

Specifying the Distinction between Scholarship and Public Engagement

One important characteristic that differentiates The Heller School from other academic institutions is the extent to which we attribute comparable value to both high quality scholarship and effective public engagement.

Scholarship refers to the generation of knowledge through research and/or rigorous analysis, employing a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods. The primary measure of its quality is the peer-review process. Its impact is determined by citations in the academic literature and its influence on the work of other scholars.

Public Engagement refers to active involvement in the dissemination and application of knowledge to affect policy and/or practice. Its impact is determined by the extent to which it informs policies and programs.

Both scholarship and public engagement can involve the design and conduct of high quality research, and both can focus explicitly on policy, management, and leadership. Notwithstanding their potential for considerable overlap, the distinctive products of each can be differentiated as follows:

Scholarship

- Publication of peer-reviewed papers, authored and edited books, and book chapters
- Presentations at scholarly meetings
- Invited lectures in academic settings

Public Engagement

- Service as an adviser to government policymakers or leaders of important organizations in the public and/or private sectors
- Testimony before legislative committees and/or at public hearings
- Presentations to influential audiences in the public or private sector
- Citations/quotations in popular media, including newspaper articles, radio interviews, and television appearances
- Op-ed opinion pieces in newspapers or articles in popular magazines
- Significant relationships with mission-driven organizations involved in the innovation and delivery of new service-based approaches to social change (e.g., organizations that address issues related to population groups, such as those defined by age, race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation; and organizations that address broad policy domains, such as health care, economic security, workforce development, or civil rights)