How the Faculty Merit Evaluation System at the University of Colorado Boulder Credits Outreach and Engagement Activities

A Report to the Office for University Outreach

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In summer 2011, the Office for University Outreach at the University of Colorado Boulder commissioned Professor Kenneth Howe of the School of Education to evaluate both campus-wide understandings of outreach and the evaluation practices of faculty involvement with outreach activities. This report is the result of 40 individual interviews with 15 faculty members who had received grants from the Office for University Outreach, 15 department or division chairs, five associate deans, and five deans. In addition, group interviews were conducted with the respective merit evaluation and review, promotion, and tenure committees of the 15 units represented, and with the Vice Chancellor’s Advisory Committee (VCAC). The research team also examined the Faculty Reports of Professional Activities (FRPAs) and annual merit review forms of 17 grant recipients. Data collection began in September 2011 and concluded in October 2012. Data collected through interviews and FRPAs reflect calendar years 2011 and 2012.

CU Boulder defines faculty outreach and engagement as a “mutually beneficial” relationship between the university and external communities “rooted in scholarship” that “enhances teaching, research, creative work and service while addressing larger societal issues.” The Office for University Outreach seeks to put in place an outreach and engagement model that (1) complements and extends CU Boulder’s role and mission as Colorado’s flagship institution and as a national comprehensive research university, (2) articulates the role and participation of its faculty, staff and students, and (3) specifies the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the University and the public. Flagship 2030 likewise calls for increased engagement in outreach along with faculty deliberation regarding outreach as it pertains to faculty evaluation.

Consistent with most research universities, CU Boulder faculty members are evaluated for merit and for promotion and tenure in terms of teaching, research and creative work, and service. In some units, unique components of outreach activities are credited across the categories of teaching (40%), research and creative work (40%), and service (20%). However, just as conceptions of outreach historically have been unidirectional, “outreach” at CU Boulder often is conflated with one-way public service, for which faculty receive only service credit.

The primary objectives of this evaluation are to inform the Office for University Outreach about how the activities sponsored through its grants program are treated in the faculty merit evaluation system and to suggest how communication, advice, and instructions to recipients might be enhanced. A significant ancillary objective is to inform the Chancellor, the Provost, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Outreach and Engagement, and the broader university community about how outreach and engagement is perceived and rewarded across the campus’s faculty merit evaluation system.

Findings

Understandings of Outreach and Engagement. When asked to “define faculty outreach and engagement” in their own words, the great majority of participants described a traditional conception; namely, outreach activities are forms of service that are directed outside of the university for the benefit of non-academic audiences. Other participants, notably including 50%
of deans and 46% of grant recipients, conveyed a conception that more closely reflects the definition used by CU, in which outreach involves a mutually beneficial relationship with members of the public that is grounded in scholarship and creative work.

Participants at all levels, including most members of merit evaluation and review, promotion and tenure committees, expressed a lack of familiarity with both the university definition of outreach and the attention given to outreach in Flagship 2030. Communication within colleges and departments regarding the university’s interest in outreach and engagement was rare.

*Perceptions of How Outreach and Engagement is Valued.* Although most administrators and committee members thought outreach was credited the right amount, most grant recipients believed it was credited too little. Some suggested that the relatively low impact of faculty outreach activities on evaluations was appropriate given that emphasis should remain with teaching and research. Of those that stated outreach activities were credited too little, many explained that the tripartite evaluation framework limited the ways in which outreach could be evaluated. Indeed, the FRPA analysis revealed that grant recipients by-and-large underreport their CU outreach grants.

*Should Outreach Be a High Priority for a Flagship Research University?* Three-quarters of participants in the individual interviews and over half of committee members agreed with the statement that “outreach and engagement should be a high priority for a flagship research university.” Indeed, some participants held that all faculty members should be involved in outreach in some way as community engagement is central to the mission of the university and the academy. Others qualified their agreement by explaining that the importance of outreach varies by department, faculty interests, and faculty strengths and weaknesses. It was further noted that engagement with outreach was differentially valued at different stages in a tenure-track career trajectory. Finally, some emphasized that outreach should not be given the same importance as teaching and research.

The most common reason given for the importance of outreach was that funding issues made it crucial to improve the image of the university in the local community and state. However, many participants also discussed the importance of outreach as a means of engaging in reciprocity with local citizens and serving the public good. Far from being optional, some faculty of color noted that there is a strong expectation that scholars of color will “give back” to their communities. In contrast to the view that increased emphasis on outreach would compromise the amount and quality of teaching and research, some participants claimed that outreach and engagement both benefit students and improves research.

**Recommendations**

The recommendations summarized here reflect joint participant and evaluator perspectives.

1. *Institutional Direction and Support*

The most commonly offered recommendation overall, and by committee members specifically, was that the university needed to implement top-down direction and support. Even if units are
allowed the flexibility to determine how outreach should be evaluated – as some claimed was quite important – administrators and faculty members across the campus need a consistent understanding of how the university conceives outreach and to what extent outreach and engagement should be encouraged and rewarded. To this end, the university should encourage deliberation focused on this issue among the deans and the various faculty bodies evaluating faculty merit. It should further ensure that its conception of outreach is clearly communicated, which would include providing exemplars such that faculty can better envision the ways in which outreach might be integrated with teaching and research. Likewise, the university should offer examples of methods that fairly credit outreach activities.

2. Cultural Shift

Over one-fifth of participants (including one-third of administrators) noted the need for a shift in the way that outreach activities are perceived. The value of outreach to the university as well as to teaching and scholarship needs to be more clearly recognized so that it may be properly credited in evaluations. Concrete changes such as the kinds of institutional direction and support recommended above are the most promising means to effect this change, while recognizing that there is no singular way for faculty to be successful.


Participants were almost unanimously against adding a fourth category for outreach and engagement. Opposition was often based on the worry that participating in outreach would then be a requirement of all faculty members. Many also thought a fourth category would further complicate and confuse the merit evaluation process.

A frequently mentioned alternative recommendation was to allow for flexibility in the tripartite evaluation framework. Some participants thought that outreach should be given a higher priority in the service category, and that service activities should be more clearly defined and differentially evaluated. Others thought that clear methods should be developed for crediting unique aspects of outreach activities across the teaching, research and creative work, and service categories, as appropriate. Differentiated loads for faculty members significantly involved in outreach also might be appropriate in some cases.

It is advisable to develop a defensible way to evaluate outreach activities within the current evaluation framework. Because faculty involvement with research grants and mentoring graduate students often cross categories in current evaluation practices, for example, it is perfectly consistent to allow for activities with outreach components to be appropriately credited across categories. Such an additive conception of outreach and engagement should be communicated to individuals and committees engaged in merit evaluation and included in standardized annual merit review forms. The FRPA reporting process should likewise be changed so that outreach activities are included in the completed form.

4. Collaboration Across Units
A few participants noted that a lack of collaboration across units is a lost opportunity for scholars to not only engage across disciplines in a way that more deeply informs their own knowledge and research but also distribute the effort involved in pursuing engaged scholarship with the community. Deliberation among the deans could include opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration across the campus. The Office for University Outreach could also facilitate collaboration across units by the way it structures its grants.

Concluding Comment

As the recommendations made by participants typically spoke to the direct issues with the current system for valuing and evaluating outreach and engagement, we agree that a cultural shift is needed such that engaged scholarship can be advanced at CU Boulder in the 21st century. We further affirm that institutional direction and support is the best means to effect this change. Measures such as providing exemplars of engaged scholarship and of evaluation methods, changes to the faculty merit evaluation process, and collaboration across units are important to clarifying and advancing the university’s aims.
INTRODUCTION

Higher education has long been involved in “community engagement” processes by leveraging institutional resources (e.g., faculty, staff, and students’ knowledge and expertise; political position; buildings and land) to address and solve challenges in collaboration with local communities. Methods of community engagement have included community service, service learning, community-based participatory research, training and technical assistance, capacity-building, and economic development (Ward, 2003). While some forms of community engagement involve reciprocal relationships, others are generally “unidirectional – from campus to communities” (Holland, Powell, Eng, & Drew, 2010, p. 3).

