



Defining, Encouraging, and Evaluating “Expanded Scholarship” as Productivity in Academic Institutions

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Abstract: “Expanded scholarship” includes produced items whose contributions are related to or inspired by broad scholarly knowledge and research, including expressing and problem-solving research questions. Expanded scholarship expresses ideas beyond current hegemonies of form and substance within a discipline and the academy. It is essential to discuss how these products are reported, evaluated, and valued within institutional frameworks. Expansion of conceptualizations of “what counts” requires a multilevel critical examination of traditional understandings of productivity and engagement with intersectional approaches to valuation. Evaluation and review processes currently entrenched within institutional structures and norms differentially impact indigenous peoples, women, gender diverse and LGBTQ people, and people of color. This article offers the authors’ perspective to encourage transformational change at the individual, unit, and institutional levels, and provides an opportunity to discuss and enact a more systemic intersectional approach to faculty evaluations and holistic conceptualizations of research and scholarship. We conclude with suggested discussion prompts leading to an action plan for institutions to recognize and reward the value of expanded scholarship.

Keywords: evaluations, productivity, promotion, tenure, Review, creativity

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) was a Renaissance painter famous for the *Mona Lisa* and *The Last Supper* as well as his extensive notebooks containing commentary and drawings on a variety of topical studies, including flying machines, anatomy, astronomy, and hydrology. Da Vinci is widely regarded now as a genius and the span of his work lauded. But how would da Vinci fare in today's academia? In an engineering department, would his work as a sculptor be seen as a scholarly contribution alongside his work on moveable water dikes, or as merely a distraction from "real science"?

We have many colleagues who engage in what are referred to as "hobbies." Some of these hobbies are very much linked to and may even be essential to the programmatic research they conduct. Sometimes the connections are obvious: for example, two professors who teach neuropsychology creating an illustrated children's book about how the brain works (Akins & Rice, 2024). Other connections are less immediately obvious. For example, a psychology of law professor who produces a series of paintings of Greek goddesses.

How these produced items, which we call "expanded scholarship," are valued by units and institutions is a reflection of individual, disciplinary, and structural hegemonies and biases. We (the authors) have participated in evaluation meetings and watched as expanded scholarship works are unvalued or assigned diminished value despite the contributions to scholarship. These valuations may result from conscious decisions, or implicit or unconscious criteria being applied. Our experiences lead us to advocate for open discussions of expanded scholarship, considering how they may be included in performance assessments and fairly evaluated by units and institutions.

Expanded scholarship is inspired by, reflects and illuminates scholarly knowledge, broadly or a specific theory or piece of research, allowing for imaginative and extra-ordinary thinking as part of a process of creating and communicating new knowledge. Expanded scholarship may include individual or collectivist products, such as a piece of pottery crafted by a molecular physicist, a landscape painting by a civil engineer, or a collaborative autoethnography exploring a math theory by a

multidisciplinary group of scholars—the possibilities are wide-ranging. Scholars within the humanities and arts may have more leeway to expand their modes of expression and contribution; though given the rigidity of disciplinary expectations and boundaries, even individuals in these fields are likely to have to make an argument for why a particular outcome is a “productive” use of their time (e.g., Rolling & Gatlin, 2024).

How do we grapple with official ways to claim, acknowledge, and evaluate the value of expanded scholarship contributions within the institutional framework we must navigate? And how do we grapple with this where indigenous peoples, women, gender diverse and LGBTQ people, and people of color engage in expanded scholarship to express their ideas beyond the current hegemony of form and substance within a discipline or an interdisciplinary program or department? Admittedly, some departments/programs, colleges, and universities do better at this; others may actively be looking for guidance; and yet others may not have given this much thought or consider this to be an issue worth exploring.

This article offers a perspective informed by reflexivity, (auto-)ethnography, institutional experiences, and the authors’ own crossings of disciplinary boundaries in order to encourage formal conversations challenging structural hegemonies and biases. These discussions are an opportunity to put into practice an intersectional approach about who faculty are and who we want faculty to be; the implications of how different experiences influence products informed by marginalized and intersecting identities; and the essential importance of these discussions to the future of higher education institutions (see Gibau et al., 2022, for a discussion of the difficulties of “disrupting the status quo”).

We believe proactively engaging with how to evaluate expanded definitions of scholarship will contribute to more sustainable professional careers and to a more diverse faculty and academy. More holistic, expansive conceptualizations of research and scholarship may also expand knowledge creation and the proposed solutions to pressing social problems. Expansion of our conceptualizations of what counts

requires critical examination of traditional understandings of productivity at individual and institutional levels, and engagement with intersectional approaches to valuation.

