

# Experiences With and Impressions of Scholarly/Creative Engagement at GVSU

## Executive Summary

### Project Goals and Approach

This document summarizes the results of a survey administered to tenure-track GVSU faculty in Fall 2021 semester aimed at:

- Understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on faculty scholarship at GVSU.
- Gathering feedback from faculty regarding ways CSCE, CSCE offices, and other offices and administrators can facilitate scholarly/creative endeavors more effectively.
- Systematically measuring faculty impressions of the value of scholarship at GVSU.

This executive summary was prepared by Dr. Kristy Dean, Professor of Psychology (GVSU). The full report was written by Dr. Dean in collaboration with Autumn Chorney, undergraduate Honors PSY and SOC major (Class of 2023), with feedback from Undergraduate Research Council (URC) and the Research & Development committee (R&D). Dean analyzed the quantitative data using SPSS software. Dean and Chorney utilized a thematic analysis approach and MAXQDA software to code and analyze the qualitative data. Interrater reliability analyses display a strong agreement between coders as to whether a particular theme applied to a particular survey response (all Kappas > .80). Although this project is not considered “research” (see IRB Policy 210), both Dean and Chorney completed all research ethics and human subjects training mandated for GVSU researchers and adhered to IRB guidance regarding the ethical collection and storage of this data (IRB Policies 730 and 740, IRB Guidance G-16).

For the sake of brevity, summaries of the qualitative data reported below focus on themes that emerge for 9-10% or more of the respondents to that particular survey question. All percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent.

### Are Faculty Respondents Representative of the Broader GVSU Faculty Community?

A total of 359 tenure-track faculty respondents completed some portion of the survey; almost 64% of respondents who accessed the survey (N=284) completed the entire survey. That said, the number of respondents varies across each question of the survey. Demographic data was collected from respondents (N=266) and compared to demographic data available from Institutional Analysis (N=853). The results of this comparison show that the sample of survey respondents is representative of the larger GVSU community of tenure-track faculty; sampled values were generally within 4 percentage points of population values for college affiliation, professional rank, gender identification, and ethnicity.

### How Do Faculty View Their Scholarly/Creative Activity and Professional Workload?

The majority of faculty describe their scholarship as involving discovery (74.2%) and application (51.6%), relative to scholarship of teaching (40.6%) and integration (34.5%). Faculty report that their average workload, during a typical academic year, prioritizes teaching (M=63.1% of time, or M=29.2 hours/week), with service (M=21.2% of time, or M=11.2 hours/week) and scholarship (M=16.2% of time, or M=8.2 hours/week) as distant second and third priorities, respectively. When asked about their ideal workload, faculty report that teaching would still be their top priority (M=52.3% of time, or M=23.3 hours/week), although they would prefer to increase the time devoted to scholarship (M=32.5% of time, or M=13.8 hours/week), and decrease the time devoted to service (M=15.1% of time, or M=6.7 hours/week). This reflects a decrease in hours worked per week (actual M=49.0 hours/week, ideal M=43.7 hours/week) that is still above the traditional full-time employee workload.

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#### How Did the COVID-19 Pandemic Affect Faculty Scholarly/Creative Activity?

In general, most respondents (84.7%) reported that the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on their engagement in scholarly/creative activity. Participants who elaborated on their response described the pandemic as...

- limiting the time available to work on scholarship (theme identified by 53.7% of respondents);
- limiting or complicating access to resources used to perform and/or disseminate scholarly/creative products (38.3%);
- increasing concerns about mental or physical health (their own or others) that distracted scholarly/creative efforts (12.7%);
- compelling revisions to scholarly agendas and methodologies to maintain engagement (12.7%); and,
- limiting interactions with undergraduate and peer collaborators (11.8%).

**Among those respondents who reported pausing or slowing their scholarship during the pandemic**, the following barriers were identified as hindering attempts to resume their usual pace of scholarly engagement:

- lack of time (identified by 86.8% of respondents);
- concerns about the degree to which scholarship is valued at GVSU (41%);
- limited or complicated access to collaborators (34.6%);
- limited or complicated access to funding (30.7%);
- limited or complicated access to human subjects (25.4%);
- limited or complicated access to spaces/materials used in scholarly/creative activity (24.9%);
- uncertainty around monetary supports offered by GVSU (23.8%); and,
- uncertainty around the degree of recognition for scholarly/creative activity in the personnel process (20%).

