

FULL-LENGTH ARTICLES

Shifting the Culture of Higher Education: A Case Study in Advancing Community-Engaged Scholarship With a Multifaceted Approach

Janine M. Jurkowski, PhD, MPH¹ ¹ Health Policy Management, & Behavior, University at Albany, State University of New York

Keywords: higher education, community-engagement, tenure and promotion, toolkit, organizational champion, participatory research

<https://doi.org/10.35844/001c.151730>

Journal of Participatory Research Methods

Vol. 6, Issue 5, 2025

Public trust in higher education and science has declined over the past decade. Community-Engaged Scholarship (CES) can help rebuild this trust by fostering reciprocal partnerships that advance both knowledge and society. However, structural and cultural barriers hinder adoption of CES, particularly at Research-1 (R1) institutions, due to the misalignment between institutional values and traditional tenure and promotion criteria.

This paper presents a case study from the University at Albany, SUNY that details a multifaceted approach to institutionalizing CES. Initiatives built upon each other, beginning with a strategic commitment to public engagement. To support this commitment, University at Albany created a resource allocation program and an award to recognize excellent examples of CES. A key initiative was the appointment of a Provost Fellow for Publicly Engaged Research and Teaching, who conducted a comprehensive review of the literature and institutional CES practices, led the application for Carnegie Classification, and developed recommendations for ongoing institutional support for CES. These recommendations ultimately guided the creation of a Community-Engaged Scholar (CES) Toolkit. This Toolkit provides a definition of CES and scholarly impact that expands traditional frameworks to include community, policy, and societal outcomes. It provides guidance for faculty as well as tenure and promotion committees to document and evaluate CES and offers recommendations for preparing for promotion. This paper concludes with reflection on the role of institutional champions as cultural change agents in advancing CES.

Introduction

The more than 30% decline in state and local funding per student at four-year public universities in the past 30 years (Webber, 2017) is likely linked to the growing distrust in science and lack of confidence in the ability of higher education to serve the public good (Gligorić et al., 2025; Sdvizhkov et al., 2022). According to the Pew Research Center, public confidence in higher education among U.S. adults has dropped from 63% in 2014 to 42% in 2024 (Pew Research Center, 2024). Distrust in science is higher among Black, Latino, and less-educated adults. Confidence in scientists is also lower among those without a college degree (69%) compared to those with a bachelor's

degree or higher (80%). This erosion of trust reduces the likelihood that the public will adopt evidence-based recommendations or recognize the relevance of academic research (Pew Research Center, 2024).

Community-engaged scholarship (CES) is a strategy for universities to rebuild public trust and demonstrate value to society by generating scientific knowledge in collaboration with those it affects.

CES includes both teaching and research. In teaching, it fosters mutually beneficial projects in which students gain practical real-world experience and community partners gain new skills, perspectives, and increased capacity. In research, CES leads to innovation, advances in social justice, and enhances communities. It also helps the public to see how research relates to everyday life (Israel et al., 2013) and therefore has the potential to improve the public's perception of higher education and science (Bell & Lewis, 2023). However, building and maintaining the equitable partnerships involved in CES often makes such initiatives more time consuming than traditional scholarship (Sprague Martinez et al., 2023).

Many universities seek Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement for recognition of their commitment to serving communities (New England Resource Center for Higher Education, n.d.). However, a disconnect exists between this public commitment and the types of scholarship that universities reward. Structural barriers, particularly at R1 institutions, discourage faculty from pursuing Community-Engaged Scholarship (CES) (Bell & Lewis, 2023). One major obstacle is the tenure and promotion system, which rewards traditional research productivity—such as publication counts, citations, journal impact factors, and federal funding—rather than impact on communities, policy, or populations (Sprague Martinez et al., 2023).