The characterization of community engagement as unidirectional derives from a long history in which understandings of the democratic mission of higher education have evolved through a service-related component. As Roper and Hirth (2005) describe, the purposes of higher education have transformed over the last three and a half centuries in response to social and economic changes. The obligation to serve the public has been eclipsed by a demand for knowledge generation. While the importance of teaching has gained some ground, Boyer (1996) argued that universities are no longer driven by urgent social needs that characterized earlier eras. He therefore called for a “scholarship of engagement” that not only “connect(s) the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civil, and ethical problems…,” but also engages higher education in “a larger purpose, a larger sense of mission, a larger clarity of direction in the nation’s life as we move toward century twenty-one” (pp. 32-33).

In a related vein, “community-engaged scholarship” (CES) is an approach to research that integrates scientific inquiry and critical analysis with community-identified needs. According to Schon (1995), CES has the potential to unite the three traditional academic missions of research, teaching, and service in innovative ways that promote sustainable institutional change. CES has three central features: research is a collaborative enterprise between academic researchers (faculty and students) and community members; the research process seeks to democratize knowledge by validating multiple sources of knowledge and promoting the use of multiple methods of discovery and dissemination; and the goal of the research is social action (Barker, 2004). Through “teaching, discovery, integration, application and engagement,” faculty members engage in mutually beneficial partnerships with communities (Cohen & Yapa, 2003, p.15).

A frequently cited barrier to faculty conducting community-based participatory research, service-learning, and other forms of CES is the risk associated with trying to achieve promotion and tenure (Boyer, 1990; Holland et al., 2010; Nyden, 2003; Ward, 2003). Faculty from non-dominant groups are especially affected (Antonio, 2002; Baez, 2000). CES poses significant challenges to traditional definitions of scholarship and is not often supported by the promotion and tenure process (Nyden, 2003). Thus, it is not surprising that faculty would be reluctant to pursue CES as a facet of their academic careers.

CU Boulder’s Office for University Outreach refers to its version of CES with the term “outreach and engagement,” which is prominent in the Flagship 2030 Initiative. CU Boulder defines faculty outreach and engagement as a “mutually beneficial” relationship between the university and external communities “rooted in scholarship” that “enhances teaching, research,
creative work and service while addressing larger societal issues.” The Office for University Outreach seeks to put in place an outreach and engagement model that (1) complements and extends CU Boulder’s role and mission as Colorado’s flagship institution and as a national comprehensive research university, (2) articulates the role and participation of its faculty, staff and students, and (3) specifies the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the University and the public. Flagship 2030 also calls for faculty to engage in deliberation regarding outreach and engagement as it pertains to faculty evaluation.

Consistent with the practice of most research universities, CU Boulder faculty members are evaluated for merit as well as for promotion and tenure in terms of the core responsibilities of teaching, research and creative work, and service. In some schools and departments, unique components of outreach activities are credited across the categories of teaching (40%), research and creative work (40%), and service (20%), as appropriate. However, just as conceptions of outreach historically have been unidirectional, “outreach” at CU Boulder often is conflated with one-way public service, for which faculty receive only service credit that has diminished weight in the merit evaluation system. Also, excellence in service cannot be the basis for the award of tenure. Whether CU Boulder faculty might believe (rightly or wrongly) that outreach and engagement work is devalued and thus be disillusioned with the professoriate or reluctant to pursue outreach and engagement activities because they are not rewarded in the faculty merit evaluation system (as has been documented in the CES literature for other universities) has not been systematically investigated and is one motivation for this evaluation.

THE EVALUATION

I. Objectives

The primary objectives of this evaluation are to inform the Office for University Outreach about how the activities sponsored through its grants program are treated in the faculty merit evaluation system and to suggest how communication, advice, and instructions to recipients might be enhanced. A significant ancillary objective is to inform the Chancellor, the Provost, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Outreach and Engagement, and the broader university community about how outreach and engagement is perceived and rewarded across the campus’s faculty merit evaluation system.

The evaluation is formative in that its purpose is to understand the merit evaluation process as it pertains to faculty involvement with outreach and engagement in order to improve it as appropriate. The purpose is not accountability.

II. Design, Methods and Data

The research team collected two kinds of data: documents and interviews (both individual and group). Documents included FRPAs and merit review forms for each Outreach Committee grant recipient who participated, as well as guiding documents for merit evaluation and for review, promotion and tenure committees (when available). We concurrently conducted individual
interviews with grant recipients, the respective department chairs, and the corresponding deans or associate deans in 15 departments across campus. In parallel, we facilitated group interviews with the merit evaluation committees for each department, as well as the review, promotion and tenure committees at the college level, and the Vice Chancellor’s Advisory Committee (VCAC).

Data collection began in September 2011 and concluded in October 2012.

1. Documents. The research team collected the Faculty Report of Professional Activity (FRPA) and the completed annual merit review form for each grant recipient for the 2011 calendar year. (Note: Calendar years are the basis for FRPAs and annual merit review.) When available, we also collected documents that specified unit-specific criteria and procedures for faculty merit evaluation.

2. Individual interviews. The research team interviewed 15 faculty members who were outreach grant recipients in AY 2010-11 and 25 administrators (five deans, five associate deans, and 15 department or division chairs) either in person or by phone. (We were able to secure appropriate replacements for the one administrator and two of the three grant recipients who declined participation. The digital file for one additional grant recipient’s interview was inaccessible due to technological issues.) In recruiting grant recipients and administrators, we aimed to maximize the number of units across the university that would be represented in the evaluation. Table 1 details the administrator and faculty participants by college, division, and department.

The protocol used as a guideline for interviews appears in Appendix A. Researchers expanded upon these questions through probes that gained a sense of the participants’ understandings of outreach and engagement, their perspectives on how outreach activities were valued in their unit, and their opinion as to whether and why university scholars should engage in outreach.

3. Group interviews. From fall 2011 to fall 2012, the research team conducted group interviews with 18 committees charged with faculty merit evaluation at various levels. Of 106 total committee members, 72 (68%) were present for the interviews. One participant served on and was present for two of the committees that we interviewed.

We aimed to conduct group interviews with each merit evaluation committee that corresponded to grant recipient departments, as well as review, promotion and tenure committees at each of the respective college levels, and the VCAC as the final decision-making body for promotion and tenure. Five committees (four departmental merit review and one unit-level review, promotion and tenure) either declined participation or were impossible to schedule. Table 2 details the administrator and faculty participants by college, division, and department.

Group interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. Participants first filled out a brief questionnaire (Appendix B) that mirrored the individual interview protocol. Facilitators (typically the Principal Investigator and one research assistant) then asked participants to volunteer any thoughts or issues that the questionnaire had raised. The interview progressed into a group discussion regarding how outreach activities were credited in the department, including various issues that had come up in evaluations regarding faculty engagement with outreach. (No faculty members were identified in these discussions; rather, participants discussed the
theoretical and logistical issues they had faced when attempting to evaluate outreach activities that crossed traditional boundaries of research, teaching, and service.

In each group, a facilitator asked participants to react to the idea of a fourth category in the merit evaluation framework for outreach and engagement. Almost no one agreed with this idea; however, the topic brought fruitful discussion of the ways in which outreach could be counted for merit and promotion.

Table 1

Individual Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College/Division/Department</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th>Faculty Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arts &amp; Sciences</strong></td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Humanities</td>
<td>Associate Dean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre &amp; Dance</td>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural Sciences</strong></td>
<td>Associate Dean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Math</td>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astrophysical &amp; Planetary Sciences</td>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geological Sciences</td>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Sciences</strong></td>
<td>Associate Dean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech, Language, &amp; Hearing Sciences</td>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil/Environmental</td>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical</td>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds Business</td>
<td>Associate Dean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing/Finance</td>
<td>Division Chair (Marketing)</td>
<td>Grant Recipient (Finance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Dean &amp; Associate Dean</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strings</td>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Grant Recipient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

Group Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College/ Division/ Department</th>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Number of Members</th>
<th>Number Present</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University-level</td>
<td>VCAC</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>Personnel Committee</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td><strong>Arts &amp; Humanities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Annual Merit Evaluation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Annual Merit Evaluation</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre &amp; Dance</td>
<td>Salary Review</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural Sciences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Math</td>
<td>Annual Merit Evaluation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astrophysical &amp; Planetary Sciences</td>
<td>Annual Merit Evaluation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Personnel Committee</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Annual Merit Evaluation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>Evaluation Panel</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Sciences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech, Language, &amp; Hearing Sciences</td>
<td>Annual Merit Evaluation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Salary Committee</td>
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<td>Learning Sciences</td>
<td>Primary Unit Evaluation</td>
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<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Review, Promotion &amp; Tenure</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
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<td>Civil/ Environmental</td>
<td>Merit Review</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Faculty Evaluation (RPT)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Review, Promotion &amp; Tenure</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strings</td>
<td>Merit Evaluation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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III. Data Analysis

1. Analysis of FRPA and Annual Merit Review Documents

The research team examined the FRPAs and annual merit review forms of all 17 grant recipients whose participation was originally requested to determine how they reported their grant funded activities and how those activities were then included in annual merit evaluations. Table 3 displays the results.

