



RECOGNIZING ENGAGED ARCHAEOLOGY IN TENURE AND PROMOTION

The Archaeology Centers Coalition
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The ACC

The Archaeology Centers Coalition was established in order to encourage departments, centers, institutes and individual scholars to take action in advancing social justice, inclusivity, and diversity in archaeology and allied disciplines. This document seeks to advise tenure and promotion committees, as well as university administrations, on how to recognize engaged scholarship when presented as part of a dossier of scholarly production.

Why Now?

The ACC recognizes that the discipline of archaeology is at an historical inflection point in its practices of knowledge production. Traditional forms of scholarship—peer-reviewed articles and books, etc.—are being challenged by new forms of media, changes in the academic publishing industry, and epistemological shifts within the discipline itself that place a higher value on sustained, collaborative, engaged research over metrics of quantitative productivity. As colleagues in allied disciplines such as [history](#)² and [anthropology](#)³ have noted, these changes place considerable strain on tenure and promotion assessments that have not, as yet, established a discipline-wide framework for articulating the value of new forms of knowledge production both within and beyond academic units. This document is intended to help contribute to the emergence of this new framework.

How to Use This Document

This document is intended to be used at multiple points in the tenure and promotion process. First, the document is intended to be a stimulus for academic units including departments and interdisciplinary programs to articulate for themselves the value they place on engaged research. The ACC recommends circulating this document to all faculty as a means to provoke sustained discussion. Second, this document can be shared with pre-tenure faculty, including at the point of hiring, as a way for departments to clearly signal the value placed on engaged research and clarify how that work will be assessed in promotion reviews. Third, this document can be included with requests for external review letters pursuant to tenure and promotion cases in order to signal to reviewers the importance of engaged research to the requesting unit and as a guide to how such work should be assessed. Lastly, this document can be included in tenure and promotion dossiers when transmitted to college and university administrations as an authoritative guide for their own review of the case. In this document the ACC seeks to communicate to administrations the high value accorded to engaged research by our member centers as representatives of the discipline of archaeology as a whole.

The recommendations contained in this document can also be used in concert with the [American Anthropological Association's Guidelines for Tenure and Promotion Review](#),⁴ which include recommendations for Evaluating Scholarship in the Realm of Practicing, Applied, and Public Interest Anthropology.⁵

Why Engaged Scholarship Matters in Archaeology

The Carnegie Foundation defines engaged scholarship as: “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” (Korner et al. 2020).

Activist scholarship, as a form of engagement, is similarly committed to communities, including communities of scholars, but seeks to make a more pointed intervention in it, prioritizing change and advancing social justice movements. The shared purpose of engaged and activist scholarship is to catalyze positive social change, enhance community involvement in the production of academic knowledge, strengthen civic bonds, and advance the public good.

Engaged and activist scholarship is not new. Since the founding of [Campus Compact](#)⁶ in 1985 by a small group of universities, there has been clear awareness on campuses of the importance of community engagement. Ernest Boyer's (1990) influential [Scholarship Reconsidered](#)⁷ provided a powerful critique of the narrow conception of academic excellence that had tended to not only create distorted incentives for academic activity but also serve as a barrier to a more inclusive faculty. Columbia University President Lee Bollinger has described societal impact through engaged and activist scholarship as the “fourth purpose” of an institution of higher education, alongside the traditional three-pronged mission of education, research, and public service.

In 2020, the Big Ten Arts Administrators commissioned a study that could provide [Guidance for Rewarding and Recognizing Community-Engaged Scholarship in the Arts](#) (Korner et al. 2020).⁸ Amongst the recommendations of the study was a call to make college and university evaluation processes less restrictive and thus in better accord with the substantial value that institutions place on engaged and activist research in their articulation of their public mission. Expanding traditional criteria for promotion and renewal is a pressing obligation of every academic unit, from programs and departments to colleges and universities. The ACC agrees that archaeology now places considerable value on public engagement and activism and that therefore, promotion evaluations need to embrace this broad range of engaged, activist, public-facing, and creative activities that enhance the teaching, research, and service work of faculty.

