

# A Qualitative Study of Multilevel Faculty Motivations for Pursuing Engaged Scholarship

Michael Rios and Larissa Saco

## Abstract

Drawing on the narrative inquiry method, a qualitative study of 49 engaged scholar interviews at the University of California, Davis was conducted to understand motivations for practicing engaged scholarship. Notwithstanding the significant contributions to understanding faculty motivations in this field, we argue that previous research details the roles of individuals and institutions of higher learning while leaving room for further theorization of other important influences and their intersections. The study findings reveal that faculty report intrinsic, extrinsic, and relational motivations that interact at multiple levels of influence. These multilevel motivational influences have implications for faculty recruitment and retention, implementation of institutional support strategies, and recognition in merit and promotion.

*Keywords:* faculty motivation, engaged scholarship, interpersonal, community, policy



The movement for engaged scholarship has gained momentum and further institutionalization over time in higher education (Jovanovic et al., 2017), with its benefits for faculty, students, and community members gaining increasing recognition. Scholars credit engaged scholarship with fostering innovation in research and teaching methods (Bowen & Kiser, 2009; McKay & Rozee, 2004; Vuong et al., 2017), promoting principles of democracy and civic engagement on campuses (Jovanovic et al., 2017; Peters et al., 2008), fostering knowledge-building collaborations between campus and community partners (Jovanovic et al., 2017; Nicotera et al., 2011; O'Meara & Niehaus, 2009), and disseminating research findings that address public issues faced locally and globally (DeFelippo & Giles, 2015; Osborne & Wilton, 2017; Vuong et al., 2017). However, despite engaged scholarship's benefits, higher education's current promotion and tenure system lacks encouragement, fair evaluation, and sufficient rewards for the work of engaged faculty scholars (Colbeck & Weaver, 2008; O'Meara, 2010; O'Meara & Rice, 2005).

As the topic of faculty recognition in engaged scholarship continues to garner attention, grow, and evolve in higher education, questions remain about how to understand faculty motivations for pursuing engaged work, and how to create institutional supports that offer effective rewards in light of them. For example, faculty are situated within a complex set of power relations that span different levels, which affect their behaviors—from their individual experiences and interpersonal relationships to the communities, institutions, and policy settings in which they practice engaged scholarship. Understanding how motivations play out at these different levels is key for several reasons, including successful faculty recruitment and retention, identification and implementation of institutional support strategies, and the creation of a greater sense of belonging among engaged scholars. Moreover, a focus on motivations provides an alternative to a dependency on institutional norms or the availability of resources when it comes to faculty recognition and rewards with respect to promotion and tenure. In this article, we draw from Blanchard and Furco's (2021) conceptualization of engaged scholarship, which can be ideally defined as

a form of engagement “built on reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationships between members within and outside of the academy” (p. 19). This definition encompasses multiple frames of engaged scholarship, including community-engaged, publicly engaged, civically engaged, public scholarship, and critically engaged scholarship. Relatedly, Beaulieu et al. (2018) identified the following principles of engaged scholarship: high quality scholarship, reciprocity, identified community needs, boundary-crossing, and democratization of knowledge. These terms encompass attainment of the highest academic standards, mutual benefit between scholars and their community partners and collaborators, practical responses to community-identified issues, an orientation toward crossing disciplinary and knowledge boundaries, and the accessibility and dissemination of knowledge beyond the academy.

In reviewing the literature of faculty motivations for pursuing engaged scholarship, scholars have described intrinsic and extrinsic reasons constituting faculty motivation. *Intrinsic motivation* refers to individual knowledge, skills, and attitudes commonly attributed to demographics, prior experiences with academia, or individuals’ professional identity (O’Meara, 2008). *Extrinsic motivation* often refers to universities’ institutional mechanisms such as promotion and tenure, as well as other factors such as community partnerships and a scholar’s academic discipline (O’Meara, 2013). Although internal goals and external conditions are factors that motivate faculty and have been discussed as long-standing concepts in the literature, scholars have also argued that a simple intrinsic-extrinsic dichotomy provides insufficient theoretical basis for understanding the complexities of faculty motivation to pursue engaged scholarship (Colbeck & Weaver, 2008). In response to this critique, motivation models have become more sophisticated in recent years as scholars have more elaborately described motivational factors in personal, professional, and institutional domains (Wade & Demb, 2009). Scholars have identified a range of individual knowledge, attitudes, and skills affecting engaged scholarship motivation (Blakey et al., 2015; Hou, 2010), and some scholars have recognized more nuance in extrinsic motivation by describing separate institutional and environmental categories as well as providing analyses that consider micro and macro inequalities

present within university settings (O’Meara, 2013, 2016).

Within this promising direction in the literature, questions remain that deserve further attention and clarification. Institutional and nonindividual categories may still be too broad and thus obscure the particularities of interpersonal, community, and societal levels of influence on engaged scholars’ motivation. First, for example, an interpersonal motivation might entail a mentoring relationship, a community-level motivation may refer to an attachment to a specific neighborhood or place, and a societal motivation could indicate a focus on human rights or a state policy proposal. All of these motivations can be considered nonindividual motivations, but their specificity here at different levels of influence can provide more clarity about how motivations operate, and can also guide effective interventions at each level to support those motivations. Second, despite a general recognition of overlap among individual and nonindividual motivations, interactions among motivations are not well understood (Colbeck & Weaver, 2008; O’Meara, 2013). Lastly, although increasing numbers of motivational and engagement models have appeared in the literature (Colbeck & Weaver, 2008; Darby & Newman, 2014; O’Meara, 2008, 2013; Ward, 2010), the field lacks a clear or systematic way to compare and contrast elements in these models for empirical or practical purposes. An exception is O’Meara (2016), who identified both macro and micro organizational practices.