The first column indicates the FRPA classification under which grant recipients reported their grant activities (see key at the bottom of the table). The most frequently occurring general category was grants (4xx), with 13 (76%) recipients listing their outreach grants in this category. The four (24%) grant recipients who didn’t report their activity as a grant didn’t report it at all. Six of the 13 (46%) additionally reported their outreach grant activities as service (6xx), and one of these also reported it under teaching (3xx).

The second column in Table 3 indicates whether grant recipients reported their grant activities as outreach via the optional check boxes that are listed under “Outreach Activities” on the FRPA. Less than half (seven of 17) reported their grant activities as outreach. Three reported outreach activities but did not include work related to their Office for University Outreach grant among them and five reported no outreach activities at all.

The third column indicates the information provided by various units in the annual merit evaluation forms. (Note: there are only 16 of these because one grant recipient is an administrator and is not evaluated in this way.) Three contained no information other than a rating of performance overall. Six had numerical ratings for each of the three categories teaching, research and creative work, and service, combined with varying amounts of text under the categories and a general rating. Seven had text only under the categories and a general rating.

The fourth column indicates whether and under which category of teaching, research and creative work, and service grant recipients’ activities are reflected in the annual merit review forms. Grant recipients’ activities are not present at all in a majority (10 of 16) of the annual merit review forms. They are listed as service in four and grants in two.

From this information, it is clear that grant recipients by-and-large underreport their CU outreach grants by (1) listing it only as a grant and not also in the teaching, research and creative work, and service categories and (2) only reporting work related to the grant in the service category (if at all) despite the nature of many funded projects that include research and teaching elements.
Table 3

Outreach Committee Grants Reporting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College/Division/Department</th>
<th>FRPA Activities Listed</th>
<th>Auxiliary OR Reported?</th>
<th>Annual Merit Review Content</th>
<th>OR Committee Grant Listed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Sciences: Arts &amp; Humanities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>General rating only</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>422, 605</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Narrative by category/ General rating</td>
<td>Not Listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre &amp; Dance</td>
<td>422, 605</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Narrative by category/ General rating</td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Math</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Narrative by category/ General rating</td>
<td>Research (grant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astrophysical &amp; Planetary Sciences</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>General rating only</td>
<td>Not Listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>421, 604</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Narrative by category/ General rating</td>
<td>Not Listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geological Sciences</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>General narrative/ General rating</td>
<td>Not Listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>Not included among others</td>
<td>Categorical ratings in each category</td>
<td>Not Listed (no narrative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>421, 605</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Numerical ratings in each category</td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>421, 607</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Numerical ratings in each category</td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences: Speech, Language, &amp; Hearing Sciences</td>
<td>322, 429, 699</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Numerical rating each category</td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Numerical ratings in each category</td>
<td>Research (grant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil/ Environmental</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Numerical ratings in each category</td>
<td>Not Listed (curt narrative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>Not included among others</td>
<td>Numerical ratings in each category</td>
<td>Not Listed (curt narrative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Narrative by category/ General rating</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds Business: Marketing/ Finance</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
<td>Not included among others</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>General rating only</td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

322 = master teaching; 421 = PI grant; 422 = Co-PI grant; 429 = other grants; 604 = public lecture; 605 = service to unit; 607 = service to campus; 699 = other professional service
The FRPA site lists several Frequently Asked Questions related to reporting outreach and specifically advises, “Not only is outreach a form of service, it can also be a form of teaching, research or creative work.” However, the optional nature of listing outreach, and the overall lack of significance for merit, promotion, and tenure likely discourages effort toward more thorough reporting of outreach activities. Indeed, some grant recipients directly stated this in their interviews:

On the FRPA, there is no place to put outreach. You just have to attach an outreach statement each year, which is a separate entity. And actually this year I couldn't even figure out how to attach it so I just ignored it because I didn’t think it would make a difference (laughs). [A&S-Arts & Humanities, Grant Recipient]

I tend to ignore those (outreach) categories because it's like, who's looking at these data? We don't see it over here. What's the point in clicking the buttons if it doesn't matter? So I think a lot of us ... don't even put our outreach activities down (on the FRPA) because ... why take the time to describe it when there's no real feeling that it would be looked at – there is no merit associated with it. [A&S-Natural Sciences, Grant Recipient]

Is there a way on the FRPA that outreach can get counted into research or teaching? I've always just seen it going into service. There is very little faculty guidance on how to fill out FRPAs. I was department chair for almost 13 years. Some people are good at promoting themselves, others do a lot but say very little on their FRPA. There needs to be an education process on how to fill out the FRPA. Some people take the FRPA seriously and some people don't. Some people think, what's the point? [A&S-Natural Sciences, Grant Recipient]

Given widespread agreement on this issue, it is likely that university records of outreach activities drastically under-represent faculty members’ active engagement with the community.

Moreover, as indicated by individual and group interviews and described below, the Annual Merit Review process tends to be opaque and varies significantly from unit to unit.

2. Analysis of Individual and Group Interviews

Research assistants transcribed and coded individual interviews in line with the following categories: participant definition of outreach; familiarity with CU definition of outreach; perceived credit and recognition for outreach; recommended changes to the system; frequency and nature of deliberations related to outreach; familiarity with the outreach initiative in Flagship 2030; opinion on whether outreach should be a “high priority”; and reasons given for why outreach should be a priority.

For each category, themes across participants were identified and agreed upon by the research team. A list of codes and themes with definitions is included in Appendix C.
Once coding was complete, counts of themes were compiled across participants in order to assess patterns within departments and across administrators and grant recipients. These perspectives and patterns are summarized here in terms of four categories: (1) Understandings of outreach and engagement; (2) Perceptions of how outreach and engagement is valued; (3) Whether outreach should be a high priority for a flagship research university; and (4) Evaluation systems across colleges, divisions, and departments.

IV. Findings

1. Understandings of Outreach and Engagement

When asked to “define faculty outreach and engagement” in their own words, most participants, including 80% of department chairs and 82% of committee members, described a traditional conception; namely, outreach activities are forms of service that are directed outside of the university for the benefit of non-academic audiences. In this view, service could be understood as “a series of concentric circles,” [A&S-Arts & Humanities, Associate Dean] in which faculty members’ service activities included those to the department, to the university, to the profession, and to the broader community. Outreach and engagement comprised the widest circle through which faculty members shared their expertise with the local community in order to benefit others’ lives, “give back” to the public, and promote the image of the university. While these participants suggested that outreach could be anything from a public lecture to a thoroughly integrated research project that included students and members of the community, faculty participation in these activities could be generally characterized under a wide umbrella of service. For example:

I would define it as a member of the campus community – anyone – sharing in some interesting and important way their expertise or passion with the broader community …. So it is about sharing our knowledge in a way that makes a difference in how people think or operate. It could be just speaking or it could be working closely with organizations. It’s about sharing our knowledge, expertise, dedication. [A&S-Social Sciences, Associate Dean]

These participants thus conceived the purpose and benefits of outreach as fairly unidirectional in that the public gains from expertise brought forth from the university, without direct mention of reciprocal benefits to members of the university engaged in the outreach activities.