Professors who pursue Community-Engaged Scholarship often encounter systemic challenges. Journals that publish CES are perceived to have lower scholarly impact, which disincentivizes researchers (Marrero et al., 2013). In many disciplines, CES is perceived as less rigorous, contributing to marginalization within the R1 academic culture (Bell & Lewis, 2023; Sprague Martinez et al., 2023). This marginalization discourages community-engaged research (Marrero et al., 2013). Similarly, teaching evaluations rarely reflect the time, complexity, and value of engaged pedagogy, resulting in insufficient recognition of professors' contributions. This poses a career risk; for example, one study found that 36% of professors at three research institutions felt their CES work was neither recognized nor rewarded in the tenure and promotion (T and P) process (Wendling, 2023).

This paper describes a multifaceted strategy for advancing community-engaged scholarship (CES) within the tenure and promotion process, using the University at Albany, the State University of New York (SUNY) as a case study. It presents the role of the university's strategic plan, investment of resources, and an award to recognize CES and focuses on the appointment of a Provost Fellow as a significant institutional commitment to fostering this

form of scholarship. Special emphasis is placed on the role of the Provost Fellow and the key outcome of the fellowship: the development of a CES Toolkit as a sustainable resource for professors engaging in community-engaged research and teaching and for T and P committees.

Setting

The University at Albany, State University of New York (SUNY) is a Carnegie-designated R1 public institution that aspires to be the nation's leading diverse public research university. The university adopted the term *public engagement* to reflect the breadth of its many partnerships. The university uses the Carnegie Foundation definition of community-engagement in that there is 'collaboration between institutions and their larger communities for a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources' (University at Albany, n.d.-e). Its location in the capital of New York State facilitates collaborations with government agencies, entities not typically categorized as being involved in community engagement. Professors also collaborate with local and global communities, community-based organizations, associations, and other non-governmental partners. In total there are over 1200 full-time and part-time faculty. Based on data from the 2024-2025 Faculty Activity Report, 528 full-time and part-time faculty report publicly engaged scholarship, including creative works. This includes data in the three components of scholarship, research and creative works, teaching, and service.

Despite the emphasis on public-engagement, the university, like many other R1 institutions, continues to struggle with the disconnect between its value of CES and the policies and practices that govern tenure and promotion. Three strategic initiatives have collectively contributed to the advancement of CES at the University at Albany: While each initiative may have limited impact in isolation, their combined implementation has substantially enhanced the overall value of CES, with the most permanent initiative being the CES Toolkit.

Strategic Commitment to Public Engagement

The University at Albany, SUNY, has demonstrated long-term commitment to public engagement through its strategic plan. Engagement and Service has consistently been a pillar in the university's three most recent five-year strategic plans (University at Albany, n.d.-b). These plans reflect a growing institutional awareness of the importance of building mutually beneficial relationships with external communities.

The University at Albany's Strategic Plan for 2018, titled "Great Danes Rising: Unleashing Our Potential," continued the inclusion of Engagement and Service as a deliberate effort to strengthen the university's connection with external communities and promote community engagement and outreach across the institution (Rodríguez, 2017). Faculty and staff with expertise in community engagement were actively involved in developing the Engagement and Service pillar. Their contributions helped define three

strategies: 1) Create an institutional culture that values and measures mutually beneficial partnerships with our communities; 2) Respond to our communities' needs through faculty, staff, and student knowledge and engagement, and by leveraging university facilities and assets; and 3) Increase community member participation in university events and programs.

Strategic Implementation and Resource Alignment

Effective implementation of a strategic plan is necessary for changing institutional culture. Recognizing this, the University at Albany has taken deliberate steps to operationalize its engagement priorities by setting goals and a roadmap for making decisions about resources, initiatives, and investments (Bryson, 2017). The three strategies for the Engagement and Service pillar helped shape the university's actions, described in the following sections.

Institutional Funding Mechanisms and Resources

The Strategic Allocation of Resources (StAR) Program, the Institute for Social and Health Equity, and Center for the Elimination of Minority Health Disparities (CEMHD) are the university's principal mechanisms for aligning resource distribution with institutional priorities. The StAR program advances the strategic plan by funding initiatives that directly support one or more pillars. In the most recent funding cycle, StAR funded 15 projects that advanced the pillar of Engagement and Service (University of Albany, n.d.-f), many of which involved cross-disciplinary and community collaboration. To encourage meaningful partnerships, the project evaluation rubric allocates 25 points of 100 for impactful community-engagement.

