

## **Measuring Capacity for Community-Engaged Scholarship: Results from an Institutional Self-Assessment at the University of Saskatchewan**

**Jethro Cheng, Nazeem Muhajarine, Linda McMullen, and Andrew Dunlop**

**ABSTRACT** The University of Saskatchewan conducted an institutional self-assessment survey in the fall of 2013 and winter of 2014 to measure its capacity for community-engaged scholarship. This effort is part of a national initiative of eight Canadian universities (Community-Engaged Scholarship Partnership), working to change institutional policies and practices around community-engaged scholarship. This paper reports on the results of the University of Saskatchewan's self-assessment survey completed by 159 participants across campus that include administrators, faculty, and professional staff. The participants report that there are strong practices of community-engaged scholarship throughout the University. However, there are also many opportunities to strengthen the support and capacity for community-engaged scholarship. Institutional leadership and support, for example, that is consistent and effective is required at multiple levels (department, college or school, university) in order for community-engaged scholarship to be recognized and rewarded in all academic processes. The University's Community Engagement and Outreach Office at Station 20 West is one notable exemplar of community-engaged scholarship and practice; it is a good example of how students, faculty, and community are effectively supported in these activities.

**KEYWORDS** community-engaged scholarship, institutional capacity, self-assessment, tenure and promotion

The University of Saskatchewan has a long history of community engagement, and there are currently many examples of mutually beneficial partnerships between the university and communities that combine teaching, learning, research, and service. While many successful community engagement initiatives continue to flourish and grow, these activities are widely dispersed. As a result, there is a high degree of variability in community engagement within departments, colleges, and professional

schools across the campus.

More recently, there has been a deepening commitment and desire to effectively formalize meaningful community-university partnerships. Two important reports have called for stronger guidelines and principles to enhance partnerships and suggested that better coordination and centralized support could contribute to the University's community-engaged scholarship activities (University of Saskatchewan, 2006, 2012).

The University of Saskatchewan's renewed commitment to community-engaged scholarship also reflects its effort in becoming a more open, accountable, and transparent institution that responds to community needs. To measure capacity for community-engaged scholarship at the University of Saskatchewan, all administrators, faculty, and professional staff were invited to participate in a self-assessment survey. The results from this institutional self-assessment show varying capacity and support for community-engaged scholarship across academic units and also identify new opportunities for partnering with communities, creating new forms of knowledge, and changing institutional structures.

### **CES Partnership Background**

In the past decade, there have been increased calls for universities across Canada to engage more with community partners (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2013). Partnerships with local, provincial, national, and global communities are regarded as fundamental to being responsive to critical societal issues. Accordingly, funding agencies such as the Tri-Council have taken stronger positions toward supporting community-based research and knowledge mobilization. As the University of Saskatchewan and other universities across Canada strive to be community-engaged institutions, a growing group of scholars and practitioners have committed to working together to ensure that community-engaged scholarship realizes its potential and capacity.

In May 2010, the University of Guelph and the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health sought out universities across Canada interested in collaborating to advance community-engaged scholarship and identifying the structures and supports required to recognize and reward engaged scholars specifically (CES Partnership, 2015). Twenty universities expressed interest in coming together, and in July 2010, a partnership was formed at the *Community-Engaged Scholarship: Critical Junctures in Research, Practice and Policy* conference between eight universities and the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, with the University of Guelph appointed as the national leader of the group.

The following eight Canadian universities are currently part of the CES Partnership: University of Alberta, University of Calgary, University of Guelph, Memorial University of Newfoundland, University of Regina, University of Saskatchewan, University of Victoria, and York University. Each member university is represented in the CES Partnership's governance committee and provides input in order for decisions to be achieved by consensus. The governance committee is also designed to

balance power, distribute financial resources equitably, and share successful models of practice between partners. Together, the partners pledge to work toward achieving the following objectives:

1. Establishing a learning community around institutional change strategies, policies and practices that support and advance community-engaged scholarship
2. Ensuring that university tenure and promotion policies and practices recognize and reward community-engaged scholarship
3. Implementing and evaluating innovative mechanisms for developing community-engaged faculty
4. Establishing a vibrant, sustainable network of universities that support and advance community-engaged scholarship.

