

Part 3: Recommendations from theory and outcomes

The issue is not whether we should change, but whether any particular change proposed will make an improvement. The literature is replete with calls to move from frameworks to blueprints at every level. There are assumptions about what is happening and comparisons being drawn, but I am compelled to confront the notion promoted by avid proponents of the conventional system---that the unique and specific nature of work in film and digital media unique situations is not a form of scholarship and therefore recognition and rewards are limited, or not possible.

The heart of this doctoral dissertation is its theoretical conclusions and recommendations that have emerged from research data. The outcome of three theories were described in the previous section, derived from careful study of data---the literature, from surveying and interviewing of participants in this research, and personal reflection in the form of auto/ethnographic writing. Recommendations herein state who needs to pay attention to the research outcomes, with each recommendation relating back to the research problem and providing at least partial response to the research question. Ideally, it is anticipated that some or all of the recommendations will generate a new round of questions and topics for future study.

Part 3 consists of thirty-four recommendations (#1-34) that emerge in response to the research problem, research question and the need for change. The recommendations herein are intended for faculty members, for academic leaders in the field of film and digital media, and administrative policy makers in institutions of higher learning. The following section moves from general recommendations to increasingly specific recommendations for consideration by all concerned parties in a performance evaluation in the field of film and digital media, at departmental, college, and university levels.

General recommendations

Recommendation #1: The entire process of performance evaluation for the purpose of promotion of rank should be dumped. Advancement of faculty rank should be based on time served within the college or university, not on abstracted notions of scholarship and merit. By instituting this change (advancement on the basis of years of service), an illusion of meritocracy (and institutional stability) can be preserved, but its emphasis is shifted away from the impossibility of objectively measuring the merit, worth or value of faculty work in any particular field, and prioritizes the practical role that a faculty member serves at their place of employment as a teacher, researcher and provider of service. As Participant #4 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 (Respondent #1).

Advancement in higher education has been demonstrated to be *passive* because there is no substantive change in the job being performed by a faculty member who has been promoted or tenured, although there is a convoluted expectation that advancement is *active* (Pergement and Veum, 1995). To reconcile this discrepancy, this recommendation links a promotion of rank to the retention process. This recommendation remains consistent with Boyer (1990), that all domains and aspects of faculty work should be recognized (see recommendation #3). If a faculty member has been successfully evaluated for employment retention year after year then that same faculty member should be entitled to be promoted. A faculty member's promotion or tenure could still offer a raise in pay and other active benefits, but the process of achieving advancement and reward would be linked to time served and upon criteria that are relevant to the job being performed. The idea of a meritocracy in the evaluation of research and other

performance by faculty academia is delusional, at least when it comes to the appraisal of works of art such as that which emerges in the field of film and digital media, so the pretense of objectivity should be abandoned and replaced by a more neutral and fair solution.

Recommendation #2: Consider the advantages of a non-meritocratic institutional structure that has sustained discrepancies, inequalities, and inadequacies in the process of performance evaluation. Discard the myth of meritocracy by re-defining and expanding the notion of scholarship in higher education as inclusive of alternative approaches, methods and outcomes. While the desirability of meritocracy is arguable from negative and positive perspectives, perpetuation of the myth of meritocracy as superior and objective is overtly harmful because it discounts the most important causes of inequality that persist in the process of performance evaluation. It leads to unwarranted prominence of those already in the inner circles of power, while also sustaining the unwarranted marginalization of those who are not.

Recommendation #3: A new model for re-defining scholarship activity should rely upon Boyer (1990):

- The scholarship of discovery---original research that includes work that is creative in nature and purpose;
- The scholarship of integration---the synthesis of knowledge, skills and approaches;
- The scholarship of application---collaborative scholarly activities with others; collaborative sharing of professional and disciplinary expertise in diverse social, commercial, governmental, industrial and other developmental settings, within and beyond the institutional setting of higher education;

- The scholarship of teaching---the sharing and transformation of knowledge for the benefit of learners in any context (Diamond, 2002).

It is also recommended that the definition of scholarly activity be expanded to include:

- Conventional *and* alternative forms research activity that lead to the production of intellectual, artistic, and creative works (output) in all of the arts, including the field of film and digital media;
- Recognition of forms of writing for publication, presentation, performance, educational purposes, creative expression and other purposes, including auto/ethnographic and other forms of personalized writings;
- Work and activities by faculty that communicate across disciplines, between programs and departments, among institutions, and within the community.

