
5% Black	4% Human Medicine
10% Asian/Pacific Islander	13% Social Science
2% Hispanic	18% Natural Science
3% American Indian/Alaska Native	2% Nursing
Current rank	3% Osteopathic Medicine
62.5% Assistant professor	3% Veterinary Medicine
37.5% Associate professor	3% Other primary tenure home

* During the study years, Music was included in the College of Arts & Letters, even though it is currently its own college.

We verified that these demographic and appointment breakdowns were representative of MSU’s tenure track population between 2002 and 2006, and found that while there were a few differences, none of them was statistically significant.

How did we Collect and Analyze the Data?

Researchers from MSU's National Center for the Study of University Engagement worked closely with staff from the Office of Academic Human Resources to access the promotion and tenure forms. A qualitative content analysis was conducted by the research team. We coded the faculty portion of the promotion and tenure forms for type, intensity of activities, and degree of scholarly outreach and engagement. We transformed these codes into quantitative data which were entered into SPSS for statistical analysis. We analyzed the data looking for patterns and differences by gender, race, age, rank, assignments (i.e., appointment percentage in instruction, research and creative activities, and service), MSU Extension appointment, joint appointment, college grouping, and disciplinary characteristics (pure/applied, hard/soft, life/non-life).

What were our Major Findings?

Overall Reporting of Scholarly Outreach and Engagement

- Ninety percent of MSU faculty reported at least one type of scholarly outreach and engagement activity on their promotion and tenure form.
- Forty-seven percent of MSU faculty reported scholarly outreach and engagement in all three main areas of academic responsibility—instruction, research and creative activities, and service.

The most often reported types of scholarly outreach and engagement were:

- Noncredit instruction (70%)
- Public understanding (69%)
- Technical assistance, expert testimony and legal advice (56%)

The least often reported types of scholarly outreach and engagement were:

- Publicly engaged creative activities (6%)
- Patient and clinical services (8%)
- Patents, licenses, copyright, and technology transfer (13%)

Analysis by Demographic Variables

Race

White faculty members were compared with non-White faculty. We found that non-White faculty were more likely to report publicly engaged creative activities and publicly engaged technical assistance/expert testimony than their White colleagues. Non-White faculty members were less likely than their White colleagues to report noncredit instruction on their promotion and tenure forms.

Gender

Analysis comparing female faculty members to male faculty members revealed two significant findings. Female faculty members were more likely than their male colleagues to report publicly engaged creative activities and technical assistance/expert testimony.

Years at Michigan State University

We analyzed the number of years faculty member were at Michigan State University and the types of scholarly outreach and engagement they reported on promotion and tenure forms. Our analysis revealed that the longer the time faculty members had been at MSU, the more likely they were to report patient and clinical services, other publicly engaged service, and patents/licenses/technology transfer.

Analysis by Appointment Variables

Rank

We analyzed faculty members' current rank (either assistant or associate professor) to explore differences in types of scholarly outreach and engagement reported on promotion and tenure forms. Faculty with the rank of associate professor at the time of their promotion and tenure review were more likely to report noncredit instruction, other service, and patents/licenses/technology transfer. They were also less likely to report publicly engaged creative activities.

Appointment Type

We examined potential differences between faculty members with academic year appointments (9 months) and those with annual year appointments (12 months). Our analysis revealed that faculty members holding academic year appointments were significantly more likely to report publicly engaged credit instruction and less likely to report the other 11 types of scholarly outreach and engagement activities on their promotion and tenure forms.

MSU Extension Appointment

We also compared faculty members who held formal MSU Extension appointments with those who did not. The analysis revealed that faculty members with MSU Extension appointments were more likely to report 7 types of publicly engaged scholarship, including research—business, research—nonprofit, other research, noncredit instruction, public understanding, technical assistance/expert testimony, and other service.

Joint Appointments

We compared faculty members with appointments in a single college (72% had single college appointments) with those who had appointments in more than one college (16% had double college appointments and 11% had triple college appointments) to explore whether there were differences in the types of scholarly outreach and engagement reported. Our analysis revealed that faculty members with appointments in more than one college were significantly more likely to report these types of scholarly outreach and engagement activities: research—business; research—nonprofit; other research; noncredit instruction; public understanding; and technical assistance/expert testimony.

Reporting on the Scholarship of Integration

When given an opportunity to report on the “integration of scholarship across mission functions of the university—instruction, research and creative activities, service to the university, and service to the broader community,” 56% of the faculty reported a scholarly outreach and engagement activity; 21% reported scholarly activities that were not related to outreach and engagement; and 23% did not report any type of integrated scholarship on their promotion and tenure forms.

MSU College Level Reports Available

Similar analysis of promotion and tenure form data was conducted for each college at Michigan State University. Individual college reports may be found at:
<http://ncsue.msu.edu/publications/reappointment.aspx>.

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