Other participants, notably including 50% of deans and 46% of grant recipients, conveyed a conception that more closely reflects the definition used by CU, in which outreach involves a mutually beneficial relationship with members of the public that is grounded in scholarship and creative work. Faculty that described outreach in this way emphasized engagement with the public as intimately connected to the mission of CU as a public, flagship research university with an important statewide presence and national influence. Like those with more traditional conceptions, these participants also cited purposes of engaging in outreach for the public good and to raise awareness of the relevance of faculty members’ work to the lives of citizens. However, these administrators and grant recipients further elaborated that outreach served to
improve the quality of faculty members’ research and creative work as well as to benefit
university students who were included in projects that involved outreach:

My view of outreach engagement is two- or three-fold (in that) it pays several
dividends. One is we are here to help the outside community – we are well
positioned to do that in any number of areas. Number two, we want to help our
students, and the more networked in our professors are, the more they are able to
help our students. And three, I do deeply believe that value will come back to the
professors from that engagement – it will make them better teachers and better
scholars. [Law, Dean]

Outreach and engagement involves leveraging the intellectual, material, and
sociopolitical tools and practices of the university for the public good; that
includes a bi-directional exchange. [Education, Grant Recipient]

For these faculty, then, outreach extended beyond a form of service to be more thoroughly
integrated with teaching and research and creative work in a way that all aspects of faculty work
were enhanced at the same time as community members benefited from faculty expertise and
resources.

Despite the similarity of the latter conception of outreach with that used by CU, less than half of
participants (including only 38% of grant recipients and just 26% of committee members) were
familiar with the definition posted on the Outreach and Engagement website. Upon reviewing the
CU definition of outreach, most felt it was consistent with their own understandings. A handful
of participants questioned words such as “collaboration,” “partnerships,” and “scholarship” in
the definition, as these terms seemed limiting to their understandings of the broad scope of
outreach and engagement.

Participants at all levels expressed a similar lack of familiarity with the attention given to
outreach in Flagship 2030. Although the majority of deans and associate deans were familiar
with both the CU definition and the Flagship 2030 initiative, most members of merit evaluation
and review, promotion and tenure committees – up to and including the VCAC – were not.
Communication within colleges and departments regarding the university’s interest in outreach
and engagement was rare. Even when faculty were aware of the outreach initiative in Flagship
2030, they had only a vague sense of the university’s intentions, at times claiming that it seemed
like “rhetoric” or “lip service.” These participants claimed that a clearer, “actionable” statement
of institutional support for outreach and engagement was needed.

2. Perceptions of How Outreach and Engagement is Valued

When asked whether they believed outreach activities were “credited in merit evaluations too
much, too little, or the right amount,” only one participant responded that outreach was credited
too much within his department. Although most administrators (deans, associate deans, and
department chairs) (67%) and committee members (55%) thought outreach was credited about
the right amount, most grant recipients (53%) believed it was credited too little.
Of the 15 schools, divisions, and departments that took part in this evaluation, participants from six schools or departments (Education; Law; Music; Physics; Speech, Language, & Hearing Sciences; Theatre & Dance) specifically stated that outreach was recognized as integral to the work of their respective units. (It was noted that the trend toward requiring a “demonstrable impact” for National Science Foundation [NSF] and other large grants has influenced a culture of outreach in the Physics Department.) In the Leeds School of Business, outreach was fundamental to the work being conducted in centers that engage the public. Because each enhances the other through a “Gestalt effect” [Law, Dean], a rich integration of research, teaching, and outreach was considered a “hat trick” [Leeds, Associate Dean]. Indeed, some of the most distinguished faculty served as exemplars for this level of synthesis:

We search for in candidates an integration … that there is a strong synergy among research, teaching, and service. ... In fact, I can show you why the highest rated faculty members are doing all three very well. Claiming that (faculty involvement with outreach) is getting its due is not saying we weight it over teaching and research, it's saying that the highest rewards are going to those that have so completely integrated the three. [Education, Dean]

Outreach is sort of ingrained here. It can't be hermetically sealed in our work. ... You would never be as seriously penalized as you would be if you didn't do your research or teaching – that could be cause for failure to promote or to get dinged on a five year review – but you're definitely seen as a lesser contributor if you don't engage with the community and the world. [Law, Grant Recipient]

Other participants that claimed outreach activities were credited “about the right amount” suggested that the relatively low impact of faculty outreach activities on evaluations for merit and promotion was appropriate given that emphasis should remain with the higher priority obligations of teaching and research:

Participant: They're credited about right.
Interviewer: You see them as being valued?
Participant: That's a different question. You didn't ask me how much they're credited, you asked me if it was the right amount, and they're credited about right.

Interviewer: And how much do you think they are credited?
Participant: They're not credited very much.

Interviewer: And they shouldn't be in your view?
Participant: They shouldn't be overly emphasized in this type of institution. I don't mean to say it in a depreciating way, but people are not going to get tenure, are not going to get promoted based on outreach. … Is somebody going to see a big bump in their paycheck because they spend a lot of time on outreach or is outreach going to compensate for poor performance in the classroom or lack of research or creative work? No. Might it give some pause to people who are considering
somebody being promoted to full professor who showed no service activity? Yes. [Upper-Level Administrator]

I certainly don't think it is valued as much as research, teaching, and even service. But I wouldn't go as far to say that it should be valued as much as those aspects of being a faculty member. I think it is good if it is done, but it doesn't mean you are not doing your job if it isn't done. [Upper-Level Administrator]

Of those that stated outreach activities were credited too little, the great majority of participants in the individual interviews further explained that the traditional teaching/research and creative work/service framework limited the ways in which outreach could be evaluated. For example, if outreach activities are only reported and credited in service, as was the case for many of the grant recipients (see Table 3, above), they become undervalued as just one aspect of a category that is only worth 20%:

Outreach is considered a useful service activity, and therefore it is given some weight, but service in itself is small to begin with, so you're talking about a necessarily small component of a small weight. So I think it's probably undervalued because there's a lot of really interesting things that bring benefit to the university in a two-way transaction that happens through outreach. [A&S-Social Sciences, Associate Dean]

Moreover, some participants noted that there is little variation in faculty ratings in the service category, especially as compared to the research and creative work category. This was said to be partly due to the fact that activities in the service category can be the most difficult to assess clearly and fairly:

Evaluation of service is the least easy to measure because there isn't much differentiation made in service as compared to teaching. It's easy to say you get a certain number of points for different types of teaching, a certain number of publications is so many points for research, but it’s hard to know how to equitably count service activities. So because it’s hard to quantify, it tends to not differentiate among faculty. ... I don't have much faith in the ability to equitably evaluate anything in service. [A&S-Social Sciences, Department Chair]

Instead, service is often treated as a broad set of duties in which very few underperform relative to expectations. Faculty involvement with outreach is then viewed as “icing on the cake” or “a feather in one’s cap,” especially given the prioritization of teaching and research:

There are no clear university guidelines in weighing (outreach) in tenure processes. The bottom line is does this person publish…that's who’s going to get tenure, whoever publishes. Teaching counts for a lot, but research is always king. ... Outreach is critical on all levels, but it’s treated just like whip cream. There is no way to really evaluate it in the current system. [A&S-Arts & Humanities, Grant Recipient]
Outreach is generally viewed as icing on the cake. ... But my own view is that we should be doing more to encourage community-related outreach and we don't really have many incentives for people to do that and my sense is that people know that. They're trying to decide how to allocate their hours and they know how they will get credit – someone will pat me on the back, and that's nice, but I won't get the same kind of esteem. [A&S-Arts & Humanities, Associate Dean]

It was noted that those with extensive engagement in outreach and other forms of service typically had differentiated workloads and/or received recognition through university awards that “preach to the choir” [Leeds, Grant Recipient]. Some of these participants suggested that outreach should take higher priority within the service category, while others felt that there needed to be clear ways to integrate outreach activities across categories.

Because outreach activities might include aspects of teaching and research, concerns about “double dipping” frequently arose. Some departments and schools addressed this issue by counting outreach activities solely within the service category, while others expressed the need to define distinct elements of outreach projects that contributed to student mentoring and scholarly production. When presented with hypothetical examples of outreach activities that crossed these boundaries, participants recognized aspects of teaching, research, and service within a given project. However, responses as to how each project would be counted within the teaching/research and creative work/service framework varied widely both within and across units. Indeed, many stated that how an activity would be evaluated was dependent upon how it was categorized and presented on the faculty member’s FRPA. The schools and departments for which participants claimed that outreach was valued, however, specifically looked for an integration of teaching, research, and outreach in faculty work. In some instances, this integration was conveyed in the written description of the FRPA. In others, the evaluation committee examined and discussed the intersections of a faculty member’s various activities that were separately reported.

