



Imagining America

Imagining America Regional Meeting

September 11, 2009

Syracuse University

- 1) What is the discussion of tenure and promotion on your campus, particularly in regards to public scholarship? What stage of planning or implementation has your institution reached?

The discussion of tenure and promotion as it concerns public scholarship is currently being debated among voices from ideologically discernible flanks. We are still in the debate stage, with the administration largely setting the terms of the conversation through proposals coming from the Provost's office.

- 2) Who are the key individuals and groups that are talking about or working on promotion policies for engaged faculty members? What institutional domains do they represent (for example, department, chair and program, college, central administration, governance)? What, if any, off-campus networks are involved (such as national associations, community partners, foundations)?

The key, most active, individuals in the discussion are senior faculty members who regard themselves as protectors of time-tested standards of scholarly excellence and champions of the University's primary mission to engage in the socially unencumbered advancement of knowledge. There are to my knowledge no efforts visibly in place to engage national associations, community partners, or foundations in the conversation, although the funding that the Chancellor has thus far received from foundations—i.e., the Carnegie monies to support her vision of Scholarship In Action—may be seen as an expansion of the field of concern beyond the walls of the campus.

- 3) What is the role of the department chair in changing tenure/promotion policies? Are you finding ways to support the chairs charged with hiring, mentoring, and evaluating public scholars?

My impression is that department chairs have exerted no meaningful leadership in the tenure and promotion debate and proposals. They seem to have focused primarily on representing the issues at stake for their faculty, urging the faculty to remain informed about what would be at stake in the changes being contemplated, but, ultimately, ensuring that their junior faculty abide by institutional expectations as they currently stand. I have known of no chair who has taken it upon him/herself to advocate for the changes and to orient junior faculty to help them succeed in an environment where a new set of criteria obtain.

- 4) What aspects of your campus efforts would you be willing to share at the Imagining America working meeting on September 11? How would this benefit other campuses?

I would be happy to share these observations at the regional meeting. I think other campuses can benefit from a conversation about the challenges that emerge from a scenario in which progressive change—transformation of the academy—emanates from the administration rather than from the faculty.