

Hope Tempered by Reality: Integrating Public Engagement into Promotion and Tenure Decisions

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Abstract

Expanding the role of public engagement, service, and outreach in the promotion and tenure process entails changing the values embedded in the campus culture. This case study of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign illustrates that incremental changes can eventually lead to a campus culture supportive of public engagement. Critical to increasing the value of public engagement is the role of chancellors and presidents in setting a vision and providing a sympathetic context.

“The challenge with integrating public engagement into the promotion and tenure process is that faculty members not only have to explain to committees the standards of quality but they must also be their own advocate.” This paraphrase from a dean at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign during the wrap-up of a campus conference and workshop on the topic of public service summarizes the juggernaut faced by universities as they wrestle with what role public engagement/service/outreach should play in promotion and tenure as well as the annual review process. That is, how can universities get to the point where the indicators of excellence in public engagement/service/outreach are so embedded in the campus culture that departmental leadership as well as promotion committees know intuitively what constitutes excellence and how excellence, in turn, can be documented? Even the terminology to describe the public work of universities is in flux and is dynamic; public engagement/service/outreach is intended to embrace this general area of work. In this article, the concept will evolve from public service to outreach and partnerships to public engagement as its role becomes more central to the campus.

Being an advocate for the inclusion of public engagement/service/outreach has elements of the mythic Sisyphean mountain up which the proverbial ball must be advanced again and again and again. Working out the issues has often been on a case by case basis involving new departmental leadership and new committees with little continuity in the acquired knowledge from previous committees or former leaders. Those who toil on this mountain wonder if the departmental and campus culture will ever know intuitively what stands as excellence in public engagement/service/outreach and reward it as they do research. Or is this challenge one of those conundrums for which as Albert Camus states in the *Myth of Sisyphus*, “The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.” Whether

this is the case or not, it is certain that to transcend the frustration of set backs and endless committee meetings, at times the struggle itself must be enough. With this thought in mind, I embark on a journey that is based on my University of Illinois experiences but has its place in the national context.

Expanding the place and role of public engagement/service/outreach in the promotion and tenure process is on the policy agendas of many land-grant and state universities across America. National university associations have studied the issue. For example the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) sponsored the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. In its third report, "Returning to our Roots: The Engaged Institution" the Commission (1999, 13) wrote:

Of all the challenges facing the engagement effort, none is more difficult than ensuring accountability for the effort. Practically every one of the eleven portraits cites the need to examine faculty promotion and tenure guidelines closely to make sure they recognize and reward faculty contributions towards engagement."

John V. Byrne, president emeritus of Oregon State University and Executive Director of the Kellogg Commission, in a follow-up survey of NASULGC member institutions conducted as the commission was finishing its work, writes that engagement is "not an obvious priority of the institution" and there is a "lack of incentives and an appropriate faculty reward system" (Byrne 2000)

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) in its provocative report (2002, 33-34), "Stepping Forward as Stewards of Place," makes a similar point and admonition for its member institutions in its recommendations.

Align the scholarship of public engagement with the scholarship of discovery. In other words, public engagement needs to have academic legitimacy if it truly [is] going to become embedded in the culture of the institution...Improve the alignment of faculty roles and incentives within engagement initiatives.

Fulfilling these and other recommendations would have the presidents and chancellors, in the words from the Foreword of the report, "walk the walk" as well as "talk the talk" in leading engagement.

This case study of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign experience with expanding the role of public engagement/service/outreach in the promotion and tenure process will illustrate how one university is bridging the barriers referred to in the national reports and how it, in part, achieved, the ideals expressed in these reports. It will also describe how the use of the term public service evolved into the use of public engagement as the way to describe the work of the faculty, staff and students with external agencies and constituents.

Illinois has been advancing up the Sisyphean mountain of integrating public engagement/service/outreach in the promotion and tenure process since the mid-1970s.

This journey is described from the perspective of my involvement in the process as it overlaps with my arrival in Illinois in 1988 to serve as Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Director of the Office of Continuing Education and Public Service and with my retirement in 2005 as Vice Chancellor for Public Engagement and Institutional Relations. This journey was episodic with periods of study, strategic planning and campus-wide implementation moving the process of along. The sections below describe these periods and how the promotion and tenure process was affected.

Beginning the Discussion on the Role of Public Service in Promotion and Tenure Review

Prior to 1988, the incorporation of public service into the promotion and tenure process at Illinois was primarily carried out by those colleges with a formal cooperative extension program. This was those colleges with agricultural, family science and veterinary medicine disciplines and programs. Colleges with education, business, labor, social work, urban planning and engineering disciplines and programs, for the most part, did not give extension/public service activities significant weight in the promotion and tenure process.

