**Notes from Breakout Session: Defining and Redefining Academic Rigor
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***Main summary points***

* Existing notion of academic rigor is still a strong model especially with respect to research – professors need to have that as a minimum requirement.
* Don’t marginalize traditional academic rigor in research and discovery as we expand into other scholarship areas.
* Rigor cannot be defined without discussing the process of assessment. Assessment implies the creation of values.
* Rigor pervades teaching and inquiry – yet we only assess research rigorously through peer review, and not teaching. Perhaps it is time to address that as well.
* A more integrated approach is possible, for example integrating research with teaching.
* Rigor in scholarship and in the classroom is part and parcel of the same thing – we are not as intentional in the classroom. Pressures in the scholarship area might compromise the rigor implemented in the classroom. There are ways of integrating the two – there really should not be a big gulf in the middle.
* Discussions about rigor must emerge from the departments and between tenured and pre-tenured faculty as well. This grassroots approach is necessary for defining and redefining rigor.
* There is a need to be pluralistic – to value others’ research.
* Criteria for academic rigor should adapt to the kind of scholarship being conducted; for example, professor doing community work may publish less in peer-reviewed journals than professor doing more traditional research.
* Pre-tenured faculty might find it difficult to adjust to a newer model because of realities of the marketplace and portability of portfolio.
* Probationary faculty may not invest the time in building community relationships. They might be more engaged post-tenure but this takes a longer time.
* Not only the number of publications, but the impact of the publication should be considered.
* The definition of rigor needs to be expanded – there is a need to convince the public that what we do has a value to society – otherwise we help foster anti-intellectual thought.
* Rigor and its connection with impact – what we do and how well we do it, has an impact on the community – articulating that as well is a challenge and a necessity in the face of current budgetary circumstances.
* We have to do a better job of communicating to the public the positive impact we have on the community.

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| Raw Notes |
| Defining – looking at the existing definition – a concern is how not to marginalize the essence of traditional notion of academic rigor (AR).At the heart – what do we think academic rigor really is? Not just moving to an eclectic model. AR is imposed upon us – two dimensions –1. disciplinary concepts reinforced through peer-review process (intense);
2. this model is being challenged – grassroots process?

