

sharing the responsibility for systemic change in the ways that faculty work is recognized, evaluated and rewarded in the field of film and digital media.

#### **Part 4: A new template for work in the field of film and digital media**

*Judge no man until you've walked a mile in his moccasins.*  
Unknown.

As with traditional research methods, the intellectual foundation of *discovery* in conventional research, as described by Boyer (1990), is also fundamental to artistic, scholarly and professional work in film and digital media. Part 4 affirms the importance and usefulness of building a larger and more inclusive meaning of scholarship and scholarly activity by faculty, but argues that the unmet issue revolves around finding ways to fairly and meaningfully evaluate, assess, and ultimately find ways to reward new, alternative and innovative forms of scholarship and scholarly work.

In most institutions of higher learning there are four major occasions when the review and evaluation of scholarly activity occurs: tenure, post-tenure, promotion and contractual renewal (Diamond, 2002). Review and evaluation of faculty work can also be related to accreditation processes, merit salary increases, the awarding of grant funds, and other extrinsic rewards. The expectations and priorities for each type of review can widely vary, but the scope and nature of the questions asked about the faculty dossier and the data under evaluation are fairly consistent, as are the range of extrinsic rewards (Diamond, 2002).

Differences among educational institutions of higher learning have been described as “remarkable” (Bukalski, 2000, p. 1). Some departments and institutions have developed and implemented clear and relevant criteria that define expectations and for faculty work, and criteria

for recognizing and evaluating faculty work, yet some do not have clear and relevant criteria, particularly in the field of film and digital media. On the other hand, some departments and institutions of higher learning have established written criteria that allow for the formal consideration and recognition of artistic, scholarly and professional work by faculty in creative fields, including the field of film and digital media. Some institutions prioritize scientific research as the principal focus of scholarly activity by faculty, while others fully prioritize teaching---yet data demonstrates that many are not considering teaching to be scholarly activity (Boyer, 1990). Very few institutions, if any, place more than token value upon community or institutional service in any form (Boyer, 1990; Lynton, 1995). Most institutions prioritize conventional methods of quantitative or qualitative research that lead to text-based outcomes for faculty research, albeit confined within narrowly defined parameters, while some other institutions are more open to post-structural and post-modern sensibilities, including the recognition of creative and artistic work, interdisciplinary work, teaching as a form of scholarly practice, the application of expertise as community service as important forms of scholarship and scholarly activity by faculty (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Boyer, 1990). Data research in Chapter 4 demonstrates that in many institutions it is common to find that evaluation practices will place at least a 60% or more weighting upon the research component, in tandem with a 20%-40% value for teaching and 10%-20% value for community and university service. Comparatively, in Chapter 4 it is also shown that institutions that prioritize teaching will allocate as much as 70% weighting to the category of teaching, with the remaining 30% split between service and research. In this light, one professor wrote:

Our university does not grant tenure; instead, contracts have to be renewed at intervals between 2-8 years, depending upon education level and how many previous contracts one

has completed. Our application for contract renewal is based on 70% teaching, 15% scholarship, and 15% service to the University and community. I have had one part-time contract renewed for 2 years and just had a 2-year full-time contract renewed for 3 years (Respondent #1).

Generally, despite the disparity in weight, allocation and percentages that pertain to expectations that determine faculty load and time, the conventional expectation is for scholarly work by faculty to be framed by the trilogy of teaching, research and service; and to be reflective of the traditional template's narrow set of standards that define academic scholarship, with few exceptions---despite the fact that data shows the traditional template to be not appropriate or useful for recognizing and evaluating artistic, scholarly and professional work by faculty in the field of film and digital media.

In a conventional process for reviewing faculty scholarship, emphasis is placed upon evaluative checks to verify that the methods and results of work are trustworthy, free of error, valid, rigorously achieved, testable and reliably replicable, applicable and transferable for another purpose, and so on. There is an explicit requirement that impersonalized results of the research be conveyed and dispassionately interpreted and expressed in a third-person voice (Holt, 2003). But, as demonstrated in much of the literature about (for and against) auto/ethnographic writing, there is a mistrust of *self* as a research vehicle, and an explicit demand for empirical data as the only form of evidence indicative of proper scholarship (Holt, 2003). There appears to be an unmet need for a greater understanding and more inclusive mindset that recognizes and considers the approach of faculty work, not narrowly and solely evaluating the artifacts of work.

Creative work, such as the artistic, scholarly, and professional work done by faculty in

the field of film and digital media, is “intellectually demanding in similar ways to that of traditional research, including the collection of data, analysis, and synthesis of data and content, and with its inherently intellectual foundations in discovery, application and integration”

(Williams-Rautiola, 2001, p. 2). Faculty work in the field of film and digital media (referred to in a variety of ways such as time based media, moving image arts, cinematic arts, multimedia arts and design, and many others) has reticulated and grown over the past few decades to a great extent, such that it now emerges in a wide range of stylistic contexts---narrative, documentary, industrial, commercial, and experimental, to name a few.