We recognize that a holistic and expansive view of scholarship requires attention to what is devalued as well as what is valued, and the challenges and needed changes at multiple levels to expand current narrow definitions and perspectives of productivity and value. As we push towards systemic change, we first position ourselves as a way to acknowledge, and invite readers to more clearly contextualize, how our individual experiences and trajectories both inform and limit the perspectives and recommendations we present here. We then shift our attention to how knowledge is currently defined, produced, and evaluated within units and institutions, as we also engage with considerations of how current definitions of scholarship differentially impact the composition of the professoriate and academy. We offer suggestions for how to define and understand the creativity in expanded scholarship, and ongoing challenges in assessing scholarship more expansively; we also provide examples and questions to help clarify the impact on individual careers and knowledge production within current exclusionary practices of reporting and evaluation. We conclude with recommendations and prompts for multilevel discussions to directly address expanded scholarship within and across units.

The Authors: Positionality and Context

We bring to these efforts our combined experiences in different types of institutions (Alcalde at R1 and R2 institutions, and a Liberal Arts college; Riggle at R1 institutions), a range of institutional leadership positions (Alcalde as Director of Graduate Studies, Associate Dean, and Vice President; Riggle as Director of Graduate Studies, Associate Program Director, and Department Chair), different disciplines (Alcalde in Anthropology; Riggle in Political Science, Psychology), serving on committees at all institutional levels (including promotion and tenure committees), and interacting with people from across the university from these positions. Our different experiences and backgrounds, including Alcalde as an immigrant, cisgender Latina scholar and Riggle as a first-generation rural Midwest (U.S.), White, gender

non-conforming lesbian queer scholar, allows us to view issues and the current state of higher ed and science from a variety of perspectives. We both learned to speak the dominant language of our disciplines while maintaining perspectives which provide unique insights. Promoting discussion encouraging others to express their unique insights in different ways and having the value of their scholarship recognized by departments, colleges, universities, and disciplines is our goal.

Ellen D.B. Riggle: My Story

I am a professor of political science, formally trained in quantitative methodologies (although my skill set has vastly expanded since my graduate school training), and a joint appointment in gender and women's studies. I am a Fellow of the American Psychological Association (Division 44 Society for the Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity) in recognition of my contributions to research on LGBTQ and gender diverse people; specifically, minority stress, positive identities, and health disparities as impacted by laws, policies, and social and cultural stigmatization. I am employed by a department within an R1 University which, under the Research category of activity, states that it values peer-review publications, university press books, and external grant money (read: preferably with indirects). I have an extensive peer-reviewed research publication record.

I am also the author of one romance novel and two novellas (under a pen name), and published poetry. All of this writing is inspired by or informed in some way by my research. Research poems combine my expertise and use of qualitative and quantitative methods, including reflexive thematic analysis of phenomena and lived experiences, with an art form that condenses expression and creates accessibility. For example, "Queer"* is a published poem (Riggle, 2023, Summer) reflecting a legacy of queer identities:

*When I call myself queer, I honor
girls shunned as too masculine /
boys bullied as too feminine /
children kicked out of their familial home /*

those ostracized, fired, displaced /
pathologized, shocked, lobotomized /
mutilated for what they wore /
raped for who they were (not) attracted to /
murdered for who they loved /
dehumanized for living truth /
could-no-longer-pretend /
loves and lives erased,
 but they lived /
struggled, endured, fought for place/space
 where I can do more than merely survive /
and call myself queer

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I have reported this “product” on my annual merit evaluation form. First, this is an act of optimism and courage. My research in LGBTQ Studies has been called activism and not scholarly. Further, any activities centering study of LGBTQ people and gender diversity are currently (and historically have been) under political attack. Professionally, I have been the target of such public political attacks in the past. Second, a space for me to report this “product” does not appear under “Intellectual Contributions” where my other scholarly publications are reported; the entry appears under “Artistic and Professional Performances and Exhibits.” I am not devaluing the latter category—in fact, just the opposite—I am pointing out that this poem is no different in the intellectual effort and process and argue the category should be labeled “Intellectual Contributions in Artistic and Professional Performances and Exhibitions.” This is my research embodied in the form of a poem that went through an evaluation process by the editor(s) of the publication.

This poem, as an example, has likely been read by as many people as read most of my research articles (maybe more). I have included the poem in a public reading (as the result of receiving First Place in a writing contest). Yet, for many of

my colleagues, this is seen as separate from and not of research value. I can imagine in my upcoming evaluation being told to “focus on research.”

An expansive view of research scholarship would value this as a contribution to the literature of the academy, recognizing the efficiency of words to evoke an emotional and visceral response to the visualizations of this history and legacy which reflects the experience of “Queer” people, something that cannot be effectively described by a simultaneous equation model. Yet, describing the experience of calling oneself Queer in this way informs the interpretation of such models. A poem also allows Queer individuals to see themselves, make connections to a literature, and possibly be inspired to expand their own possibilities in research and the academy. How and where do I report that on a form that simply asks for a Work Title, Start Date and End Date?