This article provides a response to the following research question: Why are faculty motivated to practice engaged scholarship? The findings reveal the existence of various intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that operate at multiple levels. Thus, we have used a multilevel frame to review the literature on motivational factors of engaged scholars with a focus on individuals, relationships, organizations, communities, and public policy. Following the literature review, we present a summary of the methods and findings from a study of 49 interviews across 10 colleges and schools at the University of California, Davis (UC Davis). The majority of the 49 interviewees possessed tenure or tenure-track appointments, and the majority of the 32 interviewees who responded to a demographic follow-up survey identified as a woman, a person of color, and/or a first-generation college student. The results

of the study are then presented using the aforementioned levels. The article concludes with a call for more relational approaches to understanding faculty motivations within institutions of higher education.

### Literature Review

The literature in this field recognizes faculty motivation to practice engaged scholarship at various levels, with particular elaboration of various individual and organizational mechanisms. For example, an array of motivational variables at the individual level are documented in the literature, including personal and professional experiences, identities, and epistemological approaches. The personal and professional identities of engaged scholars are found to be important, shaped by demographic, career, institutional, political, and civic influences (Colbeck & Weaver, 2008; DeFelippo & Giles, 2015; Nicotera et al., 2011; O'Meara, 2008; O'Meara & Niehaus, 2009; Ward, 2010). Scholars are motivated by their inclusive and social approaches to epistemology and knowledge production, wherein scholars challenge traditional forms of knowledge production and embrace engaged principles and practices in their scholarship (Colbeck & Weaver, 2008; O'Meara, 2008; Wade & Demb, 2009; Ward, 2010). Individuals' initial participation in engaged scholarship can be motivating in and of itself for future participation, according to more cyclical motivation models (Darby & Newman, 2014; O'Meara, 2013; Wade & Demb, 2009).

Organizational characteristics are well-documented in the engaged scholarship motivation literature as well. Documented influences include institutional type and mission (Nicotera et al., 2011; O'Meara, 2008, 2013; O'Meara & Niehaus, 2009; Wade & Demb, 2009), institutional expectations for the value of engaged scholarship (Lewing & York, 2017; Nicotera et al., 2011; O'Meara, 2013), as well as institutional policies and structures (Wade & Demb, 2009). Recognition and reward for community-driven research, teaching, and engagement in promotion and tenure protocols, faculty work expectations, and faculty appointments are widely called for by scholars (Darby & Newman, 2014; Forbes et al., 2008; Franz et al., 2012; Nicotera et al., 2011; O'Meara, 2008, 2010, 2013). Supportive institutional practices include resources for professional growth (Forbes et al., 2008; Franz et al., 2012; O'Meara, 2010, 2013), a clear defini-

tion of engaged scholarship (Franz et al., 2012), leadership support (Hou, 2010; Wade & Demb, 2009), financial support (Forbes et al., 2008; Nicotera et al., 2011; O'Meara, 2010; Wade & Demb, 2009), and a center for student engagement and community partnerships (Franz et al., 2012; O'Meara, 2010; Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013). Conducive work conditions are important as well, including workload (O'Meara, 2010), class schedule, academic calendar (Franz et al., 2012), autonomy, and organizational fit (DeFelippo & Giles, 2015). Campuses, departments, and disciplines are all important contexts for influencing motivation (Colbeck & Weaver, 2008; O'Meara, 2013; O'Meara & Niehaus, 2009; Wade & Demb, 2009).

Scholars also argue that community partners' and students' perceptions about the engagement arrangement are motivating factors, including whether they experience partnership and collaboration, satisfaction, and trust (Bowen & Kiser, 2009; Darby & Newman, 2014; DeFelippo & Giles, 2015; Franz et al., 2012; O'Meara, 2008, 2013; O'Meara & Niehaus, 2009). The literature has a significant focus on service-learning to improve learning outcomes and meet community needs, and so relationships and interactions in classroom and community settings between faculty and students, and between students and community partners, are also an interpersonal motivation (Bowen & Kiser, 2009; DeFelippo & Giles, 2015; Hou, 2010; O'Meara, 2008; O'Meara & Niehaus, 2009). Interactions with family members and colleagues, both internal and external to scholars' home institutions, were documented to positively influence faculty motivations toward engaged scholarship (DeFelippo & Giles, 2015; Hou, 2010; Jovanovic et al., 2017; O'Meara, 2008, 2013).

In the public engagement motivation literature, a variety of communities and community settings are discussed. O'Meara (2008) and DeFelippo and Giles (2015) found that engaged scholars are motivated by specific issues, people, and places, aiming to address problems that affect geographic locations and communities of people that matter to them. For example, such scholars may collaborate with particular community organizers, neighborhoods, or nongovernmental organizations, or may work with local government to impact policy for community benefit. Community and university relations are also part of engaged scholars' motivations, where scholars desire to build

partnerships (Abes et al., 2002; Banerjee & Hausafus, 2007), create community engagement opportunities (DeFelippo & Giles, 2015; Wade & Demb, 2009), push back against traditional exclusionary practices of universities (Osborne & Wilton, 2017), and colearn and coproduce knowledge with communities (Franz et al., 2012; Ward, 2010).

Scholars also discuss communities in the context of desired impacts from engagement, including beneficial or useful support to address public or community needs (Abes et al., 2002; Darby & Newman, 2014; Franz et al., 2012; Hou, 2010; O'Meara & Niehaus, 2009; Osborne & Wilton, 2017; Ward, 2010). Colbeck and Weaver (2008) found that, out of all their identified goal types, integrative social relationships, which "serve to maintain or promote other people or social groups" (Ford, 1992, as cited in Colbeck & Weaver, 2008, p. 11), were the most common among their study interviewees. Examples of this goal type include academically supporting students, serving society, and producing tangible benefits for communities, departments, and universities (Colbeck & Weaver, 2008, p. 16). Students make up a group of people that matter to faculty, with improved learning and development resulting from engaged scholarship as desired student outcomes (Abes et al., 2002; Banerjee & Hausafus, 2007; Blakey et al., 2015; Darby & Newman, 2014; DeFelippo & Giles, 2015; Franz et al., 2012; O'Meara, 2008, 2010). Professional communities that offer faculty support and socialization around engaged scholarship have also been documented (Baez, 2000; Franz et al., 2012; O'Meara, 2010, 2013; Wade & Demb, 2009). Several national organizations and networks, such as American Democracy Project, Campus Compact, and Imagining America, have been vital in this area (Orphan & O'Meara, 2016). However, leadership and support from disciplinary associations is lacking, with limited guidance coming from a few notable examples such as the Modern Language Association and the American Anthropological Association (Staub & Maharramli, 2001).