The academic and professional field of film and digital media also naturally involves learning and practice in business, legal, technical and creative domains; and highly rigorous expectations for a wide range of technical and practical skills enhanced by theoretical knowledge---and all of which are necessary for producing work in film, digital video and mixed formats---writing, directing, camera/lighting, audio recording, and editing, to name a few. Just within the creative and technical domains, the set of skills can extend to traditional and/or computer-based 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional animation, animated motion graphics and special effects of limitless variety; the design of web-based blogging and other interactive multimedia; game design and mobile media applications and other works intended for desktop interactivity; graphic and time-based multimedia design, website design, and internet art; digital installation and performance; audio recording and audio installations; sculptural works that rely upon a mix of media elements; digital kiosks, robotics, biological and DNA art, hypermedia art and other networked activities---plus specialized areas such as scriptwriting, grant writing, and other forms of critical, reflective or informational writing, storyboard artistry, audio design and so many, many more. The list continues to grow longer and longer, with stylistic and

disciplinary sub-specializations galore.

Faculty members that pursue alternative forms of scholarly activity, such as the work of faculty in the field of film and digital media, necessarily prioritize a process and outcomes of work that are different from conventional approaches to research inquiry. Work that emerges from an alternative approach, including faculty work in the field of film and digital media, is commonly allocated to the “boundaries” of disciplinary practices (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). The basic question that emerges is whether or not it is possible to develop criteria and procedures for measuring, assessing or evaluating the scholarly work of faculty in the field of film and digital media that have credibility not only at the departmental level on an individual campus, but across campus lines as well (Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff, 1997)?

A one-size-fits-all scheme that attempts to standardize and homogenize under a singular umbrella---a list of external expectations and results of all faculty research output---is demonstrated in Chapter 4 to be inappropriate, ineffective, and unfair in many cases. Data in Chapter 4, including participant surveys-interviews and a range of sources of scholarly literature, demonstrate that arbitrary, disparate, non-existent, and irrelevant criteria for performance evaluation in the field of film and digital media are common to many institutions, and this fact poses a no-win situation for faculty and their students---posing a risk and compromise to student learning while simultaneously undermining, dissipating or destroying a faculty career (Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff, 1997).

A reductionist view of the filmmaking process prioritizes a list of isolated processes of work that is performed by particular elite leaders of the production team, while all other follower members of the team are contentedly toiling as followers in technical-task isolation. In this ideal model, the whole team works in tandem, united in the end by common purpose. The team’s

leader would be either the director or producer, or both---yet leadership positions are the only ones recognized during a conventional performance evaluation---if at all. As the administrative systems in institutions of higher learning are designed according to a reductionist model, so are the policies and approaches that guide the evaluation of faculty work. Artistic, creative, scholarly and/or professional work by faculty in the field of film and digital media is diverse and unique oftentimes done by a team of many expert practitioners (or one auteur who wears many hats). According to many scholars and as argued in Chapter 5, the recognition and rewarding of work should not merely emphasize only the key leadership roles such as producer or director (Tomasulo 2009), and evaluations should not only be based upon cumulative results that are held in isolation from the process or approach undertaken while doing the work (Diamond and Adam, 2000 p 6-7).

Reframing our understanding about scholarship and the faculty reward system must coincide with an acknowledgement of disciplinary uniqueness and differences, and support the notion of individual faculty paths (Diamond and Adam 2000, p 1). Ontological change that leads to institutional recognition of artistic, creative, scholarly and/or professional practice and work for faculty rewards encourages a plethora of enhancements and further changes---such as interdisciplinary collaboration, and dissemination and accessibility of knowledge and information from the university to a wider audience including the general public---yielding direct and indirect benefits to the institution, to faculty, to students, and to society. In contrast to the traditional template that emphasizes scientific discovery and specialized text-based publication, faculty work in film and digital media is uniquely linked to the ideals of creative and artistic expression, and to commercial, industrial or other professional contexts. Artistic, creative, scholarly, and professional work in the field of film and digital media is a distinct area of

knowledge and practice where theory and practice can be uniquely interdisciplinary, collaborative, and relevant to all four of the domains of scholarship (Boyer, 1990); yet arguably it is also emergent through similar and comparable methods that are employed in scientific and humanities research practice.

**Part 5: Summary**

Faculty work in the field of film and digital media, auto/ethnographic writing, and many other alternative, expressive and creative forms of scholarship activities represent a significant deviation from traditional expectations because each emanates from the unique, specific, and personal perspective of *self*. Data, including personal observation, confirms an under-appreciation of *self* as an important alternative approach in research inquiry, and under-appreciation negates the need to identify the barriers that impede a fuller understanding. The research situation and research data confirm a need to develop strategies and solutions that can be utilized for recognizing and evaluating faculty work in the field of film and digital media. I am not content or interested to merely discover or prove the existence of barriers, or to blame the pattern making nature of the brain as cause for the insufferable nature of the status quo, but I do hope that the old barriers will not be able to remain as monolithic and impenetrable after my analysis is read and understood. I can see, feel, taste, hear and touch the barriers, so on the basis of clear empirical evidence and personal experience I am applying appropriate methods to facilitate a greater understanding of the problem, the intellectual and practical groundwork that leads to action, problem solving, and change.

