Evaluating the Publicly Engaged Work of Faculty: Ideas, Principles, and Practices

A <u>DRAFT</u> document created by the

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Civic Engagement and Social Innovation Initiative

The purpose of the Civic Engagement and Social Innovation initiative at NSPE is to promote active citizenship in an interdependent world. We aim to equip faculty and students with the tools necessary to think critically, to tread responsibly, and to work alongside communities for positive social change. Our goal is to build a community of practice that brings together faculty, staff, students, and organizational partners into relationships of mutual benefit.

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Principles Governing Faculty Evaluation at NSPE

¶ The New School for Public Engagement is a community of learners dedicated to the advancement and integration of civic, liberal, and professional learning, and to engagement in the world around us. Faculty in the division build new knowledge and understanding through a wide range of scholarly and creative practices.

¶ We evaluate our colleagues as whole persons whose vocations take many forms and paths. The arc of a colleague's career is greater than the sum of its parts, and the challenge for the individual faculty member is to articulate that greater sum, while the challenge for the review committee is to evaluate that greater sum.

¶ NSPE faculty members engage in scholarly and creative practice along a continuum from sole research and authorship to collaborative, community-based work. We value all work equally along this continuum.

¶ The goal of evaluation at NSPE is twofold: to develop individual faculty members to their highest potential; and to build a bold, innovative, and heterodox faculty for the twenty-first century. The standard categories of teaching, research, and service provide flexible rubrics for evaluating faculty work. At the same time, public engagement efforts often cross these categories, making the review process challenging. This report outlines approaches to documentation and evaluation.

¶ In the end, the irreducible criterion for evaluation is not disciplinary adherence or productive form, but rather the extent to which a candidate's work illuminates, deepens, and enriches our understanding of the world.

I. OVERVIEW

The New School for Public Engagement is dedicated to the integration of civic, liberal, and professional learning for the advancement of a just and plural society. Faculty and students in the division undertake a wide range of scholarly and creative practices that build new knowledge, solve pressing social problems, produce innovative forms of culture, and generate new understandings of the world. The division embodies the founding principles of The New School--namely the search for creative forms of education to prepare students for democratic citizenship--and as such provides a crucial space within the university for experimentation.

Faculty members in NSPE work across a wide range of disciplines and fields and build new knowledge and understanding of the world through an array of forms. Some faculty contribute primarily in the domain of theory and basic research, while others connect and apply their work to communities, institutions, and multiple publics. Still others blend theory and practice as they develop and refine their work. All of these approaches to the production and dissemination of knowledge enrich our world and are crucial for the health of the division.

For those faculty members who choose to make public engagement a core part of their vocation, we need clear processes for crediting and evaluating their efforts. We also need to expand the communities of peer review beyond the traditional academic stable, so that the public work undertaken by faculty members can be judged by an appropriate range of experts. And we need to consider a wider range of artifacts as evidence of scholarly and creative productivity. This ultimate goal is to help faculty members realize the full potential of their scholarly and creative practices.

To be sure, the details will vary within and between the four schools, based on their different historical, institutional, and governance histories. Some programs maintain explicit language about the purpose and place of public engagement; other programs may include public engagement as one among many important themes. Some faculty members might see public engagement as a major arena of scholarly endeavor, while others may participate in this work rarely or never. The division has capacious shoulders, and must accommodate faculty at all points on this continuum. Thus, this document is intended not as a proscription, but rather to offer guidance and support.

Nevertheless, it is critically important to develop shared understandings, especially in the evaluation and reward of faculty. All faculty members who want to make public engagement a key aspect of their academic work should be afforded the means to demonstrate their accomplishments, and to have these valued as much as traditional modes. We need to establish some sense of "what counts" at the program, school, and divisional levels, and how faculty can document their work in public scholarship, civic engagement, and social innovation during the preparation of their dossiers.