M. Cristina Alcalde: My Story

As an immigrant and feminist scholar, I embrace the reality of my multiple intersecting identities; among them outsider/insider, scholar/administrator, and mother/scholar. I also recognize that at different points in my career the value of my work and whether or not I am perceived and treated as belonging in a particular space has been questioned precisely because of my intersecting identities. As an anthropologist, I started my academic career in a joint anthropology and sociology department at a small liberal arts college. As an assistant professor, I transitioned into a Department of Gender and Women’s Studies at an R1 institution, attracted by the potential to continue to develop my research areas of gender violence, exclusion, migration, and racialization and to help build a robust doctoral program free of strict disciplinary constraints. As a full professor and after a decade and a half at an R1 institution in which I had ample opportunities to do research, publish, teach, and hold a variety of administrative roles, I transitioned to a senior administrative role at an R2 institution.

My higher ed trajectory has been characterized by boundary-crossing, and this informs my understanding and advocacy for engaging with, recognizing, and valuing

differences. Some boundaries have been between institutional types (small liberal arts college to R1 to R2) and others have been disciplinary (drawing on and bringing together aspects of Anthropology, Latin American Studies, Gender and Women's Studies). Some boundaries have been linguistic and geographic (publishing in English and Spanish; brief visiting teaching periods in Germany and Peru). Other boundaries I have crossed include moving from faculty to administration, a crossing some may view with suspicion or even as traitorous.

I transitioned to full-time administrative work as a way to more systemically and comprehensively work across areas and groups to contribute to what I considered to be needed changes in higher ed—including what types of knowledge and work are valued, and who is and is not understood to belong in different spaces within higher ed. While publications no longer “count” in evaluations of my work, my research continues to inform how I approach my day-to-day work and the initiatives and structural changes I work towards with others. The perspectives I gain through my administrative role also contribute to the expansion of my scholarship.

Recently, I wrote a book (Alcalde, 2022) I had wanted to write for a very long time. While earlier in my career a book I wrote was translated into Spanish a couple of years after it was published in English, this was my first attempt at writing an original book manuscript in Spanish. The book focused on a deeply personal and painful family story, a story that reflects broader societal trends and directly connects to my research areas. The choice and added effort and time of writing and publishing the book in Spanish, and of sharing a family “secret,” was tied to its impact on a specific community and topic. I would not have written this book pre-tenure for fear it would not count because it was not in English and could run the risk of being considered “too personal” to be valued as a quantifiable, scholarly product by an anthropologist. In the current state of affairs in the academy, what “counts” may not be what is most valuable and impactful for the scholar and community.

On the Limits of Knowledge Production and Exclusionary Politics

What is academic scholarship? We can probably agree on a very basic definition of original intellectual work, but how that work is specifically defined within disciplines may vary as much as a university itself, spanning musicology to sociology to nuclear physics to cardiovascular health (and encompassing all other departments and programs and centers in a college/university). While each discipline creates its own set of “norms” and metrics, institutions also create rules and metrics and in doing so risk becoming narrow in focus, method, and ultimately valuations.

Within the institutional structure, knowledge production and what counts as research and scholarship remains limited. Exclusionary politics within universities has significant consequences for what and how knowledge is produced. The highest concentrations of faculty conducting interdisciplinary research, which increasingly challenges traditional understandings of scholarship, tend to also be the most diverse spaces: interdisciplinary departments and programs such as Gender and Women’s Studies, Ethnic Studies, Indigenous Studies, Black Studies, Latin American and Latiné Studies, Asian and Asian American Studies, and Disability Studies. It is not surprising, then, that these departments and programs, historically devalued in knowledge production, are increasingly targeted for cuts in the neoliberal university.

Similarly, in many so-called traditional disciplines, indigenous peoples, people of color, people with disabilities, women, and LGBTQ and gender diverse peoples and topics connected to these identities are among the most excluded. This translates into a narrower range of perspectives in conducting studies and creating the knowledge that is taught and influences disciplines. The exclusion perpetuates itself through social and intellectual reproduction at disciplinary and institutional levels; while some experiences, knowledge, and bodies are welcomed and promoted, others remain marginalized and excluded (see, for example, Nicole & Coley, 2024).

Further, these biases remain entrenched as limitations on the professoriate ranks, which consequently limits who becomes administrators and who creates policies for defining and valuing scholarship. Critical scholars of race, leadership, and

higher education have consistently shown that universities are microcosms of our racialized, gendered, hierarchical society (Chun & Evans, 2018; Stewart & Valian, 2022). Within universities, built largely on expropriated indigenous lands, the racial and ethnic diversity within the professoriate falls significantly short of the diversity among students and in society at large. Among full professors, for example, 75.7% are White, while only 4% are Black, and another 4% are Hispanic or Latiné (Kim et al., 2024). Among women of color, underrepresentation in tenured and full professorships is even more pronounced, which in turn limits opportunities to advance into formal college and university leadership positions (Alcalde & Subramaniam, 2022); pathways to senior leadership roles continue to be severely limited for some populations, including for those who identify as LGBTQ (Crossman, 2022).