In order to more specifically address these objectives effectively, three working groups were created. The Institutional Assessment and Change workgroup is tasked with reviewing institutional and department performance indicators as well as ways for implementing change; the Faculty Assessment workgroup address issues related to tenure and promotion policies; and the Scholar Development workgroup focuses on structures and strategies for supporting community-engagement scholarship.

Each partner agreed that a self-assessment survey to gauge their current capacity for community-engaged scholarship was necessary in order to work toward future institutional change informed by evidence. With the support of the Institutional Assessment and Change workgroup, all partner universities compiled baseline estimates of their institution's capacity, in part, to measure success over time. The results from these surveys will allow universities to recognize community-engaged scholarship in a broader scope and to better support students, faculty, and community partners in these important endeavours.

## **Methods**

During the fall of 2013 and winter of 2014, all eight universities in the CES Partnership participated in an institutional self-assessment through an online survey in order to establish a baseline of their capacity and to identify areas of strength as well as areas for potential improvement. The institutional self-assessment tool was adapted from a previously published instrument developed by Gelmon, Seifer, Kauper-Brown, & Mikkelsen (2005). This tool originated through a collaboration between several health professional schools and community partners in a project led by the Community Campus Partnerships for Health, and it has been demonstrated to increase knowledge and support for community-engaged scholarship in different settings (Blanchard, Strauss, & Webb, 2012; Gelmon, Blanchard, Ryan, & Seifer, 2012).

The adapted tool for this study was approved by the University of Alberta Research

Ethics Board prior to distribution to each partner university. At the University of Saskatchewan, invitations for the survey were sent to a total of 1,209 participants, which included administrators, deans, department heads, faculty, and professional staff. Follow-up invitations were also sent to encourage more responses. A total of 159 respondents completed the survey for a response rate of 13.1%.

The institutional self-assessment survey tool is divided into six dimensions to capture different elements of community engagement and community-engaged scholarship:

1. Definition and Vision of Community Engagement (8 questions)
2. Faculty Support For and Involvement in Community Engagement (9 questions)
3. Student Support For and Involvement in Community Engagement (4 questions)
4. Community Support For and Involvement in Community Engagement (8 questions)
5. Institutional Leadership and Support For Community Engagement (9 questions)
6. Community-Engaged Scholarship (9 questions)

Respondents are asked to characterize the capacity or current practice on each of these dimensions from two perspectives: their college/department/professional school and the University of Saskatchewan as a whole, using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (lowest) – 4 (highest). The rating scale includes detailed descriptions and definitions indicating what each score means. Respondents are also given the opportunity to provide additional comments for each of the six dimensions.

Following the completion of the survey, the CES Partnership agreed to aggregate the responses of each institution to produce a national picture of community-engaged scholarship. Currently, the University of Alberta is responsible for the national data set while each participating university retains access to its own data. The results in this report present a snapshot of the capacity to practice, support, and reward community-engaged scholarship at the University of Saskatchewan.

## Results

The 159 respondents who took part in this institutional self-assessment include 83 female (52.2%) and 75 male (47.2%) respondents, with one respondent having missing information. Respondents in the survey represent 17 different colleges, departments, and schools at the University of Saskatchewan. The College of Arts & Science and the College of Medicine together account for 42% of the total respondents. Over half the respondents are faculty members, who are evenly distributed between full, associate, and assistant professor positions. The other respondents in the survey include professional staff and university administrators (see Table 1). Almost all

administrators and three-quarters of faculty have been at the university for five years or longer compared to two-thirds of the professional staff, who have been at the university for less than five years.

**Table 1. Position and Rank of Respondents**

| <b>Rank</b>         | <b>Frequency (%)</b> |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Full Professor      | 27 (17.0%)           |
| Associate Professor | 26 (16.4%)           |
| Assistant Professor | 29 (18.2%)           |
| Professional Status | 51 (32.1%)           |
| Administrator       | 17 (10.7%)           |
| Other Status        | 9 (5.7%)             |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>159 (100%)</b>    |

Sixty-four percent of respondents describe themselves as being community-engaged in their current position at the university. As expected, there are varying levels of experience with community-engagement across the university that are contingent on job position. For example, over half (52%) of the administrators and nearly half (45%) of faculty rate themselves as being experts or being experienced in community-engaged scholarship. In comparison, 78.4% of professional staff rate themselves as either having no experience, being a novice, or being only somewhat experienced.