**Among those respondents who reported accelerating their scholarship during the pandemic**, the following barriers were identified as hindering attempts to maintain this increased pace of scholarly engagement:

- lack of time (identified by 48.6% of respondents);
- limited or complicated access to funding (27%);
- concerns about the degree to which scholarship is valued at GVSU (26.6%); and,
- limited or complicated access to collaborators (22.7%).

Notably, the top four most frequently mentioned barriers hindering engagement in scholarly/creative activity were the same regardless of whether respondents slowed or accelerated their pace of scholarship during the pandemic.

#### Fostering Engagement in Scholarly/Creative Activity: What Feedback Did Faculty Provide to CSCE and CSCE-Related Offices?

A total of 246 respondents offered **open-ended feedback to CSCE**. Our coding process identified three thematic categories and a total of 12 themes across these categories – Funding (5 themes), Assistance (5 themes), and Advocacy (2 themes). The most frequently mentioned

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themes are included here. Respondents that commented on **funding** requested that CSCE allocate and award funding...

- to reduce and/or rebalance workload for those actively pursuing scholarly/creative endeavors (12.2% of respondents);
- to a greater degree than it currently does (i.e., general request for more funding, 11.8%);
- to support undergraduate and graduate student collaborators (11%);
- to support dissemination (10.2%) and supplies (9.8%).

Respondents that commented on **assistance** specifically requested that CSCE assist faculty by...

- facilitating connection-building and collaborations between faculty and between faculty and student scholars (9.8%);
- increasing information sharing, specifically, disseminating more information to faculty about CSCE offerings and seeking more information about faculty needs (9.4%);
- streamlining and/or simplifying application processes for CSCE funds (9.4%).

Respondents that commented on **advocacy** requested that CSCE advocate for faculty by...

- engaging in more activities that communicate the value of, show appreciation for, and increase visibility of faculty's scholarly and creative efforts and contributions (14.6%).

Respondents also provided **feedback to CSCE reporting units**. The themes identified in this feedback vary across offices given the unique roles each play in fostering scholarly and creative engagement. Also, the number of respondents offering feedback varies across offices (Ns range from 42 to 65). The most frequently mentioned themes for each office are included here. Feedback given to the **Office of Research Compliance and Integrity (ORCI)** and ethical review boards – **Institutional Review Board (IRB)** and **Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)** – includes requests for...

- increased information sharing, especially involving training resources (14.3% for ORCI, 17.7% for IRB/IACUC);
- revisions to the protocol review process, especially revisions that speed up or increase consistency in reviews (9.5% for ORCI, 13.7% for IRB/IACUC);
- more assistance with preparing protocol applications (7.1% for ORCI, 11.8% for IRB/IACUC).

Feedback given to the **Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP)** emphasized the need for...

- more information sharing between OSP (e.g., events, what grants are available) and faculty (e.g., specific funding needs, 16.4%);
- more proactive support (e.g., identifying funding sources for faculty; 14.6%);
- more clarity about OSP's mission and capabilities (12.7%);
- more assistance with gathering information and paperwork for grant applications (12.7%);
- nontraditional forms of external funding (e.g., seed funding, funds for course releases, 12.7%).

Feedback to the **Center for Undergraduate Scholar Engagement (CUSE)** included requests for...

- more funding, either via increased investment in existing funding mechanisms or development of new/varied programs (32.3%);
- more recognition of and support for specific types of scholarly inquiry, fields, personnel, or models/approaches (16.9%);

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- revisions that streamline application, review, and training processes (15.4%).

#### **Fostering Engagement in Scholarly/Creative Activity: What Feedback Did Faculty Provide to their Units, Colleges, Faculty Governance, and Upper Administration?**

A total of 152 respondents offered **feedback regarding their Unit's efforts to foster scholarly and creative activity**. The most frequently mentioned themes include...

