

UConn Terms and Definitions

Community Engagement

Community engagement “describes 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. The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching, and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.”¹

Community

“In this context, community is broadly defined to include audiences external to the campus that are part of a collaborative process and that contribute to the public good.”²

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is the recognition, respect, and valuing of the knowledge, perspective, and resources that each partner contributes to the collaboration.³

Community-Engaged Scholarship

Community-engaged scholarship (a) integrates community partners as co-creators of new knowledge or novel ways to interpret and apply information, and/or co-educators; and/or (b) is intentionally conducted to address or positively impact societal issues.⁴

¹ Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, *The Elective Classification for Community Engagement*, last modified 2025, <https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/elective-classifications/community-engagement/>

² Lorilee R. Sandmann, “When Doing Good Is Not Good Enough! Good to Great: The Scholarship of Engagement,” *Online Submission*, 2003, 4.

³ E. M. Janke, M. Quan, I. Jenkins, and J. Saltmarsh, “We’re Talking About Process...,” *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 29, no. 1 (2023).

⁴ University of Connecticut, Office of the Provost, *Guidelines on Promotion, Tenure, and Reappointment (PTR/PR)* (Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut, July 1, 2025).

Societal Impact

Refers to the significant and positive changes that research can bring about in society, not including reiterative contribution to an academic discipline, and is assessed in terms of the social, cultural, environmental, and economic benefits that contribute to the capital of a community.⁵

Community-Engaged Research and Creative Work (also known as just community-engaged research)

Is a form of scholarship in which community partners participate in theory building, problem formulation, research design, and/or data analysis and interpretation.⁶ Another form of community-engaged research is the creation, interpretation, or application of knowledge to address societal issues. Both forms of community-engaged research must apply the principles of community engagement—mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. As with other forms of scholarship, community-engaged research is rigorous and systematic. Therefore, it must have clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, significant results, effective presentation of results, and reflective critique.

In addition to traditional publications (i.e., journal articles, books, and book chapters), community-engaged research requires the consideration of other outcomes to assess faculty performance. These outcomes must be (1) publicly accessible, (2) open to critical evaluation, and (3) presented in a format that allows other scholars to utilize them.^{7 8} Community engaged research may also be evaluated by the measurable benefits it contributes to advance society, rather than merely counting the number of traditional outputs. Tangible benefits may be assessed in terms of social, cultural, environmental, and economic contributions to social capital such as policy influence, implementation of new approaches, cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, enhancing productivity, feedback from communities, and capacity building, among others. Estimating the actual societal impact can be resource intensive, long-term (beyond the term of a promotion cycle), or not always economically viable or practical. Therefore, assessment can be conducted based on a mix of intermediate progress and finished products that serve as indicators of progress towards the desired societal change.⁹

⁵ Lutz Bornmann, “What Is Societal Impact of Research and How Can It Be Assessed? A Literature Survey,” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 64, no. 2 (2013): 217–233.

⁶ Andrew H. Van de Ven, *Engaged Scholarship: A Guide for Organizational and Social Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁷ Shulman, L.S. and Hutchings, P. 1998. *About the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: The Pew Scholars National Fellowship Program*. Menlo Park, CA: The Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching

⁸ Boyer, E.L. (1990). *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Princeton, NJ

⁹ University of Connecticut, Office of the Provost. (2025, July 1). *Guidelines on promotion, tenure, and reappointment (PTR/PR)*. University of Connecticut.

Community-Engaged Teaching

Is teaching that enriches student experiences through the development of reciprocal, sustainable community partnerships, which leverages university and community resources, impacts students, and strengthens the university and the community. Community-engaged teaching as scholarly work is characterized by its interconnection with the advancement of knowledge in academia and the community, continuous improvement and reflection of learning methods, and integration of research and practice. For PTR purposes, the term *student* has been traditionally applied exclusively to university undergraduate and graduate students in university settings. However, educational activities that follow pedagogical procedures to educate communities can also be *reported* under the teaching section.¹⁰ However, faculty are advised to follow departmental guidelines to decide which section of the PTR form is more appropriate to their unit. The Clinical, In-Residence, and Extension Faculty (CIRE) form contains a specific section where *Clinical and Extension Service* is reported.