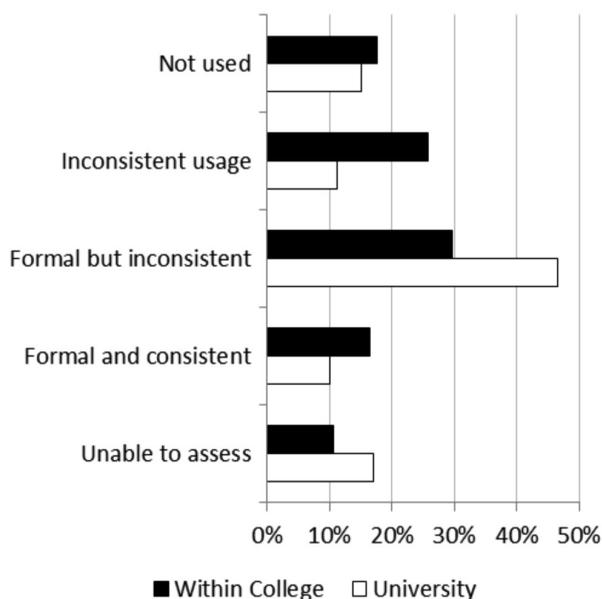
Across all six dimensions, there is a slightly lower average rating for the institution as a whole, compared to average ratings for respondents' department, college, or school. This indicates that respondents view their own department/college or school as having greater capacity or better practice in different aspects of community-engaged scholarship than they view the capacity of the University as whole on these same aspects. Statistical measures of associations also show that across all dimensions, there are non-linear, positive relations between the paired responses of the ratings for a respondent's department, college, or school and the university as a whole. In the following sections, each dimension is explored in more detail and respondents' qualitative comments are included to add further context.

### ***Definition and Application of Community Engagement***

A wide variation is seen in the respondents' report of a formal and consistently used definition for community engagement at both the college level and university as a whole. Some respondents report that there is no formal, consistent definition in their own college while others report that a formal, consistently used definition exists in other colleges. There is a slightly stronger opinion about the definition for community engagement used by the university as a whole. Nearly half the respondents (46.5%) endorse that a formal definition exists at the university level, but that it is not always consistently accepted, used, or understood (see Figure 1). With the exception of the question regarding the presence of a formal definition of community engagement,

ratings for respondents' colleges are higher than ratings for the university as a whole.

**Figure 1. Definition of community engagement**



There is a strong view that community engagement is promoted in both the mission of colleges and the university. Approximately 60% believe that community engagement is openly valued in the mission statements of their own college and at the university. However, there is a discrepancy between this view and the perception of whether there is any official strategy for advancing community engagement. For example, slightly more than half endorse that an official strategic plan for advancing community engagement is lacking (54.7%), or that community engagement either stands alone or is only loosely tied to other high-profile planning efforts within their own college (55.4%).

Community engagement is considered to be an integral component of student education, research, and service, and respondents typically rate their own colleges higher in these three areas than they do for the university as a whole. The variance between ratings at the college level and the university might be due to the long history of extension, outreach, and engagement in different disciplines; how the term 'community engagement' is understood; and differences in experience. For example, one faculty member noted that "community engagement is variously called experiential learning and a few other terms at this university." Some faculty recognize that there are more "opportunities available in certain units with long-term and strong commitment to some version of community-engagement" while others are only "beginning to realize how valuable community engagement is" or starting to "take

baby steps towards engagement.”