The Institute for Social and Health Equity complements these efforts by providing grant proposal development support, grant writing training, and workshops for researchers working closely with external partners. Similarly, CEMHD strengthens community-engaged research by hosting community-based task forces, which links researchers with community partners, offers community-focused feedback on grant proposals, and provides letters of support and event sponsorship. These structural supports are comprehensive capacity-building resources for engaged researchers. By linking resources to the strategic plan, the university creates structural incentives for faculty and staff to pursue research that aligns with community needs and institutional values.

Creation of CES Award

To support institutionalizing a culture of public engagement that includes engaged scholarship, the University at Albany, SUNY, established the President's Award for Exemplary Public Engagement. This annual recognition honors faculty, staff, and students who demonstrate outstanding commitment to engaged research, teaching, and service. The awards celebrate a wide range of collaborative efforts from local, state, and global communities and reflects the university's mission to do public good (University at Albany, n.d.-d). By publicly acknowledging exemplary examples of CES, the award

elevates the visibility of engagement and reinforces its value as a part of academic practice. This award is another step toward creating a cultural shift and signals to the university that CES is a part of academic excellence.

Organizational Champion for Community-Engaged Scholarship

Tenure and promotion are deeply embedded within the culture of academic institutions. Academic Affairs typically supervises faculty development and research evaluation. The University at Albany Associate Vice President (AVP) for Academic Affairs was the administrative lead for the University's Council on Promotion and Continuing Appointment and authored the university-level Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure. The AVP served "as a key resource on the diversity of scholarly methods and approaches recognized by the institution" (University at Albany, n.d.-a).

In preparation for its application for the Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement, the AVP created a Provost Fellowship for Publicly Engaged Teaching and Research. The goal of the position was "to lead a campus-wide effort to integrate language in campus-wide, school/college, and departmental procedures and standards to recognize applied and engaged research, undergraduate research, and experiential learning." As stated in the fellowship's charge, institutionalizing these public engagement activities as valued faculty contributions in evaluation for T and P would be central to the university's strategy for achieving the Carnegie designation.

The fellowship's role functioned as an organizational "champion" for CES. The literature on organizational change identifies champions as individuals who strongly identify with the culture they aim to promote, hold influence as opinion leaders, and operate across organizational boundaries. Thus, champions are positioned to influence policy and practice within the institutions they represent (Hendy & Barlow, 2012). Effective champions often connect administrative leadership with faculty to reinforce commitment to change through actions and advocacy (Hendy & Barlow, 2012; Higgs & Rowland, 2005).

Provost Fellowship for Community Engaged Scholarship

I was selected for the one-year Provost Fellowship for Publicly Engaged Research and Teaching based on my promotion to full professor and more than two decades of experience in community-based participatory research and engaged teaching. My sustained involvement in university committees focused on public engagement and strategic planning further established my expertise and positioned me as a trusted resource for both the university leadership and colleagues involved in public engaged scholarship. The fellowship included two course releases and a modest stipend.

As the inaugural Provost Fellow and author of this paper, I was appointed to co-chair the committee responsible for preparing the university's application for the Carnegie Foundation's Elective Classification for

Community Engagement (American Council on Education, 2024). While this was a central responsibility, I was granted flexibility in shaping the scope and approach of the fellowship.

The fellowship's first major task involved a comprehensive review of the university's current practices related to publicly engaged scholarship, with a focus on tenure and promotion. To ensure that faculty experiences were incorporated in the review, I conducted one-on-one interviews with a cross-disciplinary group of 21 community-engaged professors identified through word of mouth as engaged in CES. Those interviewed represented disciplines including anthropology, atmospheric sciences, business, communications, education, emergency preparedness, engineering, history, public health, social work, and studio art. At times during the interviews, I found myself educating engaged scholars about the legitimacy of their work as a valid form of scholarship. I also was able to explain the role of my fellowship as a demonstration of institutional support for CES.