In 1978, the Campus Committee on Teaching and Service issued a report entitled, “A Statement on the Evaluation of Outreach Teaching and Scholarship.” The committee was formed by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, “because of persistent comments from the Campus Committee on Promotions and Tenure (and others) that insufficient attention was being paid to the documentation and consideration of teaching and service in decisions regarding promotion and tenure” (Weir 1978). In the report, continuing education and public service were defined as “outreach forms of the traditional faculty functions of teaching and scholarship” (Weir 1978). The report said that there were four important characteristics of outstanding faculty performance in continuing education and public service: (1) professional competence, (2) ability to develop programs responsive to client needs, (3) ability to identify emerging client needs, and (4) achievement of clientele and faculty benefits (Weir 1978). The report was designated for use by both faculty members and those who review faculty promotion materials as a guide for “assessing the quality of outreach activity” (Weir 1978).

The committee was supported by the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Director of the Office of Continuing Education and Public Service and by his staff.¹ In the mid-1980s, under the leadership of a new associate vice chancellor and director, and his staff, a new push was made to incorporate public service formally into

¹ This early work at Illinois had an impact at other universities as the people involved moved to other positions. Alan Knox, former Associate Vice Chancellor and Director of Continuing Education and Public Service (CEPS) and a resource to the 1978 Campus Committee on Teaching and Service, went on to the University of Wisconsin as a member of the faculty and continued to do research on outreach scholarship. Jim Votruba, a former Associate Director in CEPS, became a national leader in working to align the mission of the university with the rewards system while he was Vice Provost at Michigan State University and continues as a national advocate as President of Northern Kentucky University. Votruba was also the chair of AASCU committee that issued the report “Stepping Forward As Stewards of Place” referenced earlier.

the promotion and tenure materials referred to as Communication 9. Although the 1978 report had been available for promotion committees, much of the continuing education and public service was not being recognized and rewarded through the promotion process. Through the advocacy of the continuing education staff, considerable headway was made in the language within the promotion and tenure guidelines. Continuing education and public service were formally included as forms of teaching and of research in promotion guidelines issued by the Office of Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

Having public service formally included in the promotion and tenure campus guidelines was an important step in changing a culture that considered research as paramount and teaching secondary, even if public service was considered as only an outreach form of research and teaching and not a function that had qualities independent of research and teaching. By having public service more prominently included in the research and teaching criteria, faculty members with significant public service portfolios, but not carrying Cooperative Extension appointments, could more easily make a claim to be considered for promotion or tenure based on their continuing and/or public service activities. As important as this was, the campus paid little more than “lip service” to this advance. I talked with deans during the early 1990s that indicated their college level tenure committees would not send forward portfolios that had a significant portion of the portfolio documenting continuing education and/or public service activity because of the belief that the campus committee would turn it back given the number of science and humanities faculty members on the campus committee. With this as the state of affairs, it was time for a new strategy.

Faculty Members’ Views of Public Service

At the turn of the decade into the 1990s, a confluence of events occurred that ushered in a new phase of raising the visibility of public service on campus. When I came to Illinois from the University of Minnesota in 1988, I was reunited with a colleague, Professor James Farmer, Jr., with whom I had collaborated on higher education evaluation studies. We shared a passion for public service. I was active with colleagues nationally in those sections of NASULGC arguing for a more prominent role for public service on our campuses, and I came to Illinois carrying that vision for Illinois. This discussion was stimulated by the work of Lynton and Elman (1987) who proposed “new priorities for the university,” and by Boyer’s (1990) proposition that “scholarship be reconsidered” to include the scholarship of application as well as the scholarship of discovery and of teaching. Farmer directed the graduate program in continuing higher education and had personally experienced the vagaries of promotion committees as he had difficulty convincing his colleagues that his work with medical societies to improve their teaching should be counted in his promotion argument. He soon was appointed chair of the Senate Committee on Continuing Education and Public Service on which I was an ad hoc member serving in a staff role.

We advanced to the Senate the idea of doing a study of the faculty regarding their participation in and views of public service and its role in the promotion and tenure

process. Our goal was to obtain ideas about public service directly from the faculty members across the campus with the aim of improving the section in the promotion and tenure documents on the service criterion. We believed that the definition of public service needed to reflect the views of the faculty and that the documents should contain examples of what constituted quality and how it is documented.

We believed Illinois needed to find its own voice and language in how to talk about public service. Only in this way was there hope that public service would be seen as substantial and subject to quality standards. At Illinois, as is the case of other Research I universities, there is a culture of having to find its own way. Influenced by Elman and Smock (1985) we believed that public service was a function that could stand on its own beside research and teaching and didn't need to be defined or assumed solely under one or both of them or become an expanded form of scholarship as was advocated by Boyer in *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (Boyer 1990).

Using a case-study approach, 328 faculty members at Illinois responded about their (1) involvement in public service, (2) their definition of public service, and (3) their attitudes about its importance and role in promotion and tenure. The faculty members were from a pool of five hundred faculty members selected at random from the 1,820 faculty members who met the test of being full-time and tenured or on tenurable appointments.

