CREATIVE ACTIVITY AND RESEARCH: the Need for Creative Activity/Research Plans

In the final analysis tenure is awarded to individuals who have demonstrated that they will continue to be productive members of our scholarly community. Tenure is not awarded based upon your past achievements. Quite the contrary, it is awarded to those whose past work is indicative of someone who has significant scholarly, management, and organizational skills to remain productive in the future. Future promise is assured by a research/creative activity plan that demonstrates an ability to place oneself within an intellectual landscape, set goals and objectives, plan the future, meet a schedule, obtain resources, and accomplish and reflect on outcomes. All these attributes are essential for tenured faculty.

A central aspect of creative activity and research in your tenure dossier and performance evaluations is your creative activity and research plan. This plan should be developed during your first year at UMCP and updated throughout your career. The creative activity and research plan is an opportunity to outline the areas of expertise you will develop and establish the benchmarks that you will achieve in your drive toward tenure and promotion.

You should review your creative activity and research plan annually with your unit director and members of the senior faculty. The faculty and Director can assist you in evaluating your goals, the products you hope to produce, and suggest alternative funding sources.

Creative Activity / Research Plan: The creative activity/research plan is not envisioned as a static instrument; rather, it should serve as a dynamic roadmap that provides direction, coherence, and focus to the faculty member’s energies and efforts. It is not evaluative, but developmental – a creative activity/research plan evolves and responds to ongoing scholarly activities. When assembling the creative activity/research plan the faculty member should consider the following:

- The set of serious intellectual, aesthetic, or creative questions, issues or problems to be engaged;
- The proposed contributions, including long-term goals and purposes;
- The means for addressing the questions, issues, or problems of interest;
- Potential resources to be utilized;
- Anticipated outcomes and venues for distribution such as journal publications, conference presentations, or other outlets for creative works;
- The plan’s relationship to the school or department mission and strategic plan.

Each of these items should be used to form a creative activity/research plan document that becomes part of your tenure and promotion dossier. When updating this document
for your dossier, be sure to highlight the achievements and evidence that indicates the success you have had in implementing the plan.

Without a doubt the products of creative activity/research activity are a key component of understanding a junior faculty’s scholarly capability. The outcomes of your efforts will be measured in part by the evidence of your efforts and the peer reviewed venues you chose. In the School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation there is a wide array of evidence that is acceptable to demonstrate achievement in creative activity and research. Approaches to creative activity and research may be based on empirical investigations as well as investigations that draw upon traditions in the humanities. The latter include investigations into the critical appreciation of design and related fields, development of theories or the application of theories to gain insight into our understanding of design, cultural products, and related fields, drawing connections or relationships between the various forms of design and formal expressions, and philosophical reflections upon the significance of cultural products to our society. The School also recognizes and encourages the creation of art, environmental and design projects as a valid and acceptable form of creative activity/research. This sort of activity may advance knowledge, perception, or understanding in the design, environmental and allied professions.

Whether one pursues scholarship or the creation of creative works, the contribution these activities make toward promotion and tenure are measured through external acceptance and recognition. These can be made through peer reviewed publications, reviews of work published or exhibited, participation in distinguished exhibitions through selection, citations of your work in publications, or juried awards. In every case the relative influence is determined by its widespread distribution and prestige of the reviewers and institution. Thus, national and international venues are generally more prestigious than regional ones. The context is established by the other artists, designers and scholars who participate in the venue within which your work is represented. To assist in the proper evaluation of your efforts, it is very important that you provide the necessary supporting documents so that an appropriate assessment of significance can be assigned. For example, if your work has been part of a juried exhibition or competition, it is important to list the jurors and their reputation. The more the venues of your creative activity and scholarship drift outside the norm of academic experience, the more you need to contextualize your work and its merit.

Lastly, since tenure is but a step in your academic career, it is appropriate to outline future goals and objectives for your creative activity/research endeavors when preparing your creative activity/research plan for the tenure dossier.