In addition, I attended faculty meetings across several schools and colleges to gather insights into how CES was understood and supported, and I met with several administrators to understand their perspectives on structural supports and barriers to CES. These conversations provided helpful insight into challenging institutional practices and models of excellence, which informed the development of recommendations and supporting products. They also provided me with an opportunity to educate professors about the application for Carnegie Designation and talk about the support for CES in the Provost's Office. The comprehensive review was also included in the Carnegie application.

Key Initiative Outcome: Community-Engaged Scholar (CES) Toolkit

Drawing from faculty conversations, my personal experiences, and a review of both peer-reviewed and gray literature on CES in tenure and promotion, I developed the Community-Engaged Scholar (CES) Toolkit. There is an existing guide for faculty and committees that also informed the Toolkit (Jordan et al., 2009), but it was decided to use that as a model and develop one specifically for the University at Albany.

The CES Toolkit provides a comprehensive and adaptable framework to educate faculty and administrators about publicly engaged scholarship, direct CES scholars in planning for tenure and promotion, and support scholars in documenting and presenting CES work in their dossiers. In addition to assisting individual faculty members, the toolkit has strategies for departments to adopt during the review process.

Beyond its practical application for advancement, the CES Toolkit reflects the institution's commitment to public engagement and serves as a resource for faculty at all career stages—whether they seek to understand CES dossiers or aim to integrate public engagement into their research, teaching, or creative work.

[Table 1](#) presents the Table of Contents for the toolkit. Key components of the Toolkit are discussed below.

Table 1. Engaged Scholarship Toolkit Table of Contents

What is Public Engagement?
Engagement as a UAlbany Strategic Pillar
Why is there a toolkit for publicly engaged scholarship?
What makes an activity or product scholarship?
What is the definition of Publicly Engaged Scholarship (PES)?
Who counts as a non-academic partner?
Comparison of Traditional and Engaged Scholarship
Who conducts publicly engaged scholarship?
Language That Supports Publicly Engaged Scholarship in Tenure and Promotion Guidelines
Evidence of Publicly Engaged Scholarship
Impact
Guidance for Faculty Working Toward Tenure and Promotion as a Publicly Engaged Scholar
Mentorship for Publicly Engaged Scholars (PES)
Resources for Mentorship
Finding a Mentor Outside Your Department or Institution
Expectations for Promotion and Tenure
Strategies for Meeting Discipline and Institutional Expectations
Long-term Strategies for Careers in Publicly Engaged Scholarship
Publicly Engaged Scholarship in the Promotion and Tenure Process
External Review Letters
Ethical Considerations in Publicly Engaged Research
References

Defining and demonstrating university support

Adopting an institutional definition of community-engaged research provides a shared understanding of Community-Engaged Scholarship among professors, the administration, and external partners. It provides guidance for professors and enables universities to develop evaluation criteria that ensures CES is assessed fairly. Several professors I interviewed did not realize that they were doing community-engaged scholarship. A common theme that emerged during interviews was professors perceiving their engaged scholarship as service and therefore not documenting the engaged aspects of their work.

For the CES Toolkit, The University at Albany adopted the Carnegie Foundation's definition: "the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (American Council on Education & Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2023). The Toolkit also included the Boyer Model's definition of forms of scholarship: discovery, integration, application, teaching, and learning (Boyer, 1990). The definition broadens our understanding of research beyond the traditional definition that primarily focuses on discovery. The Boyer Model recognizes a full range of scholarly activities and legitimizes interdisciplinary and applied research. The inclusion of applied research to address real-world problems embraces community engagement, which becomes necessary to address real human issues. The model also includes the scholarship of teaching and pedagogical innovation (Boyer, 1990, pp. 18–22).

Clarifying Community-Engaged Scholarly Activities

The question of what qualifies an activity or product as scholarship often arises when assessing engagement efforts and prompts extensive discussion among faculty who may hold differing perspectives—especially when evaluating specific activities and products in practice-oriented fields. For instance, while I was doing the fellowship, a debate emerged between me and the acting provost over whether program or policy evaluation should be considered research. While the provost viewed it simply as “work,” the Boyer Model clearly defines it as applied research that qualifies as scholarship (Boyer, 1990, p. 36). Interestingly, no one challenged the broader definition I presented at the Faculty Senate meeting despite at least 50 professors from across the university being in attendance. This example highlights the importance of having a clear and shared understanding of what constitutes scholarship.