II. TERMS

We use the term *public engagement* as a broad umbrella for varied faculty practices. The notion of publicly engaged work is grounded in the assumption that knowledge is socially produced, and that the university plays a key role in its creation. While we evaluate all faculty work within the standard categories (teaching, research, and service), public engagement often cuts across them. To bring shape to these wide-ranging endeavors, we identify three key areas of public engagement: public scholarly and creative practice, civic engagement, and social innovation. These areas should not be taken as discrete or categorical, but rather as heuristic. In practice, faculty will often blend these areas.

Public scholarly and creative practice

Public scholarly and creative practice involves the generation of knowledge and understanding for the benefit of external audiences. It is best characterized as the dissemination of work that is both rigorous and accessible to audiences beyond the academy, such as through performance, exhibits, media production, lectures, radio and television broadcast, web development, publication in popular venues, and client-based research. Public scholarship constitutes an act of translation, where a faculty member's work is oriented to broad audiences, multiple publics, or specific public interest clients. Ideally, faculty gain knowledge from such work that would not be available through traditional channels, and they incorporate these new understandings back into their research, teaching, and service at the university.

Civic Engagement

Civic engagement involves the collaboration of students and faculty with communities, organizations, and institutions in the co-production of knowledge and understanding of the world. This involves building long-term partnerships and placing the resources of the division at their disposal--including faculty and staff consultation, student internships, research and media expertise, and tailored coursework. In turn, partnering organizations provide students with hands-on experience in a wide variety of settings, allowing students to gain valuable insights into the work of civil society. This approach enriches the university, the partnering organizations, and the broader communities they serve.

Social Innovation

Social innovation as a field of practice aims to enhance the capacity of individuals, communities, and organizations to devise effective, just, and sustainable solutions to social and environmental problems. Social innovation takes many forms, including new modes of interaction, organization, policies, products, services, technologies, and systems to improve lives and address the pressing needs of the 21st century. Social innovation projects undertaken by faculty and students build critical thinking, collaborative learning, entrepreneurial confidence, and the capacity to work across boundaries (sectors, cultures, disciplines), all while working to solve problems in innovative and often system-changing ways.

III. FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND ADVANCEMENT

The goal of the evaluation process at NSPE is twofold: to develop individual faculty members to their highest potential; and to build a bold, innovative, and heterodox faculty for the twenty-first century. The traditional categories of teaching, research, and service allow for this development, as they provide durable, flexible rubrics for evaluating faculty work. At the same time, public engagement efforts often cross these categories, making documentation and evaluation difficult. This document provides guidelines for faculty to document this work, and for review committees to evaluate it.

The Faculty Handbook defines the employment tracks as well as the procedures for evaluation. According to the Faculty Handbook, criteria for promotion in each category include the following:

> Renewable Term Appointments are extended to faculty members who demonstrate excellence in at least one category of teaching, service, scholarly or creative endeavor, and remain current in their field.

> Extended Employment requires ongoing excellence in teaching. In addition, the faculty member must elect to be evaluated for ongoing excellence in either service or their scholarly, creative or professional activities with the remaining category requiring an ongoing and good level of performance.

> Tenure requires a commitment to sustained excellence in scholarly, creative or professional activities as well as ongoing excellence in either teaching or service, with the remaining category requiring an ongoing and good level of performance.

To cultivate a thriving division, we must calibrate the tools of faculty evaluation and reward accordingly. *This is especially true for NSPE, where creative and public works by scholar-practitioners comprise key aspects of faculty intellectual labor constituting fully legitimate forms of academic productivity.*

Evaluation is more art than science, and cannot be reduced solely to numerical values of productivity. The specific admixture of modes, pathways, and artifacts will be unique to each faculty member. There is no ideal array, nor is any one particular genre or artifact required for advancement.

Nevertheless, while the work of a faculty member can emerge out of multiple forms of knowledge production, it must be distinguished for its intellectual coherence, excellence, and wider contributions. The fundamental question for evaluation is whether the faculty member's specific trajectories have yielded a coherent body of excellent work. Therefore, the evaluation process requires a common framework that structures each particular case and allows for comparison across cases. It is crucial, therefore, that faculty be oriented to the evaluation process from the moment they are hired. In this way they can develop their scholarly, creative, and pedagogic practices while simultaneously documenting them for future reviews.