- the need for better balance between teaching, scholarship, and service workload responsibilities (38.2%);
- greater monetary support of scholarship (e.g., funding for course release time, resources to perform research, awards for finished products, etc., 16.5%);
- increased valuation of and encouragement for engaging in scholarly/creative activity (16.5%);
- more information sharing about scholarly/creative endeavors and the resources that facilitate them (e.g., "lunch and learns", e-newsletters, formal and informal discussions, 10.5%).

A total of 157 respondents offered **feedback regarding their College's efforts to foster scholarly and creative activity**. The most frequently mentioned themes include...

- the need for better balance between teaching, scholarship, and service workload responsibilities (36.9%);
- greater monetary support of scholarship (e.g., funding for course release time, resources to perform research, awards for finished products, etc., 31.9%);
- increased valuation of and encouragement for engaging in scholarly/creative activity (19.1%).

A total of 84 respondents offered **feedback regarding the efforts of Faculty Governance to foster scholarly and creative activity**. The most frequently mentioned themes emerging from this data include...

- the need for advocacy to better balance teaching, scholarship, and service workload responsibilities (34.5%);
- increased valuation of and encouragement for engaging in scholarly/creative activity (23.8%);
- greater monetary support of scholarship (e.g., funding for course release time, resources to perform research, awards for finished products, etc., 22.6%);
- increased clarity of scholarship expectations for tenure/promotion (15.5%).

A total of 253 respondents offered **feedback regarding the University's efforts to foster scholarly and creative activity**. The broad wording "University" was used so that respondents could focus their attention on whatever facet of university structure they believe is important. Faculty consistently referred to Upper Administration, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), the Provost, and the President in their responses, suggesting they interpreted our reference to "the University" as meaning higher-level administrators and leadership at GVSU. The most frequently mentioned feedback themes emphasize the need for the following from university leaders:

- more opportunities to reduce the teaching workload (e.g., reassigned time, accumulating "points" toward course releases, etc., 28.9%);

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- more actions and decisions that communicate the value of, show appreciation for, and increase visibility of faculty's scholarly and creative efforts and contributions (23.3%);
- changes in policies and/or procedures related to tenure/promotion standards, workload assignments, and uncredited/unpaid work to address workload inequities (22.9%);
- reductions in service/administrative workload (20.2%);
- increased monetary support of scholarship, especially increases in professional development funds (18.6%).

### How Do Faculty Conceptualize the Value of Scholarly/Creative Activity at GVSU?

A total of 278 respondents described their **perspectives on the value of engaging in scholarly/creative activity**. The most frequently mentioned themes emerging from this data convey that faculty believe scholarship...

- compliments and enhances other professional activities, especially teaching (38.9%);
- provides student scholars with high-impact, hands-on experiences that hone skills and prepare them for future professional endeavors (33.8%);
- has intrinsic value for faculty, who identify as scholars and desire intellectual stimulation (20.1%);
- provides opportunities for faculty professional growth (18.0%);
- contributes valuable, new knowledge to one's field and the broader society (16.6%);
- elevates GVSU's visibility and reputation, thus attracting more students and strong scholars (12.6%).

### What Are Faculty Perceptions Regarding the Degree to Which Units, Colleges, and Upper Administration Value Scholarly/Creative Activity at GVSU?

Respondents reported how much each target group values scholarship using a rating scale ranging from 1 (*none at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*), with 3 (*a moderate amount*) as the midpoint. Respondents were also asked to describe the specific evidence or experiences they were drawing on when choosing their numeric response.

A total of 299 respondents reported **the degree to which their Unit values scholarly/creative activity**. The overall mean score was above the midpoint ( $M=3.67$ ,  $SD=.97$ ), representing a degree of value somewhere between "a moderate amount" and "a lot". A total of 257 respondents described the evidence they used when answering this question. Faculty weighed the following evidence most heavily when judging the degree of value their Unit places on scholarly/creative activity:

- Faculty evaluations and their outcomes (e.g., personnel standards, yearly faculty evaluations, merit raises; 46.3%)
- The presence/absence of intangible support like encouragement from Unit colleagues and Chair (21.4%);
- The degree to which scholarly/creative activity is prioritized relative to other faculty responsibilities (20.2%);
- The amount of discussion around scholarly engagement and achievements happening in one's Unit (18.7%).