As archaeologists have come to increasingly understand the discipline's historic role in legitimizing colonial dispossession, racism, sexism, and injustice, we have also come to better understand the discipline's power to reshape how the past is used in the present and to change the stories that archaeology tells, and who tells them. Engaged and activist archaeology is thus vital to expanding the discipline's audience, diversifying our ranks, and successfully training our students to think critically about the past and contribute meaningfully to society. The future of the discipline will be powerfully shaped by engaged and activist scholarship.

Engaged and activist scholarship matters because it can promote greater diversity and inclusion amongst both faculty and student communities, which in turn enhances the scholarship produced. And it matters because faculty and students alike share an increasing interest in making a difference in their communities. It further recognizes the social and political impacts that archaeological research has on living communities, and this form of scholarship seeks to ensure that such work is conducted in an ethical manner that is beneficial to community needs.

The Challenges of Engaged and Activist Scholarship

It is important to be aware of the unique challenges posed by engaged and activist scholarship in evaluating scholars for tenure and promotion.

Time: Archaeological research takes time. Not only are our traditional methods of research slow and painstaking, but the time “up front” required to secure permits or licenses for research can take months or even years. Engaged and activist archaeology is even more time intensive. Relationships of trust must be built between academic archaeologists and local communities and these need to flourish into equitable and ethical collaboration. Such outcomes can only arise out of years of careful conversation, negotiation, and joint work. Tenure and promotion committees need to understand that Engaged and activist archaeology cannot develop on the traditional timeline of archaeological research projects. Moreover, individuals and committees involved in assessing tenure and promotion cases should recognize that the preliminary stages that establish the conditions for such research are vital to both the method and theory of the work. Such community conversations should be recognized as tangible evidence of the development of new research projects, as central to the initial stages of new projects as the securing of external grant funding or the awarding of permits.

Money: Although the national situation is changing, there are at present relatively few funding sources specifically for Engaged and Activist archaeology. One such funding source is the Wenner-Gren Foundation’s [Engaged Research Grant](#).⁹ Indeed, finding support for preliminary stages of trust-building can be quite difficult and that trust can be undermined by the uncertainty of typical grant application programs. Hence, colleges and universities need to recognize the constraints of this different approach to research funding. Most funding for engaged research comes from private rather than federal sources at present. These private sources, committed to archaeology engaged with the public, play a vital role in the conduct of 21st-century archaeology every bit as important as traditional public sources. The labor and scholarly rigor involved in securing private support for engaged archaeology is robust and awards are highly competitive. Funding for these engaged projects are often underreported and involve in-kind services that do not always appear in tenure/promotion dossiers.

Outputs: The tangible forms of scholarly production created as a result of engaged and activist archaeology often differ from the genres typically recognized at moments of tenure and promotion. The monograph and the peer-reviewed article are still part of this kind of scholarly work, but so too are multi-authored works, highly visible opinion pieces, white paper reports, video and audio productions, museum exhibits, graphic novels, and websites. Institution-building and capacity-building, both within communities and the discipline, are also important outputs of engaged, collaborative research and teaching. Outreach to community youth programs, establishing mentoring programs to enhance career pipelines, and providing training in new techniques to under-resourced

communities worldwide are all vital aspects of archaeological practice. These forms of scholarship should be evaluated based on the depth of thought, imagination, collaboration, and impact.

Evaluating Engaged and Activist Archaeology in Tenure and Promotion

The ACC understands engaged and activist archaeology to be a vital element of scholarly work in the 21st century and as such must be considered in cases of tenure and promotion as fully equal to other traditional forms of scholarly production such as books and peer-reviewed articles. We understand engagement and activism to contribute across all three areas of a typical promotion dossier.

Scholarship: Emerging standards for archaeological research clearly point to the importance of connecting any new scholarly work to the interests of descendant communities and other potential stakeholders. Engaged archaeology and activist archaeology are vital forms of scholarship that should be evaluated as contributions not only to the future of the discipline (or service) but to the production of knowledge itself. This requires that tenure and promotion reviews articulate clearly the value that they place on the products of such research and communicate that clearly to external reviewers and university administrations.