A study was also made of the literature on attempts to describe public service as a function different than research and teaching. Three areas emerged across this literature that characterized public service: (1) public service utilizes the faculty member's academic expertise (Elman and Smock 1985; Lighty 1916); (2) the purpose of the activity is important (Checkoway 1991; Apps 1988); and (3) the activity is in the public interest and contributes to the public good (Van Hise 1915; Lawshe 1965).

A keyword usage study of the self-reported definitions of public service from the Illinois faculty showed four themes (Schomberg and Farmer 1994).

1. Public service activities utilize professional expertise but are distinct from teaching and research activities.
2. Public service activities benefit others and contribute to the general welfare of society by solving problems or providing information.
3. The audience for public service activities is outside the university and is most often characterized as the "community," "government," or "public."
4. Public service activities are undertaken voluntarily with little or no compensation.

Drawing on the themes from the literature and the results of the self-reported definitions from the faculty, the Senate committee concluded that three primary elements contributed to a definition of public service activities: (1) they contribute to the public welfare or the common good; (2) they call upon the faculty member's academic or professional expertise; (3) they directly address or respond to real-world problems, issues, interests or concerns. These characteristics of public service activities

were included in the criteria section of Communication 9: Promotion and Tenure Criteria and Guidelines issued annually by the Office the Provost as the “distinguishing characteristics of activities considered as public service” (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Office of the Provost 2005).

The results from the survey indicated extensive faculty involvement in public service activities. Table 1 shows that 81 percent of the faculty members responding to the survey gave a presentation at workshops, institutes, conferences, or noncredit courses intended for professionals or the public. Seventy-five percent indicated that they made the results of research understandable and usable in practical settings. Sixty-two percent tested concepts, processes, or ideas in a reality-based laboratory or in the real world. Sixty-six percent advised, consulted, or provided technical assistance within their field to professional associations.

Table 1: Percent of faculty members involved in specific public service activities, percent of the whole faculty sample reporting the activity’s importance in promotion and tenure considerations, and the rank order of activities as to how many faculty members indicated the importance in promotion and tenure.

Activities	Level of Involvement	Importance in Promotion and Tenure Consideration	
	%	%	Rank Order
1. Provide University clinic services	12	46	19
2. Make research understandable/usable	75	76	2
3. Test concepts & processes in real world	62	73	4
4. Develop patents or copyrights	19	54	13
5. Create or perform literature, art or music	14	68	7
6. Act as an expert witness	20	37	21
7. Provide information to the media	59	34	22
8. Advise students doing public service	44	53	14
9. Present at workshops	81	84	1
10. Write for popular/practical publications	57	64	9
11. Teach off-campus credit courses	20	57	12
12. Evaluate programs or operations	53	69	6
13. Participate in governmental meetings	47	61	10
<i>Advise, consult or provide technical assistance to:</i>			
14. Neighborhoods and agencies	35	48	17
15. Schools, museums, and park districts	31	52	15
16. Town, city or county government	14	50	16
17. State governmental agencies	29	58	11
18. Federal governmental agencies	46	65	8
19. Professional associations	66	75	3
20. Practitioners in the field	57	70	5
21. Self-employed individuals	28	38	20
22. Private business and industry	46	47	18

Regarding promotion and tenure specifically, this sample of faculty members also indicated broad endorsement of the activities as important for recognition in promotion and tenure decisions. Fifty percent or more of the sample indicated that sixteen of the activities were important to recognize in tenure and promotion evaluations. This endorsement raised expectations among those of us advancing the notion of public service; that progress could be made in including public service in promotion and tenure discussions.

The survey results also revealed that the form of public service varied significantly from college to college. When the participation data were analyzed using factor analysis techniques, five distinct forms of public service emerged:

1. Providing professional practice.
2. Consulting with state/local agencies.
3. Serving disciplinary and professional associations.
4. Bringing the arts to the public.
5. Commercializing research outcomes.

Table 2: Forms of public service, percent of variance accounted for by the form and their primary component activities—factor scores in parenthesis.

<p><i>Form 1: Providing Professional Practice—30.4%</i> consulting with the self-employed (.73) and private business (.49), assisting practitioners (.72), making research understandable (.62), writing for popular/practitioner publications (.63), providing clinic/lab services (.60), giving presentations for professionals (.59), testing concepts and processes in the real world (.57), and providing information to the press (.57).</p>
<p><i>Form 2: Consulting with State/Local Agencies—8.4%</i> assisting towns, cities, and counties (.81), state agencies (.66), schools (.53), neighborhoods (.58), acting as an expert witness (.54), and participating in governmental meetings (.50).</p>
<p><i>Form 3: Serving Disciplinary and Professional Associations—6.8%</i> evaluating programs (.73), assisting professional associations and federal agencies (.64), and participating in governmental meetings (.52)</p>
<p><i>Form 4: Bringing the Arts to the Public—5.9%</i> creating works of literature, art and music (.76), assisting schools, museums and parks (.52).</p>
<p><i>Form 5: Commercializing Research Outcomes—4.8%</i> development of patented and copyrighted items (.73).</p>

Note: Items associated with factors were selected with factor loadings > .45. At this level, a factor will account for at least 20% of the variance in the item.