Difficult to replace the peer-review process?Public sector – Al Hayes working with low-income neighborhoods – wanted an academic base – to step back and look at the big picture – is an important contribution – uniquely placed to contribute as scholars (different perspective – from those working in the field).Maintaining the connection to reality? Balance this with relevance.If you could take what you are doing and connect it to scholarship – not really a barrier – more integration required.Many elements of integrated education are in place – just need a different angle/perspective. We are committed to students and discipline – need a good finger on the pulse of the profession – Cannot redefine rigor without discussing the process of assessment.Another dimension is – teaching implication as well – not just researchHow are we enculturating students to understand their own practice? AR – pervades teaching and inquiry – rigor flows through work we do as part of our academic work.We have an institutionalized system – we have not extended that in our teaching – if you are rigorous in research, are you rigorous in our teaching? Do we critique our class assignments, grading practices, etc.Is there a heavier emphasis on rigor in research and not enough in teaching?Setting a standard and help students achieve this standard? Students should be center stage.Are we making a decision between being clinical practitioners or …is it mutually exclusive? Does not have to be.If we did not apply research to their world, it does not help them defend their decisions – research not just as experimental studies – want students to be able to say – provide reasoned opinions – be innovative… it is not a this or that approachP&T more on research and merit on teaching – rigor in research is because of peer review.We could do peer review on teaching and service.Distressing sense – ideas that connect with what is going on …defend their decisions, rationalize………..is the place for that eroding? Not just what but why?Studied difficult texts of dead people – service learning cannot substitute for that. Many years of apprenticeship required to reach there…Keynote speaker - making room for valuing all forms of scholarship – that are available to explore.. faculty want a space to be in the community doing community-based research – takes time to do this. Scholarship can be evidenced in many forms as rigorous – alternative evaluations exist.Is it a question of time frame versus mode/type of inquiry?Example – Gene Lutz – valuable contributions to community – but not as many peer-reviewed publicationsThree- legged stool – model still viable? Can you be equally good in all four modes of scholarships? You can be working in any one of those.Is rigor evidenced only by a peer-reviewed publication? Good to have broad definitions of scholarships – but there also has to be evidence that faculty can do data-based scholarship from start to finish, even if it is one aspect of the total portfolio – cannot ignore this altogether. Still entrenched in the traditional system. You need to show that you can do what you are trained to do – discipline specific. Different set of skills need to be demonstrated – What is academic rigor? We want to keep rigor – are we too focused on a time frame? If ethnographic research, time frame may not be sufficient? Have we locked ourselves into one way of evaluating academic rigor?When you have multiple authors (alphabetized) how is credit earned when you are engaging in interdisciplinary research?Struggle – making judgments – involves values – we are afraid of doing that; quantifying instead of assessing impact.Challenges of vision – easier to measure within disciplines relying on the peer-review process (and journal impact factors, etc.) – this is an easy way out rather than a substantive reading of the article.Can we better measure the outcome – impact on students?We do not have enough discussions about these issues – some departments do not have updated standards – P&T committees and departments should constantly have these discussions – fields are changing as also the way we do things. Still not heard these types of discussions – also need to be cross-disciplinary – can learn from each other. Tenured and pre-tenured faculty need to have conversations about these issues.The challenge is – research may not be exciting – value neutrality – balance this with what its true impact/relevance might be. Not all journals may fit within a hierarchy. We have to be pluralistic – and find a way to value others’ research. This requires some commitment on our part – we will face these value questions. Inspired by keynote speaker – things already being done in counseling program – have to demonstrate outcomes – how can we take what our students are learning and apply to community – meaning-making – and how does that apply to the community? Need to broaden the dialog – defining scholarship. Students need to first assess what questions to ask and how? TSS – any of the two – need to be exemplary.We are 21 years after *Scholarship Reconsidered*. Alternative forms look interesting – but how do we assess them for quality? The onus on faculty – need to assess themselves on the six criteria created by authors – Boyer? It is not about whether you personally value their work – but was the work scholarly..Vision – incorporating undergraduate students more in research – teams and publications. Perspective of probationary faculty – they have a choice – if we reward community engagement research – they can make a choice – which route will get them to the magic number – no place is going to take me if I don’t have the publications. Very difficult to adjust to newer model because of realities of the marketplace – portability of portfolio? Probationary faculty may not invest the time in building community relationships. Post-tenure, you might be more engaged – takes a longer time.Defining rigor – true integration – if rigor can be shown in research, and that is brought into the teaching – reliance on student assessments might not provide a true picture – need peer assessment as well.Ideas worth presenting – peer-review is still important It looks different now – Can expand the role of the universityRigor in scholarship and in the classroom are part and parcel of the same thing – we are not as intentional in the classroom. Pressures in the scholarship area might compromise the rigor implemented in the classroom. There are ways of integrating the two – there really should not be a big gulf in the middle. If you are teaching different from the research – it becomes a problem. If research is in a very specialized area, it presents more of a challenge to be more integrative. Department model – two lists – one is GPA in classes taught – faculty members know where they stand – absolutely no grade inflation. Rank orders student assessment scores – indicates where you are in that order. Share notes about strategies in the classroom – using peer pressure to make ourselves better?What about artificial grade inflation? There is a guard on this – you need to look at student assessments and grades together.Grade expectations – what is student expecting – correlation with grades – tells a lot about the instructor.If there are a lot of successful students and the GPA is high, is that a bad thing? Stable content base – economics do not change – large numbers of students – capstone course – more variability.Number versus impact? If work is deeply embedded in the community – takes a longer time – meaningful, impactful work – how do we assess this? One size fits all? How do we include/assess evidence of impact? Would a pre-tenured faculty invest time in this endeavor? Is it a gamble?Is it discipline-specific – currency and value of basic scholarship? Some disciplines value the community-engaged scholarship – others accept multiple forms of scholarship. Taking a big risk by engaging in something different – although there is a support for the traditional peer-review processTenure-track faculty are encouraged to take risks to carve out a space for themselves – pursuing external funding, create collaborative relationships with people – grants count – fewer pubs at front end – and more later. Does not have to even spread of pubs. Other collaborators – grants did not count in their departments. Credit for grants? Discrepancy at department levels? Senior faculty advice – publish – focus on that. Untenured faculty – book – how does it count? Discipline specific.External reviewers? Varies? Sometimes from Associate to Full, but not at the assistant level.Positive and negative changes – anti-intellectual approach in politics – Attack on PDAs – we need to stand against this?Newer definitions of rigor – definition of rigor needs to be expanded – need to convince the public that what we do has a value to society – that fosters anti-intellectual thought.Public administration conversations – discuss the state of the field – why are we not being tapped for expertise when instituting policy – we have made ourselves irrelevant – we publish for ourselves – what have we accomplished if it is just a small audience.We want peer-reviewed journals that someone actually reads. If we go too far in one direction – is the trend to domesticate the university? There is a traditional place for the university – Disciplines – can test ideas that will be of use not just to academics but also other people. Example – political science theories and their application…Peer-review – academic journals. There is also the issue of the public intellectual – different from the applied/community based research;kind of venues one might publish in – how does that count?Online publications – might be rigorous as well. There might be a nexus of academic and general public audiences – not exactly traditional writing. How might this require redefining rigor?We need to be explicit about – we always compare with peer-reviewed journals – as if that is the only standard? It has flaws as well. There should be a way to document what we do – in a way that is visible and can be assessed by peers.We need to reconsider the emphasis on publications. There is the issue of impact – impact in various arenas – our battle for funding – larger audiences really need to understand what we do and why it is important. This is putting more things on our plate – but the more ways we find to tell a story – we need to extend the stage – the arena. The message may take reshaping in order to reach the audience. We need to educate others as well – community outreach.Things that impact our university – what do we do need to make a difference – there have to be links between what we do and what is going on out there. Anti-intellectualism has a ripple effect. We see it in our ‘consumer’ students. It is easy for media to dismiss the value of higher education – and not acknowledge the value of learning. The cost and gain approach ignores the incubation period – we need to be articulate about the long-term gain.We need to do business differently in order to make things meaningful. Art matters – how do we convey the value of leading a more interesting and fulfilling life?  |