The CES toolkit provides a detailed description of how professors’ activities qualify as research. The products of Community-Engaged Scholarship must meet the criteria below, which include having a beneficial impact on society (Boyer, 1990; O’Meara, 2018). To qualify as CES, scholarship must (Boyer, 1990, pp. 23, 50; O’Meara, 2018):

- require a high level of skills in a discipline or expertise (this can include teaching)
- be a form of discovery, integration or application
- be documented
- have significance or impact on the discipline, the field and/or society

Impact

Successful scholarship is defined by its impact. How a university defines impact shapes what is considered scholarship. Traditionally, impact is defined by academic metrics such as creative work and publications. The number and quality of publications, and the frequency of citation, are considered evidence of impact. The amount and prestige of external funding for research and teaching are also considered evidence of successful scholarship. These measures facilitate many evaluations for promotion and tenure, as was evidenced by the fact that only these traditional metrics were included in nearly all tenure and promotion guidelines I reviewed. The College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security, and Cybersecurity and School of Social Welfare were the only ones at the time that included community-engaged scholarship.

Traditional metrics have significant limitations that have been recognized by universities nationally and globally. Accountability for public funding of research and educational institutions is a driving force for universities

to expand the definition of impact. Traditional measures of scholarship do not measure impact on practice or society. A broader definition of impact has greater reach and is more flexible for acknowledging the impactful work of engaged scholars. Expanding the definition of impact to include contributions to policy, practice, community outcomes, public discourse, and social change creates a more expansive view of engaged scholarship by acknowledging that impact can occur within an academic field as well as in communities or the larger society (Holland, 2005; Jordan et al., 2009).

Documenting the Impact of CES

Documentation of community or publicly impactful scholarship is frequently different than traditional scholarship. For example, a community-engaged professor I interviewed collaborated with colleagues across the country to develop evidence-based training on the importance of understanding the diversity of the country to achieve equity in disaster preparedness and response. This person administered the resulting training to hundreds of Homeland Security employees around the country. Another professor collaborated with a company and a local police department to improve the time it took for the department's 240 traffic and crime cameras to be analyzed. He used computer techniques and an algorithm that he and his students developed to review large amounts of recordings (prior to Artificial Intelligence becoming commonplace). Neither professor documented the local and national impact of their research. The CES toolkit offers strategies for documenting evidence of societal and community impact that include directing professors to specific journals that accept CES and raising awareness of the university's publication resources for non-traditional materials.

The CES Toolkit recommends that the research and/or teaching statements in the dossier highlight the value of the candidate's research or creative activities by demonstrating its meaningful contributions within the context of its community-engaged approach (O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006). Linking this information to traditional metrics of scholarship not only makes explicit the impact to reviewers but also brings attention to community-engaged scholarship as a legitimate form of research in the discipline and at the university.

The inclusion of external letters from community partners and/or someone with authority who will attest to the broader impact of scholarly activities can strengthen the dossiers of community-engaged scholars. At the University at Albany, these letters have been sought for the President's Award. However, including them in the dossier provides additional evidence of impact. Further, an external supporter may have more information on the longer-term impact of that scholarship. For example, another professor developed a partnership with a statewide coalition of nonprofits to develop and implement policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change to address child health. This work was presented at national conferences for the

nonprofits and these presentations influenced policy change in other states. A letter from that coalition describing the impact on policy represents an excellent way to document impact beyond traditional metrics.

Given that journals, peer reviewed conference presentations—and in some cases, books—are the only dissemination products considered in traditional metrics, many engaged scholars do not list other modes of dissemination on their C.V. A professor I spoke with spent multiple years collaborating with the state department of health to evaluate its Medicaid redesign program. This culminated in a very large report, which does not count as a metric of scholarly activity in their discipline and is not explicitly described in their department tenure and promotion guidelines. Therefore, this person felt there was no way they could go up for promotion. The Toolkit suggests that C.V.s highlight all modes of dissemination, including white papers and social media, and discuss the impact of these modes of dissemination. Further documenting dissemination strategies can increase awareness within the university and in the discipline of the societal value of CES.