This pattern of differences followed college lines; what was a preferred form of public service in one college was not in another. Engineering faculty members are extensively involved with federal panels and professional societies as well as in commercializing research outcomes. Faculty members in agriculture are active in providing direct service and working at the state and local levels. Education faculty members are active on federal panels and in schools. Faculty members in the fine arts and literature fields were focused on interacting with the public around performance and creating works of art. The faculty members in professional fields such as veterinary sciences focused on commercializing the outcomes of their research to help the public. Among the Liberal Arts and Commerce faculty members no form dominated.

Through the five forms of public service, faculty members provide the knowledge of the University to society but in very different ways. These differences may lie in the recognition that each faculty field has a unique logic and process of linking themselves to the outside world. Veterinarians consider it important to relate to practicing veterinarians. Engineers are more oriented toward conducting public-supported research valued by the federal funding agencies. Musicians and artists value performing publicly in order to create access to their work. The logic of how one faculty field relates to the larger society does not necessarily translate to another faculty member's field.

For purposes of promotion and tenure considerations, this finding was important. College and department committees may find a form of public service important but the campus committee will have faculty members from several colleges in which such activities are not thought important or of particular value to the field. It becomes important to help committees recognize that just as research methods differ widely among fields and colleges, so does the form of public service.

When faculty members were asked specifically about the role of public service in the promotion and tenure process, no majority views emerged as to whether public service was adequately recognized in tenure considerations or in merit salary considerations. Between one-fifth and one-third did not know and between one-third and two-fifths did not think that public service was adequately a part of the reward and recognition process. However, two-thirds or more thought public service enhanced the reputation of the person doing it and that academic units had an obligation to provide public service.

As a major outcome of the study, the Senate endorsed the preparation of a "Faculty Guide for Relating Public Service to the Promotion and Tenure Review Process" (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Senate Committee 1993). The handbook was referenced in promotion and tenure guidelines and made available in both a printed and electronic version for faculty members to use. The handbook sought to clarify (1) what could be considered to be public service, (2) how public service related and informed teaching and research, and (3) the issues faced by promotion and tenure committees and deans in determining what is public service.

Creating a Strategic Plan and Rewarding Public Service

In 1994, Michael Aiken came to Illinois to serve as chancellor of the campus. Soon after he arrived, he initiated a strategic planning process that included the “service mission of the University” as one of its areas. This resulted in the creation of campus programmatic structure and assigned a level of priority to public service that hadn’t previously been in place at Illinois. I was assigned as staff to a committee that was chaired by the dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine. The committee was well representative of the colleges with faculty members who were enthusiastic with the opportunity before them.

One of the tasks of the committee was to collect from the colleges all of the ways that faculty members were programmatically involved with the public. The extensive list of more than five hundred specific activities surprised the chancellor and the committee members. They were surprised at both the extent of the activities and, if so extensive, why across campus and among the public, there was little recognition of this broad array of programs. The committee recommended that public service needed a focus and better marketing to make the vast number of opportunities known to the public as well as to the faculty.

As an outcome of the strategic planning process, the “Framework for the Future” was created and published in 1995 and had as its seventh goal: Outreach and Partnerships: Reinvigorate Commitment to Outreach and Partnerships. The goal read as follows:

The land-grant mandate to make the expert knowledge of Illinois faculty available to serve the people of Illinois and the broader society is central to our institution. Not only does this arrangement work to the benefit of the citizenry at large, but it also serves the campus’s interest in focusing teaching and research on contemporary issues in appropriate disciplines: the knowledge and insights faculty gain while engaged in outreach are imported to the classroom and laboratory, where they inform teaching and research.

Goals

- Establish Partnership Illinois, a new initiative to bring faculty expertise to bear on the educational, technological, economic, social and cultural challenges facing Illinois and the broader society.
- Keep the public fully informed about developments on the campus.
- Enhance our cooperation with other institutions and organizations both independently and through a variety of consortia and associations.
- Employ a range of strategies to build bridges between the campus and the world (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Office of the Chancellor 1995).

Responsibility for implementing these goals was assigned to my office within the Office of the Chancellor where I had become Associate Chancellor. In personal communication, Chancellor Aiken had told me that he believed that to make significant progress on these goals, his office needed to be in the lead as a way of sending a message that public service was important across the campus. He also said he would chair the Partnership Illinois Council, comprised primarily of the college deans, that was to provide oversight to implementing Partnership Illinois. He wanted to use his personal leadership to raise the level of attention on public service (outreach and partnerships).

In order to help keep the public informed about the programmatic opportunities provided to it, an electronic index of the five hundred or so public service activities identified in the colleges was created. A process was put in place to update the information annually involving college contacts assigned to undertake the updates. The president of the University liked what the Urbana-Champaign campus was doing and asked his staff to create a parallel database for each of the other two campuses at Chicago and Springfield. The index was also put in print form and distributed to members of the legislature to illustrate how the University of Illinois was serving the state. The electronic version of the index continues today and is updated on an annual basis.