Diamond (2002) wrote: “While the documentation of research and publication has become fairly standardized since the 1980s, demonstration of quality work in other domains is just beginning to receive attention” (p. 18). Many alternatives to the traditional and conventional three-part model of teaching, research and service have been identified and described in this dissertation (Boyer, 1990; Rice, 1991; Gray, Adam, Froh and Yonai, 1994; Hutchings and Schulman, 1999).

Recommendation #4: The recognition and evaluation of faculty work should be de-centralized and brought under local review and authority. Individual academic units should be given the responsibility of determining if a specific activity, work and approach are within the work of the discipline and the priorities of the institution, school, college, department and profession.

Central administrators or central committees should have no authority to make determinations about the recognition and evaluation of unique and specific attributes of faculty work. Each

department within each institution should decide by design or default the extent to which it will pursue *quality* in terms of (a) external perceptions and/or (b) fulfillment of internal purposes and agendas associated with field and disciplinary advancement, and with fostering individual achievement. It is recommended that we eschew aspirations for standardization, both institutional and national, and seek a more modest objective: to develop and provide a resource for applications that focus upon local expertise and local concerns.

Recommendation #5: An institution's published, formal documents should articulate the unique and specific attributes for recognizing and evaluating faculty work in the field of film and digital media. Formal documents or statements can include:

- Institutional mission and vision statement
- Departmental mission and vision statement
- Faculty handbook that is consistent with university bylaws

Recommendation #6: The process of performance evaluation should be cost effective and time-efficient. Faculty submitting a dossier for review should clearly and easily know what is the extent of effort and products that are expected of them, and what documentation is required, and what is the schedule of deliverables and decision making that pertains to the performance evaluation processes.

Recommendation #7: If the meritocratic process of performance evaluation is sustained, then committee members (in tandem with administrative authority) should assist faculty by providing proven examples or models that guide faculty through the entire process---from the outset of

employment, through the years of employment leading up to the application for performance evaluation, and throughout the entire process until completion (also see recommendations #31-33). This recommendation is particularly important if the activity is one that falls outside of the traditional areas of research and publication, such as work by faculty in the field of film and digital media.

Recommendation #8: Because so much of the source of quality in artistic, scholarly and professional work in film and digital media is individual, it is extremely problematic to assume that what works in one case will work automatically in another. In pedagogical approaches, there are no universal certainties. Therefore, if the meritocratic process of performance evaluation is sustained, then a new model for recognizing and evaluating faculty work in any discipline, including the field of film and digital media, should honor the approach and artifacts of work, rather than the conventional notion of artifacts *over* approach (Diamond, 2002). Borrowing from the theoretical models provided by Diamond and Adam (1993) and Glassick, Huber and Maeroff (1997), the criteria for recognizing approach and artifacts in faculty work in the field of film and digital media should focus on the following:

- The approach and activity require a high level of discipline-related expertise
- The approach and activity break new ground or is innovative
- The completed work has significance or impact
- The completed work can be peer reviewed by experienced and knowledgeable colleagues
- The approach and completed work demonstrate clear goals
- The completed work was adequately prepared
- The approach and completed work demonstrate appropriate methods

- The completed work demonstrates significant results in its completed form
- The completed work was effectively presented
- The approach and completed work are supported by reflective critique, both by the faculty who made the work and audience members

If the meritocratic process of performance evaluation is to be sustained at a particular institution, then a complex mathematical model should be used to judge the performance of faculty members. The model used to judge Olympic gymnasts is an example of what can be used. In the Olympics, gymnasts are no longer judged according to the perfect 10 as the ultimate goal. Now, gymnastic competitors get two scores---one each from two different panels of judges. There is an A score with its own judges, and a B score with its own judges. The A judges allocate a score that measures the difficulty of a move. The way to maximize one's A score is to "cram the toughest possible moves into your routine and pack them as tightly together as you can manage" (Ellenberg, 2008, p. 2). The A score starts at zero points and is incrementally increased, step-by-step, according to the difficulty of the moves and the routine. Each move has a known and highly precise point value and it is the job of the judge to notice and additively attach value to each move. The B score starts at the top of the scale rather than at the bottom, and counts every mistake by deducting points for each miscue (Ellenberg, 2008). Each mistake or miscue has a specific value, and these amounts are subtracted from a total of 10. The final tally is the sum of the A score and the B score.

The downside of this approach is a plethora of problems, and these problems outweigh any advantage that this approach might suggest. It is difficult to imagine an artist being motivated to make creative decisions about the writing, shooting or editing of a film on the basis

of accruing points---gee, this shot, this transition or this effect will be worth a bundle of points! But, if the meritocratic process of performance evaluation must be perpetuated at an institution, then a point-based measuring tool is probably a fair and objective solution.