Other participants that thought outreach was credited too little claimed that it was unclear how to report outreach activities on the FRPA, and that options to report outreach were minimal compared to the ways in which teaching and research activities could be reported. As noted above, some participants described how faculty members often “blew this off” in the FRPA reporting, because (1) how to report outreach was unclear and (2) outreach was generally not valued in the department anyway.

While some appreciated that checkboxes for outreach are available under each of the teaching, research and creative work, and service categories, many regretted that this was primarily for university accounting purposes rather than something that would be considered in their evaluation for merit or promotion. Indeed, one recommendation to improve the evaluation of outreach, especially among faculty members, was to make adjustments to the FRPA that would allow different aspects of a particular project to be counted across categories.
3. Should Outreach Be a High Priority for a Flagship Research University?

Despite the views expressed above that highlight the tensions of valuing outreach at the perceived expense of research and teaching, as well as the relative lack of credit given for involvement in outreach in evaluations for merit or promotion, 72% of participants in the individual interviews (including all but one grant recipient) and 56% of committee members agreed with the statement that “outreach and engagement should be a high priority for a flagship research university.” Exceptions to this trend were those who viewed outreach as a “feather in one’s cap” and insisted that research and teaching must not be compromised by time spent on outreach.

There are only 24 hours in a day. The primary priority for a research university is research and teaching. We certainly value outreach as part of the service component, but the service component that a typical faculty person does is 20% of their time. I'm quite happy if someone uses up all 20% doing outreach, but if it gets above 20%, you're eating into research and teaching and that's not so good. [A&S-Arts & Humanities, Department Chair]

Some others wanted outreach to be a higher priority than it currently is, but clarified that it should not be given the same emphasis as teaching and research. For example:

I think it should be a higher priority than I perceive it as here. If "high" priority means it should be in very top tier, I'm not sure I'm ready to say that. This is a research university. That has to be its primary focus - research and teaching - I'm OK with all forms of service being a notch down. [A&S-Arts & Humanities, Associate Dean]

Some participants qualified their agreement with outreach being a high priority by explaining that the importance of outreach varies by department, faculty interests, and faculty strengths and weaknesses. (One participant [A&S-Natural Sciences, Department Chair] mentioned “cringing at the thought” of some of the most esteemed researchers in his department engaging with the public.)

It was often noted in both individual and group interviews that engagement with outreach was differentially valued at different stages in a tenure-track career trajectory. Pre-tenure faculty members were often advised to focus on their teaching and research activities as tenure rested on evidence of productivity and excellence in teaching and research. Upon approaching full professorship, however, it was expected that faculty members would be more involved with various forms of service, with outreach seen as especially applicable to full professors who had already established a strong record of research:

I would say, the truth is, if I was going to try and do something like that, I would go to senior faculty. I can't in good conscience stress it to people who are building their careers. ... If the university told assistant professors to go out and engage in these things - I'd tell them not to. I'd say, you're crazy if you do that, because you're not going to get rewarded for that at tenure... Faculty go through a life
cycle, and these aren't activities for junior faculty. When I left my PhD program, my professor said, you go in your office and get your research done. And that's what the name of the game is. Once you're tenured and you move on in your career, my major professor gave so much back to his university, way more than he would get rewarded for. And I hope I do too, but I didn't do it as an assistant professor. People need to get their house in order. [Leeds, Division Chair]

Even though some units valued outreach in merit evaluations, it was widely recognized that “it won’t get you tenure.” Given the variety of perspectives present on the VCAC – including whether outreach activities should be counted solely as service or integrated across categories as well as the perceived value of outreach to the university – the issue of promotion and tenure was the most salient for faculty members’ decisions regarding whether and how much to engage in outreach. Some participants therefore claimed that junior faculty members’ interests and skills in integrating their research and teaching with the public were arguably compromised under pressures to produce more traditional forms of scholarship.

Indeed, some participants held that all faculty members should be involved in outreach in some way as community engagement is central to the mission of the university and the academy more broadly. For those not skilled or knowledgeable in conducting worthwhile outreach projects, collaboration across units was cited as an underutilized resource.

The most common reason given for the importance of outreach (by 69% of individual participants) was that given cuts to higher education, diminishing taxpayer support, and a general lack of understanding of the relevance of the university to the public, it was crucial to improve the image of the university in the local community and state. “Good press” [A&S-Natural Sciences, Department Chair] was most easily achieved through outreach, and participating in these activities as a “means of self-preservation” [Education, Grant Recipient] was the most obvious and pressing reason to engage with the community. As indicated above, however, engaging in outreach because the university has a “PR issue” [A&S-Arts & Humanities, Department Chair] does not necessarily render the types of richly integrated, mutually beneficial outreach activities that are valued by some units and promoted by the university. Nonetheless, the importance of public support for the university cannot be underestimated.

That is why NSF is being proactive about if we give you $2 million, you have to have some sort of outreach component because they have a PR issue - a lot of Americans don't understand – Why is the federal government spending billions of dollars on government funded research? (NSF) realized that we're not telling the story of why this is beneficial. Same thing with CU – why is our state support like 8%? We've done a bad job of saying this is the benefit of a research institution to the state of Colorado. The institution has to be more present in the public sector so that people go, oh, that's why we should fund higher ed in this state. .... It's not just monetary, but it is money. [A&S-Arts & Humanities, Department Chair]

It helps greatly to convince the public of the university's value to them … There's a lot of bad press about universities generally – about student loan debt, about universities only being in it for the money. If we can show that's not the case, it
makes us more valued – universities and higher ed as a whole. I don't think higher ed in the US is viewed all that highly from the public, especially when we have to pay these huge tuition bills for our kids. [A&S-Natural Sciences, Department Chair]

We're a public university, so we're a public resource. Students pay tuition, but taxpayers own our real estate and pay for at least part of our operations, so we owe them something. For our own self-interest, we want to let them know how great we are. One of the things our department is very pleased about is we get great press when we do public events – when we're in the news, it's usually good news. [A&S-Natural Sciences, Department Chair]

Additionally, in the individual interviews, 38% of administrators and 50% of grant recipients discussed the importance of outreach as a means of engaging in reciprocity with local citizens and serving the public good. For these participants, outreach is not only “the right thing to do,” but also an important part of the university’s mission to both develop and share knowledge in a way that contributes to better lives. One administrator [A&S-Arts & Humanities, Associate Dean] expressed that while the benefits of research might “trickle down” to those outside the ivory tower, it would more likely benefit others’ lives if members of the university directly engage with the public. As a grant recipient explained, there is a misconception that elite institutions excel by focusing solely on research (and teaching). However, some of the highest ranked institutions (for example Harvard and UCLA) in fact have strong commitments to outreach and thoroughly integrate their work with the public. As CU Boulder continues to progress in its national standing as a premier R1 university, it is a mistake to focus exclusively on research at the expense of its relevance to the public interest.

I think it should be a priority, I wouldn't put it necessarily at the top of the list. … I think universities have much larger responsibilities than (research and teaching alone). And those responsibilities are growing over time. So, actually communicating the passion and excitement and interest in what we do is important. It makes people directly better off in lots of ways. It provides substantial interest. It helps educate the public ... So I think universities have become more engaged and we need to continue to become more engaged going forward. ... I think it's part of our responsibility, the right thing to do, but I also think people are invested in seeing knowledge advance and it doesn't do them any good if we don't find a way to communicate that knowledge. … It would be an extreme waste of knowledge and investments if we didn't get our expertise and passions out there into the public debate in some important ways. ... I'm not sure doing all this PR is effective - it's more about being the good citizen. [A&S-Social Sciences, Associate Dean]

Far from being optional and consistent with the literature (Antonio, 2002; Baez, 2000), some faculty of color noted that there is a strong expectation that scholars of color will “give back” [A&S-Natural Sciences, Grant Recipient] to their communities. In this way, outreach could not be distinct from engagement in one’s scholarship. As a grant recipient from the School of Education explained:
Participant: Outreach has high salience for me because as a faculty member of color, there is an expectation that what we do has got be able to be leveraged in communities that matter to us, communities we represent – low-income communities, communities of color, whatever. … 

Interviewer: But it shouldn't just fall on shoulders of faculty of color, either.