The Partnership Illinois program was initiated with \$200,000 of small seed grants distributed on a competitive basis. The program evolved into an incubator of partnerships focused on important societal problems. Sixty programs received funding over a six-year period. Most of the programs were project focused and were completed after one to three years or were not successful and were phased out. Others evolved into ongoing services and partnerships.

When Partnership Illinois was launched, no formal plan was in place to sustain the initiatives deemed worthy of continuing beyond the grant year. There were vague notions of new initiatives becoming self-supporting through fees or contributions of the external partners. This was a naïve notion and none of the mature Partnership Illinois programs were able to be self-sustaining. While each generated some income, each one needed some form of permanent sustaining funding. For example, the campus received sustaining funds from the Illinois General Assembly for the Novice Teacher Support Program.² In the end a handful of programs received continuing support through campus reallocation.

² The Novice Teacher Support Project is a collaborative effort that combines personnel and resources from the Council on Teacher Education (which spans six colleges on the Urbana campus), Regional Offices of Education for Champaign-Ford Counties and Vermilion County, and local school districts from the three-county region dedicated to attracting and retaining teachers in East Central Illinois. This collaboration also involves the Illinois Education Association, and the Illinois Federation of Teachers. The goal is to develop a set of learning experiences that enable beginning teachers to meet and work together across school districts as they make the transition into full-time teaching.

In order to raise the profile of excellence in public service work, the Senate Committee on Continuing Education and Public Service created a campus awards program. The awards were expected to help establish norms for quality and excellence in public service. Choosing candidates for the award meant that a faculty committee was now making quality judgments as to what constituted excellence in public service. To receive an award based upon peer review of faculty chosen broadly across the campus has now become a point of pride and an annual reception is held to feature the awardees. It has also become a factor in annual review and a permanent salary increase for the faculty member accompanies the award. In the first years, faculty members in the sciences, social sciences and professional schools won the award, illustrating that public work was indeed broader than the traditional extension venues.

In 2000, as a way to gauge the progress the campus had made in the role of public service in the promotion tenure process, the Senate Committee on Continuing Education and Public Service repeated the study conducted ten years previously. A new sample of five hundred faculty members was drawn with 238 returning questionnaires. The faculty members reported similar participation rates with some notable changes. Compared to the 1990 study, the areas showing the largest increases in faculty members activities were in technology transfer (19 percent vs. 27 percent) and working with schools, communities and local government (35 percent vs. 44 percent). Also noteworthy, because of the general interest across the nation in service learning, is that advising students on service learning and volunteer activities was on the rise (44 percent vs. 51 percent). Those activities showing the greatest decrease between 1990 and 2000 were writing for popular or practitioner publications (57 percent vs. 48 percent) and evaluating programs outside of the University (53 percent vs. 45 percent).

The feedback on the promotion and tenure front was disappointing. Faculty members reporting on the survey indicated that at the departmental level the promotion and tenure process was considered inadequate. Only 38 percent said it was important within their unit and that the unit had successful procedures for evaluating public service. Furthermore, 55 percent indicated that the value placed on public service changed with a change in department heads removing any consistency of expectations. This suggested that public service was not sufficiently embedded in the departmental culture so that when a new department head came on board, public service could be disregarded as important. This notion was underscored by faculty members indicating that departmental norms (71 percent) and campus culture (61 percent) were among the barriers to undertaking public service. Although the generally negative feedback was disappointing, we believed the results were in part a function of the increased expectations regarding public service that were not being met in many departments.

Centrality of Public Engagement to the University

In 2001, Nancy Cantor became chancellor at Illinois. She made one of her top priorities engaging the campus with the public for their mutual benefit. Her ideas found fertile ground as Partnership Illinois had fostered such reciprocal relationships with the community and the campus handbook on public service and the promotion and tenure process had advocated for an interactive relationship among research, teaching, and public service.

Her first major address to an external audience was to a group of legislators and local government and business leaders on the topic of “University Public Engagement and the Critical Issues of Illinois.” As Cantor surveyed the many ways Illinois was working with the public, she outlined why engagement was a campus goal and why public engagement was the way to describe the University’s relationship with the community.

“What I am seeing is affirmation at Illinois of a fundamental assumption: great universities cannot be ivory towers; we arise out of and must exist within a public sphere of responsibility. This intimate relationship between the University and society provides us our very identity and it informs everything we do, not just what can be labeled as our “service mission.” This was true in the 1860s when the first land-grant universities were founded and is true today. In fact, I view this assumption about the centrality of public engagement to all of our missions as so important that I believe it is worth re-stating tonight the answer to a simple question: that is, why should our University care about public engagement...

1. We should care because the vitality of our ideas, the creativity of our scholarly work, the timeliness of our innovations, are not only tested in the marketplace of public engagement but also shaped and co-produced by our engagement with our external partners;
2. We should care because we cannot be said to be “educating” our students if we do not engage the world which they are preparing to lead;
3. We should care because our knowledge helps create the technological, social, and human capital that can change the world that [our students] will lead;
4. And, we should care because by making those discoveries, fully educating those students, and sharing that knowledge, we become a public good, renewing the trust that our publics have in our scholarly community” (Cantor 2001).