Recommendations specific to the field of film and digital media

In the specific context of recognizing and evaluating the artistic, scholarly and professional work by faculty in the field of film and digital media, Tomasulo (2008) and Bukalski (2010) have provided the most guidance. The following is a composite group of recommendations that have emerged from data.

Recommendation #9: Artistic, scholarly and professional work by faculty in the field of film and video can be disseminated and evaluated in similar ways as some forms of conventional scholarship, although an understanding of this work is less well-developed and less well-understood by some within the academic community. The process of recognition and evaluation should emphasize the specific and unique aspects of work. Each type of work and each individual work exhibit specific intent, content, methodology, and product. Individual or group decisions during performance evaluation about these four elements should be based upon the ways that creativity, inquiry, and investigation were used to produce work in various artistic, scholarly, pedagogical, or other specializations within the field of film and digital media.

Recommendation #10: Completed creative work by faculty in film and video consists of products of research whose forms have a greater variety in length than is found in printed

materials. The length of a finished work is significant but not indicative of the effort required to complete it.

Recommendation #11: It should be recognized and appreciated that in performance evaluation it is extremely important to know what role a faculty member played on a particular production. In many cases, the faculty member had total responsibility for the production. In other cases, his/her role might have been that of writer, editor, cinematographer, art director, sound designer, etc. It is appropriate to give varying levels of credit for varying levels of responsibility. In cases of shared responsibility, it is best to rely on experts in the field to determine the relative importance of each individual's contribution.

Recommendation #12: All artists, scholars and designers in the field of film and digital media know that mere technical fluency is not sufficient for true quality. However, it is recommended that the performance evaluation include the formation of a list of characteristics that define individual achievement and general notions of technical quality associated with high-level individual work in the artistic domain---prioritizing and allowing for the recognition of fundamental knowledge and skills, and conceptual frameworks associated with disciplines and specializations relating to the field of film and digital media. A list forms the partial basis for describing attributes, capabilities, capacities, and the nature of work that are present when knowledge and skills are being applied in an advanced and sophisticated way, such as the artistic, scholarly and professional work by faculty in the field of film and digital media. The specifics associated with each characteristic vary among disciplines and specializations within the field. The 22-point list of production criteria by Tomasulo (2009) and the series of policy

statements by NASAD (undated) could be a starting point for determining an overview of the steps of work in the process of producing work in film and digital media.

Borrowing from portions of Tomasulo's (2008) 22-point list of measurable (quantifiable) outcomes for recognizing and evaluating the technical and creative aspects of student work in film and digital media, and using the four aspects/four phases model set forth in Chapter 4, the following criteria can be recommended (depending on the job performed by the faculty member on a particular project) in the following categories for performance evaluation:

Screenwriting

- Originality of premise
- Clarity of narrative
- Character development
- Dialogue
- Storytelling technique
- Shot design
- Acting performances

Production

- Cinematography
 - Shot composition
 - Lighting
 - Focus
 - Camera movement and support
- Production design
 - Wardrobe, hair and makeup
 - Set design

Audio

- Dialogue recording
- Production recording

Post Production

- Editing
 - Pacing
 - Editing for geography and space
 - Conveying information
- Special effects
- Sound design
 - Music
 - Sound mix (dialogue, music, sound effects)

A point-allocation scheme could be developed for adding and deducting points based on the

breadth and specificity of what is evidenced in the faculty's work. Score A could be an additive list that measures the difficulty, from relatively easy to astonishing---giving point value to a particular shot, its set decoration, the lighting of a scene or the compositing of a sequence; while score B could be a tally of mistakes or other problems---such as a focus problem, shaky camera, boom microphone in the shot, etc. What if the faculty member whose work is being evaluated has done several jobs on a particular project---directing, writing, producing, cinematography, editing, audio recording, etc.?---then a separate sheet for each job title should be done by each judge. The subjectivity that emerges when we try to develop an objective model or implement meritocracy in performance evaluation is obvious, and not highly recommended. An alternative approach would be to emulate the model used for a beauty pageant, but I believe that this option has been fully discounted in Chapter 4. The questions that have challenged and shown the conceptual weaknesses behind large-scale assessment systems should not be overlooked or easily dismissed. Systems that would replace substance with a false kind of objective, numeric evaluation are not a viable solution in the context of work in film and digital media because they would replace doing with counting.