IV. BASIC TENETS OF EVALUATION

NSPE recognizes three basic tenets that guide faculty evaluation. These tenets are broad, and are meant to encourage faculty work across a wide range of modes, fields, and pedagogies.

1. A diverse and heterodox faculty will take many paths

We evaluate our colleagues as whole persons whose lives and callings follow many paths. The arc of a person's career is greater than the sum of its parts, and the challenge for the individual faculty member--in close consultation with senior faculty and mentors--is to articulate that greater sum. Likewise, the challenge for reviewers is to evaluate that greater sum, drawing on a wide range of materials. Faculty members should be free to take on publicly engaged work and to cultivate identities as civic professionals. Our faculty development processes should support these paths, and our evaluation processes should likewise account for them.

2. Scholarly and creative practice unfold along several continua

Faculty members in NSPE engage in scholarly and creative practice along a continuum from lone research and sole authorship to collaborative, community-based projects. We value all work equally along this continuum, as it adds to the richness and depth of the division. Depending on where a faculty member's work falls on this continuum, it will model different ways of asking questions, deploy mixed methods of inquiry, and result in varied artifacts of intellectual, aesthetic, and social value. The audience for such work will also fall along a continuum from entirely academic (other scholars) to entirely public, with most scholarship and creative practice falling somewhere in between. The key point is that the faculty member engages in a purposeful sequence of projects and activities that yield results of demonstrable value. The faculty member should document this work with rigor and foresight, wherever it may fall on the continuum, accounting not only for the specific items in her portfolio, but for the overall trajectory as well.

3. Faculty work across multiple boundaries

The irreducible criterion for evaluation is not disciplinary adherence or productive form, but rather the extent to which a candidate's work illuminates, deepens, and enriches our knowledge and understanding of the world. While we deploy evaluation rubrics such as scholarly and creative practice, teaching and learning, and service, evaluators must recognize that a faculty member's work often blurs and overlaps these categories. For example, a community-based course or civic engagement project might simultaneously incorporate innovative pedagogy, high-level service, and the co-production of new knowledge. Likewise, a faculty member's creative practice may shape her teaching and service, just as her service may shape her teaching and creative output. The focus of faculty evaluation should be on the broad arc and quality of accomplishments.

V. THE BROAD RUBRICS OF EVALUATION

The ethos of evaluation at The New School is *high standards, multiple criteria*. The university maintains high standards for all faculty applying for advancement, while at the same time providing for flexibility in divisional, disciplinary, and interdisciplinary emphases. Core expectations have been articulated through university policy along the lines of the traditional tripartite distribution of efforts, with important recalibrations based on the nature of academic labor in the institution:

1. *Scholarly and creative work*, here defined as research, publication, design, performance, exhibition, professional practice, public engagement, clinical application, and other accomplishments. All faculty members seeking advancement must generate a well-developed scholarly and/or creative program that can be assessed as a body of work.

2. *Teaching and learning*, here defined as offering courses, contributing to curriculum, advising and mentoring students, building community and professional connections for students, and adjudicating student work through review and critique. Strong teaching and advising, with careful attention to learning outcomes, is required of all faculty.

3. *Service and administration*, here defined as service to the institution, profession, and community. The strength of The New School depends on the willingness of faculty to serve at a variety of institutional levels, while the university's visibility in the wider world depends on faculty service to national and international academic bodies. Administrative appointments to lead units of the university comprise a key aspect of academic labor.

Faculty work through a wide range of modes in the production and dissemination of knowledge and understanding. Public engagement efforts can emerge from, and often cross between, these various modes. These include, but are not limited to:

1. *Discovery*: work that produces new knowledge relevant to a discipline, its constituent fields, and its forms of practice.

2. *Pedagogy*: work that adds to the knowledge of teaching and learning within and across fields.

3. *Creativity*: work that adds to or produces new knowledge through aesthetic, artistic, literary, performative, or curatorial endeavor.

4. *Integration*: work that connects ideas across disciplines or across fields within a discipline in order to produce new knowledge.