Although overall less documented in the literature, public policy work has been recognized as a mode through which individuals practice engaged scholarship, as well as an example of how levels intersect vis-à-vis scholar motivations. Public policy is an area that needs further conceptual clarity, including distinguishing whether public

policy is an explicit focus, an outcome of community engagement, or a by-product of research. In this context, more study is needed regarding means and ends of engaged scholarship vis-à-vis public policy, and when this type of work can be categorized as engaged scholarship—that is, when it is focused on reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships. It is not surprising that a policy focus often intersects, intertwines, and is associated with political engagement and social issues. For example, O'Meara and Niehaus (2009) found that some service-learning faculty are committed to a specific social cause, issue, need, or situation with impact ranging from local to global, where policy-related work may involve connecting people to political engagement opportunities, including policy advisement. In addition to people and places, engaged scholars are also committed to specific social issues. A range of social issues have been reported, including but not limited to environment, public health care, public education, urban planning, poverty, homelessness, sustainability, child advocacy, prisoner education, women's health, rural community vitality, and economic and social justice (DeFelippo & Giles, 2015; O'Meara, 2008; Peters et al., 2008). Commitments to social issues may be supported by a university mission and public funding source (Osborne & Wilton, 2017) and knowledge gained from an academic discipline (DeFelippo & Giles, 2015). Some researchers encourage engaged scholars to be conscious and reflective about their commitments to social issues and obligations in general, including biases, interests, roles, politics, identities, and stances (O'Meara, 2008; Osborne & Wilton, 2017; Peters et al., 2008). Studies report faculty desiring to address social problems by becoming experts to influence public policy issues, creating more socially just and democratic university classrooms and spaces, and making academic disciplines relevant in democratic transformations of higher education and community life (DeFelippo & Giles, 2015; O'Meara, 2008).

Although psychological, organizational, and cultural fields have furthered scholarly and practical understandings of faculty pursuing engaged scholarship, scholars have argued that models from these areas overestimate the roles of individuals and higher education organizations and underestimate other profound influences on engaged scholarship (O'Meara et al., 2011). In discussing the perspective of psychology and motivation,

O'Meara et al. (2011) suggest that "origins of faculty engagement" can also be shaped by "the social, economic, or cultural context" (p. 89). They argue these contexts could better explain "origins" such as "generational influences, involvement in identity politics, or power struggles for social justice" (p. 89). The present study addresses this tension in the literature by asking the research question, "Why are faculty motivated to practice engaged scholarship?" To address this question, we have paid analytic attention and description to various levels of influence on engaged scholars' motivations, including interpersonal relationships, community, and public policy.

## Methods

### Study Context, Sampling, and Recruitment

The present study was conducted at UC Davis, a public land-grant research university in the western United States. The aim of the study was to understand faculty motivations to practice engaged scholarship in order to inform faculty program and development opportunities as well as mechanisms that would increase recognition for this field in merit and promotion, given the focus on engagement at this research-intensive institution. Engaged scholarship—as an aspirational ideal and a set of emerging practices—remains peripheral to the actual work of most universities. The research literature explains this lack of priority by citing two powerful institutional barriers that affect both public land-grant and research-oriented universities in particular. The first is the growing privatization of public universities, with education being viewed increasingly as a private benefit rather than a public good (Boyer, 1990; Rice, 2016). As government funding decreases, the logic of the marketplace takes over, and it becomes difficult to justify research that does not promise short-term economic or commercial value (Harkavy & Hartley, 2012; Newfield, 2008). The second barrier consists of internal university practices (Gelmon et al., 2013; Jaeger et al., 2012; Stanton, 2012), particularly merit and promotion processes that skew faculty incentives away from engaged scholarship (Ellison & Eatman, 2008). These two factors are mutually reinforcing. The recent trend toward quantifying faculty research products and outlets via measures such as H scores and impact factors represents the transfer to the academy of the bottom-line metric mentality prevalent in

the private sector (Davis, 2009).

We therefore offer a threefold rationale for focusing on scholars at a public land-grant research university in California: (1) The literature on faculty motivations has a growing but small representation of institutional case studies conducted explicitly in the western United States (McKay & Rozee, 2004; Nicotera et al., 2011; Russell-Stamp, 2015), (2) none of the analyzed western U.S. institutions were explicitly described as public land-grant research universities, and (3) given the empirical and practical intentions of conducting this research, the study team sought to identify, first, motivations and related opportunities and constraints at UC Davis specifically and, second, those that may be transferable to other institutions of higher learning.

The choice of a single case study approach also has a threefold rationale: (1) Case studies are suited to addressing "why" and "how" research questions like the one pursued in this study, (2) they are used to understand and describe in-depth complex social phenomena, and (3) they attend to social phenomena rooted in lived experiences and events structured by multiple levels of influence (Yin, 2009). As stated in Robert K. Yin's (2009) book on case study research design and methods:

As a research method, the case study is used in many situations, to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena . . . the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events—such as individual life cycles, small group behavior, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, school performance, international relations, and the maturation of industries. (p. 4)

The study was reviewed, approved, and assigned exempt status from the institution's IRB, but all study procedures were implemented in alignment with IRB human subjects research principles and practices, including informed consent and confidentiality. A purposive sampling strategy was adopted that aimed for representativeness across engaged scholars' disciplines, faculty ranks, colleges, and schools. Study

team members created a list of initial interviewee recommendations based on their own knowledge of engaged scholars at the university, and they also emailed deans from each college and professional school requesting the names of five to 10 faculty members committed to engaged research and/or teaching. The study team emailed 67 recommended individuals to recruit for the study, and 54 of them participated in a one-hour interview, yielding an approximately 81% response rate. Of the 54 interviewees, 49 individuals were considered to hold an academic position; therefore, five interviewees holding a nonacademic position were removed from the sample for analysis.