The prioritization of scientism and text-based publication in specialized journals has served to undermine or compromise interdisciplinary collaboration, professional development, and the application of expert knowledge in social contexts. In response, in chapter 5 of this dissertation a new understanding about faculty priorities is illustrated and supported by relevant and clearly written criteria that is specific to the unique requirements for recognizing and evaluating the wide range of artistic, scholarly and professional work by faculty in film and digital media. Any notion that assumes institutions of higher learning to be unified in consensus

about change and consistent in practice would be naïve, superficial and simplistic. There are polarized conflicts and contradictions beneath the surface and between the lines of any institutional practice or policy decision. I do not expect or intend that my dissertation to be the absolute final word on the matter, but I do view it as part of a continuous process of personal journeying for greater understanding that (in the case of this project) leads to a process of institutional change and individual growth.

This dissertation primarily focuses upon the need for recognizing and rewarding artistic, scholarly and professional work forms of scholarship activity by faculty in the field of film and digital media. The scope and nature of this dissertation research is probably relevant and applicable to other academic disciplinary domains and fields that seek to improve local processes for evaluating faculty work that does not prioritize the narrow strictures of the traditional template---and this matter is recommended as an important and unmet area for further study. It is implicit and explicit in this dissertation that recognition of the unique and specific faculty work the field of film and digital media, appearing in all of its many creative forms, is necessary and possible, and that evaluation and rewards should include the broadest range of service activities and the sharing of knowledge through teaching (Boyer, 1990).

This dissertation aims to build a useful resource that emerges from methodological rigor, is expressed through self-reflective and self-critical writing, and conveys personal and collective knowledge and thoughts about the recognition and evaluation of creative scholarly work by faculty in the field of film and digital media other disciplines; generating a model for recognizing and evaluating artistic, scholarly and professional work in film and digital media. It is implicit, likely and welcomed that the arguments and model that emerge in this dissertation will resonate and find relevance for many faculty who are practicing in the field of film and digital media, and

in related fields such as photographic arts, fine arts (painting, printmaking, sculpture and others), many forms of design, theater and musical arts, and other creative areas of study and practice—and in many others where film and electronic/digital media are occurring that relate to anthropology, humanities, social sciences, natural and medical sciences.

I have built knowledge by reflecting upon the theoretical writings of others, and by written reflection upon my own first hand experiences with the processes and problems as an applicant for promotion of faculty rank on the basis of creative scholarship and professional work in film and digital media. Perhaps as the result of influences from schools of thought such as critical and postmodern theory, perhaps on the basis of common sense and logic, the research I have done for this dissertation has enabled me to reject positivist and post-positivist criteria as the sole measures for evaluating artistic, creative and professional work in the field of film and digital media. This dissertation demonstrates that performance evaluation can be designed to yield important information with great formative value when it is done for the purpose of improving, informing and appraising a faculty member's skills and self-awareness, but the process can also be conceived and designed so poorly that it is perceived as frightful, threatening and de-motivating (La Pelle, 1998). Unfortunately, chapter 4 of this dissertation also provides significant evidence that the latter is the more of a norm than not, demonstrating that the traditional template for performance evaluation of scholarship that is relied upon at many institutions of higher learning does not reflect an accurate understanding of the breadth of activities that are inherent to artistic, scholarly and professional work in the field of film or digital media.

Although I am not arguing for the abandonment or replacement of historical values and practices that serve to underpin the craft of conventional academic research in the Western

tradition, I do intend to advocate change and improvement to existing practices and notions that frame faculty performance evaluation in academic settings. Much successful work in the arts relies on inspiration born partially from vast reservoirs of knowledge, skill, and experience. The rationalized study, findings, and recommendations presented do not intend to replace intuition and inspiration with procedure, but rather to provide a better basis for recognizing alternative forms of work by faculty. Although this dissertation research project is not intended to be a study of organizational change, nor is it intending to be an analysis of organizational culture *per se*, it does intend to explore ways and possibilities for change to long-held ideas in academe about research and the output of research, including about the evaluation of research practices and subsequent research output. I do not arrogantly demand that a new orthodoxy for evaluation of scholarship be immediately embraced in all situations, but I do aim to make it significantly more difficult to hold onto the old ways. I do find personal difficulty in mustering the patience to accept the glacial slowness of change in institutional settings of higher education, and I am intolerant in the face of goose-stepping resistance to change, particularly when logic dictates an urgent need for change. Nonetheless, I am advocating for change, despite its difficulties.