5. *Practice*: work that is applied in nature. Ideally, practice generates research questions, and research interests guide practice endeavors.

V. THE COMMUNITY OF PEER REVIEW

Because of the wide range of work by NSPE faculty, it is crucial that each evaluation draws upon the appropriate peers for external review. In some cases, this will be entirely encompassed by faculty in other institutions of higher education. But in many cases, it will require reaching out to a broader range of stakeholders, including national experts in public scholarship and engagement, creative practitioners and critics, leaders of non-profit organizations, professionals in cultural and civic institutions, and community collaborators and partners.

Chairs of review committees, School Deans, the Associate Dean for Faculty, the Review of Personnel Committee, and the Executive Dean all bear responsibility for ensuring that faculty dossiers receive review from those interlocutors most appropriate to the faculty members' work. Often a faculty member's dossier will require external reviews from across sectors. For example, faculty whose work mixes traditional research, community outreach, and public creative production cannot be properly evaluated by one or the other constituency exclusively. Rather, multiple voices should contribute to the overall picture of a faculty member's work.

Senior faculty mentors and administrators should cultivate a large pool of potential reviewers from among university-based scholars and artists whose work involves publicly engaged practices. These reviewers can be located through scholarly networks, professional associations, university civic engagement and service learning offices, and publicly-oriented centers and institutes. While it is important that the reviewers have a reasonable understanding of the faculty member's field, their main role is to assess the public dimensions of the work as documented in the dossier.

Additionally, review committees should solicit letters of evaluation from community organizations and institutions with which the faculty member has collaborated. These partners should be given explicit guidelines for evaluating the significance of the collaborative project, how it contributed to new practices and understandings, and the overall quality of the university-community partnership that resulted. In developing these evaluative relationships, review committees might need to work with the community partner through several iterations of the letters in order to ensure the most thorough and useful account possible. Anonymized model letters can be provided to the partner as a guide to demonstrate the nature, format, and purpose of evaluation.

Junior faculty who make public engagement a feature of their work should keep a running list of potential external reviewers from both the academic and non-academic worlds. When developing publicly engaged projects, junior faculty should bear future evaluation in mind, collecting appropriate documentation along the way and delineating the expectations of academic work for community collaborators.

VI. RECOGNIZING AND EXPANDING WHAT COUNTS

The process of evaluation should recognize scholarly and creative work that connects knowledge and understanding across academic and public domains. For many faculty, it is this connectivity, rather than any specific discipline or genre of production, that constitutes the key intellectual commitment. This reality suggests three crucial approaches for evaluation.

1. Encourage and reward boundary crossing

   The evaluation process should account for accomplishments in the creation of knowledge and understanding across boundaries of disciplines, institutions, communities, and cultures. Evaluators should consider the impact of public engagement across multiple constituencies and audiences, and the work by faculty members to build bridges between social groups. Moreover, the process should reward efforts by faculty to integrate their scholarly and creative practices with teaching and learning, university and community service, and public engagement.

2. Adopt new measures of 'significance'

   Faculty commitments to rich and complex public engagement requires that the review process move beyond the limitations of traditional measures of significance. For example, evaluators should value local, community-based and regionally-scaled work equally with projects that are national or global in scope. Additionally, evaluators should consider a broad range of scholarly and creative work that responds to matters of public interest or concern, as well as the diverse artifacts that emerge from such work. And the review process should recognize a faculty members' public and community presentations as evidence of scholarly or creative activity on par with academic presentations. In all cases, it is the quality of the work, rather than the specific form, that is the basic measure of accomplishment (see section X).

3. Consider alternative units of analysis

   Most faculty members engaged in public work organize their scholarship, creative practice, and teaching around projects. In other words, it is most often the *project* that comprises the basic unit of public engagement, rather than any specific course or artifact. Projects unfold at varied scales, with few or many partners, involving stable or changing casts of characters, comprising a wide range of formats, and resulting in a diverse array of artifacts. However, traditional faculty review tends to focus narrowly on the published results of projects, while the projects themselves recede into the background. For faculty members who undertake this kind of work, then, it is important to highlight the projects in the dossier, and to explain how they generate outcomes across the standard evaluation categories. Likewise, review committees should treat the projects themselves as generative units of faculty productivity even as they evaluate specific artifacts that result from the projects.