The 49 interviewees are affiliated with 10 academic colleges and professional schools across the university. The schools and colleges with the most interviewees include the College of Letters and Science, the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, and the School of Medicine. Approximately 49% of the sample are full professors, and over half of the interviewees have been with the university for over 10 years. At UC Davis, tenure is granted at the associate professor level for all colleges and schools. Additional information on institutional characteristics is presented in Table 1.

After all the interviews were conducted and analyzed, the authors sought to contextual-

**Table 1. Institutional Characteristics of Interviewees**

Characteristic	<i>n</i>
<b>College or School</b>	
College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences	7
College of Biological Sciences	3
College of Engineering	5
College of Letters and Science	10
School of Education	4
School of Law	5
School of Management	2
School of Medicine	5
School of Nursing	4
School of Veterinary Medicine	4
<b>Title</b>	
Professor	24
Associate professor	8
Assistant professor	10
Assistant adjunct professor	2
Lecturer SOE (Security of employment)	1
Other <sup>a</sup>	4
<b>Years at Institution</b>	
Less than 5	9
5–10	11
More than 10	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>

<sup>a</sup> Interviewees in the “other” category held academic administrator and staff positions but not professorial or lecture positions. Affiliations in this category include directors and codirectors of institutionally affiliated centers, professional researchers and research administrators, and clinical staff in social work.

ize the interview findings with respondents' self-reported demographic characteristics. Based on manuscript reviewer comments, the authors created and distributed an electronic follow-up survey to the 49 respondents in the study's analysis sample in August 2022. This Qualtrics survey included the following three demographic questions: (1) "How do you describe your racial and/or ethnic identity?", (2) "How do you describe your gender identity?", and (3) "Are you the first in your family to receive a four-year college degree?" The first two survey questions allowed for multiple answers and included a text entry option, and the third survey question allowed for a single answer. The survey was distributed via email to respondents, followed by one email reminder. A total of 32 respondents from the analytic sample completed the survey, yielding a 65.31% response rate and meeting the general norm of 20 to 30 completed responses in nonethnographic, interview-based qualitative work (Warren, 2001). Demographic data responses were collected anonymously to promote trust, rapport, and commitment to the study (Carr et al., 2018).

Most survey respondents (75%) described themselves as a woman, a person of color, and/or a first-generation college student. Women made up a majority of the engaged scholar survey sample (59.4%). Underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities made up 15.6% of demographic survey respondents, compared to 10.2% of senate

faculty at UC Davis, and people of color represented 37.5% of survey respondents, compared to 26.1% of senate faculty at UC Davis (see Table 2). These figures are consistent with scholarship finding that women and faculty of color are more likely to conduct engaged scholarship compared with men and White faculty (Abes et al., 2002; Antonio et al., 2000; Astin et al., 2006; Baez, 2000; O'Meara, 2002). The demographic survey also reported one respondent as nonbinary (3.1%) and a little under a third of the sample (28.1%) as the first in their family to receive a four-year college degree.

### Qualitative Data Collection and Development of the Interview Guide

Between November 2017 and February 2018, the interviews were conducted with individuals who practice engaged scholarship, the majority of whom held tenure-track appointments (see Table 1). Initial interviews were conducted face-to-face by the principal investigator and a trained graduate student researcher, followed by the remainder of interviews conducted by the graduate student researcher. Interview questions focused on individuals' experience navigating and practicing engaged scholarship, including the request for individuals to share a story of a project or personal experience. Interviews often became a reflection on the interviewee's research and teaching, and the joys and challenges of working in an academic institution. The specific ques-

**Table 2. Race and Ethnicity Comparisons Between UC Davis Faculty and Survey Respondents**

Category	UC Davis faculty <sup>a</sup>	Survey respondents
Underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities <sup>b</sup>	10.2%	15.6%
People of color <sup>c</sup>	26.1%	37.5%
<b>Total (N)</b>	1,400	32

<sup>a</sup> UC Davis faculty data were obtained from UC Davis Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (2020), which reports data collected in October 2016 on Academic Senate faculty that hold tenure/tenure track titles of assistant, associate, or full professor.

<sup>b</sup> UC Davis defines underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities as "African Americans, American Indian/Alaska Native, Chicana/Latinx (including Puerto Rican), and Pacific Islander (including Native Hawaiian)" and excludes the categories "Other White/Unknown/Decline to State and White" (UC Davis Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, 2020, Notes, para. 1).

<sup>c</sup> UC Davis defines people of color as "all underrepresented minorities and Asian categories (Chinese-American/Chinese; East Indian/Pakistani; Filipino/Filipino-American; Japanese American/Japanese; Korean-American/Korean; Other Asian; SE Asian[,] not Vietnamese; and Vietnamese)" and excludes the categories "Other White/Unknown/Decline to State and White" (UC Davis Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, 2020, Notes, para. 1).

tions from the interview guide that relate to motivations, the focus of the present study, are as follows: (1) “Did you have any key mentors or people who deeply influenced who you are, what you believe in and what you’re committed to in your work and life? Tell me about them.” (2) “What led you to do publicly-engaged scholarship? Had you been doing publicly-engaged scholarship before you came here [UC Davis]? What attracted you to do this type of scholarship?” (3) “What would you say most motivates you to do publicly engaged scholarship? What are you most excited or passionate about? What are the goals you most want to accomplish in this aspect of your work? Not so much the goals that are in your job description, but the goals you hold personally?” (4) “Did you have any life-changing experiences that put you on the path that led you to be doing what you’re doing today? Tell me about them.”