Participant: But it does. ... As a scholar of color, it's not an option. It's a commitment you make that your work has got to have consequence. But I also wanted my work to be really valued in the academy and have consequence in both the academy and the community. I do think it's important for every faculty member, but it should look different … there should be a range of ways to do it.

In contrast to the view that increased emphasis on outreach would compromise the amount and quality of teaching and research, some participants in the individual interviews (14% of administrators and 20% of grant recipients) claimed that outreach and engagement both benefits students and improves research. With regard to teaching, faculty members noted that students thoroughly enjoy their involvement with these projects. These activities not only make their education more meaningful, but also introduce students to the contexts in which their studies are relevant. Strategically, it also allows for networking that helps students to land jobs.

It is good training for students on a pedagogic level – real life experiences that they can use to help them get a job and it gives them a strong sense of purpose. Students involved in outreach are very moved by their experiences and care deeply about them. It makes them feel connected to something that they know matters. … The university can be seen as disconnected, snooty, elite – outreach can help the community feel good about university, not just taking resources but giving back. For faculty too, it makes me feel like my work has another component that stretches beyond what I do in the university classroom. The biggest benefit - beyond to the (community) – is to give students chance to see what it would be like to have a job in their field. [A&S-Arts & Humanities, Grant Recipient]

With regard to research, faculty who are engaged in outreach better understand the import of their work and contexts in which findings might be used. Moreover, they are better able to frame research questions and conduct investigations such that findings are of significance for society.

Ultimately it ensures that it's not just doing good, it's ensuring that the character of the work has value or impact. If you remain detached – we're doing this good work here and somebody else can take it off the shelf and out into the community – I think it is poorly informed work. It's not just that we need to maintain our reputation in this state as a valued entity, which is true about the politics of higher ed and higher ed support in the state. But there is a more fundamental issue … it's informing the character and insightfulness of your work. ... Even if you're doing
very technical work – you need to understand how it is being used. [Education, Dean]

We are uniquely situated as a forum for convening as a university, and we underutilize the power of convening. I also think our students learn better when what are learning is put into contexts and relationships, and the role of outreach and convening is to facilitate broader contexts and relationships for our students. It gives them both a richness as well as more opportunities post-graduation. ... Our students are better off in being in an environment that is about outreach and engagement. I also believe for faculty and staff, they are enriched by it as well and that (a) we should reward them for doing it well and (b) we should help them to do it better and remove barriers to it. [Law, Dean]

Finally, one college and one other department emphasized the role of outreach in recruiting future CU students, and in enhancing the academic preparation of those students prior to entering the university. Work in K-12 schools served to both introduce students to potential studies in higher education, as well as to begin an educative process that would prepare students to offer higher quality work in those departments at the university level.

4. Evaluation Systems Across and Within Units

Some differences in the perspectives of administrators as compared to grant recipients across the campus are highlighted above. In this section, we note evidence of consistency and variation in how outreach is valued and credited both across and within schools and departments.

**Across Units.** As each unit has the authority to determine an appropriate merit evaluation system, evaluation practices varied widely across schools and departments. Some units used a point system while others looked more holistically at individual faculty members’ records. Although “double dipping” was a common concern, some units addressed this issue by counting each activity in only one category, while others ensured that distinct teaching, research, and service elements of a given activity were counted under the appropriate category.

Concerns about promotion and tenure nonetheless impacted the evaluation practices of units. It was seen as unfair to reward faculty members in the merit system for activities that would not result in promotion or tenure. Participants from some units described attempts to “fit” their work into the teaching/research and creative work/service framework in ways that would be understood and recognized by members of the VCAC, while those in the arts explained that their contributions to the aims of the university were largely undervalued and misunderstood. In units with centers dedicated to outreach, faculty members who worked in the centers often had different proportions of teaching, research, and service required of their job descriptions. Adjusted proportions occasionally occurred for other individual faculty members across the campus whose involvement with outreach was recognized as integral to their work.

**Within Units.** Within most units, there were not consistent understandings among evaluation committees, administrators, and grant recipients with regard to how outreach was valued and credited. The Law School and the College of Music stood out as exemplary in terms of
consistency: from the deans and the evaluation committees to the grant recipients, participants shared similar views of outreach being valued in their units as well as understandings as to the reasons why outreach was important to scholarship in law or music. Participants in one A&S Natural Sciences department were consistent in claiming that outreach was assigned appropriate credit, but varied as to their understandings of outreach and whether it was of high value to the unit. Participants in another department A&S Natural Sciences department agreed that outreach was credited too little in their unit.

The remaining eight of the 12 departments for which we are able to compare committees, administrators, and grant recipients evidenced differences of opinions as to whether outreach was valued in the department and credited appropriately. It was not always the case that grant recipients viewed outreach as being credited too little while department chairs viewed it as being credited appropriately; in three of the eight cases, it was the department chair who saw outreach as undervalued. While differences of opinion existed within most committees, the majority of members on all but four committees believed that outreach was credited the right amount in their units. Interestingly, the majority opinions of committee members often differed from those of the respective department chairs, despite the fact that department chairs served as either active or ex officio members.

Only the School of Education and the Civil and Environmental Engineering department were consistent in describing outreach in line with the type of reciprocal engagement that the CU definition entails. This does not mean that other units were not effectively practicing and valuing outreach to these ends. Rather, this implies that clarity regarding outreach and engagement may be needed both within units and across the campus more broadly in order to countervail the longstanding association of outreach with traditional forms of unidirectional service.

To this end, Flagship 2030 calls for deliberations among administrators and faculty within each unit. However, deliberations of this nature appear to be rare. Instead, deliberations were typically confined to committees in the process of evaluating a faculty member’s involvement with outreach and engagement. It is not surprising, then, that 73% of grant recipients were unaware of any deliberations, including 20% that specifically stated they were “needed,” while 73% of department chairs responded that deliberations occurred either occasionally or often. Moreover, 40% of deans and associate deans believed that deliberations were not needed as outreach was well enough understood and not a pressing concern, while the other 60% noted that deliberations occurred occasionally or often.

It was therefore clear that deliberations about outreach typically occurred in closed circles. Again, the Law School and College of Music were exceptions to this trend. Participants from the Law School indicated that deliberations were not needed due to a clear commitment and policy, while all participants from the College of Music indicated that deliberations occurred often.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, faculty involvement with outreach activities is substantially underreported in the merit evaluation system, due to both lack of clarity in reporting and perceptions that outreach will not be valued in evaluations for merit, promotion, or tenure. Indeed, there was wide variation among participants as to whether outreach was respected and encouraged across the campus, with a handful of units serving as exemplars for engaged scholarship that was consistently understood. Understandings of outreach and engagement across the campus likewise varied, with most participants conveying a traditional notion of largely unidirectional service as opposed to the university definition that encourages mutual benefit among scholars and community members. Despite a lack of clarity regarding outreach, most agreed that it should be a high priority for a flagship research university for reasons of gaining public support, promoting the public good, and enriching teaching, learning, and scholarship.

All participants were asked, “What changes, if any, would you make to the faculty merit evaluation system regarding outreach and engagement activities?” Notably, 40% of committee members, 20% of administrators, and 14% of grant recipients responded that the current system does not need any changes. The majority of participants, however, gave recommendations that parallel the themes found above regarding a lack of consistency in understandings and evaluations of outreach across the campus. The participants’ recommendations are summarized below (indicated by PR), followed by our discussion and additional recommendations (indicated by DAR).

1. Institutional Direction and Support

PR. The most commonly offered recommendation (by over one-quarter of participants, including one-third of department chairs) was that the university needed to implement top-down direction and support. Indeed, guidance for a consistent means to evaluate outreach was the most frequent recommendation offered by committee members. Even if units are allowed the flexibility to determine how outreach should be evaluated – as some claimed was quite important – administrators and faculty members across the campus need a consistent understanding of how the university conceives outreach and to what extent outreach and engagement should be encouraged and rewarded.