As artists and designers in the field of film and digital media grow in sophistication, technique becomes more complex. Methods of intellectual pursuit, including analysis and interpretation are combined with the various techniques, artistic mediums, and methods of production, blended with them, integrated and synthesized at ever increasing levels of sophistication. Methods and techniques combine and integrate to become units, patterns, and entireties so that one acquires the ability easily to combine techniques, concepts, and process in a virtually infinite number of variations of art and design work. Often, those techniques become building blocks of still larger patterns, so that an artistic structure and an aesthetic architecture

emerge. Physical and intellectual skills gradually work in larger and larger conceptual and creative units. This reflects the same set of principles surrounding parts and wholes (Wait, M. and Hope, S., 2009).

Recommendation #13: Media production is inherently expensive. Thus it is not infrequent for a faculty member to be involved in seeking in support for creative work. This can be a time-consuming process, which requires clear written articulation of creative goals and methods. Credit should be given in the promotion and tenure process for the seeking of grants as well as for any grants received.

Recommendations pertaining to scriptwriting in the field of film and digital media

Recommendation #14: Screenwriting is a worthy artistic and academic endeavor in and of itself, and that scripts have intrinsic value whether or not they are produced as films, for television, or for other media form. The fate of a screenplay is not necessarily a reflection of its quality or the skill with which it is written.

Recommendation #15: The possibilities for publication of scripts are extremely limited relative to the number of scripts completed each year. In no case should a college or university require that a script be published in order to validate its use as an accomplishment in promotion and tenure cases.

Recommendation #16: The timeline of a commercial production is seldom aligned with the schedule expectations of faculty work in the academic world. Sometimes scripts are made into

successful films ten, fifteen, and even twenty years after they were originally written. This is far in excess of the length of time professors of screenwriting have available in order to prove the value of their work before being subjected to the tenure and promotion process.

Recommendation #17: Far more important than the *number* of scripts written by a faculty member, emphasis for recognition should be placed upon the challenges of the project as posed by its writer, the degree of originality demonstrated, the depth of the work, and the skill with which it is executed. As with any artistic creative endeavor, a scriptwriter produces multiple drafts before arriving at a manuscript ready for submission and dissemination; thus “one” screenplay is the result of numerous versions.

Recommendations for recognizing and evaluating the dissemination of work

Recommendation #18: Public showings of a film or video work to informed audiences should be considered dissemination of the work, equivalent to that of scholarly publication.

Recommendation #19: The quality of a film or video work may be partially indicated by any festival awards or prizes that have been bestowed upon it. Festival awards and prizes are evidence of a positive competitive judgment about the quality of the work. Selection of a faculty member’s creative work for showing at a festival that has a good reputation can be considered indicative of the quality of the work.

Recommendation #20: Selection for screening by an academic associations based on a preconvention evaluation can be considered an indicator of quality, provided the current reputation and procedures of the association are known.

Recommendation #21: It should be recognized that museums, media arts centers, film festivals, association conference and universities schedule public presentations. The prestige of such invitational showings varies, of course, depending upon the importance of the institution and the rigor of the selection process. Although such a presentation is difficult to document, it should be considered the equivalent of the presentation of scholarly papers for peer critique in academic settings.

Recommendation #22: When a faculty member's creative work is presented in a public venue or other venue or event, it is usual for the faculty member to orally (perhaps also in writing) introduce the work and to respond to any subsequent questions, comments, and criticisms. As highly educated and experienced professionals in the field, faculty members in film and digital media know how to make effective oral presentations that contextualize evaluations and assessments, and are aware of the things that they know and do. The recommendation is to learn effective ways to articulate and present this knowledge in convincing ways for those who don't know what we know and can't do what we do.

Improvement is always possible, but the fact that improvement is possible does not mean that we do not know what we are doing. All art and design professionals work their whole lives to improve their powers of self-assessment. In fact, if expert judgment were still trusted in our society and among policy-makers associated with higher education, there would be no need for

this paper. The problem is well-stated by Wait, M. and Hope, S., (2009):

It is not that we do not know how to describe our work, or how to make assessments and evaluations, but rather that we are probably not as adept as we need to be in explaining to others what we do, how it works, and why it works. We also need to improve our abilities to debate effectively when our explanations are rejected. Our purpose is to help us all think more deeply about communication, with the goal of maintaining assessment on terms useful and productive for the art and design profession. This is becoming increasingly problematic in these difficult times for all of American higher education. Therefore, maintaining assessment on our terms requires an increased focus and effort by all those with an interest in the future of our profession (p. 2)

Recommendation #23: The merit of a film or video work may be indicated by its broadcast on television. Greater weight is often given to works selected for network presentation than to those carried only locally. In all cases, it is important to consider the level at which the work has had public exposure. It must be acknowledged that television showings are not equally accessible to all types of work.

