MODERNIZING SCHOLARSHIP FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

ALIGNING UNIVERSITY RHETORIC, POLICY, & INFRASTRUCTURE

Need and opportunity

The importance of the public impact of scholarship is commonly cited in the mission and strategy documents of public research universities However, faculty and staff who pursue this impactful work cite the lack of advancement, reward, and supportive promotion policies and practices as core barriers to engaging in this work fully. While these challenges have been acknowledged and studied for years, these barriers to modernizing scholarship persist: universities need guidance to align the necessary rhetorical support, policy, resources, and infrastructure to support faculty and staff who do this work and how to better communicate its impact.

This project is supported by the Rita Allen Foundation and the Kavli Foundation as part of the Civic Science Fellows Program and will build on previous efforts by APLU on Public Impact Research (PIR). It will focus on the ways public research universities can support scholars and advance reward and recognition related to Public Impact Research, Cooperative Extension, civic science, and other forms of public engagement (PE), with special attention to the ways that diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) are integral to this work. Dr. Elyse Aurbach, the APLU Civic Science Fellow and Public Engagement Lead at the University of Michigan's Center for Academic Innovation, is leading this effort.

The project will focus on four integrated efforts:

Synthesizing and framing the scholarly literature around advancement, reward, and promotion related to PE, PIR, Cooperative Extension, and DEIJ efforts (drawing inspiration from other reform efforts, related to innovation, entrepreneurship, teaching & learning, etc.).

Developing case studies for "leading edge" institutions to identify what exemplifies their policy and programmatic success in supporting, recognizing, and rewarding scholars in their PE, PIR, and DEIJ, including **examining their centers and Cooperative Extension offices** (e.g. mid-level infrastructure), resourcing, faculty/staff experience, and where possible, evaluation criteria.

Creating a **framework for action** with interventions to better support engaged and DEIJ-oriented scholars across the academic hierarchy and in different institutions, with an emphasis on public and land-grant universities. This framework will provide guidance for decision makers, center and Cooperative Extension (and other mid-level infrastructure) leaders, and faculty on how to best leverage their assets to support PE, PIR, and DEIJ efforts, including through the lenses evaluation, advancement, reward, and promotion.

Extending and expanding the work via APLU and the Civic Science Fellows program; drawing on leaders from across research engagement initiatives to identify leading approaches and metrics to support, advance, and assess faculty contributions to research based on its impact or degree of public engagement. The work is being undertaken in collaboration with the vice presidents for research, communications, engagement, academic affairs, and food/agriculture/natural resources/extension councils of APLU, as well as a coalition of leaders across University of Michigan offices, centers, and initiatives. The project will also connect to and draw inspiration from other members of the Civic Science Fellows network and their projects.

Expected Deliverables

1 Three (or more) **case studies** of distinct institutional models to determine similarities and differences in how public and land grant universities support PE and DEIJ work, focusing on centers and Cooperative Extension as critical pieces of mid-level infrastructure;

2 A final **guidance document** and/or convenings for decision-makers that includes relevant scholarship, frameworks, illustrative examples, and evidence-based interventions at multiple scales and levels for supporting, advancing, rewarding, and recognizing PE, PIR, and DEIJ.

3 **Connecting national initiatives and pilot efforts** at a major R1 - the University of Michigan - and consider a path to scale across 240 public research universities;

Impact and Future Directions

We see potential for this project to inform national efforts to help institutions to align rhetoric, policy, infrastructure, resourcing, and lived experience of faculty and staff to better support PE, PIR, and DEIJ in higher education. Our intention is to support more faculty and staff to pursue scholarship and engagement involving and benefiting different publics. We further hope that these efforts will enable faculty and staff who engage in this work - especially individuals of color and whose backgrounds are frequently marginalized in academic spaces - to be supported, retained, and rewarded for their efforts. We are especially interested in surfacing and advancing tactics that different institutions might use to bring successful strategies to scale across APLU's network, which consists of leadership across about 200 public research universities in every state conducting some 60% of the nation's academic research (~$47 billion annually). By leveraging these multiple university constituencies across North America, the project could potentially influence and change the systems, structure, and policies of these institutions around research. Ultimately, we hope that this work can add to efforts that appreciably increase faculty and staff participation and contribute to stronger connections between science and society.

Learn more at aplu.org/modernizing-scholarship.

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