Teaching: It is vital that archaeology contribute to the wider mission of colleges and universities to address inequalities in access to education and to meet the needs of underserved communities. Archaeology has a key role to play in confronting past injustices and opening new pathways for a more inclusive discipline. To do so will mean teaching archaeology as an engaged discipline as committed to change in the present as it is to understanding the past. Engaged and activist archaeology can make for transformational student learning opportunities, but the additional effort that this requires must be understood and valued during tenure and promotion reviews. This includes more hands-on activities.

Service: Engaged and activist archaeology is manifestly also a form of service to the discipline and to the communities that collaborate in knowledge production. Traditional service roles on local and national committees are valuable, but so too are the activities of engaged and activist scholarship in communities, projects that do a great deal to burnish an academic institution's reputation and should be valued as such. Engaged and activist scholarship also provides a vital service to the discipline of archaeology, identifying concerns in the structure or practice of the discipline and advocating for needed change.

The practice of engaged and activist archaeology enhances the visibility of both the scholar and the college or university in powerful ways. These projects often attract additional attention from media outlets, and the broader public, drawing scholars into open and important civic debates.

Valuing Engaged and Activist Archaeology in Tenure and Promotion Reviews

The key to transforming traditional promotion reviews is communication. In defining faculty positions and articulating the core values of tenure and promotion reviews, engaged and activist archaeology needs to be clearly defined as a core institutional value. Ideally, signaling the importance of this work can begin with the job advertisement, which articulates the interest in engaged and activist research. Certainly communications surrounding the tenure and promotion process should also make clear the value academic units recognize in engaged and activist work. This includes not only communications

with the candidate but also with external reviewers, letter writers, and administrations. By clearly articulating the importance of engaged and activist archaeology to scholarship, teaching, and service, departments can send a clear signal that traditional metrics of evaluation are no longer the sole criteria for evaluating archaeological practice.

Candidates for tenure and promotion should also be advised to forward their engaged and activist work in research, teaching, and service statements including these new avenues of activity and impact. These discussions should include an account of the consequential academic labor that went into building relationships with stakeholder communities, securing funding and resources, developing non-traditional forms of scholarly output, and building partnerships. It is also imperative that departments signal their support for engaged and activist scholarship in the letters to external reviewers. Reviewers must be informed about departmental expectations and be ready to comment on these aspects of dossiers. Lastly, departments should be very clear in their letters transmitting promotion dossiers to college and university administrations on how engaged and activist scholarly outputs were considered in promotion reviews. This kind of ready communication at all levels across all of the participants in promotion reviews is critical to the success of efforts to expand criteria for evaluation.

These changes are vital for archaeology to undertake in collaboration with departments, deans, and college and university administrations. The faculty who undertake this form of archaeological practice are working to ensure that the discipline's future is more inclusive, more diverse, and more attuned to the concerns of the current generation of students.

Appendices

1. Sample Text for Utilizing this Document

For letters soliciting external reviews of tenure and promotion candidates:

Our guidelines establish the criteria for promotion to the rank of _____ as excellence in research, distinction in teaching, and service to our institution, the discipline, and the public. We accord particular value to forms of engaged scholarship that cut across research, teaching, and service. We include in this request a document from the Archaeology Centers Coalition which our academic unit has endorsed that articulates how engaged scholarship should be assessed in tenure and promotion reviews. We hope that this document can help shape your evaluation of the candidate's commitment to public engagement as reflected in the materials provided in the dossier.

For letters of transmittal to college and university administrations:

Included in this dossier is a document from the Archaeology Centers Coalition (ACC), an organization of leading centers of archaeological research dedicated to advancing diversity and inclusion in the discipline. The document provides a clear account of the importance the discipline accords engaged research and how they advise this work be evaluated in the context of tenure and promotion processes. Our department believes strongly in the importance of engaged research in archaeology today and affirm the principles set out by the ACC.

2. Frequently Asked Questions

What kinds of research are “engaged”?