As we advocate for expanding the definition of productivity, we acknowledge the ways in which the neoliberal university frames productivity in terms of number of publications, impact scores, and citations (Burke, 2020). Our efforts to reframe and expand the definition of scholarship and productivity complements existing critiques of the neoliberalization of the university. The slow scholarship movement, for example, is a form of feminist resistance to the neoliberal university and encourages reframing how we approach research in order to create more sustainable caring, nurturing spaces that defy traditional productivity measures (Mountz et al., 2015). The concept of *crip time* invites us to reimagine the limits of traditional conventions of time as it “bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds” rather than forcing disabled bodies and minds to assimilate and adapt to existing structures in higher ed (Kafer, 2013, p. 27). Both slow scholarship and *crip time* encourage us to look beyond the confines of existing normative practices to explore new ways of doing and valuing scholarship in the academy, and what counts and how scholarship is counted.

Expanded Scholarship as Productivity

What qualifies as expanded scholarship? When, for example, does a knitting project become more than a hobby? Is the knitting project a scholarly contribution when it incorporates a researched indigenous design? Is it when a scholar-activist spends a specific amount of time knitting culturally appropriate hats, and then donates these to the local shelter for unhoused people? Is the project scholarly when it becomes a “yarn bomb” covering a tree in a public park—or is the yarn bomb only scholarly when it is accompanied by a sign explaining the relationship between the yarn, knitting, trees, and ecology? Is the knitting project “productivity” when it is part of a juried show? And what of the mathematician who typically does research on algebraic geometry, creating a knitting project inspired by and inspiring their knowledge of angles? And if a mathematician whose research focuses on K-12 education develops a knitting project speaking to their experiences developing math lessons for historically marginalized high school students, does that count?

Praxis, a term commonly used in feminist methodologies, is the act of embodying our research as a contribution to the community. By turning theory into action or applying our scholarly findings in the “real world,” we strive to make the world a better place for everyone. For some, this translates into direct community work and involvement in civic organizations—what might be called volunteerism. For others, this translates into a physical output not typically associated with the forms understood as quantifiable productivity in their discipline, such as paintings, housing structures, fictional novels, origami, music, or rain gardens.

Some of these creations may be informed by formal College/University classes taken as an undergrad or post-bac; sponsored workshops through a professional association, such as cartoon drawing for molecular scientists; or the result of extracurricular training or workshops, such as a 3-D printing class at a local library or joining a local art guild. Other skills may be self-taught (e.g., YouTube DIY). Creations may be a direct translation of or inspired by research. And some may be inspired by the same passions that brought us to our discipline in the first place.

Defining when a “thing” becomes expanded scholarship is a task for open discussions within an atmosphere of cultural humility, learning, and honoring the spirit of expansive scholarship. Baseline conditions going beyond current monetized, commercialized, or hegemonic standards may result. For example, one baseline may be that a work is or has been publicly available, such as a novel that can be ordered or a painting exhibited in an art show. Another baseline might be requiring an articulated connection to scholarly interests or a reflection on how the work contributes to knowledge, broadly defined and without judgement. Baselines allow for future discussions and expansions of definitions.

One example of a frequently debated product that may be considered expanded scholarship is translations. The American Literary Translators Association’s (ALTA) guidelines for evaluating literary translations recommends that these be given the same weight as other forms of scholarship in faculty reviews. However, translations are consistently devalued and counted as less than other forms of academic knowledge production (Ulrich, 2007). As recently as 2023 the Modern Language Association (MLA) called attention to this pattern of devaluation of some forms of scholarly labor—in this case, literary translations—by endorsing the ALTA guidelines (Modern Language Association, 2023). Translations are often a collaboration between the original work author and the translating author, creating a new product, which may have important implications for how scientists conceptualize research questions, hypotheses, analyses, and discussions of results.

Similarly, how much should writing in a language other than English count? While English is not the first language of the majority of researchers around the world, publishing in English is the normative language for academic publications to be recognized and reach a wider audience (Flowerdew, 2008). Yet, in publishing in English, what groups and communities (including the ones impacted by the research topic) are excluded from access to knowledge? When a researcher chooses to write in another language as a way to provide access to the research they have conducted, this may result in steering away from English language top journals and presses that appear in institutional bibliometric analyses, such as SciVal. What is the

impact on that scholar's career when their efforts are devalued because they intentionally publish in a non-English language as a way share knowledge with specific communities impacted by their research?

We have no definitive answers to define expanded scholarship in its many forms, which is why we need open discussions. We argue these discussions must take place at the institutional level to support capacity building beyond strict disciplinary and departmental boundaries. These efforts can contribute to a more inclusive environment that recognizes and rewards, for example, scholarship-art, including culturally informed art, and the creative inquiry and advances it can inspire, as well as the impact on community (inside and outside the academy). For example, we need to learn from, acknowledge, and privilege indigenous ways of knowing, and how these are related to language and ceremony, and artistic expressions with creations honoring relationships, including relationships with all elements of the Earth. For example, Kimmerer (2013), an environmental biologist, provides a rich discussion of the possible impacts of indigenous knowledge on the choice of topics to study and the frameworks for studying the impacts of humans on an ecological system, including the reciprocal relationships found in an "honorable harvest" (see Cooms & Saunders, 2024, for a discussion of decolonizing hegemonic disciplines through centering indigenous voices; see also Kimmerer, 2024).