Early Planning for Tenure and Promotion

The CES toolkit suggests that community-engaged scholars in tenure track positions begin planning for tenure and promotion as early as their first months at the university. Developing, implementing, and disseminating quality CES can take more time than traditional research. It is important for faculty to think about how to translate their vision for community engagement into quality scholarship and describe how their work fits within the mission, vision and values of the academic institution and department.

Mentorship

The CES Toolkit emphasizes the recommendation for CES-specific mentorship. Many universities provide mentors for faculty, but some universities may not have senior community-engaged professors. Regardless of the level and quality of mentorship provided by the university or department, the CES Toolkit recommends that community-engaged scholars seek an additional mentor who is available to counsel and encourage professional development in the context of CES, such as a senior researcher within their research community. Among senior community-engaged professors I interviewed, several spoke of having mentors from their discipline or a related discipline who were engaged scholars.

Based on my interviews and the literature, mentors should coach the community-engaged scholar on the following topics:

1. expectations for promotion and tenure
2. strategies for meeting discipline and institutional expectations
3. dossier and external letters
4. ethical considerations in community-engaged scholarship

Reflection on the Role of a Provost Fellow for Publicly Engaged Research and Teaching

One of the most effective elements of the Provost Fellowship was the formal recognition of the role and the access it afforded. The AVP distributed a university-wide announcement introducing the fellowship, highlighting my qualifications and outlining my role. The visibility facilitated engagement with college deans, department chairs, and faculty who positively responded to my requests for interviews or to attend faculty, college or department meetings; the council of deans; and the faculty senate.

Early in the fellowship, I attended faculty meetings at several schools and colleges to ask questions, learn about discipline-specific engaged scholarship, and hear faculty perspectives about the university's support for CES. I also conducted meetings with four administrators to discuss their perception of CES. I was invited to the President's Council of external stakeholders, which strongly endorses CES and recognizes its potential to demonstrate the university's relevance.

Once the Toolkit was complete, I delivered presentations across the university at department and college faculty meetings, the Dean's Council, and the University Faculty Senate meeting. The responses were notably positive. Professors expressed appreciation for the introduction to CES, as many were previously unfamiliar with the concept, while others welcomed the university's efforts to support faculty through dedicated resources. As a member of the provost's team, I was able to advocate for making the CES Toolkit publicly accessible to faculty via the university website: <https://www.albany.edu/public-engagement/faculty-resources>.

Discussion

Despite universities' public endorsement of Community Engagement, there remains a misalignment between the rhetoric and the scholarship they incentivize (Bell & Lewis, 2023). This discourages professors from pursuing CES. Those who do engage in such scholarship often do not emphasize their work in their dossier for promotion and tenure due to fear that CES will be dismissed as service or not rigorous (Bell & Lewis, 2023). Community-engaged research is often presented as traditional research to meet T and P expectations (Moore & Ward, 2010). This decreases the visibility of CES and reinforces the traditional culture around promotion and tenure.

The literature is clear: Cultural and structural changes, most notably in tenure and promotion, are required if CES is to be more commonplace (Bell & Lewis, 2022; Marrero et al., 2013; Nokes, et al., 2013). Previous literature defines CES (Blanchard & Furco, 2021; Gordon da Cruz, 2018), offers a framework to examine structural and cultural barriers (Sdvizhkov et al., 2022), and discusses the views of faculty (Marrero et al., 2013; Nokes, et al., 2013). There are also resource packages that target professors who engage in CES as well as for the tenure and promotion committees (Jordan et al., 2009).

This case study describes a multifaceted approach to change the University at Albany, SUNY's culture and structure to support CES at this R1 institution. Like most efforts for changing culture, words such as those in the University at Albany's Strategic Plan are important for setting a tone, but they are not enough to make institutional change. This case study discusses the combinations of the university's strategic plan, awards of recognition, and a funding resource for CES, but it emphasizes the role of a CES Toolkit and a CES champion in the Provost Office as key strategies for promoting and sustaining change (Hendy & Barlow, 2012).