This speech established the rationale for why public engagement should move from a specialized and marginal status to a central campus role.

As she and I worked on the speech together, the principles and values that engagement should embrace emerged for us. They were (1) sustained engagement, (2) shared decision making, (3) dynamic programs, and (4) reciprocity. These features of engagement became benchmarks of effectiveness. Cantor spoke to these features:

“Confidence and trust grow out of *sustained relationships*... *Shared decision making* is one of the most important of the features of effective public engagement... Accordingly, to be effective, we have to learn to listen to our community partners... What other lead faculty members in these kinds of alliances have said is so true of *shared decision making*: ‘In this work, you have to share, you have to give up control.’ . . . Most of the successfully sustained public engagement activities are *dynamic programs* that change over time and build on previous successes. . . Finally, the benefits derived from public engagement must be *reciprocal*” (Cantor 2001).

One story well represents these features. I was welcoming a group of school superintendents, principals and teachers to the campus to discuss the details of a new program funded by Partnership Illinois and jointly developed by education faculty members and staff members from the local regional office of education with the superintendents. I remarked that as the Novice Teacher Support Program was being developed, the University was here to listen. Spontaneous applause broke out much to my embarrassment. Afterward, several superintendents said it was the first time they could recall a senior administrator for the University saying they were there to listen. For them, something had changed. The University wasn't going to simply try to fix a problem for the schools but was partnering with the schools to learn about and create a solution together to keep novice teachers from leaving the profession.

To create more opportunities for faculty members to engage with the public and to create momentum for engagement across the campus, the Cross-Campus Initiatives were started. Teams of faculty members from across campus formed groups to address specific societal needs. Among the themes were PharmaEngineering, Neural Repair in the Nano-Domain, Cell as a Micro-Machine, Humanities in a Globalizing World, Institutions in a Demographically Changing World, Arts in a Technology-Intensive World, Food Security, Democracy in a Multiracial Society, Aging, Promoting Family Resiliency, International and National Policy: The Changing Context. Each theme had a public engagement component and was to meet the requirements that Cantor had spelled out in her initial address on the qualities of public engagement.

How to document excellence in the public engagement partnerships and initiatives continued to be a goal. Grant holders were asked to evaluate their projects, but this turned out to be an inadequate strategy. Evaluations were one of the last things to get accomplished. The faculty members with grants asked for help from a professional evaluator as many did not have evaluation backgrounds. In response, an evaluation model was created that used the four benchmarks of effectiveness Cantor had outlined earlier: reciprocity, shared decision making, dynamic programs, and sustained

engagement. A professional program evaluator was retained and worked with each partnership to learn about its impact and effectiveness.

Cantor also raised the profile of public engagement in the classroom as she advocated bringing societal problems onto campus not only to be studied but to be part of the education of students. Faculty members were encouraged to involve students in opportunities for engaging societal issues through “boundary crossing” learning opportunities such as service learning, study abroad, and intergroup dialogue (Cantor and Schomberg 2002). For example, Illinois had been slow to implement service learning as a campus initiative, leaving it to individual faculty initiative to develop. The only significant pocket of activity was connected with the East St. Louis Action Research Project sponsored by the departments of architecture, landscape architecture, and urban and regional planning. With Cantor’s vision as the guide, the resources of the Partnership Illinois seed grant program were used to encourage faculty members to include community-based learning in the curriculum as a form of service learning integrated into existing courses. Twelve grants were awarded to implement these programs.

An example of bringing societal problems into the classroom through community-based learning is the Intensive Spoken Spanish course that created a link between the local Hispanic community and the University by allowing students of Spanish to assist in meeting the needs of the Latina/o population. The course integrates service learning with new designs for foreign language curricula to meet the national standards for foreign language learning. The course utilized community service to yield cultural experience and linguistic growth by requiring students to work within a local organization that serves the Spanish-speaking population. In the process of meeting with members of the Hispanic community at a service center, the students learned not only better spoken Spanish but also about the barriers to health care, education and social service created by language and cultural differences.

To further support these initiatives, raise their profile, and build more momentum across campus, Cantor created the position of Vice Chancellor for Public Engagement and Institutional Relations. The vice chancellorship provided the strategic direction and leadership for campus programs and relations with Illinois stakeholders and external partners around critical societal issues. The office also oversaw campus-level public engagement programs such as the Office of Continuing Education, Robert Allerton Park and Conference Center, the University Arboretum, and the Partnership Illinois initiative—the strategic initiative to promote, renew and expand the public engagement mission of the University. In addition, the vice chancellor served as campus liaison to the University-level administration offices of Governmental Relations and the Board of Trustees.