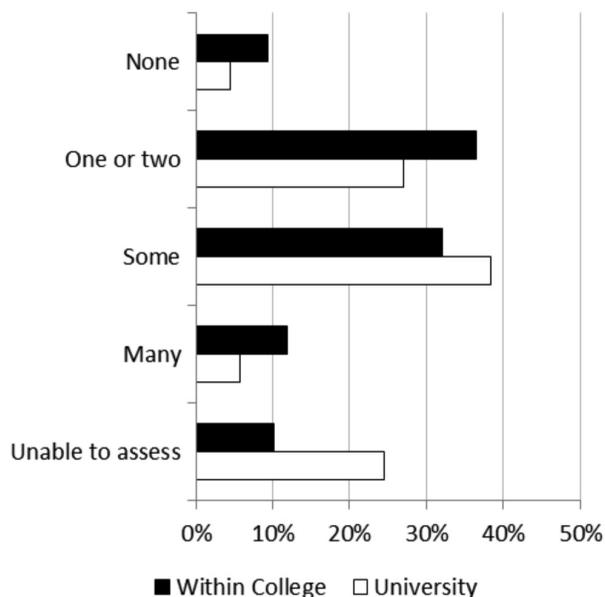
Several colleges have also been actively involved in community engagement well before the more recent push to make deliberate connections between the University’s goals/missions and external partners. A researcher in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources, for example, noted the history of “strong links to the agriculture community” and another faculty member remarked that “Family Medicine is a community-based discipline in which service, learning, research, and development are all entwined with the communities served.” Other instances include the “long-standing commitment and practice in CES that is integrated into the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology.” Although there are many uneven pockets of activities across campus, there is growing awareness that community engagement is actively practiced at the University.

While a commonly accepted definition of community engagement is useful, it is important to note that a definition should remain broad and flexible to avoid excluding activities that do not fit easily with conventional terms. Similarly, although there are differences between disciplines, departments, colleges, and schools, it is crucial to view the boundaries between them as fluid when thinking about how community engagement is practiced.

### ***Faculty Support For and Involvement in Community Engagement***

The presence of many recent community-university partnerships reflects the resolve and commitment of faculty toward community engagement. However, the extent and degree to which this occurs is wide-ranging. Within each college, there is a general perception that at least some faculty members currently participate in community engagement (57.2%); that some faculty members understand community engagement and how it can be integrated into teaching/research (47.2%); and that some faculty members are supporters and advocates of community-engaged scholarship (47.2%). One respondent describes how the level of involvement varies with “some faculty that are very interested and willing and some that are more curious or seeking opportunities with faculty regularly doing such work.” The ratings for the university as a whole show a similar pattern although slightly lower. A possible explanation is that it is difficult for respondents to assess the vast array of activity taking place on campus.

Presently, there are only a few faculty members who are perceived to occupy important leadership roles for advancing community engagement. In most colleges, respondents are typically able to identify only one or two faculty, and in some cases a few colleagues, who are leaders in this capacity (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Faculty leadership in community engagement**

A similar pattern and distribution exists for the perceived number of community-engaged scholars who are in tenure-track positions and the number of community-engaged faculty who hold influential roles on review, tenure and promotion committees, curriculum committees, or faculty governance. Given the lack of leadership roles for community-engaged faculty, some respondents believe that their opportunity and success in these initiatives “depends on the Dean’s interest in community engagement.”

Finally, the availability of resources, such as faculty development programs to support academics pursuing community-engaged scholarship, is irregular. Approximately 40% of respondents believe that they are only occasionally provided with opportunities to become familiar with the methods of community engagement and only occasionally with supports necessary for practicing community engagement, either within their own college or at the university level. Without adequate support, faculty may experience challenges to incorporating community engagement into their teaching, research, and service. Some already feel that they have limited capacities:

In fact, we barely have enough time and resources to fulfill the core parts of assignments. While it has not been said explicitly, I get the sense that we are discouraged from spending too much time on work external to the college unless it is required for our [tenure/promotion] case files.

Nevertheless, one faculty member expressed the view that “opportunities have been increasing in the last one to two years and some faculty are taking advantage

of this.” These remarks are significant because the level of support for faculty and their level of influence that faculty have can open up potential avenues for community engagement as well as increase the likelihood that such scholarship will be acknowledged, recognized, and normalized.

### ***Student Support For and Involvement in Community Engagement***

A burgeoning form of community-engaged scholarship is occurring in the form of service-learning and experiential education that structures and connects curriculum elements to the community. In most departments, colleges, and professional programs, students tend to be only occasionally involved in community engagement as part of their curriculum (32.7%) rather than being frequently or regularly involved. Variation across these units might be contingent on how the term ‘community engagement’ is conceptualized in different academic programs. For example, one nursing faculty member provided a particular version of understanding of community engagement:

I do not consider nursing practice in health care agencies to be community engagement, although it is service learning. The apprenticeship model is inherent in many health sciences disciplines, given the need to acculturate students into the system.

