

The Public & the Federation's Role

Building Scholar-Activist Competence Amid Uncertainty



Andrew M. Colombo-Dougovito, Ph.D.

Distinguished Teaching Professor

University of North Texas

College of Public Affairs and Health Sciences

Questions to Consider:

1. How would you define 'scholar-activism'?
2. What is your initial response to the term? *Why?*
3. What do you believe constitutes 'scholar-activism'? *What counts?*

Scholar

a person who studies a subject in great detail

Activist

a person who takes action on behalf of a cause

Scholar-Activism

A conceptual Framework (Ramasubramanian & Sousa, 2021)

- Community-driven
- Social justice-oriented
- Action-oriented
- Grounded in the co-creation of knowledge
- Interdisciplinary
- Requires long-term involvement
- Challenges the status quo
- Driven by intrinsic motivation
- Blurs the boundaries of scholarship

“the scholar activist becomes another kind of knower”

Practices

What does scholar-activism look like?

- Direct engagement with practical problems and efforts to improve the world
- Putting new issues on the research agenda as well as the public agenda
- Speaking truth to power and speaking truth directing to the people
- Confronting and making difficult choices
- Acting with accountability to the publics you study, and reciprocating

Questions to Consider:

1. How would you define 'public scholarship'? *How does it differ from 'scholar-activism'?*
2. What constitutes 'public scholarship'? *What isn't?*
3. Are there certain forms of public scholarship that you engage in? *What are they?*
4. Is there anything you would like to do? *What is holding you back?*

Public Scholarship

How can we define it?

- ...is the practice of sharing academic research and knowledge with a wider audience outside the institution of academia.
- ...any scholarly activity generating new knowledge through academic reflection on issues of community engagement.
 - It integrates research, teaching, and service.
 - It does not assume that useful knowledge simply flows outward from the university to the larger community.
- Public scholarship recognizes that new knowledge is created in its application in the field, and therefore benefits the teaching and research mission of the university.

Carnegie Foundation, which established the Community Engagement elective classification, focuses on the term ‘**community engagement**’ as a “*collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.*”

Kellogg Commission defines engagement in relation “*to institutions that have redesigned their teaching, research, and extension and service functions to become even more sympathetically and productively involved with their communities, however, community may be defined.*”

The **American Association for the Advancement of Sciences** define public engagement with science as “*intentional, meaningful interactions that provide opportunities for mutual learning between scientists and the public.*”

The **Metcalf Institute** defines science communication as “*any information exchange that engages audiences in learning, conversations, or activities related to STEMM – science, technology, engineering, math, or medicine.*”

Michigan State University defines outreach scholarship as “a scholarly endeavor that cross-cuts teaching, research [and creative activities], and service. It involves generating, transmitting, applying, and preserving knowledge for the direct benefit of external audiences in ways that are consistent with university and unit missions.”

*The **University of Minnesota** defines public engagement as “the partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.”*

Other names for Public Scholarship

- science communication
- scicomm
- research communication
- civic engagement
- public outreach
- thought leadership
- public scholarly and creative work
- civically engaged scholarship
- participatory research
- public information networks
- civic literacy
- outreach scholarship

Value of Public Scholarship

- **Promoting Dialogue and Collaboration**

- ...bridges academia and the broader community.

- **Addressing Societal Needs through Applied Research**

- ...generates actionable new knowledge to address pressing social challenges, bridging theory and practice for tangible societal benefits.

- **Enhancing the Visibility and Impact of Research**

- ...transforms research dissemination, making findings accessible and relevant to non-academic communities and broadening impact.

- **Encouraging Quality Public Discourse**

- ...fosters an environment for the respectful sharing of diverse ideas, enhancing public discourse and knowledge co-creation.

Benefits of Public Scholarship to Institutions

- By prioritizing public scholarship programs, institutions can:
 - **Promote Civic Engagement:** Encourage students and faculty to contribute to their communities through volunteer work, advocacy, or public service initiatives.
 - **Enhance Societal Impact:** Translate academic research into actionable solutions for real-world problems, benefiting a wider audience.
 - **Foster Inclusive Dialogue:** Bridge gaps between academia and the public, facilitating mutual understanding and respect through open discussions and knowledge sharing.