DAR. The university should encourage deliberation focused on this issue among the deans and the various faculty bodies evaluating faculty merit. In doing this, it should ensure that its conception of outreach is clearly communicated, which would include providing exemplars such that faculty can better envision the ways in which outreach might be integrated with teaching and research. Likewise, the university should offer examples of methods that fairly credit outreach activities. The contributions of faculty and administrators in this evaluation as well as the study of grant recipients’ evaluation of their own outreach activities being conducted by Sandra Laursen in the Center to Advance Research and Teaching in the Social Sciences (CARTSS) provide a start. The findings from these two projects should inform efforts toward clearer understandings of outreach as well as more transparent evaluative practices.

1 Dialogue about outreach among the deans was suggested by the dean of the Law School.
While we agree with participants who emphasized the need for flexibility across units regarding expectations for faculty to participate in outreach activities, it is critical to consider the way in which outreach is credited for promotion and tenure. As noted in the findings, unit-level flexibility in the evaluation of faculty outreach was constrained by an understanding that involvement in outreach would serve as a detriment to earning promotion or tenure. Given that most participants – including 85% of the VCAC – were unfamiliar with or had forgotten the role of outreach in Flagship 2030, the university needs to better communicate this aim and clarify its commitment to outreach and engagement.

2. Cultural Shift

PR. Similar to the change in attitudes toward the purpose of the university and of scholarship advocated by Boyer (1996), over one-fifth of participants (including one-third of deans and associate deans) noted the need for a shift in the way that outreach activities are perceived. The value of outreach to the university as well as to teaching and scholarship needs to be more clearly recognized so that it may be properly credited in evaluations for merit, promotion, and tenure.

DAR. Concrete changes such as the kinds of institutional direction and support recommended above are the most promising means to effect this change. Again, flexibility is the watchword. Universities such as CU Boulder do not have a single culture, and there is not a single way for faculty to be successful. Because of a faculty member’s specialty or dispositions and talents, they may not find success or reward in outreach activities, but otherwise be very productive and deserving of respect. In the case of such faculty, a reasonable goal is that they appreciate the outreach mission of the university overall as well as the work of faculty engaged in it.


PR. Participants were almost unanimously against adding a fourth category for outreach and engagement. Opposition was often based on the worry that participating in outreach would then be a requirement of all faculty members. Many also thought a fourth category would further complicate and confuse the merit evaluation process.

A frequently mentioned alternative recommendation (by one-quarter of participants, including one-third of department chairs) was to allow for flexibility in the tripartite evaluation framework. Similarly, one-fifth of committee members suggested that outreach should be given “more credit” within the framework. This might involve allowing time devoted to outreach projects to reduce time devoted to teaching, or, similarly, permitting faculty members significantly involved in outreach to have differentiated loads. Some participants thought that outreach should be given a higher priority in the service category, and that service activities should be more clearly defined and differentially evaluated. (As noted in the findings, the problem of double counting—receiving credit for an activity in more than one category—was a frequently expressed concern.) Others thought that clear methods should be developed for crediting unique aspects of outreach activities across the teaching, research and creative work, and service categories, as appropriate.
The addition of a fourth category to the merit evaluation system devoted to outreach would be unwise, in our view, for the reasons given by the participants in the study. But given the way in which the tripartite framework is typically applied currently, the practice of placing each faculty activity in a only one category (most often service) often results in diminished credit for outreach activities. For example, collaborating with graduate students in a study of a program devoted to transitioning adolescents who are in the juvenile justice system back into high school incorporates elements of research, teaching, and service. If the faculty member is not credited for all aspects of this work, it raises questions about both the fairness of the evaluation of activities with an outreach component and incentives for faculty to engage in such activities. And this prohibition against placing an activity in more than one category is not consistently applied to non-outreach activities. Consider a faculty member running a research grant that includes among its activities supervising several of her Ph.D. advisees and publishing articles with them. Although the teaching and the research aspects of this faculty member’s activities are difficult to disentangle in this case, it is clear that she would be credited in both the teaching and the research categories. It is therefore perfectly consistent to allow for activities with outreach components to be appropriately credited across categories.

The tripartite framework is virtually second nature among university faculty and administrators when it comes to faculty merit evaluation. Thus, it is advisable to try to develop a defensible way to evaluate outreach activities within it. That all outreach activities have a service component might be exploited to this end. In particular, outreach could be conceived as always being an instance of community service but in many cases as also having teaching or research/creative elements, sometimes very substantial ones. Many participants agreed that all three elements could be seen when presented with examples of faculty outreach activities drawn from projects funded by the Office for University Outreach (see Appendix A, question 3). This additive conception of outreach and engagement should be communicated to individuals and committees engaged in merit evaluation and included in standardized annual merit review forms.

The FRPA site already advises that outreach activities can involve teaching and research as well as service. Yet faculty members have little motivation to report outreach activities for purposes of merit evaluation as the process now stands. The FRPA reporting process should be changed so that outreach activities are included in the completed form. Because FRPAs serve as a primary source of data in faculty merit evaluation, particularly annual merit review, outreach activities would then achieve greater visibility in the merit evaluation system.

4. Collaboration Across Units

A few participants noted that a lack of collaboration across departments is a lost opportunity across the campus. Just as higher education has become discipline-specific over time, colleges and departments tend to work in isolation. Indeed, almost no participants had a sense of how outreach is valued or evaluated in schools or departments outside of their own. Rather than isolated projects, collaboration can offer an opportunity for scholars to not only engage across disciplines in a way that more deeply informs their own knowledge and research but also distribute the effort involved in pursuing engaged scholarship with the community.
DAR. Deliberation among the deans, as recommended above, could include opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration across the campus. Additionally, the Office for University Outreach could facilitate collaboration across units by the way it structures its grants.

5. Encouraged for Instructors

PR. Finally, two administrators suggested that outreach and engagement be encouraged for instructors rather than for tenure-track faculty. Involvement with outreach would be clearly credited in merit evaluations for instructors, and would allow for university engagement with the community in a way that did not demand time from tenure-track professors.

DAR. It is important to note that shifting the responsibility for outreach to instructors would not be consonant with the conception of engaged scholarship being advanced by Flagship 2030 as well as by other elite research universities and funding organizations.

Concluding Comment

As the recommendations made by participants typically spoke to the direct issues with the current system for valuing and evaluating outreach and engagement, we agree that a cultural shift is needed such that engaged scholarship can be advanced at CU Boulder in the 21st century. We further affirm that institutional direction and support is the best means to effect this change. Measures such as providing exemplars of engaged scholarship and of evaluation methods, changes to the faculty merit evaluation process, and collaboration across units are important to clarifying and advancing the university’s aims.
APPENDIX A

Grant Recipient Interview Protocol

I. General Participant Information

Male_________Female_________________

Race/Ethnicity________________________________________________________

Academic Rank_______________________________________________________

Department or School__________________________________

II. Questions

1. How would you define faculty outreach and engagement?

2. Are you familiar with the definition of faculty “Outreach and Engagement” activity as used at CU Boulder?
   
o Is the definition (shown on paper) consistent with your understanding or is there anything that you would change?

3. As you know, CU Boulder evaluates faculty performance annually as well as for reappointment, tenure, and promotion in terms of the three-category framework of service, teaching, and research and creative work. How would your department (or school) apply this framework to the activities A-C below? Indicate whether it would treat them the same or differently.

   A. An engineering professor leads a group of six graduate students in a project to improve children’s health in a low-income rural community by measuring the air quality in aging school buses and developing emissions control technology to retrofit the buses that have poor air quality.

   B. A geology professor specializing in volcanology returns from a sabbatical spent studying active volcanoes with a collection of spectacular videos. She then offers a series of public lectures on her recent sabbatical research incorporating the videos by projecting them on to large screens behind and to the sides of her.

   C. A professor of environmental science teaches a course tailored to the needs of middle school teachers-to-be. He adds to the course a project involving several local middle schools in which the teachers-to-be collaborate with undergraduate majors and graduate students in environmental science to coordinate activities such as after school tutoring, in-school workshops for gifted and talented students, and the development of middle school environmental science curriculum.
4. In your view, are faculty outreach and engagement activities (such as A-C) credited in merit evaluations too much, too little, or the right amount in your unit? In your college? In the university?

5. What changes, if any, would you recommend the faculty merit evaluation system with respect to outreach and engagement activities?

