Guidelines for Evaluating Community-Engaged Scholarship in Candidates’ Dossiers

Definition
Community-engaged scholarship (CES) is defined as a “collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (Driscoll, 2008, p. 39). Faculty members and community partners, including nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and civic groups, work together to address issues of concern in their respective communities. Faculty involved in CES should demonstrate that reciprocity exists within this relationship (both sides to the partnership offer expertise) and/or a responsiveness to the community’s needs or concerns.

Review questions (some of these are adapted from Michigan State University’s Points of Distinction)
If the candidate has been involved in community-engaged scholarship, this should be described in their research narrative along with their other research. Along with the review of traditional scholarship, the following questions can be reflected on for the candidate whose dossier includes CES:

- Does the research address a community need or concern?
- Does the research project show responsiveness to the community’s needs/concerns and/or reciprocity?
- Is the scholarly expertise of the candidate leveraged in this research study?
- Has the candidate rigorously documented the research process from conceptualization through reporting of findings?
- Were the products of the study appropriate for the relevant interest groups? Were they consistent with the goals of the study?
- Is the CES aligned with the research agenda trajectory in the narrative of the candidate?
- Did the candidate address how this research fit with the university’s mission?
- If this research is not published in a peer-reviewed journal, did the candidate provide another layer of external review of the product(s) by scholars or expert practitioners?

Example of CES
Alanah Fitch, a chemistry professor at Loyola University in Chicago, was involved in a working group on community health and the environment through the Policy Research Action Group (PRAG). (PRAG was a multi-university consortium in Chicago which was the foundation for the Center for Urban Research and Learning (CURL) at Loyola.) The working group decided to sample soil near a middle school in Chicago and work with 5th grade students to sample the soil. The lead analysis techniques which were developed for this project were then carried over into a re-designed undergraduate chemistry course at Loyola. An individual with the Chicago Legal Clinic linked Fitch’s Loyola class with the Center for Neighborhood Technology which in turn connected students with a low-income neighborhood where an incinerator was based. Students in the class went to houses in the neighborhood, collected and analyzed soil samples, and communicated the results back to the Center for Neighborhood Technology. One of the students involved in the project refined the sampling strategy by factoring in the wind patterns around the incinerator and how this may affect the health threat faced by the neighborhood. Furthermore, an interdisciplinary group out of Loyola University joined with public schools in one neighborhood to write a proposal to the National Science Foundation to further refine the instruments and sample soil around schools in order to completely assess the prevalence of lead in the community (Fitch 1997).