The tone of these qualitative responses was generally affirmative: 42.8% of respondents convey the above-mentioned pieces of evidence demonstrate support for the value of scholarship. By comparison, 17.5% of respondents convey this evidence signals that scholarship is not valued at the Unit level, and 10.9% cited mixed messages of support.

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A total of 292 respondents reported **the degree to which their College values scholarly/creative activity**. The overall mean score was slightly above the midpoint ( $M=3.23$ ,  $SD=.97$ ), representing “a moderate amount” of value. A total of 221 respondents described the evidence they used when answering this question. Faculty weighed the following evidence most heavily when judging the degree of value their College places on scholarly/creative activity:

- Faculty evaluations and their outcomes (e.g., personnel standards, yearly faculty evaluations, merit raises; 35.8%);
- The amount of monetary support provided to fund scholarship or award scholarly/creative contributions (20.8%);
- The degree to which scholarly/creative activity is prioritized relative to other faculty responsibilities and College-level priorities (20.8%);
- The amount of discussion around scholarly engagement and achievements occurring in one’s College (18.1%);
- The presence/absence of intangible support like encouragement from College colleagues and Deans (21.4%).

Consistent with the quantitative data, the tone of these responses was relatively more mixed. 24.4% of respondents convey these actions at the College level affirm support for the value of scholarship. By comparison, 32.6% of respondents convey these pieces of evidence signal scholarship is not valued, and 13.6% cited mixed messages of support.

A total of 285 respondents reported **the degree to which Upper Administration values scholarly/creative activity**. The overall mean score was below the midpoint ( $M=2.53$ ,  $SD=1.09$ ), representing a degree of value between “a little” and “a moderate amount”. A total of 224 respondents described the evidence they used when answering this question. Faculty weighed the following evidence most heavily when judging the degree of value Upper Administration places on scholarly/creative activity:

- The degree to which scholarly/creative activity is prioritized relative to other faculty responsibilities and administrative initiatives and priorities (e.g., student retention, new campus infrastructure, etc., 42.9%);
- The amount of monetary support provided to fund or award scholarship (29.5%);
- The amount of discussion around scholarly engagement and achievements by GVSU leadership (18.1%).

Consistent with the quantitative data, the tone of these responses was critical regarding the value Upper Administration places on scholarly/creative activity. 11.1% of respondents describe the messages and actions of GVSU leadership as demonstrating support for the value of scholarship. By comparison, 52.7% of respondents say these pieces of evidence signal scholarship is not valued by GVSU leadership, with 20.1% of respondents citing mixed messages of support.

### Final Thoughts

We encourage readers to view the full report. Readers with limited time may consider prioritizing the *Summary and Synthesis* sections that provide some analysis of key findings from each section. The report ends with a synthesis of key themes that emerge throughout the report:

- The COVID-19 pandemic impacted scholarly/creative engagement negatively, and in multiple ways.
- Faculty emphasize that “support” for scholarly/creative activity comes in many forms.

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- Faculty value scholarly/creative work and its benefits and are concerned by the relative lack of valuation they perceive among administrators.
- Many faculty are confused and dissatisfied with the degree to which scholarly/creative activity is valued and supported relative to other aspects of the faculty role and administrative priorities.

Though we are hesitant to make specific recommendations for future action, our immersion in the data reinforces the following points:

- The interdependent nature of the teacher-scholar role requires better balance to achieve optimal outcomes for faculty, students, and administrators.
- Valuing and supporting scholarly/creative engagement at GVSU will necessarily involve communication, collaboration, and action across all levels of university organizational structure.

This final section of the full report also includes questions to facilitate further reflection and discussion among individual faculty, within Units and Colleges, among CSCE directors and staff, and among Upper Administration.

We are indebted to our survey respondents for lending their voice to these important issues and are hopeful our findings will inform future policies and initiatives associated with faculty scholarly and creative activity. Thank you for your time!