Public Engagement Formally Defined

Public engagement became the way the campus talked about its relationships with the public. The Senate Committee on Continuing Education and Public Service took the

lead in recasting itself into the Senate Committee on Public Engagement. It redrafted its roles and defined public engagement. In doing so, it coordinated its work with an ad hoc committee appointed by the provost to determine whether public engagement should play a greater role in promotion and tenure considerations. The appointment of the ad hoc committee followed soon on the heels of the granting of tenure on the basis of public engagement to a celebrated faculty member in chemical engineering who had a growing national reputation at interpreting science over radio, through a newspaper column and an online column. The Senate committee and the ad hoc committee provided the crucible for faculty debate over what constituted public engagement. As vice chancellor I served on both of these groups and helped facilitate the discussion between them.

The Senate committee members agreed to a definition and shared it with the ad hoc committee on promotion and tenure. With only a few changes, the committee members from the social sciences, humanities, agriculture and professional schools quickly agreed on a definition. However, those committee members from science areas did not, and a debate occurred over about a six-month period on a definition of public engagement. The Senate delayed its action on the new committee charge until both the Senate and the ad hoc committee studying the promotion and tenure questions could agree on a common definition. The definition that was affirmed said:

Public engagement is the application for the public good of the knowledge and expertise of a faculty or staff member to issues of societal importance. Typically, this activity is done in collaboration with others inside and outside the University. The activity may enrich research and teaching as well as lead to new directions within the University (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Senate 2004).

The campus now had a definition of public engagement endorsed by the Senate as well as by the ad hoc committee charged with review of the promotion and tenure process regarding public engagement.

The definition had continuity with the earlier definitions of public service in that it continued to contain the elements of (1) faculty expertise, (2) societal needs, and (3) benefiting the public. What was new was the interactivity notion of collaboration outside and inside the University and that through public engagement the University may launch new initiatives.

The committee looking at the role of public engagement in the promotion and tenure process recommended that public engagement play a greater role in the process and issued recommendations for improving peer review of activities, documenting of quality, and educating deans and tenure committees on documenting and evaluating quality public engagement. An updating of the “Faculty Guide for Relating Public Service to the Promotion and Tenure Review Process” is underway by the chair of the ad hoc committee and will be reviewed by the Senate prior to approval by the Provost.

Once the update is completed, it will be a useful tool for the workshops with deans and department heads that the ad hoc committee recommended.

The terms public service and outreach have evolved into public engagement. One of the gains over the past twenty years has been a more complex and fuller understanding of what once was called “service.” Where once public service was used generically for all forms of providing education and knowledge to the public and granting public access to University venues, it now represents those services primarily initiated by the University such as sponsoring public radio/TV or hospitals as well as veterinary and health clinics or when faculty are asked to serve on state/federal panels, testify before legislators, and provide access to University specialized equipment. Outreach is largely faculty, staff or student initiated where resources are identified and applied to the problem or societal issue or when faculty give public lectures, teach continuing education or when students volunteer in the community (Farmer, Sheats and Deshler 1972). Public engagement has become the more general term and includes public service and outreach, but at the same time, it also designates the most complex of the ways the University relates to the public because it connotes more extensive collaborative and interactive qualities and involves the public and/or target audience in understanding the societal issue as well as creating and implementing solutions which often involve partnerships. In an ideal setting, both public service and outreach will be undertaken in the form of public engagement.

Leadership Creates an Environment to Support Public Engagement

Leaders at Illinois have been instrumental in creating an environment to advance public engagement. As this case study illustrates, the advocacy and leadership roles played by former chancellors Aiken and Cantor were critical. I was told by faculty members through informal conversations that the public stance and embrace of public engagement/service/outreach by the chancellors provided validation for their work. It gave them the reinforcement to approach department heads about recognizing their work in the annual review. Faculty members told me they felt freer to talk about their work and to pursue ideas with the public that they found interesting and important. It also provided an opportunity for conversations with faculty members in the sciences and humanities who hadn’t thought of their work as public engagement. For example, a chemist told me he was delighted to learn that his work with others on a critical health problem and his subsequent sharing of the findings with professional and government groups was public engagement. He now saw himself as part of the public engagement initiatives, not outside it.

The presidents of the University of Illinois³ also played a very prominent role in making outreach/public engagement an important activity for the University as a

³ The University of Illinois consists of three campuses-Chicago, Springfield, and Urbana-Champaign-with a president as the head of the system and a chancellor as the head of each independent campus.

whole. Former president James J. Stukel made renewing the links with the State of Illinois one of his priorities when he became president in 1995. He undertook fifty day-long community visits to take the University to the state, created Illinois Connection as a way of linking the citizens of Illinois to the University, and established a University-wide electronic database on public service programs. He went on to serve on the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities and to chair the Board of Directors of NASULGC as a national advocate of public engagement.

B. Joseph White became University president in 2005 and launched a strategic planning framework that includes within its vision “engagement and public service.”

...to create a brilliant future for the University of Illinois in which the students, faculty, and staff thrive, and the citizens of Illinois, the nation, and the work benefit; a future in which the University of Illinois is the recognized leader among public research universities in: teaching, scholarship and research; engagement and public service; economic development; arts and culture; global reach; athletics...(University of Illinois, Office of the President 2005).