On the other hand, there is a slightly stronger perception that outside of curricular requirements, students are occasionally involved in community engagement (39.0%). For example, in the College of Medicine, “Many of these [community engagement] activities are student driven rather than admin led or supported.” The availability of supports for students is sometimes perceived as insufficient within colleges and university-wide. Overall, 44% perceive that there are only occasional mechanisms for creating awareness among students compared to only 12.6% who report that there are ongoing mechanisms to inform students in their college. Despite the lack of supports, students appear to have a strong interest in community engagement, as one faculty keenly discerned that “the opportunities are low and the interest level among students is high.”

Incentives and rewards for student participation also vary, with some respondents stating that there are only a few informal mechanisms to reward students (25.8%) and others indicating that there are some formal structures combined with informal ones (26.4%) to reward students in their college. Faculty members seem to find it easier to identify informal rewards for students such as having “positive letters of references,” being able to “put something on their resume,” or claiming that the “main reward comes from the experience itself.” One respondent suggested the “consideration of community efforts for scholarships” would be an effective mechanism to reward students.

In order to realize the potential benefits, such as being able to critically reflect on societal issues and integrate theoretical knowledge with their experiences, of community engagement for students, there need to be recognitions and rewards for

students in addition to supports and awareness at the college and university-wide level.

### ***Community Support for and Involvement in Institutional Community Engagement***

Partnerships that are mutually beneficial and reciprocal are characterized by equal decision-making abilities in which the different expertise of each member is valued. Such relationships are often based on the understanding that community representatives have a unique voice and contribute to the co-creation of knowledge. Although different colleges have had varying lengths of community engagement, respondents rarely report community leaders describing the University as an essential and regular partner in addressing community concerns (11.3%). In addition, few respondents (10.1%) perceive that there is extensive understanding between the institution and community partners regarding each other's needs, timelines, goals, resources, and capacity.

Given the evolving nature and diversity of relationships, the majority of respondents are also unable to assess whether most relationships lapse or are maintained regularly and sustained year-to-year. A faculty member observing the dynamics and intricacies within each relationship provided a cautionary remark:

These questions [about the nature of community relationships] are hard to answer since each partnership is unique. Some community-engaged scholarship is participatory so that community partners always communicate their needs and aspirations with the University partners. Some partnerships are less reciprocal.

Whether community partners can negotiate their level of contribution and involvement within each stage of research, from developing research questions to disseminating results, can be reflected in their voices and roles available to them. When communities have an equal footing in partnerships, there is a greater chance that knowledge is co-created. A fair share of respondents perceive that community partners have occasional roles in significant activities on campus such as serving on advisory committees and directly collaborating on research (42.8%) within their college. However, one faculty cautioned that certain economic partners may wield more influence than others and are “already influential in steering research agendas, resource allocation, [and] university culture.”

When community partners are valued and embraced, there should be tangible and discernible rewards and recognition for their contributions. Faculty comment that “something must be done to increase the expression of appreciation of community partners” and that “in terms of rewarding these [community partner] roles, we can do much more.” Respondents observe that community partners are rarely rewarded or compensated for their roles in teaching, research, or service (30.2%) or that community partners are only occasionally recognized for contributions (32.7%) in their college.

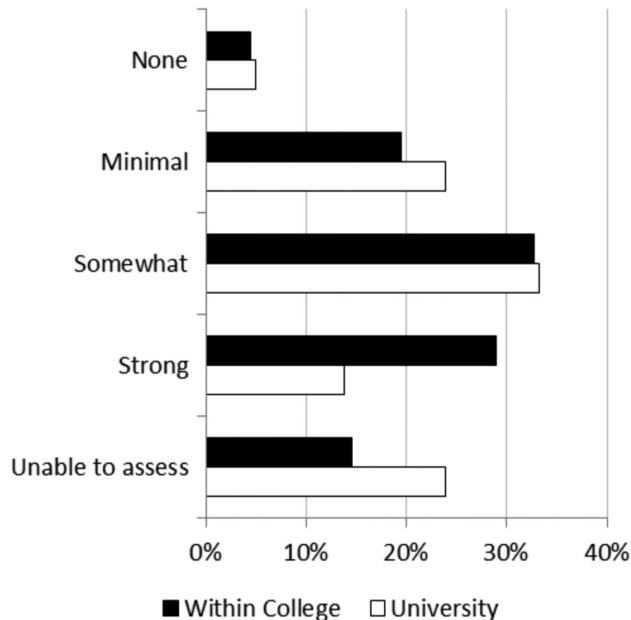
The current environment for practicing engaged scholarship might present challenges and barriers for rewarding community partners. For example, one faculty