VII. THE ARTIFACTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Faculty members engage in work that yields a vast range of tangible and intangible artifacts. Such artifacts take a diversity of forms, including but by no means limited to:

musical compositions	maps
paintings	research reports
films	K-12 educational materials
journal articles	installations
technical trainings and transfer	scholarly books
essays	experimental videos
web sites	poems
exhibits	theatrical performances
translations	toolkits and products
social programs	games
planning documents	policy recommendations
therapeutic techniques	novels
community design processes	soundscapes
children's books	spoken word events
sculptures	consulting reports

Some faculty will favor a particular medium for their work, while others will seek multiple venues and artifacts through which to explore their scholarly and creative interests. The division does not require the production of any one specific kind of artifact, and indeed encourages experimentation across a range of forms. However, each faculty member should use the dossier to build a coherent account of the mix, sequence, and contribution of the artifacts they have generated. And however diverse the mix of artifacts, the charge of review committees remains to assess the quality of a faculty member's work as presented in the dossier.

Knowledge emerges out of varied productive contexts--from the archive to the choreographic chart, from the data set to the neighborhood charette, from the exhibition to the oral history interview. As these contexts shift and change, the range of possibilities expands for faculty to connect with different audiences and to produce varied artifacts. Projects, programs, and courses might serve both civic and intellectual purposes, leading to experimental pedagogical and critical strategies that add complexity to the work and its evaluation. Likewise, the artifacts that faculty produce out of this work take shape in many genres and speak to various and specific publics.

For those whose work takes public forms, engages communities, or connects to civic institutions, the artifacts of knowledge and productivity might not be immediately evident. It is crucial, therefore, that senior faculty and administrators mentor junior faculty in the documentation of their processes and outcomes, however intangible. Indeed, if review committees are asked to evaluate a faculty member's public engagement work, it is incumbent on the faculty member to provide through documentation of that work and its outcomes.

VIII. THE ATTRIBUTES OF EXCELLENCE

To develop a portfolio suitable for advancement, a faculty member must demonstrate excellence in one or two areas of evaluation, depending on their track. At NSPE, the irreducible criterion for evaluation is not disciplinary adherence or productive form, but rather the extent to which a candidate's work illuminates, deepens, and enriches our understanding of the world.

To guide faculty in the development and documentation of their work, the following set of criteria are useful and applicable across domains (further detailed in section X).

1. *Clear and Compelling Goals*

    The faculty member clearly articulates goals and achievements in scholarly and creative practice, teaching and learning, and service. These goals and achievements are substantive and compelling.

2. *Adequate preparation*

    The faculty member approaches her work thoroughly and carefully prepared, from research or creative endeavors to curriculum and courses, and from institutional to professional and community service.

3. *Appropriate methods*

    The faculty member deploys methods of inquiry, pedagogy, and engagement appropriate to the goals and proposed outcomes of various courses and projects.

4. *Significant results*

    The faculty member makes substantial contributions to her field of scholarship or creative practice, has a measurable impact on student learning, and places her stamp on the institution through service or administration.

5. *Effective presentation*

    The faculty member presents the results of her work effectively, as assessed by various peers. Modes of presentation may change, depending on the nature of the project or course.

6. *Reflective critique*

    The faculty member engages in continuous reflection on her work, and in so doing demonstrates an arc of improvement, increasing sophistication, or expanding capacities in scholarly or creative practice, teaching and learning, or service.

IX. DOCUMENTING THE WORK

For faculty members dedicated to public engagement, the evaluation process should accord this work the full measure of informed peer review. To do this, the faculty member must document and critically reflect upon the evidence submitted in the dossier.

Because public engagement work crosses multiple intellectual and institutional boundaries, review committees should evaluate it on terms established by the faculty member's integral, multifaceted role within the division, rather than the norms of any specific discipline. This role can be clarified through several means, including the dossier statement itself, input by the faculty member's program chair or director, and in the letter from the School Dean.