The strategic vision and direction is to be implemented by each of the campuses. It provides a context to encourage the University to continue to improve on its ways of engaging the state.

Conclusion

Universities are ideal places to address societal issues and to engage those affected by them. Our universities are both set apart from involvement in the daily affairs of society yet expected to transform society with the infusion of new ideas and solutions to life’s seemingly unyielding problems and challenges (Cantor and Schomberg 2003). Universities are set apart so there is time to study societal problems without the pressure for immediate solutions. They are set apart so students and faculty members can test and experiment with solutions and so they can preserve and conserve the world’s culture and knowledge. Yet, our universities are also deeply engaged with society so that they can benefit from the knowledge of those outside of the academy that are involved with society’s problems, so that they can shape an education that will serve the students who seek to be leaders in their fields, so that the ideas generated by faculty and students can be tested in the arenas where the problems exist, and so that University inventions and ideas can generate new economies and new communities. In other words, so that society can benefit from the vast knowledge resources of the University and so the University can benefit from the on-the-ground knowledge and experiences of society.

Framing the University in this way makes public engagement central to its purpose. This turns on its head the notions of the 1980s where work with the public was argued to be an extension of research and teaching. In this new paradigm of the public

engagement university, research and teaching become an extension of and are dependent upon public engagement.

In today's accountability environment when the public in general and elected officials in state legislatures and in the Congress in particular seek better results from higher education and question the level of public investment in higher education and how funding is used, framing the university as driven by public engagement offers terrific opportunities for making a case for its value to society. However, this notion needs more advocates as many faculty and university leaders continue to focus on what the public and government can do for higher education and not on the university as a public good engaged with society to address critical societal issues. For the idea of the public engagement university to become more fully entrenched, the culture of higher education must continue to adapt to this reciprocal-driven and partnership environment. The promotion and tenure process itself will signal that a transformation has occurred when public engagement is not just permissible as a criterion but is an expectation.

To become more fully a public engagement university calls not only for an expanded role of public engagement in promotion and tenure considerations but also for recognition that unique skills are necessary for exemplary public engagement. In describing the public engagement of the University of Illinois at Chicago with the public schools, Larry Braskamp and John Wergin illustrate how it is "messy work" and takes a special set of skills such as being able to negotiate the research questions that are important to the schools and to navigate the tricky communication and politics of school administrators and teachers' union (Braskamp and Wergin 1997). These are not skills often learned in graduate school yet they are necessary for exemplary public engagement faculty.

There are signs that more and more graduate students are learning these skills. These students are now being mentored by faculty members involved in the community and are learning to work with community groups and agencies. Last spring I met with such a group of graduate students in community psychology to discuss public engagement and the challenges they are experiencing as they conduct their research in community settings. Also a more activist group of faculty seems to be populating our lower ranks. When the public engagement cross-campus initiatives were first being planned, a strong interest came from the junior faculty. They appeared eager to be involved with societal issues and the communities that are affected by them. This means that we must continue to press for the expanded role of public engagement in promotion and tenure considerations. And as a corollary, there will need to be more tolerance for and embrace of what constitutes quality research. Increasingly, action and field research have become more important for the public engagement university. If universities want the support of the public for its work in communities, cities, rural areas, schools, local governments and with agencies, they must accommodate to the new skills faculty members need to be successful.

At Illinois, change in the role of public engagement in the promotion and tenure process has been incremental and has taken time. However, there are signs that the

culture has changed, and that in the future, those with major public engagement portfolios may be more successful in seeking promotion and tenure based on the “service” criterion. With regard to public engagement, campus values at Illinois have changed. The Senate approval of the new Committee on Public Engagement and its charge was unanimous. The land-grant notion of the university to engage societal problems has moved beyond the agricultural and veterinary medicine disciplines to incorporate many parts of the campus. Discussions and planning about how the University will engage with society have moved from the president’s and chancellor’s offices to the colleges and departments. Public engagement is no longer the domain of special organizations such as extension, continuing education offices, and public radio/TV. Through the campus awards for excellence in public engagement and the competitive Partnership Illinois grants program, faculty committees are gaining experience across a wide range of disciplines and professional fields in what constitutes quality public engagement and where to look for indicators of quality.

The advantage of a long career is that you can look back and see that what seemed Sisyphean in nature were actually small steps of evolution in the campus culture and environment as adaptations were made to the changing context in which Illinois found itself. With such gradual change, University leaders with a passion for public engagement must have some Sisyphean qualities. For as Albert Camus in the *Myth of Sisyphus* helps us to see, at times the struggle to advance public engagement/service/outreach in the promotion and tenure process has to be reward enough. One lesson from this case study is that persistence pays off, visionary leadership from the chancellor and president positions is critical to success, and each generation of leaders builds on the success of the past. While it may be a slow way to make change, perhaps it will be lasting.

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