Importantly, the visibility and access afforded by the fellowship—particularly access to administrative leaders and Faculty Senate processes—positioned me serving as a university-wide advocate for CES. In addition to having opportunities to speak on the subject at multiple levels of the university, I was able to share examples of excellent collaborative research across disciplines. Once the toolkit was complete, I was able to continue advocating for its inclusion on the university website, in part because my role as Provost Fellow had established my visibility and credibility within the provost's office. This familiarity meant that colleagues were more likely to respond to my emails and engage with me in formal and informal settings. I was able to present the toolkit to the Faculty Senate. Surprisingly, the presentation was received with no challenges from the senators and administrators. Faculty members who had seen my presentations at Faculty Senate and department and college meetings reached out to me with questions about CES. Further, I was appointed to the University Tenure and Promotion Committee for three years after completion of the toolkit, which allowed me to speak with dual authority as a faculty member actively engaged in CES and a former Provost Fellow in Publicly Engaged Research and Teaching. In this way, I was able to sustain and legitimize the conversation around CES well beyond the conclusion of my fellowship.

The CES Toolkit was designed to be sustainable and widely applicable across departments. It is available on the university website and the provost's administrators continue to remind the faculty of the resource, including providing it to new faculty during their orientation and at annual faculty leadership academies to continue reinforcing the culture shift.

Limitations

The University at Albany has moved the needle of incorporating CES into its culture but still has room to improve. Although some of the colleges and departments have explicit CES language in their tenure and promotion guidelines, the provost's website does not embrace Boyer's broader definition of scholarship, nor does it mention engaged research as a valued part of its academic enterprise (University at Albany, n.d.-c). The toolkit is promoted by the Provost's Office at faculty orientations and leadership academies, but it is not available on the Provost's Tenure and Promotion website (University at Albany, n.d.-c). The Toolkit is offered on the Office of Government and Community Relations website under Public Engagement (University at

Albany, n.d.-e). Further, the university is not tracking whether the Toolkit is being used by community-engaged faculty as they develop their portfolio for tenure and promotion. This case study suggests that having a Provost Fellow for Publicly Engaged Research and Teaching for multiple years, rather than one year, would be more effective at facilitating the cultural shift necessary for CES to be fully embraced.

A multifaceted strategy is essential to effectively transform the structure and culture of a university to embrace CES in the long term. The university's strategic plan is an important place to signal that community engagement is a core priority of the university. Dedicated institutional resources such as internal funding mechanisms and formal recognition for CES through awards serve as tangible demonstrations of commitment. The creation of a university-specific CES Toolkit to support professors and T and P committees is a valuable resource. However, the appointment of a designated CES champion, empowered with access to decision-makers across all levels of the university and capable of advocating for CES, is an important strategy for institutionalizing the value of CES, particularly at an R1 university.

.....

Acknowledgements

William Hedberg and Hal Lawson for their mentorship and support and Sheila Seery and Mary Hunt for providing information and for their continued promotion of CES. Thank you to all the UAlbany faculty who shared their CES experiences. I would like to acknowledge Esther Richter for her help preparing this manuscript.

Submitted: May 24, 2025 EST. Accepted: September 25, 2025 EST. Published: December 30, 2025 EST.



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CCBY-4.0). View this license's legal deed at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0> and legal code at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode> for more information.