We also need discussions at intersections with sexual identity and gender diversity, where insufficiency of languages may restrict the ability to communicate ideas, not through lack of skill but through lack of common words. These deficiencies may impact opportunities for research in the paradigms in which we operate, and the modes of expression demanded by the hegemonic academy (see example of the first author's poem above; and see discussion of LGBTQ STEM faculty and students in Reggiani et al., 2024). Likewise, we need discussions at intersections with race, ethnicity, and minoritized cultures within the hegemonic academy. Encouraging culturally creative visions may lead to new ways of thinking about theoretical and practical problems. (See McGee, 2020, which discusses racialized STEM education, and the resulting exclusion of new perspectives in these fields.)

Encouraging Creativity and Imagination in Scholarship

Alternate forms of expression activate different parts of the brain and may result in new insights. In a recent study of Nobel Prize winners, Root-Bernstein and Root-Bernstein (2020, 2023) found that laureates exhibit high rates of having multiple interest areas, spanning crafts, performance arts, creative writing, humanities and social sciences, sciences, sports, and nature activities. While some might label these as merely hobbies, Root-Bernstein and Root-Bernstein note that “Nobel laureates themselves often make explicit the substantive and useful connections between their multiple interests, recognizing, in essence, the integrated networks of multidisciplinary that stimulate and sustain their creative work” (2023, p. 117). For example, Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin, Nobel Prize winner in Chemistry (1964), analyzed protein structures such as penicillin and created paintings of these protein structures, and worked to transform these artistic representations into designs on fabrics and fine china. What would today’s corporatized neoliberal university make of these forms of expanded scholarship?

It is clear that creativity in how we express ideas and thoughts can help us produce new and exciting, sometimes unexpected, insights and move fields forward. At the same time, the traditional “publish or perish” approach in the academy communicates to pre-tenure faculty especially that the path to successful reviews, tenure, and promotion is a narrow one, requiring them to focus on number of publications and journal name recognition (Niles et al., 2020). Boyer’s (1990) work has pushed institutions to more intentionally embrace a broader definition of scholarship by recognizing discovery, integration, and application, within and especially as related to teaching as legitimate forms of scholarship. We move these efforts forward as we delve deeper into what types of scholarship are valued and how we can even more intentionally expand what is valued as scholarship, particularly outside of teaching. The recent case of Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones’ tenure denial by the University of North Carolina is one example of how a narrow focus on peer-reviewed publications fails to capture the broader

societal impact and value of different forms of scholarship. It would be difficult to argue that the “1619 Project” (first as a journalistic initiative, Hannah-Jones, 2019, August 14; later as a podcast, book anthology, and television series) did not have a profound impact on societal, institutional, and community discussions of slavery and race relations in the United States.

Stuart (2024) argues that imagination is an essential element for progress and we should expand our study of scientific imagination, how it works and what it contributes to scholarship. His study finds that “younger scientists and scientists who were members of underrepresented groups (including women, certain ethnic minorities, differently abled, or neurodivergent people) expressed less positive, or even negative, views about the usefulness of imagination in science, and they also tended to express negative views about the strength and usefulness of their own imaginations” (p. 283), while scientists in overrepresented, dominant groups “praise imagination in general and their own imaginations in particular, going so far as to attribute major successes to the power of the imagination” (p. 284).

In order to engage in imaginative, creative, expressive activities, individuals need mentors who encourage these expanded forms within disciplines. This is especially true for pre-tenure or non-tenure track individuals who do not have the nominal protections and job-security of tenure. There may also need to be mentors from outside of a department (or even outside a university) to advise and advocate for valuation of expanded scholarship in promotion and tenure or periodic reviews.

We (collectively as academics) often encourage creativity and imagination in our students in classes because we believe this will facilitate their engagement. We work on campuses that emphasize retention, which is aided by a sense of belonging. We need to also recognize the value of expanded scholarship helping students see themselves and their future in the academy. However, we less often encourage and value the expanded scholarship of our colleagues; this is communicated by the institutional forms of evaluation which explicitly and implicitly message that expanded scholarship takes time away from “real” work and from reaching university productivity goals.

Individuals may need to negotiate in writing how expanded scholarship will be reported and evaluated; we caution everyone that negotiated outcomes should be in writing and kept as a record. We have watched as colleagues verbally say something is important, but then criticize or critically dismiss those contributions at evaluation time behind closed doors. Written accountability, by both mentors and departments more broadly, can go a long way in supporting a more holistic, caring, and insightful approach to scholarship. Departments, colleges, and universities should be transparent about evaluations and draw clear lines of expectation. For example, a department or university should avoid broad public statements about valuing community engagement but in practice privilege some forms of community engagement and dismiss others—for example, valuing and “counting” social media blogs but not public art.