regretted that “administrative requirements make [the] requirement of this work difficult...I cannot issue an honorarium any longer, I must put a service contract in place.” An important consideration that is also currently missing is how communities view themselves in these arrangements, particularly with the recent calls to explicitly connect academic missions with community-engagement activities. Given the recent emphasis on sharing responsibilities and decision-making in all phases of a research project, there needs to be a more thorough examination of how community partners are acknowledged and rewarded for their involvement.

### ***Institutional Leadership and Support for Community Engagement***

The presence of institutional leadership and central supports to assist faculty in different career stages to develop community-university partnerships is a strong measure of the extent to which community-engaged scholarship is acknowledged and seen as legitimate. Overall, there is a wide spectrum of views regarding the support given by senior administrative and academic leaders for community engagement. The general perception is that senior administrators and leaders only somewhat support community engagement (see Figure 3). Ratings at the college level for institutional leadership and support are slightly higher than for the university as a whole, which might be the result of closer interactions between community-engaged faculty and their own department and college administrators.

**Figure 3. Leadership support for community engagement**



There is presently some awareness of professional staff who provide significant support for community engagement. However, some respondents report that there is either minimal or no professional support staff available to them (41.5%). When asked about the presence of physical structures, such as a clearinghouse or centre devoted to supporting community-engagement, respondents indicate that only one or two places exist with limited support available (26.4%), or that they are unaware of any structures at all (20.4%). A centralized resource or body dedicated to community-engaged scholarship is critical because it contributes technical expertise and also serves as a key entry point for faculty and communities interested in partnering.

The availability of support from high-level committees such as the board of governors, the faculty council, or curriculum committee is difficult to assess within one's college and even more so at the university-wide level. For example, many respondents are unable to determine whether any deliberate consideration is given to experience with community engagement when academic administrators are recruited. Some expressed regret that under current conditions "living up to the vision [is] nearly impossible" with respect to the principles, goals, and aspirations set out in the key foundational documents by the University. However, within the constantly-shifting environment at the University, one senior leader also openly admitted: "We are new to this activity (in the planning stages) and hope to build institutional support. There is interest in senior leadership and we are working to incorporate it in our programs."

Endeavours to measure the impact and to disseminate the results of community engagement are slowly being recognized in some colleges. Nearly 40% indicate that there are some efforts to disseminate results compared to a small proportion (10.7%) who perceive no effort is being made in their college. Once more, ratings could be made only at the college level and not for the university as a whole. An effort to expand community-engaged scholarship will require leadership and support to permeate across different levels at the institution and also likely depend on how well community-engaged scholarship is integrated into policies, structures, and priorities of the University.

### ***Community-Engaged Scholarship***

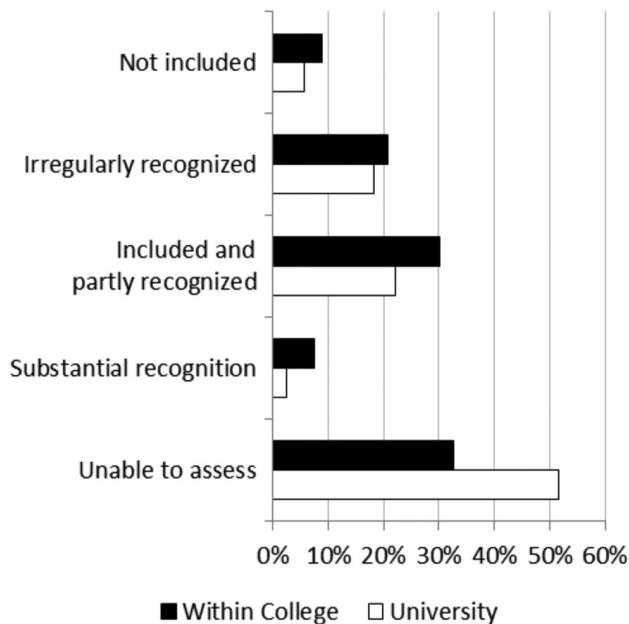
The principle of community-engaged scholarship places considerable emphasis on the integration of teaching, discovery, and service with community engagement. Engaged scholars utilize rigorous methods, reflective critique, and theoretical positions, and, similar to their colleagues, their work is peer-reviewed. However, the outputs of community-engaged scholarship have not always been given the same visibility compared to, for instance, laboratory-based discoveries.