References

- American Council on Education & Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (2023, January 27). *The Elective Classification For Community Engagement*. Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. <https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/elective-classifications/community-engagement/>
- Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate* (1st ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Bryson, J. M. (2017). *Strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations: A guide to strengthening and sustaining organizational achievement* (5th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Gligorić, V., van Kleef, G. A., & Rutjens, B. T. (2025). Political ideology and trust in scientists in the USA. *Nature Human Behaviour*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-025-02147-z>
- Hendy, J., & Barlow, J. (2012). The role of the organizational champion in achieving health system change. *Social Science & Medicine*, 74(3), 348–355. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.02.009>
- Higgs, M. J., & Rowland, D. (2005). All changes great and small: Exploring approaches to change and its leadership. *Journal of Change Management*, 5(2), 121–151. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14697010500082902>
- Holland, B. A. (2005). Scholarship and mission in the 21st century University: The role of engagement. In A. J. Kezar, T. C. Chambers, & J. C. Burkhardt (Eds.), *Higher Education for the Public Good: Emerging Voices from a National Movement* (pp. 235–259). Jossey-Bass.
- Israel, B. A., Eng, E., Schulz, A. J., & Parker, E. A. (Eds.). (2013). *Methods for community-based participatory research for health* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Jordan, C. M., Joosten, Y. A., Leugers, R. C., & Shields, S. L. (2009). The community-engaged scholarship review, promotion, and tenure package: A guide for faculty and committee members. *Metropolitan Universities*, 20(2), 66–86. <https://journals.indianapolis.iu.edu/index.php/muj/article/view/20391>
- Marrero, D. G., Hardwick, E. J., Staten, L. K., Savaiano, D. A., Odell, J. D., Comer, K. F., & Saha, C. (2013). Promotion and tenure for community-engaged research: an examination of promotion and tenure support for community-engaged research at three universities collaborating through a Clinical and Translational Science Award. *Clinical and Translational Science*, 6(3), 204–208. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cts.12061>
- New England Resource Center for Higher Education. (n.d.). *Understanding Carnegie community engagement classification*. <https://nerche.org/carnegie-engagement-classification/>
- O'Meara, K. (2018, August 21). *Accurately assessing engaged scholarship*. Inside Higher Ed. <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2018/08/22/academe-needs-better-evaluate-engaged-scholarship-opinion>
- O'Meara, K., & Jaeger, A. J. (2006). Preparing future faculty for community engagement: Barriers, facilitators, models, and recommendations. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 11(4), 3–26.
- Pew Research Center. (2024, February 1). *From Businesses and Banks to Colleges and Churches: Americans' Views of U.S. Institutions*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2024/02/01/from-businesses-and-banks-to-colleges-and-churches-americans-views-of-u-s-institutions/>
- Rodríguez, H. (2017, October 26). *Strategic plan update*. University at Albany. <https://www.albany.edu/president/presidential-communications/strategic-plan-update>

- Sdvizhkov, H., Van Zanen, K., Aravamudan, N., & Aurbach, E. L. (2022). A framework to understand and address barriers to community-engaged scholarship and public engagement in appointment, promotion, and tenure across higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 26(3), 129–147.
- Sprague Martinez, L., Chassler, D., Lobb, R., Hakim, D., Pamphile, J., & Battaglia, T. A. (2023). A discussion among deans on advancing community engaged research. *Clinical and Translational Science*, 16(4), 557–563. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cts.13478>
- University at Albany. (n.d.-a). 1997 excellence award winner in professional service. https://www.albany.edu/feature97/excellence_awards/hedberg.html
- University at Albany. (n.d.-b). Great Danes rising: Unleashing our potential. *The University at Albany strategic plan 2024-2029*. <https://www.albany.edu/strategic-plan>
- University at Albany. (n.d.-c). Introduction and Key Terms. <https://www.albany.edu/provost/promotion-tenure/apply/introduction-key-terms>
- University at Albany. (n.d.-d). President's awards for exemplary public engagement. <https://www.albany.edu/public-engagement/awards>
- University at Albany. (n.d.-e). Public Engagement, Office of Government and Community Relations. <https://www.albany.edu/public-engagement>
- University at Albany. (n.d.-f). Strategic allocation of resources. <https://www.albany.edu/strategic-plan/strategic-allocation-resources>
- Webber, D. A. (2017). State divestment and tuition at public institutions. *Economics of Education Review*, 60, 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2017.07.007>
- Wendling, L. A. (2023). Evaluating community-engaged research in promotion and tenure. *Metropolitan Universities*, 34(5), 58–83. <https://doi.org/10.18060/26658>