Colleagues should educate themselves on various forms of expression (including artistic and cultural expressions) and supportive evaluation processes, including interrogating hegemonic biases; evaluators should not hide behind academic presumptions of devaluation, especially of work by indigenous peoples, women, LGBTQ and gender diverse people, and people of color. These discussions need to take place across disciplines as well as across geographies. Not everyone is impacted equally or in the same ways. Discussions by those in departments or disciplines with already expanded valuations and boundaries can help others understand and fairly evaluate expanded scholarship as they search for possible models and pathways.

When the Personal Becomes Professional

For some scholars, producing expanded scholarship outside of traditional disciplinary realms is deeply personal. Even though a creation may be integrally related to their work, an academic may not wish to expose themselves to an evaluation by peers and the assignment of value to their work. This is understandable. Biases, gate-keeping, and personal attacks and criticisms abound in all disciplines. In this environment, scholars may not wish to open themselves up to a so-called scholarly

discussion of their expanded scholarship, which is a reasonable self-protection decision, especially for indigenous peoples, women, LGBTQ and gender diverse people, and people of color who are already subjected to micro- and macro-aggressions and the externally produced stressors of stigmatization on a daily basis (e.g., Alcalde & Subramaniam, 2022; Niemann et al., 2020).

How do we (as academics) decide where our creations fit within our jobs and scholarly profession? We are often taught and encouraged to reproduce narrow disciplinary boundaries and expressions. More often than not we witness colleagues self-censoring or devaluing their own works, stating, “Oh, that’s not my research,” or “Oh, that’s not science,” or “Oh, I don’t expect anyone to count it.” This type of self-policing allows disciplines and institutions to avoid important conversations, and teaches others to devalue their own work and expansive definitions of contributions outside the dominant norms.

Especially for indigenous peoples, women, LGBTQ and gender diverse people, and people of color, the current cultural and political environment may both challenge and inspire our passions, making it more likely we want to break out of the conventions and engage in creative outlets, thereby making us targets. Given public attacks on academics by anti-science and anti-equity/diversity/inclusion political operatives, a person may legitimately wonder if they will be targeted for their expanded scholarship, creating additional stress. (See Goldberg, 2024, for results of a study of the impact of anti-DEI legislation on LGBTQ+ faculty and their research programs.)

Given the internal politics of increasingly corporatized universities, including bowing to external pressure or being taken over administratively by anti-higher education agents, a scholar may not want to have their work publicly reported in order to avoid scrutiny and possible attacks. Legislatures have already threatened to and have defunded programs perceived as “liberal,” “woke,” or “divisive.” Attacks by students on professors have multiplied, including websites dedicated to naming professors to be targeted. Physical and psychological violence against women, sexual and gender diverse minority individuals, and people of color is increasingly

normalized and common. In some departments and programs, colleagues may be fearful that attacks could target a specific individual or an entire department, or that a program that is already targeted for cuts and is actively struggling for survival may be completely shut down. In these scenarios, individuals may approach expansive scholarship cautiously because of their understanding of the consequences of any challenge to cultural hegemonies as well as academic status quo and traditional productivity goals and measures.

In this political and cultural environment, deciding what to proclaim as personal only and where to enter our expanded scholarship into our professional activity log must be an individual, pragmatic decision. However, universities, colleges, departments, and programs need to create space for this to be a choice, and for conversations to follow, instead of merely giving in to strict boundaries and hegemonic norms, and, in some cases, fearmongering.

The Bias of Current Frames of Scholarly “Productivity”

It is not uncommon to find articles discussing promotion and tenure (P&T) issues in a variety of fields (e.g., Cervato et al., 2024; Rodriguez et al., 2024). This is understandable given the career (and life) altering implications of especially tenure and also promotion for an individual. Somewhat less common is to find articles within disciplines on the regular evaluation processes that take place during an academic professional’s career. These evaluations are often called some variation of annual, merit, progress, or productivity review, denoting a regularly scheduled review of the quantifiable “accomplishments” and activities of an individual, and typically tied at least loosely to pay raises, workload, and future assignment of duties.

Articles on both topics (P&T and “productivity”) discuss the inequities and additional labors of women and racial/ethnic minority academics, and less frequently LGBTQ, gender diverse, and indigenous academics, and biases in evaluations (e.g., Masters-Waage et al., 2024). This includes the additional emotional labors (e.g., informal advising or nurturing) expected of these individuals, which are often under-reported and under-valued if they are reported. The extra work may also include

additional committees, community engagement, or public-facing activities (e.g., showing up at events to be “seen”). (For example, see Wright-Mair, 2023, for an intersectional overview of “costs” for LGBTQ+ faculty of color.)

Departments/programs, colleges, and universities have written rules for the processes of P&T and reviews, which vary in level of specificity as to what “counts”—with an emphasis on the numerical. It is our experience that universities have become increasingly quantified and commodified in reviews, such that an individual’s worth is measured in terms of their quantifiable productivity within specific timeframes. There are forms and software programs available that include all disciplines under one accounting system, such as the “Watermark Faculty Success” program, with tabs for reporting the different areas of effort (Service, Teaching/Advising, and Research/Scholarship). Under these tabs are categories such as “Artistic and Professional Performances and Exhibits” and “Intellectual Contributions” (as though these are separate domains). In an effort to be inclusive, forms may also have sections for reporting “Other.”