Community-engaged teaching and learning for university students involves *relevant and meaningful service to the community, enhanced academic learning, and purposeful civic learning*.¹¹ These three principles emphasize the application of the core component of community engagement—"the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity". Community-engaged teaching may lead to enhanced academic learning as a result of the alignment of the application of academic concepts with activities or projects that community partners define as important to them. Courses must also be intentional in preparing students to live a civically-engaged life beyond the duration of the course, meaning the aspiration to contribute to local communities and beyond. Community-engaged teaching requires building relations with community partners and the co-creation of a curriculum in collaboration with non-traditional educators. Therefore, the time required to design and implement a community-based curriculum can be time consuming. Supervisors are advised to consider this when assigning, supporting, or evaluating community-based teaching.

Community-engaged teaching may include credit or non-credit courses that are taught as part of the University's Land and Sea Grant mission or departmental outreach programs to build capacity in the community. These educational programs may include older adult community programs, Extension programs, community classes, and early college programs, among others. As with all community-engagement activities these educational programs must include the *mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and*

¹⁰ Teaching appointments are established at the time of hiring by each academic unit. Appointments determine the expected efforts a faculty is required to do to comply with their jobs. Teaching appointments are specific to University undergraduate and graduate students. The recommendation to *report* teaching to audiences outside of the University in the Teaching PTR section does not supersede the original hiring appointment and expectations.

¹¹ Howard, J. (ed) 2001. Service-Learning Course Design Workbook. Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning. University of Michigan

reciprocity, suggesting that the curriculum should be developed to address learning gaps that are relevant, meaningful, and applicable to communities as university and community resources are leveraged to enhance learning.¹²

Community-Engaged Service

Refers to professionally-related public and community service activities that promote the public good through provision of expertise and resources by way of the application of science-based information through technical assistance, consulting, or clinical service. Community-engaged service to be considered in the PTR process must be deliberate and systematic, as opposed to a list of ad-hoc service activities. Community-engaged service may not always lead to traditional scholarly outcomes or publicly available products. Therefore, candidates are advised to provide evidence of assessment outputs that provide an indirect measurement/indicator of the outcomes of the work or direct measurements of indicators that demonstrate advancement from the program and benefits to society. The value of community-engaged service in the PTR process may be weighed differently by academic units. Some scholars in Extension, Nursing, Medicine, Social Work, among others, are specifically hired to provide high-level community-engaged service to a particular group of stakeholders.

For community-engaged service to be considered in the PTR process, it must be deliberate and systematic, as opposed to a list of ad-hoc service activities. Community-engaged service may not always lead to traditional scholarly outcomes or publicly available products. Therefore, candidates are advised to provide evidence of assessment outputs that provide an indirect measurement/indicator of the outcomes of the work or direct measurements of indicators that demonstrate advancement from the program and benefits to society.¹³

Distinction Between Community Engagement and Community Service

Community engagement and community service (sometimes referred to as charity) are sometimes conflated because both may take place in community settings and involve activities that benefit community entities. However, they differ in purpose, process, and the nature of partnership.

Community service generally refers to activities that are provided to or conducted for communities. These activities often follow a uni-directional model in which university expertise, resources, or services are extended outward to benefit individuals, groups, organizations, or the public.

Community engagement, in contrast, refers to activities undertaken with community members through collaborative and reciprocal partnerships. It is defined not by location or activity type, but by shared decision-making, mutual exchange of knowledge and resources, and a collective commitment to advancing the public good.

¹² University of Connecticut, Office of the Provost. (2025, July 1). *Guidelines on promotion, tenure, and reappointment (PTR/PR)*. University of Connecticut.

¹³ Ibid.