Interviewing faculty exemplars is a methodological approach that has helped shape the literature on engaged scholarship motivation (O’Meara, 2008; Peters et al., 2008). The present study builds on this tradition by centering engaged scholars’ practice stories, wherein faculty describe an instance of their scholarship in depth to illuminate the practical contours of their work (Forester, 1993). The theoretical approach that informed the design of the study’s interview guide was the narrative inquiry method (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), which lends itself to practice stories by illuminating the storyteller’s meaning-making from actual lived experiences. These stories inform critical assessments of both knowledge production and practice in interdisciplinary fields, which maps well to engaged scholarship as both a concept and a form of critical praxis that can transcend disciplinary boundaries.

The narrative inquiry method is not a fixed protocol and can vary in approach by study (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2007), but the element threading approaches together is attention to a study’s particular field and interviewees’ personal, social, and historical contexts (Clandinin, 2006). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space that involves “the personal and social (the interaction); the past, present, and future (continuity); and the place (situation)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 56). These dimensions informed the interview questions’ focus on personal trajectories

and relationships with people, places, and events that may have influenced motivations for their engaged scholarship projects and aspirations.

### Qualitative Data Coding and Analysis

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then imported into MAXQDA. Similar to prior qualitative scholarship on engaged faculty perspectives (Darby & Newman, 2014), the coding and analysis plan drew from Hennie Boeije’s (2010) widely cited coding procedure. After the data collection of interviews was complete, the graduate student researcher who was present in all of them began with an initial read-through of the transcripts and proceeded with open coding the data in MAXQDA. Regular check-ins occurred among the research team about the development of concepts and categories, drawing from the team’s collective experience conducting and reading literature on engaged scholarship.

After reaching saturation of the initial codes, the graduate student researcher and PI progressed to axial coding and continued regular check-ins. This process led to the definition and delineation of the following axial codes: Alternative ways of producing and disseminating knowledge, engaged scholarship’s scales of impact, a sense of obligation to people and places, and a personal sense of reward and fulfillment. The third phase, selective coding, then commenced between a second graduate student researcher and the PI (the authors) for processing the theoretical models and evidence from an extensive literature review on faculty motivations for pursuing engaged scholarship. After observing the literature’s more detailed elaborations of psychological and organizational factors in contrast to the data’s equal complexity of community, policy, and interpersonal factors, the authors decided to apply a social ecological lens to the data. The interview excerpts were well fitted to social ecology’s individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy levels of analysis (McLeroy et al., 1988; Sallis et al., 2008), demonstrating the empirical efficacy of this analytic lens and addressing a meaningful tension in the conclusions found within the faculty motivations literature.

### Trustworthiness of Findings

The rigor of the present study is evidenced by the ways in which our methods align with



Andrew Shenton's (2004) "provisions" of trustworthiness, which are based on the methodological contributions of Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition to the detailed transparency in our research protocols provided above, and the limitations noted later in the article, below we explain the provisions of trustworthiness that we applied for this study.

We adopted appropriate, well-recognized qualitative research methods consistent with extant interview studies about engaged faculty motivations (Darby & Newman, 2014; O'Meara, 2008; Peters et al., 2008). Research team members developed an early familiarity with the culture of the participating organization through years-long occupational and educational affiliations with the university. The study designers employed the triangulation of different respondent types (representing various schools and colleges at the study institution), job titles, years at the institution, racial and/or ethnic identities, gender identities, and generational college statuses (see Tables 1 and 2). Triangulation was also supported by conducting follow-up surveys to quantitatively contextualize select social identities represented in the sample, while relying on interviews to qualitatively understand how and when social identities and experiences may shape faculty public scholar motivations.

Research team members adopted both written and verbal strategies to help encourage honesty during interviews, including scheduling in-person interviews, sharing their positionalities as engaged scholars, expressing openness about using the data to improve support of engaged scholars, and reassuring respondents of their rights to confidentiality, asking questions, raising concerns, and skipping questions or removing themselves from the study without consequence. As reflected in the interview questions, iterative questioning took place in the interview dialogues to clarify and elaborate on expressed perspectives for both the interviewer's and the interviewee's understanding.

Regarding data processing and intercoder reliability, an initial graduate student researcher led the open and axial coding process, and a second graduate student researcher led the selective coding and social ecological analysis. Although only one graduate student researcher at a time coded at each of these stages, early and on-

going debriefing sessions took place among the research team to exchange reflective commentary on data collection impressions and analytic patterns throughout the life course of the study. Data analysis also entailed negative case analysis to account for all the data excerpts, categorizing each of them into analytic themes. Quoted data excerpts are included in the following section to thickly describe themes for readers' own assessments of the findings.

## Findings

We analyzed the interview data and ascertained that faculty motivations for pursuing engaged scholarship existed at multiple levels. It is worth noting that the findings draw attention to interpersonal, community, and public policy sources of motivation that we argue deserve more elaboration in the literature. The following section discusses the findings organized at the individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy levels.

### Individual Level Motivations

Individual experiences shape scholars' motivations to pursue engaged scholarship in their academic career. Interviewees spoke about their personal and professional identities informing their decisions to become engaged scholars, drawing from experiences being raised in families and communities within contexts of race and ethnicity, education, immigration, income, and geography. A number of interviewees touched on the theme of personally experiencing structural inequities, such as racism, sexism, and poverty, and using education and knowledge to effect change. They explained how engaged scholarship connects to their individual passion for intellectual development and lifelong learning, motivating them to both understand and resolve complex problems. For example, a professor in Native American Studies who works with community partners on how to form mutual relationships that support Native self-determination initiatives shared: "I grew up spending a lot of time outside. I grew up [as] one of the very few minorities in the community where I grew up and dealt with racism, both overt and covert, in multiple ways growing up, so I was drawn to social justice issues that deal with the environment." Scholars may turn to engaged work for its capacity to address social inequities experienced on a personal level.