Fostering an environment for community-engaged scholarship is partially dependent on whether it is given the same weight, importance, or recognition as other teaching and research activities. At present, 30.8% of respondents believe that community-engaged scholarship is valued in faculty appointments for both tenure and non-tenure track positions, but there is still a substantial minority (17%) who believe

that it is either not valued at all or only in non-tenure track positions. However, these findings need to be interpreted cautiously, given that the large majority of respondents were unable to determine how much consideration is given to community engagement in faculty appointments within their own college or across the university campus.

Tenure and promotion policies that reward, value, and recognize the outputs produced by engaged scholars are another significant indication that community-engaged scholarship has an equal and legitimate place in academia. At present, only a small minority (7.5%) indicate that review, tenure, and promotion policies substantially recognize community-engaged scholarship. The remaining respondents perceive that review processes do not include community-engaged scholarship at all or that it is irregularly valued or only occasionally recognized (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Review, tenure and promotion policies and practices recognizing community-engaged scholarship**



With only occasional recognition given to community-engaged scholarship, one faculty member asserted, “The tenure and promotion issue is a major shortcoming. Many community-based scholars pay a real price for their engagement.” Another pointed out that there are only a few rewards or official recognition for community-engaged scholarship: “Although awards are given for community engagement ... they are only at the university level for two people per year with no awards at the college of department levels.” One engaged scholar stressed that “the high degree of variability in

the recognition of community engaged scholarship” was a critical issue to be addressed.

Publishing scholarly work to expand the evidence base of community-engaged scholarship is another growing area of concern. In many colleges, nearly half (47.2%) of the respondents report that only publications in books or peer-reviewed journals are valued regardless of what is stated in review, tenure, and promotion policies. In comparison, a very small proportion (5.7%) perceives that disseminating scholarship through alternative means is encouraged and valued. Additionally, publishing outside one’s own discipline or receiving grants from non Tri-Council sources, such as the not-for-profit sector, foundations, charities, private sector partners, and foreign entities, is rarely given equal consideration. While many recognize and acknowledge some effort to disseminate community-engaged scholarship, the dominant perception is that rewards are skewed toward first author publications in traditional disciplinary journals and recipients of traditional research grants from SSHRC, CIHR, and NSERC.

Although traditional forms of scholarship are still privileged in the tenure and promotion process, there is some evidence that small changes are taking place. For example, the perspectives of community members are gradually being incorporated in these processes. When asked about community participation in tenure and promotion reviews, a modest proportion (15.0%) indicate that letters of support from community members are given serious consideration. However, for the large part, most feel that community members have no role or an inconsequential one at best.

As community-engaged scholarship continues to grow, it will be important to assess how much visibility it is given. The value of community-engaged scholarship cannot be overstated, and as one faculty member articulates, there is much that can be done to acknowledge community-engaged scholarship:

Formal acknowledgement of the importance of this work in tenure and promotion standards is lacking, as is the sufficient commitment to the interdisciplinary infrastructure that best supports community engagement. There are many willing allies, with a need to galvanize the energy and potential here.

Within academia, there has already been a remarkable shift from traditional forms of dissemination to forms that emphasize the co-creation of knowledge with community partners. However, measuring the degree that community-engaged scholarship is integrated into review, tenure and promotion processes will influence whether existing outputs will be sustained and whether new initiatives will be taken up.

### ***The Office of Community Engagement and Outreach at Station 20 West***

New opportunities and structures are allowing students, faculty, and staff to become immersed in community-engaged scholarship. To support these activities, the University of Saskatchewan established a central Office of Community Engagement and Outreach. Created in 2012, and reporting to the Vice-President, Advancement and Community Engagement, the Office of Community Engagement and Outreach is a high-level support unit providing assistance to all colleges, schools, and affiliated

research centres. Support is structured to encourage meaningful, scholarly, rigorous, and reciprocal community engaged research and teaching. Examples of support include internal research seed funding, internal funds to support community-based teaching and learning, university-level support on tri-council proposals, venues for scholarly dissemination, consultation and training for faculty, staff, and students, relationship facilitation, and support for public outreach programs.

