EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Linking Scholarship and Communities

Report of the Commission on Community-Engaged Scholarship in the Health Professions

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A PDF version of this report is available on the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health website at www.ccph.info. Additional hard copies may also be ordered through the website.

Questions and comments on this report may be sent by mail to Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, UW Box 354809, Seattle, WA 98195-4809; by fax to 206-685-6747; or by email to ccphuw@u.washington.edu.

We encourage interested readers to subscribe to the Community-Engaged Scholarship electronic discussion group at https://mailman1.u.washington.edu/mailman/listinfo/comm-engagedscholarship.
Executive Summary

Over the past decade, a steady stream of national organizations have been recommending the community engagement of health professional schools as an essential strategy for improving health professional education, achieving a diverse health workforce, increasing access to health care, and eliminating health disparities. Community engagement is now widely viewed as fundamental to the mission and purpose of health professional schools. Recruiting and retaining diverse community-engaged faculty members are essential to developing and sustaining the community partnerships that form the foundation for community-based teaching, research, and service.

With the expansion of community engagement in the health professions, a troubling issue has arisen in many schools: Roles and expectations of faculty are changing, but the faculty review, promotion, and tenure system has not kept pace. A frequently cited barrier to sustained faculty involvement in community-engaged scholarship is the risk associated with trying to achieve promotion and tenure. Community-engaged scholarship poses a number of challenges to the predominant paradigm of faculty incentives in health professional schools. Among these is the tendency of faculty peers to classify community-based work as service rather than to consider the factors that might qualify the work as genuine scholarship. Further, the standard metrics for judging the quality, productivity, and impact of scholarship tend to exclude much of the evidence from community-engaged scholarship. With no accepted method of peer reviewing the diverse pathways and products for dissemination that are common in community-engaged scholarship, these are not given sufficient credit and credibility in faculty review, promotion, and tenure processes.

Thus, a significant gap exists between the promise of health professional schools as engaged institutions and the reality of how faculty members are typically judged and rewarded. Closing this gap is the central focus of the Commission on Community-Engaged Scholarship in the Health Professions and this report.

The Commission on Community-Engaged Scholarship in the Health Professions was convened by Community-Campus Partnerships for Health in October 2003, with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, to provide national leadership for creating a more supportive culture and reward system for health professional faculty involved in service-learning, community-based participatory research, academic public health practice, and other forms of community-engaged scholarship.

A more supportive academic environment for community-engaged scholarship will significantly enhance the ability of academic institutions and community partners to collaborate in educating future health professionals, generating community-relevant knowledge, and building healthier communities.

We recommend actions by health professional schools and their national associations that can support community-engaged scholarship, and cite promising practices that illustrate their implementation (see box on next page).
Recognizing and rewarding community-engaged scholarship in the health professions will require changes not only in the wording of policies and procedures but, even more importantly, in the culture of institutions and professions. Leadership is needed from both academic institutions and the many external stakeholders that influence their values and priorities, including but not limited to government, philanthropy, peer-reviewed journals, accrediting bodies, and the communities in which academic institutions reside and work.

As a starting point, we suggest that health professional school administrators, faculty, and members of review, promotion, and tenure committees review this report in relation to the mission, vision, values, and policies of their professions, schools, and universities. We are eager to work with health professional schools, their national associations, and other interested stakeholders to support the implementation of these recommendations, and we welcome inquiries and suggestions on how best to facilitate such support.

### Recommendations

| 1. Health professional schools should adopt and promote a definition of scholarship that includes and values community-engaged scholarship. |
| 2. Health professional schools should adopt review, promotion, and tenure policies and procedures that value community-engaged scholarship. |
| 3. Health professional schools should ensure that community partners are meaningfully involved in review, promotion, and tenure processes for community-engaged faculty members. |
| 4. Health professional schools should educate the members of review, promotion, and tenure committees about community-engaged scholarship and prepare them to understand and apply the review, promotion, and tenure guidelines in the review of community-engaged faculty. |
| 5. Health professional schools should invest in the recruitment and retention of community-engaged faculty. |
| 6. Health professional schools should advocate for increased extramural support for community-engaged scholarship. |
| 7. Health professional schools should take a leadership role on their university campuses to initiate or further campuswide support for community-engaged scholarship. |
| 8. National associations of health professional schools should: |
| • Adopt and promote a definition of scholarship within the profession that explicitly includes community-engaged scholarship |
| • Support member schools that recognize and reward community-engaged scholarship |
| • Advocate for increased extramural support for community-engaged scholarship |
| 9. Recognizing that many products of community-engaged scholarship are not currently peer reviewed, a national board should be established to facilitate a peer review process. |
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