In the study, engaged scholars recognized that they never have all the answers, yet individually they have the desire to keep learning and growing. An assistant adjunct professor in the School of Management explains how their research connects to their individual passion for personal development: “And just the intellectual curiosity of all the things you have to learn and continue to learn. Right? It’s a lifelong learning process. You can’t ever be truly up to date. You can never hope to know everything you need to know. So, there’s this constant charge to continually learn.” While motivated to understand complex problems, scholars are also individually motivated to have an impact by concretely addressing those problems. A professor in the School of Education who focuses on STEM education for high school youth shared,

What I discovered was that, even the more tedious moments of it, I enjoyed them more, because I felt like I was doing something good. That was one moment, not the only one, clearly, but a moment late in my college career where I thought, I really want something that has that applied aspect to it, and that feels like it’s a tangible good that I’m doing. . . .

Such feelings of self-efficacy served as an individual motivational basis, and were also closely tied to the ways individual scholars personally connected with others.

### **Interpersonal Level Motivations**

Interpersonal experiences also fueled scholars’ motivations to address public needs and overcome setbacks along the way. Interviewees described a sense of fulfillment from making a positive difference in people’s lives. Individuals shared stories of influential relationships on their paths to becoming engaged scholars, including with individual family members, community partners, university colleagues, and students. A professor in the College of Letters and Science, who collaborates with deportees in Mexico, offers the following example of the importance and impact of relationships in engaged work:

We have his story that’s been published. His daughters have seen it. They know it’s out there, and if they have lost him . . . and they’re somehow able to find out where the web-

site is, and were to contact us, that would be something that we could at least tell them what happened . . . clarified for me how important it is what we’re doing, even just at this interpersonal level.

Interviewees also appreciated guidance from dedicated mentors, who demonstrated the importance of cocreating knowledge and disseminating findings to create positive impacts that address social issues and produce beneficial outcomes for involved places and people, such as students and community partners. A professor in the School of Medicine shared a story about meeting their mentor who prioritized community needs:

And I remember him saying, “If I’m going to help you, I need you to make sure that you stay true to what you are saying you’re going to do. And that’s to help the community.” And I remember just thinking profoundly like, wow, he not only believes this and says it, but he lives it.

For another faculty member, an assistant professor in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, it is important that their research is relevant and understood in accessible ways: “I want something that [a family member] can clearly articulate, that my research matters and this is why, versus something that’s articulated in a tenure file as an impact factor or citation count.” The stories shared by interviewees capture a range of interpersonal relationships—from early childhood through completion of formal education to the types of relationships established with peers and individual community members.

### **Organizational Level Motivations**

Organizationally, interviewees indicate motivations based on the university’s institutionalized principles that align with engaged scholarship. An associate professor in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences observed:

There is more and more support at the university level, again the interest or commitment of the Provost for this community engaged scholarship strategy, that speaks greatly to the value that the university is putting on the recent relocation of *Imagining America* to UC Davis

similarly I think represents a commitment of the university for engaged scholarship.

Scholars noted that the mission of a land-grant university aligns with scholars' desires to partner with and benefit communities, as well as integrating research with teaching. They recognized this alignment despite the complicated history of public land-grant universities with regard to building systems of oppression, land dispossession, and ties to government and industry, which several interviewees acknowledged. An assistant professor in the School of Education indicated the reason they chose to take a position at the university: "So I ended up at UC Davis because the opportunity to work and create and teach and do the theoretical and then apply it to actual products, apply it to learning and teaching, that's what brought me here." Interviewees also spoke about the university's institutional identity coinciding with the goal of making a difference through engaged scholarship. A professor and director of a health disparities research center shared the following perspective on the university's purpose:

I think that the mission of the university, in terms of research, education, and service is related pretty much, being a land-grant public institution, that we are to serve. And serving means not only through education, but also through service and through reaching out to communities and trying to make things better for, in my case, in underserved communities.

### **Community Level Motivations**

Interviewees also reported developing a sense of obligation at the community level, many discussing attachments to specific populations and places. A lecturer in the School of Law powerfully stated: "Then there's those of us who come from that community and of course this is the whole reason why we're here." Similarly, a professor in Native American Studies identified their attachment to place as the impetus for their research:

I grew up without electricity for the first ten years and we got our water from a spring and the spring dried up part way through my childhood. It was related to some changes with

the management of a mill on the other side of the hill. So, after that, we had to dig a well, but I guess to say, I spent a lot of time outside so this region is really important to me.

Individuals also expressed commitments to produce knowledge that would benefit communities that face social injustices, such as poverty and racism. An assistant professor in Human Ecology explained their motivation:

The reason I do the work and tend to focus on marginalized communities is [that] I've seen what good research can do in terms of capturing people who listen or people who make decisions and what good research can do to help people listen to the challenges that are going on or draw connections.

Sometimes scholars shared their prior hesitancy to start engaged work, but then observed the positive impacts it can yield. A professor in the College of Letters and Science remembered the following transformation in their scholarly trajectory:

I was very happy in the archive . . . I think I overcame that by seeing work that other people were doing and seeing the potential for the impact that community-based work can achieve, and gradually got over my fear or reluctance or whatever that was. And now I can see very clearly the potential impact of work, of community-based work.

Other scholars discussed the imperative of people being involved in the problem-solving related to ecological issues. A professor in the School of Veterinary Medicine elaborated: "I learned how important communities and humans were in that equation. . . . Not only were we the ones that were changing environments that made them less optimal for wildlife populations, but we were also the only ones that could reverse that." A professor in the College of Biological Sciences similarly discussed their following interest: "Human activities have a really big effect on these ecosystems. . . . I could see these ecosystems decline. That's why humans have to be part of the whole ecosystem. . . . It was just obvious that humans had to be involved in the ecology."

