Faculty productivity at the University. The academic productivity of the University's faculty contributes substantially to the community, the state, the nation, and the world. The University's tri-fold mission—research, teaching, and service—guides faculty work. All of us are expected to generate and advance new ideas and creative work that can lead to new therapies, innovations in economic and business sectors, better understandings of human behavior, improvements in methods of interaction with our environment and the global world, and other societal advances. Teaching and research are in synergy at the University; achievement in one promotes achievement in the other. Together they constitute proven means of yielding graduates with the knowledge and tools for innovation in the work place, professionals who can effectively respond to human needs, and scholars who quicken the pace of discovery. Why are we able to deliver on our mission? Our faculties are researchers, working artists, authors, and leaders who are actively engaged in expanding the boundaries of their respective fields. The goals of education are not merely the acquisition of knowledge but also the learned ability to discover and create new knowledge. In other words, experienced researchers and students they educate drive discovery. Our goal is to convert students from consumers of knowledge to generators of knowledge.

The productivity of all faculty members at the University has value, whether externally funded or not. The U.S. research enterprise has grown rapidly since World War II to become the most creative and productive research enterprise in the history of humankind. This enterprise, facilitated in part by sponsored research that supports the creativity of individual investigators, has helped develop medical and scientific innovations that save lives and provide employment. But equating innovations with sponsored funding is misguided; it is not money alone but ideas that expand the boundaries of both the arts and sciences. This rapid advancement of the enterprise has also been driven by scholars with little more than access to a good library and pen and pencil. Those in the humanities and arts operate with little financial support yet their scholarly work—symphonies, books, performances, and exhibits, to name a few—has a dramatic impact on our students, our communities, and culture as a whole.
Productivity is rigorously evaluated. University faculties have a tradition of and continuously benefit from highly critical local, national, and international review. University policy requires that colleges annually review all faculty, tenured or not. Evaluations focus on scholarly productivity, quality of teaching, and breadth and reach of service. Scholarly outputs, such as articles, books, presentations, patents, and various art forms, are forms of faculty productivity, externally funded or not. To gain tenure, scholars must submit their work for review by experts from other universities who must judge the national and international impact of the scholarship and magnitude of contribution to the arts and sciences. After tenure, professors continue to have annual evaluations of the quality of their work.

Productivity at this University has never been greater in both quantity and quality. The bar is higher to reach tenure than in the 1980s and 90s, and an effective process for post-tenure review is in place at the University of Minnesota to ensure continuing faculty productivity. In addition, the rigor in measuring educational success has also dramatically increased and improved. The intensity and quality of faculty evaluations by their students and peers have become mandatory and more effective. Students have more contact with professors; new and more effective teaching methods are practiced, and internet-based classroom management systems have created more transparency and given more control to students.

At a time in the U.S. when all enterprises must assure the impact and quality of investment, externally funded or not, the University of Minnesota has in place a diverse array of methods for ongoing measurement of our capacity and our progress in assuring value and fulfilling the University’s mission.

COMMENT

The Faculty Consultative Committee requested the Senate Research Committee to prepare a statement on the value of scholarship irrespective of whether it receives external support.