Recommendation #24: It should be understood that multiple showings/screenings of the same film are not the equivalent of reprints of a scholarly work. There is generally no such easy access to media works; thus, in most circumstances each showing of a media work makes the production available to a new, previously inaccessible audience. Recognition should be given to work that is shown in multiple locations, consider the reputation of the multiple venue(s) in which the work is being screened.

Recommendation #25: Film and video works may be disseminated through distribution agencies and companies, although most film and video distributors are commercial in nature, and the exclusion of a faculty member's work from such distribution is not necessarily an indication that it has little or no artistic or social value. It must be remembered that faculty works must compete for distribution with works produced by individuals whose careers are exclusively dedicated to creative film and video production.

Recommendation #26: The evaluation process should recognize all meaningful reviews of faculty creative work that appear in scholarly and professional publications, library media publications, and even, in some cases, newspapers. These constitute an important and serious form of peer review that should be recognized. In evaluating such reviews, as in the case of scholarly reviews, it is important to consider the reputation of the individual or institution contributing the evaluation.

Recommendation #27: It should be acknowledged and appreciated the possibility that appropriate means of dissemination and evaluation have not yet been devised for certain types of creative or artistic works. Multi-image pieces and some types of experimental work in film and digital media fall into this category. In such cases, it is necessary to rely on professional peer evaluations to establish the value and importance of faculty creative work.

Recommendation #28: Disseminated scripts must be evaluated as part of the promotion and tenure process, without the contingency that the script being produced as a film. In order to

achieve the threshold of dissemination, the possibilities for faculty screenwriting projects can include any of the following:

- Distribution of scripts to peer screenwriting professors at other universities for reading and evaluation;
- Distribution of scripts to professional organizations that include script evaluation sessions and/or partial or complete script readings among their activities;
- Distribution of scripts to organizations for possible production;
- Readings by local and regional groups, provided selection of material is based on a jury or panel decision rather than mere proximity to the writer;
- Publication of scripts in whole or in part. Publication possibilities might include the following:
 - Selection for existing or future print publications of the University Film and Video Association;
 - Selection for other print publications;
 - Selection for media publications of professional organizations;
 - Internet publication where allowed by institutional regulations.
- Peer reviews written by screenwriting professors at other colleges and universities----This might be completed for individual works or a body of writing.
- Peer review of scripts by the University Film and Video Association---The Association uses a blind selection process to select the scripts chosen for review at each annual conference. A peer reviewer produces a written review, and, in addition, the public discussion that follows the formal review can be recorded and/or transcribed.

- Screenwriting awards of merit by professional organizations---Using a blind review process, expert judges would normally select a limited number of scripts for recognition
- Reviews by industry professionals in situations in which institutions allow such reviews, and in the event that the industry professionals are sufficiently aware of the goals of the promotion and tenure process in academe.
- Optioning or actual production of scripts by recognized professional production companies; optioning indicates sufficient merit in a script to warrant a commitment.
- Published reviews in print or media format: These might include but would not be limited to print reviews that appear in the *Journal of Film and Video*, and reviews that appear in the DVD issues of the same periodical.
- Screenplay competitions that screenwriting professors are eligible to enter: In many instances, individuals who have already earned income as a professional writer may be ineligible to compete.
- Selection for competitive writing residencies, writing fellowships, and/or screenwriting awards or grants.

Recommendations for peer review

Recommendation #29: Faculty serving on review committees should focus on the quality of the product(s), and not whether or not the activity should be considered as scholarly. Committees should not be considering a need to categorize faculty activities. The system and criteria for performance evaluation at the departmental, college and university levels should be fair, clearly articulated, written, easy to understand, consistent (yet unique and specific) across the disciplines, openly available for review by all concerned parties, and recognizing of *difference*;

and no one particular field, discipline or group of disciplines, or particular group of faculty members or administrators, should determine or dictate what scholarship should be for another disciplinary field or group.

Recommendation #30: Peer evaluation of film or video work should be focused upon determining the probable difficulty of a faculty member's particular project that is under review.

Recommendation #31: A panel of three to five faculty experts be used in all cases involving the promotion or tenure of screenwriting professors, with the possibility that an industry professional might also be included on such a panel.

Recommendations for the post evaluation period

Recommendation #32: Bad news from an unsuccessful performance evaluation should be delivered with compassion, honesty, and always considering the feelings of the message's recipient.

Recommendation #33: Colleagues should be encouraged to interact professionally with the unsuccessful candidate after the denial of tenure, to preclude the possibility that a faculty member would be socially isolated with a sense of failure in a time of need.

Recommendation #34: The institution that has denied a candidate's tenure or a promotion should openly encourage and provide constructive, productive, and available mechanisms that directly and significantly help the individual to move on with his or her career.