Interviewees also reported experiencing community-level sources of motivation on their university campus. At both undergraduate and graduate levels, students comprise communities that motivate engaged teaching and collaboration for scholars. Individual scholars also benefited from groups of colleagues who share similar engaged scholarship interests and dedicate time and expertise to collaborative efforts. Through such campus community supports, faculty feel encouraged in their commitments to the public good by directing their academic skills and education toward engaged scholarship.

### Policy Level Motivations

In terms of public policy, scholars expressed a personal obligation to affect policy as a way to spur social change. Interviewees experienced reward from influencing public discourse; affecting policy issues; producing applied, tangible products with the results of their scholarship; and seeing the impact of policy change. A professor in Earth and Planetary Sciences emphasized their urgent, policy-level sense of obligation: "I'm trying to motivate individual change but also I'm trying to motivate people to get their government to change . . . because I work on an issue that is extremely pressing and rapidly moving, and we have to do something about it quickly." Another faculty member, a professor in Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies, described the intellectual sense of reward from partaking in politically relevant work:

Because you become much more sensitized, especially in the fields that I work in, to the way that your body doesn't stop at its skin. It goes out from there. And thinking about the social and political implications of that is probably what has made it intellectually really interesting to do community work.

Scholars want their scholarship not only to be published in journals, but also shared widely to influence important decisions affecting communities. A professor in Evolution and Ecology, who is a strong advocate in government, media, and educational circles, shared:

You can write as many publications as you want, but mitigation lies in the hands of policy makers and government agencies, and they need

science. They need a scientist to talk to in ways that they can understand and take up and then use.

Individuals also articulated engaged scholarship's influences on law and policy and potential benefits for the public. An associate professor in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences who directs an action-oriented research center shared: "What motivates me is really the impact, the benefits that we can have on changing public policy, on supporting community empowerment, on channeling more resources towards disadvantaged communities, that kind of thing." As is apparent in this quote, this conceptualization of impact intersects at community and public policy levels. Other interviews expressed impacts that cut across two or more levels, which suggests that interventions at different levels can work together and complement each other, and that perhaps concepts such as power, inequality, and differential access may be implicated at multiple levels of influence as well. As evidenced by our study's examples, a focus on policy is more than regulatory reform; it also encompasses aspirations toward political, societal, and environmental change.

### Implications

The findings provide evidence for exploring ways that institutions of higher education can support faculty at multiple levels, especially at universities that prioritize research over teaching and service, while at the same time increasing efforts to recruit and retain women and faculty of color. Interviews qualitatively explored how and when social identities and experiences have shaped faculty public scholar motivations. When asked about motivation, some engaged scholars spoke about experiences being raised in families and communities within contexts of race and ethnicity, education, immigration, income, and geography. At the individual level, a number of interviewees touched on the theme of personally experiencing inequities, such as racism, sexism, and poverty, and using education and knowledge to effect change.

The study underscores concerns about faculty recruitment and retention of engaged scholars, especially women and faculty of color, given that these populations represented a significant percentage of the engaged scholars in our survey sample. More broadly, a focus on recognition of engaged scholarship necessarily encompasses equity

in scholarship and epistemic inclusion, especially among faculty of color who practice engaged scholarship (Settles et al., 2019, 2020). Such recognition includes valuing the full array of faculty life experiences and ways of being in the world beyond socialized disciplinary identities; it includes the different types of knowledge that faculty bring to bear on their scholarship, and the diverse approaches to how knowledge is produced, with whom, and with what effects. To consider engaged scholarship as an equity issue challenges traditional knowledge communities in the academy and the ways these spaces are policed that devalue engaged scholarship. A key issue concerns how Whiteness reproduces social hierarchies and norms about engaged scholarship and how socialized behaviors support and reinforce particular faculty motivations over others, and related expectations for promotion and tenure. Often, engaged scholars are tokenized. At other times they are met with resistance, hostility, and dismissiveness by their colleagues. These types of experiences also do epistemic harm and highlight tensions of othering and belonging inherent in structural marginalization (powell, 2012).

Relatedly, the study has implications for faculty recognition and the role of the promotion and tenure system (Colbeck & Weaver, 2008; DeFelippo & Giles, 2015; Franz et al., 2012; Jovanovic et al., 2017; Nicotera et al., 2011; Wade & Demb, 2009). Responding to faculty motivations at multiple levels can more holistically meet individual and collective needs, which has implications for promotion and tenure. Such a holistic approach is also a response to scholars who call on higher education leadership “to diagnose micro and macro inequalities in how diverse forms of scholarship are recognized” (O’Meara, 2016, p. 104). Insights from interviewees’ promotion and tenure reflections articulate an array of challenges and opportunities for universities to respond to engaged scholarship motivation at multiple levels of influence. Universities would gain by taking more holistic and multilevel approaches to recognition and rewards, thereby responding directly to faculty motivations rather than framing reward systems solely on institutional norms or the availability of resources, because multiple levels of influence have the potential to support faculty motivation and subsequent productivity.

Possible forms of multilevel institutional

support include providing individual faculty clear merit and promotion and tenure guidelines, or examples of engaged scholarship evidence, both of which could reduce confusion about what counts in dossier reviews. At the interpersonal level, mentorship by senior engaged scholars and establishment of peer support networks could help scholars gain firsthand knowledge from engaged scholars who have successfully navigated the system of faculty personnel reviews on such topics as how to articulate holistic and impactful representations of community-engaged research and/or teaching. Although more common, organizational level supports are also vital. For example, explicit merit and promotion policies signal to faculty that their work is supported by their institution, while also providing guidance to department chairs, faculty personnel committees, and others who review faculty dossiers. Similarly, faculty recruitment and retention efforts that make explicit mention of faculty public scholarship are an important strategy to ensure a more diverse professoriate. Resources that support faculty involvement in engagement centers, recognition awards, and grant programs are other examples. Shifting to the communities that are the focus of much engaged scholarship work yet receive little to no institutional resources, grant assistance to support these community partnerships, as well as community coauthorship recognition, would provide significant recognition of the labor behind the coproduction of knowledge. Additional ways to recognize partners as coequals include community partner involvement in merit and promotion reviews, as well as the establishment of IRB community advisory boards. Lastly, the community of engaged scholars can be further enlarged, especially in the STEM fields, through institutional support strategies that mirror engaged scholar motivations to produce research that responds to societal challenges and/or has public policy impacts. Such a focus on broader impacts is a timely response to growing public criticism of institutions of higher education.