Engaged research draws interlocutors directly into an active role in determining the problems explored. As the [Wenner-Gren Foundation](#) notes, research is enhanced “when undertaken as a partnership, beginning with the formulation of research questions and extending to data gathering, skill sharing, scholarly communication, and public mobilization. Engaged research occurs in a broad range of settings, including communities, courtrooms, government offices, and laboratories. It results in findings that are meaningful and potentially transformative for research participants and others with a stake in the collaboration.”

Does engaged research add to archaeology’s understanding?

Yes! Innovation arises from new ideas coming together. By engaging with communities, archaeologists can develop a richer understanding of history, be pushed to develop cutting edge new methods, and ensure that their findings will have real world consequences. Engagement enhances our ability to advance anthropological knowledge, by forcing us to question our assumptions and develop new ways of exploring the past. And engagement can contribute to our vision for the future, by creating powerful new relationships, contributing to peace and reconciliation, and offering the possibility of a more just present.

Is community engagement considered to be an activity beyond the traditional areas of research, teaching, and service that make up tenure and promotion assessments?

No. Engaged research is research AND teaching AND service. Too often in tenure and promotion, engagement is classified as a form of service and thus less valuable than the traditional metrics of evaluation. This is not the position of the ACC. We understand the process of engagement as fundamental to the design, conduct, and presentation of research. But we also see engagement as a pedagogical activity, one that is deeply committed to teaching students, colleagues, and collaborating communities alike. And engagement also is a service of value to sponsoring institutions, the discipline as a whole and society.

Is engaged research something to undertake only after tenure?

Our goal in writing this document is to support scholars at all stages of their career who are committed to engaged research, informing a broad spectrum of university and college committees of its value and significance within academia and beyond. There are potential roadblocks. But our vision for the future is a field that is strongly committed to engagement. The purpose of this document is to make it safer to take the risk of such engagement at all stages of one’s career.

Our goal is that this research and career trajectory should become an accepted and valid path in one’s career at all stages. We hope that there can be a discipline-wide framework of assessment

that will bring this strategy of inquiry into academic scholarship. While this might not be the case throughout US academia, it is the ACC's goal that it become so.

Why is the ACC interested in advancing engaged research?

Archaeology is at a historical inflection point. Individuals entering the field are bringing a more diverse set of life experiences to their work than their predecessors. Many have a strong sense of commitment to the communities affected by the work that archaeologists do and are eager to reach wider audiences with their work. Traditional forms of scholarship—peer-reviewed articles, books etc.—are being challenged by new forms of media, changes in the academic publishing industry, and epistemological shifts within the discipline itself that place a higher value on sustained, collaborative, engaged research over metrics of quantitative productivity. These changes place considerable strain on tenure and promotion assessments, which have not, as yet, established a discipline-wide framework for articulating the value of new forms of knowledge production both within and beyond academic units. The ACC welcomes the changes underway in the discipline; they are ultimately making archaeology richer, more effective, and more impactful. But we recognize the need to support our colleagues, especially those at precarious stages in their careers, that are spearheading this new approach to the field.

References Cited

Boyer, Ernest. 1990. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Princeton, New Jersey.

Korner, Barbara O., Charles O'Connor, Christopher Marks, and Kevin Hamilton. 2020. Guidance for Rewarding and Recognizing Community-Engaged Scholarship in the Arts. Big Ten Arts Administrators.

https://www.a2ru.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Big-Ten_Evaluating-Community-Engagement.pdf, accessed March 11, 2023.

Notes

1 <https://wennergren.org/program/engaged-research-grant/>

2 <https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-standards-and-guidelines-of-the-discipline/tenure-promotion-and-the-publicly-engaged-academic-historian>

3 <https://www.americananthro.org/AdvanceYourCareer/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=21713>

4 <https://www.americananthro.org/AdvanceYourCareer/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=1667>

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<http://s3.amazonaws.com/rdcms-aaa/files/production/public/AAA%20Guidelines%20TP%20Communicating%20Forms%20of%20Public%20Anthropology.pdf>

6 <https://compact.org/>

7 <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED326149>

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https://www.a2ru.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Big-Ten_Evaluating-Community-Engagement.pdf

9 <https://wennergren.org/program/engaged-research-grant/>