As part of the new initiative, the Community Engagement and Outreach Office at Station 20 West opened in October 2012 as part of a community-enterprise centre in Saskatoon's west-side core neighbourhood (University of Saskatchewan, 2015). Station 20 West's mission is to improve social and economic equality in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods by providing essential services in one location, such as a community owned grocery store, housing and employment programs, early childhood programs, and a health centre, along with many other resources.

The University's Station 20 West office serves as an important bridge and entry point for community groups and scholars interested in critically engaging with one another on social issues. The Station 20 West office assists in identifying opportunities for mutually beneficial community-university partnerships and cultivating existing relationships. Professional staff at the Station 20 West office also support faculty and students who are interested in integrating community engagement into their teaching, learning, and research. An example of important community-engaged scholarship that the Station 20 West office has facilitated is the collaborative research to improve food security between community health researchers and CHEP Good Food Inc., which is also located on the same premises and whose mandate is to improve access to healthy, affordable food. The Station 20 West office also supports emerging engaged-scholars, and currently one postdoctoral student is examining youth resiliency in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods.

One of the key benefits of conducting engaged-scholarship at Station 20 West is the increased accessibility of researchers and community partners. Close proximity and collaborative spaces at Station 20 West enable informal and spontaneous communication. These informal interactions are often instrumental in projects where processes are highly interdependent and require frequent input from partners. Working directly in the community also fosters goodwill and allows community partners to be more easily recognized and rewarded, which is a critical component that this institutional self-assessment identifies as lacking. The trust that is built between the community and the university allows them to view each other as important and essential partners and to develop an extensive understanding of each other's goals and resources. As engaged-scholars continue to produce important work at Station 20 West, the impact of their findings has the potential to expand the supports and structures needed for community-engaged scholarship, which is another critical element that this self-assessment suggests as requiring improvement.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Community-engaged scholarship continues to grow at the University of Saskatchewan and at universities across Canada. A new sense of commitment provides a timely opportunity to improve existing practices and to nurture new partnerships that are meaningful and relevant to communities and academic institutions. Along with eight other universities in the CES Partnership, the University of Saskatchewan completed an institutional self-assessment to measure the capacity for community-engaged scholarship with the goal of being able to better recognize, value, and reward efforts in this area. The CES Partnership and its working groups realize that developing an environment for effective community-engaged scholarship requires continuous monitoring and assessment, more inclusive tenure and promotion policies, and new supports and structures.

The results from the University of Saskatchewan's self-assessment indicate that there is a long history of community engagement with numerous efforts underway at present. However, community-engaged scholarship is unevenly distributed amongst different colleges, schools, and departments and not always connected to a wider strategic plan. There is also a consistent pattern where individual departments, colleges, and schools are rated higher in their capacity for community-engaged scholarship than the university as a whole. This is perhaps partly a reflection of differences in each discipline's academic practices, but also perhaps partly due to a lack of synergy across campus with respect to community-engaged scholarship. In many instances, for example, respondents are uncertain about processes outside of their own college and unable to assess university-wide practices. This self-assessment, however, identifies many opportunities to address the resources, structures, and leadership needed to support students, faculty, and communities participating in engaged scholarship at the University of Saskatchewan.

The ability for engaged scholars and communities to collaborate, to learn from one another, and to co-create knowledge will expand as the academic institutions attempt to better define and provide formal recognition for community-engaged scholarship. At the same time, community-engaged scholarship must be conceptualized as a diverse array of initiatives, and any institutional change needs to be flexible and adaptable to different circumstances, the historical context of each college, department, and school, and the particulars of each relationship. Leadership in community-engaged scholarship will also be required at different levels of the university, from professional support staff to senior administration and the president's office. Finally, in order for the impact from each university's self-assessment to be far-reaching, all eight partner universities in the CES Partnership must learn from each other and widely share new ways to support community-engaged scholarship in Canada.

## About the Authors

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