Interdisciplinary/Collaborative Research: getting recognized

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Interdisciplinary effort: Collaboration

• Hallmark of a modern research university.

• Science is not a solitary activity.
  - No monks here.

• Interdisciplinary/collaborative projects are the Bitcoin of the realm

❖ But what do promotion committees think?
Interdisciplinary Effort: institutional support

Within the University of California

• Interdisciplinary research is enshrined in the ORU (Organized Research Units):

“A structure to facilitate research, provide students with opportunities, & carry out public service programs across traditional disciplinary boundaries. ORUs are interdisciplinary in nature & work across the breadth of the UCLA campus.”
Interdisciplinary research at UCLA: ORUs

Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies

CRUMP INSTITUTE for MOLECULAR IMAGING

IRLE

UCLA-DOE INSTITUTE
Collaboration: departmental support

- Hybrid departments (e.g., Bioengineering)
- Use of **joint** or **split** appointments
- Your responsibility is to clarify departmental policy about interdisciplinary effort, especially in teaching:
  - Teaching in an IDP is as valuable as a Departmental course.
  - In the medical school (DGSOM), teaching is not departmentally based, but
  - In primarily undergraduate departments, the pressure is to teach in departmental offerings.

* A split appointment refers to the practice of sharing a ”tenure home”.
  A joint appointment is a courtesy appointment in another department reflecting shared interests/research.
Collaboration: perceived tension

Entrenched disciplinary structure/orientation

Emphasis on the independent, lone creative force

More holistic approach to complex problems

Funders’ emphasis on interdisciplinary collaborations
Collaboration: Promotion

The *bowling for tenure* triad

- Research: achieve a national level of prominence ("have a story")
- Teach (as defined by the department)
- Be a good citizen (i.e., collegial, interactive, committee service)

Council on Academic Personnel (CAP) – University of California

- Campus (UCLA)-wide committee for promotions and appointments
- 14 senior faculty
- Serves a quality-control function
Independence

Perceived to be a major impediment & one of the most misunderstood aspects of promotion.

- Not mentioned in the Academic Personnel Manual (APM)
- Misunderstood to mean that a candidate must work alone

At UCLA, how is Independence defined?

“…collaborative efforts are strongly encouraged and are becoming essential for the multidisciplinary, high technology research that characterizes modern biomedical science, for instance, and also are commonplace among many other fields of academic pursuit…. CAP recognizes that a faculty member's entire scholarly productivity may be as part of a collaborative team, in which case evidence of a unique and essential contribution is considered equivalent to independence.”

www.apo.ucla.edu/cap-guidance

Independence

Academic Career
Collaboration: Independence

• Promotions committees are supportive of collaborative efforts
• Why are people confused?
  • Contributions are not well delineated: “needs to clearly identify, fully delineate, & specifically assess the specific intellectual & creative role of the candidate.”

• Describe in Self-Statement
• In letters from senior collaborators
• In departmental committee report
• In the Chair’s letter
  • Evidence of a leadership role is missing (i.e., does the candidate provide a unique & critical contribution?)
    • Evidenced by lead or senior author publications
    • PI on a grant(s)
    • Specify contributions in journals

Universities are looking for creative intellectual leaders.