Universities frequently rely on mechanisms measuring productivity in narrow ways, perhaps motivated in part by the rankings game for “best of” lists (e.g., U.S. News and World Report or discipline specific rankings of departments). For example, by using Scopus citations institutions rely on criteria which include “citations per publication,” “field-weighted citation impact,” “publications share in top 5% of journals by CiteScore,” and in “top 25% of Journals by CiteScore.” These practices may discourage departments and institutions from viewing faculty productivity more holistically, deterring faculty from engaging in expanded scholarship that will not appear in ratings used for evaluations, especially in the early years of one’s career. This narrow focus may be encouraged by departmental and mentoring discussions, and result in self-censorship.

The trend of demanding increasing volumes of quantifiable productivity from faculty to win the rankings games prevalent in academia, reinforces the primacy of competitions even as contemporary research underscores the biases inherent in such categorizations. Citation scores and rankings exhibit bias in favor of science,

engineering, technology, and medicine; with humanities and social sciences receiving less comprehensive coverage through, for example, Thomson Reuters Impact Factor (Kassis et al., 2022). Language bias becomes an additional layer working against valuing some forms of scholarship, as databases mostly focus on publications in English so that scholarship published in other languages is ignored or devalued (Kassis et al., 2022). And even without language bias, not all English publications have an equal chance of being cited. For example, in political science women receive fewer citations than men (Atchison, 2017), and in physics male-led articles cite male-led articles more often (Teich et al., 2022).

There have been some expansions in what counts as scholarship as departments, universities, and colleges increasingly employ forms of public relations branding commonly referred to as community engagement or engaged scholarship, which at least nominally encourages public scholarship. The traditional op-ed published in a newspaper or magazine has come to be seen as legitimate use of scholarly knowledge, in large part because of its potential to expand the reach and reputation of an institutional brand. However, authoritative value is still too often assigned based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and other demographics of cultural constructions (e.g., Gardner et al., 2017). Expanded scholarship is not fully counted (if at all) even within most current versions of expanded scholarship or engaged scholarship paradigms (for a study of inconsistent applications of engaged scholarship evaluations, see Blanchard & Furco, 2021).

Evaluation and Valuation

How to evaluate and assign value is admittedly tricky, and as with other forms of scholarship; therefore, we would expect variation and multiple perspectives across units and institutions. We (the authors) certainly cannot and do not pretend to represent all perspectives. We have watched our colleagues in different disciplinary and interdisciplinary departments engage in evaluation of what we would define as expanded scholarship, or more often, express their confusion about whether or not to include these items and how to evaluate them. For example, we have witnessed

some colleagues credited and valued for engaging in local organizations or national organizations related to their work, even if it is technically volunteer, while others are unvalued for involving community in their scholarship. We wonder, where is the line of valuation between sitting on the board of a local organization and creating a painting that comments on the same topic and is publicly viewed by many? If a picture is worth a thousand words, how do we include that in the word count for productivity reviews?

Other issues related to “peer review”—referred to as the “gold standard”—often arise. How do we evaluate peer review outside the academy? Is exhibition in a juried art show of greater value than an open show? Does the editor of a poetry journal who is not a professor at a university count as a “peer review”? Does an acceptance/rejection rate of a non-scholarly publication count? Does the effort of writing in a non-English language for the purpose of reaching a specific community that does not as easily access English language materials count? Does it count more or less if the item appears on an easily accessible webpage?

There is a long history of devaluing works by indigenous peoples, women, LGBTQ and gender diverse people, and people of color. This includes having research labeled “activism” instead of scholarship because of assumptions about identities; or failing to recognize expanded scholarship as “real work.” For some, we (including the authors) have fought so long and so hard to have our research recognized at all that we may not want to extend the fight to include our expanded scholarship. This is completely understandable and why we need discussions to take place institutionally to address systemic issues and discrimination. Avoiding the discussion allows the hegemonies and embedded biases to continue unabated, and discourages future generations from claiming the value of their experiences and efforts.

When we as scholars decide to include or report our expanded scholarship for reviews, it is not always obvious where on the forms to do so. For example, it may not be clear within the confines of promotion and tenure portfolios or periodic merit evaluation documents where and how expansive works can be included, and what

the metrics of impact are. Where is, for example, bioart collaborations between scientists and people with disabilities that change how chemistry is perceived (e.g., Lopes et al., 2018) reported as a line item? This type of activity leads to capacity building and is often labeled as service, or ignored, but we would argue for value as intellectual productivity.

We invite departments, colleges, and universities to have discussions and take actions to be fully inclusive of reporting and evaluating all scholarship related products. Conversations are important to discovering best practices acknowledging all contributions, and bringing clarity and transparency to the process. These discussions are also, in most spaces, long overdue.