Faculty recognition in the merit and promotion system is not the only example to illustrate how institutions can provide multilevel supports that match faculty motivations. Similar approaches can be applied to increasing faculty involvement in community-engaged learning or multiyear anchor institution initiatives. A diversified investment strategy that spans supports at

different levels will pay dividends in terms of individual meaning, creating a sense of faculty belonging, increasing retention rates, enabling new forms of knowledge production, and demonstrating community-based and policy-relevant impact.

To further bolster motivation, and to prevent hesitation to act on those motivations, the work of engagement needs to be recognized and not punished by the institution. In reviewing our interviewees' promotion and tenure reflections, a few interviewees noted how some department leaders and colleagues privilege traditional scholarship in faculty evaluation, create conditions that compel engaged scholars to be risk averse, and discourage engaged scholarship through punitive measures. Moreover, engaged scholarship is one way to assess the accountability of institutions of higher education to the mission of the university. Engaged scholarship is especially vital for land-grant universities, which espouse adherence to the public good or societal benefit. This form of scholarship is also an avenue for unleashing faculty innovation and creativity, as well as leveraging additional sources of funding.

### Conclusion

This study addresses a gap in the literature by focusing on different levels of influence on engaged scholars' motivation and offers a nuanced reading that takes into account an individual's life experience, meaning-making, and sense of belonging. Based on data from 49 interviews detailing practice stories of engaged scholarship at a public land-grant research university, this study sought to understand faculty motivations for this type of scholarly practice. Interviewees reported individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and public policy influences on their motivation for engaged scholarship. The results offer an analytical structure for conceptualizing interactions between motivational themes and levels of influence, as well as a practical approach for university leadership to identify areas of change in institutional policies, programs, and processes to better support engaged scholarship, especially around promotion and tenure.

Results from this study have already directly influenced an implementation strategy at UC Davis centered on faculty recognition and rewards. The newly formed Office of Public Scholarship and Engagement initi-

ated several faculty-facing programs and resource supports between 2019 and 2021. At the individual and interpersonal support levels, this new office offered guidance and resources for faculty seeking evaluation of their public engagement activities for merit, promotion, and tenure, as well as the establishment of a Public Scholars Community to connect engaged scholars to one another. At the organizational level, several cohort-based faculty fellows programs were created and focus on advancing individual scholarship and integration of community engagement in coursework. Additionally, a research grant program supports university researchers who are working in partnership with nonuniversity groups. Although much work remains to effect change in merit and promotion policies, the office has begun consultations with the university's faculty senate to consider changes to the academic personnel manual, the policy document that describes expectations with respect to research, teaching, and service. At UC Davis, the areas still most needing attention are community and public policy level motivations. However, plans are in the works to provide community partners temporary affiliate status that would allow them to gain access to training opportunities, library services, and university events, among other benefits. Additionally, internal collaborations are being explored to build the capacity of individual scholars to communicate and disseminate their research through nonacademic channels, including public policy briefs.

The present study's findings bolster arguments for multilevel approaches where personal commitments, knowledge production and dissemination, and outcomes are motivated and experienced not only at a few levels, such as the individual and institutional, but at multiple levels that dynamically interact with each other including interpersonal, community, and public policy. These findings suggest the need for relational theories and nonbinary models to further understand and analyze faculty motivations for pursuing engaged scholarship and concordant practical interventions that support multilevel motivations. However, given that the present study focused on one institution—a public land-grant research university in the western United States—it is limited in its methods and data, presenting opportunities for future research. We encourage future researchers to apply multilevel analyses to other types of higher

education institutions to assess the suitability and fit of our findings, highlighting the unique contexts and pathways in which engaged scholarship is pursued. Future research may also explore the relationship between motivational levels and various engaged scholarship frames such as community, public, civic, or critical (Blanchard & Furco, 2021). Researchers may employ comparative study designs to analyze more than one institution vis-à-vis a multilevel framework, as well as how, if at all, motivations may vary by level(s) of influence for different demographic groups.

Additionally, the present study's purposive sampling strategy aimed for representativeness across scholars' disciplines, schools,

and ranks, yielding a limited sample size of 49. Although these study constraints limit the generalizability of findings, future research can expand study sample sizes and aim for randomized sampling methods to minimize sampling biases. Lastly, multilevel studies that examine equity and inclusion are needed. For example, the field would benefit greatly from relational and multiscalar studies that critically examine how individuals are situated in geometries of power regarding their own social identities, relationships to others, the institutional cultures in which they find themselves, the communities they engage, and the public policies that directly impact communities.



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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Michael Rios, Office of Public Scholarship and Engagement, University of California, Davis, One Shields Avenue, Davis, CA 95616. Email: mxrios@ucdavis.edu

### About the Authors

*Michael Rios is vice provost of public scholarship and professor of human ecology at the University of California, Davis. His research interests focus on community engagement, university–community partnerships, and collective impact in higher education. He received his PhD in political geography from The Pennsylvania State University and his master of architecture and master of city and regional planning from the University of California, Berkeley.*

*Larissa Saco is a graduate student researcher at the University of California, Davis. Her research interests broadly focus on politics–expertise dynamics between communities, universities, policymakers, and markets. She received her master's degree and is pursuing a PhD in sociology from the University of California, Davis.*

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