6. Has the faculty of your department (or school) engaged in deliberations about the treatment of outreach and engagement activities in faculty merit evaluations?

7. Are you familiar with the treatment of faculty outreach and engagement in Flagship 2030?

8. Would you agree that faculty outreach and engagement should be a high priority for a flagship research university?

9. From the perspective of a recipient of an Outreach Grant with first-hand experience of how Outreach and Engagement is treated in the faculty evaluation system, do you have anything further to add?
Group Interview Questionnaire

I. General Participant Information

Male_____________   Female_______________

Race/Ethnicity________________________________________________________

Academic Rank_______________________________________________________

Department or School_________________________________________________

II. Questions

1. How would you define faculty outreach and engagement?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

2. Are you familiar with the definition of faculty “Outreach and Engagement” activity as used at CU Boulder?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

3. As you know, CU Boulder evaluates faculty performance annually as well as for reappointment, tenure, and promotion in terms of the three-category framework of service, teaching, and research and creative work. How would your department (or school) apply this framework to the activities A-C below? Indicate whether it would treat them the same or differently and, if so, how.

   A. An engineering professor leads a group of six graduate students in a project to improve children’s health in a low-income rural community by measuring the air quality in aging school buses and developing emissions control technology to retrofit the buses that have poor air quality.

______________________________________________________________________________

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B. A geology professor specializing in volcanology returns from a sabbatical spent studying active volcanoes with a collection of spectacular videos. She then offers a series of public lectures on her recent sabbatical research incorporating the videos by projecting them on to large screens behind and to the sides of her.

C. A professor of environmental science teaches a course tailored to the needs of middle school teachers-to-be. He adds to the course a project involving several local middle schools in which the teachers-to-be collaborate with undergraduate majors and graduate students in environmental science to coordinate activities such as after school tutoring, in-school workshops for gifted and talented students, and the development of middle school environmental science curriculum.

4. In your view, are faculty outreach and engagement activities (such as A-C above) credited in merit evaluations too much, too little, or the right amount in your unit?
5. What changes, if any, would you recommend the faculty merit evaluation system with respect to outreach and engagement activities?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

6. Has the faculty of your department (or school) engaged in deliberations about the treatment of outreach and engagement activities in faculty merit evaluations?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

7. Are you familiar with the treatment of faculty outreach and engagement in Flagship 2030?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

8. Would you agree that faculty outreach and engagement should be a high priority for a flagship research university?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
## APPENDIX C

### List of Themes and Explanations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant Definition of Outreach</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact outside university</td>
<td>Benefiting people outside of the university; tends to sound like providing service for community (vs. service to university/ profession); non-academic audiences [more traditional definition]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting with public</td>
<td>Sharing knowledge with communities outside of university, but indicating that outreach is mutually beneficial (rather than &quot;bringing scholarship to them&quot;) [closer to CU definition]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Familiarity with CU Definition</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>Consistent with participant understanding of outreach; participant agrees with spirit of CU definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration?</td>
<td>Participant questions the word &quot;collaboration&quot; in CU definition as sometimes university gives something to community without collaboration involved; e.g., can be a lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships?</td>
<td>Participant questions the phrase &quot;mutually beneficial partnerships&quot; in CU definition as university might give something to community without establishing partnerships or getting anything back out of it; e.g., outreach that raises awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship?</td>
<td>Participant questions the word &quot;scholarship&quot; in CU definition as this word can be limiting (vs. &quot;creative and scholarly work&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiar</td>
<td>Participant familiar or knows CU definition well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less familiar</td>
<td>Participant not very familiar or doesn't know CU definition at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Credit: Too Little</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear on FRPA</td>
<td>Needs multiple categories like Teaching or a way for it to stand out; people blow it off on FRPA or don't know where to put it; hard to differentiate between projects with different value to university and amount of work involved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation framework

Gets shortchanged by only being in Service when cuts across research and teaching and is time-consuming; evaluating Service (quantity and quality) is vague so doesn't get appropriately weighted; would be better credited and higher quality work if integrated across categories ("hat trick"); emphasis on research and teaching in evaluations => not high value in unit

Perceived Credit: Right Amount

Valued in this unit
Valued and encouraged in unit, not sure outside of unit

Assigned appropriate credit
Given certain number of points or agreed-upon value in merit evaluations, generally in Service; may or may not be valued - participant may or may not want to see it valued more

Deliberations

Often
Regular, ongoing discussions; most of faculty involved

Some
Some discussion regarding outreach; discussion typically occurs in merit evaluation committees

Needed
Deliberations regarding merit evaluation of outreach haven't occurred but would be valuable for that purpose or other purposes, such as raising awareness, clarifying goals, etc.

Not needed
Place and evaluation of outreach is understood; discussions not needed

Unaware
Not aware of discussions; not involved at that level

Evaluation System

Double dipping
Fear of counting faculty activities more than once

Distinct categories
Credit for project falls only within one category

Integrate categories
Credit for components of project can be counted across categories

Point system
Unit uses point system

Outreach Initiative in Flagship 2030

Familiar
Familiar with outreach initiative of Flagship 2030

Less familiar
Not as familiar with outreach initiative or aware of its presence

Priority or Status of Outreach

Icing on the cake
Outreach is "nice," feather in cap, icing on cake, but that's about it; can't get tenured on it
High priority

Outreach should absolutely be a high priority

Full professor

Outreach and Service are important at full professor level; not recommended for junior faculty

Research & teaching

CU is a research (and teaching) university; can't lose sight of research (and teaching) mission; emphasis on outreach might decrease focus on research (and teaching); "Research is King"

Priority in service

Outreach is or should be a valued priority within Service aspect of faculty work

Depends on unit

High priority in some units (e.g. Theatre & Dance) over others

Reasons for Outreach

Benefits students

Students at CU enjoy community engagement, are more engaged in learning, see purpose of their work, networking helps them get jobs

PR issue

Public needs to see how university benefits community and in turn value university and/or higher education, including (but not limited to) willingness to fund university and pay taxes

Public good

"It's the right thing to do" to give back to the public, share expertise rather than keep it in ivory tower, serve the public, engage in reciprocity, serve communities that can't afford to pay for expertise, “giving back” is expected of scholars of color

Improves research

Understanding how research is or could be used outside of ivory tower improves the quality of research; "informs character and insightfulness of our work"; also, recognition that funders now often require outreach as component of research

Recruit

Improve quality of students that might enter CU; benefits university through recruiting and college preparation

Recommended changes

Recognition

Faculty would like some form of recognition, esteem, award that is not only preaching to the choir (beyond current mini-luncheon)

Collaboration

Units across campus should collaborate to meet goals of both research and outreach

Cultural shift

A shift in understanding regarding the value of outreach is needed in terms of changing attitudes

FRPA changes

Changes should be made to the FRPA to make coding more obvious and ensure proper credit
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional direction &amp; support</td>
<td>Should be more consistent across university (in terms of points allotted or how it is viewed in merit evaluations); currently how to evaluate it is unclear; more clear statement from university is needed (vs. &quot;rhetoric&quot; or &quot;lip service&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority in service</td>
<td>Attention needed to Service category - difficult to evaluate Service activities but important to recognize good Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation framework changes</td>
<td>Give more weight to outreach in framework (not as much as research and teaching); allow outreach activities to be integrated across categories to be more appropriately weighted; might involve allowing flexibility for different units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructors</td>
<td>Encourage instructors to do outreach since have more connections to community and less demands for research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding support</td>
<td>University needs to back outreach goals with funding, especially for units that do not typically receive large grants; recognize small dollar amount of outreach grants when setting expectations; can include interest in allowing released time in exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>No changes needed; done well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES CITED


ADDITIONAL REFERENCES CONSULTED


Kecskes, K., ed. Engaging Departments: Moving Faculty Culture from Private to Public, Individual to Collective, Focus for the Common Good. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006. *25 copies of this book were purchased and distributed by Interim Vice Provost Micheline Chalhoub-Deville to faculty who attended the OLSL March 5th, 2009 Speaker Series. Additional copies were provided to administrators she directly supervised.


*Kerry Ann O’Meara was brought to UNCG in April 2009 by Dean Celia Hooper. This book was distributed to all HHP faculty.*


