

Part 4: Concluding Thoughts

In closing, I do not believe that there is a single formula, approach, package, or template that will satisfy the need for fairly and fully recognizing and evaluating faculty work in the field of film and digital media in every instance. All the data show clearly why a total reliance on quantifiable data, sometimes mischaracterized as assessment, is not consistent with the nature of evaluation in the arts, including work in the field of film and digital media. I cannot suggest just one way of doing a performance evaluation process that is better than all the other ways. A “best practice” should cover the range of recommendations presented herein, rather than focusing on a specific formula or approach.

There are conventional, highly developed evaluation systems in academic settings which function at all sorts of levels. These have intended to be consistent with the nature and expectations of faculty work and its many specializations. The proponents of conventional practice may not reflect an understanding of what is done in the field of film and digital media, or see validity in it because it is not consistent with science, social science, or humanities based views of how knowledge and skills are organized and taught, or how they are evaluated. But no one can say that those of us at the borders, we in the field of film and digital media, working within the general domain of art and design, do not have systems and approaches that work in terms of defining who we are as professionals, the broadness of scope in what we do, and the aesthetic/creative, technical, business, and legal nature of our field. Our unique and specific process of work and the nature of outcomes from our work prove the validity of our approach, and this combined whole should be the basis of an evaluation.

In performance evaluation of all faculty work, not limited to work in the field of film and digital media, it is necessary to consider complete wholes that may contain many parts or

elements. These parts may be evaluated separately, but the most critical thing is how the parts work together to produce a composite result. While it is important to have fully functioning parts, this does not mean that functioning parts will automatically create a functioning whole, much less an outstanding result. The composite result should be judged in terms of its unique and specific characteristics, and not overlook the importance of the work's intent. Intent is to be determined and articulated by the faculty member who developed and produced the work. Intent can be expressed in specific terms, and the approach of a particular work can be done in any one of many successful ways. The artistic aspects of work in film and digital media have an infinite number of possibilities, and the faculty artist makes particular choices among them. The nature of successful evaluation in artistic matters depends on understanding the relationships between the goals, conceptualizations, processes, and products of the creator in great depth, and then being able to evaluate the creator's success at developing connections between the goal, processes, and eventual product. Since there is an infinite number of goals, many of which may evolve as one creates, and since decisions about them are made by individuals, an effective performance evaluation requires deep knowledge and sophistication. It is for all these reasons that the artistic, scholarly and professional work by faculty in the field of film and digital media rely primarily on individual evaluation rather than standardized assessment.

If the two polar extremes of the continuum proposed by Braxton, Luckey and Helland (2007) were to be broadened to allow the inclusion of alternative forms of artistic, scholarly and professional work, an increasingly vast landscape would open in the middle of the continuum, enabling a synthesis of approaches, a meeting of the traditional/conventional with the creative/alternative/innovative to occur. Artistic, scholarly and professional work by faculty in the field of film and digital media can be located in the middle of the continuum, rather than

being placed on the extreme polar opposite from conventional research output---although until now such work is not recognized on its merits and its faculty practitioners are marginalized in conventional workplaces. A question for further study would be to demonstrate how the breadth and variety of art works and performances, including musical compositions, creative writings, paintings and others works of art can also be located firmly on the continuum.

Each institution, meaning its administrators and its faculty, are tasked to collectively answer for themselves the three following questions in the context of performance evaluation:

- Which characteristics or attributes will be evaluated?
- How will data be collected during evaluation?
- Who will do the evaluation?

If these questions are answered with clarity and honesty; considering *difference* among the disciplines, the *unique and specific attributes* of faculty work in the field of film and digital media, and is respectful and honest towards all concerned parties and interests, then the research problem and research question raised herein have been resolved.

Borrowing from an indigenous perspective it is clear that an important, fundamental and underlying notion that guides my inquiry and advocacy about change in the ways of recognizing and evaluating faculty work is the need for *respect*---a growing need for respect of the *self*---in the context of the individual person, in the context of community, and in the context of community as a plural entity of individuals. We need a growing and improved level of respect that honors excellence that is achieved in diverse ways, reaching beyond conventional notions of research and the limits of the status quo. In this light, common notions of hierarchical advancement and promotion, linear progress, the quest for more money and other value systems in our modern culture are only superficial indicators of group membership and group respect, a

means of rewarding competence, and acknowledgement that otherness is accepted by the insider group (Janis, 1982). Once the unmet need for a useful model emerges, underpinned by the value of true respect, including respectful acknowledgement of otherness, the research problem, the research question and its ramifications will disappear into history.

The notion of change and the patterns of resistance to change continue to affect the problem situation and are never far away from the research problem itself. The historical norm in organizations and institutions of higher learning is to prioritize equilibrium, yet this norm is also perceived to be constantly under threat by forces seeking to unbalance or disrupt the desired state of equilibrium. Despite the perception that equilibrium equates with stasis, the true nature of equilibrium is itself forever changing and is at odds with systemic nature of change (Buckley, 1968). Prioritizing the a state of equilibrium and stasis as necessary and ideal explicitly disallows change, and thus explains why institutions find it difficult to change.

Boyer (1990) and subsequent scholarly works have challenged faculty and administrators on a personal, professional and institutional level to rethink their scholarly identities and aspirations. A more broadly framed concept of research, where new forms of communication, creative expression and outreach are integrated and valued, must be implemented, specifically in the context of faculty promotion of rank, tenure review and in applications for faculty rewards at institutions of higher learning. Broadly-based and more coherent, relevant and pertinent consideration and evaluation of creative work and scholarly teaching by faculty in film and digital media fosters greater collaboration between faculty and administration, and more meaningful engagement of faculty with students and the community. Further, a new paradigm for consideration and evaluation of creative work will facilitate greater intrinsic motivation for creative work in the future in the context of teaching, leading to more possibilities for

interdisciplinary collaboration. Transparent and relevant criteria for evaluating and rewarding of creative work by faculty in film and digital media, and all other areas of fine arts, would encourage faculty to know that the scholarship of discovery, integration, application and teaching in filmmaking and media production practice, including scholarly teaching, can be considered as a complex and interrelated activity with value. A more integrative and holistic approach by faculty will result in the production of more creative resources for students and the public, in the forms of publication, broadcast, other public exhibition or performance, intra-organizational communication, or other conventional and non-conventional forms of scholarly outreach.

Institutions worldwide, with some notable exceptions, are applying outdated and relatively irrelevant criterion, thwarting most possibilities for fair and proper consideration or successful advancement of faculty who are engaged in creative work output as a necessary and logical form of expression. Irrelevant criterion that relate to work(s) in film, digital media and other forms of Fine Arts practice have led administrators to unrealistic expectations and an underestimation of faculty's creative work, a lose-lose situation for all concerned parties. There is confusion on all sides, resulting in creative faculty being hamstrung by an inconsistent application of rights and standing in the university and college setting, and a perceived disparity of opportunity amongst peers. Such disparity exacerbates the possible perception of non-advancement in career growth and provokes greater de-motivation toward research by highly motivated faculty members that would otherwise aspire to and qualify for promotion under more reasonable circumstances. Change is necessary at this time.