Navigating the Challenges

Ethical and Practical Considerations

- **Managing Criticism and Controversy**

- Public scholarship opens the door to both widespread praise and rigorous scrutiny for many academics.

- **Ensuring Equity and Inclusion in Scholarship Practices**

- Incorporating diverse voices and knowledge systems ensures public scholarship reflects a broad range of experiences and expertise, resulting in richer research outcomes and community engagement.

- **Maintaining Ethical Standards in Knowledge Dissemination**

- Scholars must navigate the risks of misrepresentation or oversimplification for general audiences.

UNT LGBTQ Studies program includes lessons on 'how to have better sex'

Students in the taxpayer-funded university study topics including sexuality, prostitution policy, and alternative views of family relationships.

The LGBTQ Studies minor remains available despite Texas efforts to refocus higher education away from DEI-based programming.

Jabari Armotrading '28 | Texas Investigator

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The University of North Texas (UNT) in Denton, Texas offers an LGBTQ Studies minor that includes coursework on sex, queer family structures, and prostitution policy.

Another faculty member involved in UNT's LGBTQ Studies curriculum is Professor Andrew Colombo-Dougovito, who **describes** himself on LinkedIn as a "Scholar. Educator. Activist." Public course records indicate that he has taught LGBT-related courses at UNT since 2023.

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Dissemination Methods

Outline of Categories

- **Mass Media** (e.g., tv, radio, social media, press releases, magazines, webpages, policy briefs)
- **Local Methods** (e.g., community events, seminars, health fairs, flyers, brochures)
- **Academic Approaches** (e.g., journals, conferences, institutional newsletters)
- **Virtual Meetings** (e.g., webinars, teleconferences, expert panels)
- **Videos** (e.g., community-involved films, documentaries, short films)
- **Data visualization** (e.g., graphs, charts, infographics)
- **Educational outreach** (e.g., curriculum development, workshops, presentations)
- **Dissemination Toolkits**

Written/Print-Based

- Op-eds and guest columns
- Policy briefs or white papers
- Practitioner guides or community toolkits
- Accessible Public-focused blogs or newsletters
- Book reviews or essays for general audiences
- Popular press articles or essays (e.g., The Conversation)
- Publicly accessible Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (SoTL) write-ups

Audio/Visual Media

- Podcasts (solo or interview style)
- Recorded mini-lectures or explainer videos
- YouTube or TikTok channels for scholarly content
- Visual abstracts or research infographics
- Webinars or digital symposia
- Educational video series

Digital/Open Access Scholarship

- Open educational resources (OERs)
- Digital archives or story maps
- Online learning modules or Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)
- Interactive data visualizations or dashboards
- Wikipedia editing and knowledge equity projects

Community/Experiential Engagement

- Community-based exhibitions or installations
- Public workshops, lectures, or pop-up teach-ins
- Collaborations with schools, museums, or nonprofits
- Local radio or TV interviews
- Citizen science or participatory research projects
- Public storytelling or art-based research events

Advocacy & Public Discourse

- Testimony or briefings for policy makers
- Social media advocacy or public communication campaigns
- Letters to editors, public responses, or thought leadership posts
- Contributions to professional organization blogs or newsletters

Questions to Consider:

1. What individual responsibility do we each have as scholars to informing the public?
2. What role should the federation hold?
3. How do we support one another and build competence/capacity to enact change?

Mission & Vision

Mission: The mission of NAFAPA is to advance scientific inquiry and the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge in Adapted Physical Activity.

Vision: An Adapted Physical Activity field that ensures equitable opportunities for meaningful participation in physical activity, sport, and exercise for individuals experiencing disability across the lifespan.



**Public writing takes place in a specific industry
and specific markets, with specific norms,
gatekeepers, and standard (not best!) practices.**

David Perry

1. Move Fast
2. But lose Control
3. Write Broadly
4. Write Anything

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Thank you.



Andrew M. Colombo-Dougovito, Ph.D.
Distinguished Teaching Professor

University of North Texas
andrew.colombo-dougovito@unt.edu



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