Documentation of public engagement work requires a broader and more eclectic range of materials than traditional arenas of academic productivity. Often, a publication arising from a public engagement project is only the tip of iceberg, reflecting only one kind of desired product or outcome. Other outcomes might include new programming, improved processes for organizations, stronger community relations for cultural institutions--deliverables that are more difficult to measure by standard academic means. Likewise, as already discussed, the peer community itself should be widened to include not only scholars in the discipline or proximate fields, but also clients, practitioners, institutional and organizational partners, and other authorities beyond the university.

Even more importantly, it is crucial that the faculty development and review process recognize the risks involved in publicly engaged work. Junior faculty who undertake such work must be supported to take such risks, to fall short of goals, to try again, and to reflect on the process overall. Innovative teaching, scholarship, and creative practice require space for experimentation with the forms and processes of knowledge production. Such innovation also requires experimentation with diverse intellectual approaches, longer time frames for the rollout of projects, unconventional means of support, and a wider variety of artifacts and outcomes.

In all cases, public engagement should be an integral part of the dossier--from the opening statement to the documentation of scholarly and creative practice, teaching and advising, and administration and service. Each faculty member should provide a statement that frames the arc of her career, the broad themes and concerns of that guide her inquiries, the disciplines and fields to which she contributes, the public commitments that shape her work, and the future directions she envisions.

To build a case, the faculty member should provide documentation of her work through a variety of relevant materials, such as public and scholarly presentations, multimedia and curricular materials, individual and co-authored publications, site plans, policy reports, participant interviews, artistic achievements, workshops, and planning and assessment tools, and so on. Such documentation should not be treated as static products but rather as an ongoing process of creation and reflection. Faculty members should take care to delineate their roles in collaborative and multi-authorial projects.

X. EVALUATING FACULTY PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORK

This section presents a range of questions that help to structure the process by which review committees evaluate the quality of a faculty member's work. These are by no means exhaustive, nor are they definitive. Programs and Schools in the division should work out the most useful and meaningful criteria for evaluating faculty public engagement work.

Goals and Objectives
- Does the scholar state the purpose of the work and its public value?
- Is there a good fit with the scholar's role and university mission?
- Does the scholar define objectives that are realistic and achievable?
- Does the scholar identify intellectually compelling and significant questions?
- Does the scholar incorporate goals of community partners where relevant?

Context of theory, literature, good practices
- Does the scholar show an understanding of relevant existing scholarship?
- Does the scholar bring the necessary skills to the collaboration?
- Does the scholar make significant contributions to the work?
- Is the work compelling intellectually and relevant to public stakeholders?

Methods
- Does the scholar use methods appropriate to the goals of the work?
- Does the scholar describe the rationale for methods deployed?
- Does the scholar effectively apply the methods selected?
- Does the scholar modify procedures in response to changing circumstances?

Results
- Does the scholar achieve the stated goals?
- Does the work add consequentially to knowledge and understanding?
- Does the work open additional areas for further exploration and collaboration?
- What is the public impact of the work, and how is this measured?
- Does the work make a contribution over time consistent with the stated purpose?

Communication/Dissemination
- Does the scholar use a suitable style and effective organization to present the work?
- Does the scholar disseminate to appropriate academic and public audiences?
- Does the scholar use appropriate means to communicate work to audiences?
- Does the scholar present information with clarity and integrity?

Reflective Critique
- Does the scholar critically evaluate the work?
- What are the sources of evidence informing the critique?
- Does the scholar bring an appropriate breadth of evidence to the critique?
- In what way has the community perspective informed the critique?

• Does the scholar use evaluation to learn from the work and to direct future work?

XI. WORKS CONSULTED

There is a substantial and growing literature on the subject of evaluating the public and civic engagements of faculty, and over the past ten years several journals have emerged that are dedicated to the topic. In compiling this document, we have consulted a wide range of these sources.   More specifically, we have borrowed language, ideas, and examples from the following documents.

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