Recommendations and Guiding Discussion Prompts

Thinking expansively and critically about scholarship products and how they are reported and evaluated is necessary for and will benefit all disciplines (not just STEM or STEAM). All levels of academia need to be intentionally intersectional and inclusive in these discussions to avoid delegitimizing the value of some forms of scholarship. How can intentional discussions within and across institutions and disciplines lead to expanded best practices better serving all scholars?

At the level of the individual, we call attention to the agency and power senior faculty exert through tenure and promotion letters. Whether or not a letter-writer takes an expansive view of scholarship has the potential to significantly impact the career of the person under review. We foreground the importance of reflexivity and intentionality in considering what lenses we (as senior scholars) bring to our assessments of the scholarship of more junior scholars whose works we are called upon to review. We recommend taking the time to more critically consider, before writing a letter, how our own trajectories and experiences inform the lenses we bring to scholarship (e.g., how narrow or expansive is our own scholarship? How familiar or open to other scholarly contributions have we been?). By first intentionally reflecting on our own trajectories and experiences, we can more carefully identify and address

how possible biases embedded in the lenses we bring may seep into our evaluation of more inclusive and expansive forms of scholarship.

More broadly, administrators in academic affairs can encourage and promote cross-unit pollination through discussions at the institutional level and embedded levels of colleges, programs, departments, and other academic units. For example, what can Fine Arts learn from Engineering, and vice versa, about expanding concepts of scholarship and practices for evaluation? Interdisciplinary units often struggle to be inclusive of individual contributions, and encouraging faculty to engage in forward thinking interdisciplinary work requires consistent and fair evaluation of that work that transcends the boundaries of a single discipline.

At the cross-institutional level, what can an R2 institution learn from an R1, and vice versa? Or a small liberal arts or community college? As measurement and reporting systems become more standardized by the use of external products, how can institutions retain a holistic view of scholarship and faculty productivity?

Discussions may also be facilitated by discipline-based organizations, which have less institutional pressure and more in-depth knowledge about their substantive and theoretical practices. Disciplinary associations may influence and serve as a reference for institutions in evaluations through expanded and inclusive written norms which may be cited. Disciplinary discussions may also inform external reviewers of promotion and tenure files, and departmental or program reviews (see also Cervato et al., 2024).

Currently, we observe that expanded forms of scholarship art are mostly reserved for those who have tenure or full professor status, and others—pre-tenure and non-tenure track faculty—are deterred by the need for job security and to meet quantified job, tenure, and promotion criteria (see Niles et al., 2020; Stuart, 2024). Disruptive (to traditional ways of understanding quantifiable, counts-for-rankings production) products are reserved for those who have “proven” themselves. In seeking to transform who has access and the privilege to engage in expanded scholarship, these discussions have the opportunity to open up possibilities for faculty earlier in their careers and expand academia. These discussions have the

potential to break open meritocratic assumptions rife in the academy, where some products are considered to be the result of hard, scholarly work and others are dismissed as irrelevant to or undecipherable as scholarship.

The following are suggested prompts for discussions at different levels of institutions responsible for evaluations of faculty (see also Rodriguez et al., 2024, for a set of questions specifically about promotion and tenure criteria that would be useful in conjunction with the prompts below). Productive discussions will not become stuck or fixated at one level or in abstractions; they must move forward with respectful dialogue with all voices heard and varying perspectives reflected. It will be helpful to have relevant policies (for example, university regulations regarding performance evaluations, workload, and tenure processes; department tenure and promotion criteria) available and read before the discussion. These questions may need to be adapted depending on the context.

1. What are the formal (written) scholarly values of your unit? Make a list and label where these are found. What are the formal scholarly values of the institution? Make a list and label where these are found.
2. What are the scholarly values of the unit not present in documents, and that explicitly or implicitly impact evaluations of faculty? Make a list. What are the scholarly values of the institution not present in documents, and that explicitly or implicitly impact evaluations of faculty? Make a list.
3. What are examples of expanded scholarship in your field of study? Think of examples from your own work, or the work of others. Make a list. What are examples of expanded scholarship in your field that reflect indigenous ways of knowing, intersectional perspectives, or other non-hegemonic productions?
4. How are (or would) these examples of expanded scholarship be valued in your unit? By the institution? How could that valuation be expanded?
5. How could impact of a product be determined or evaluated (beyond, for example, citation scores that have been shown to be biased) at the

department level? At the institutional level? How could the determination of impact be expanded?

6. What sorts of discussions and professional development would be useful or necessary for mentors to engage in to support mentees in thinking about expanded scholarship? What sorts of discussions and professional development would be useful or necessary for evaluators in review processes in thinking about expanded scholarship? How could mentorship and evaluation reflect intersectional and multicultural values?
7. What changes to formal documents could be made to be more inclusive and explicitly value expanded scholarship in your unit? By the institution? What specific wording could be added to or changed in existing documents?
8. What is the next step to make these changes, and who could be responsible for accomplishing different parts of the process?

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