BUILDING BLOCKS FOR IMPACT

Capturing scholarly "impact" often relies on familiar suspects like h-index, JIF, and citations, despite evidence that these indicators are narrow, often misleading, and generally insufficient to capture the full richness of scholarly work. Considering a wider breadth of contributions in assessing the value of academic activities may require a new mental model.

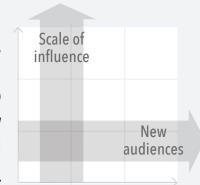


Collaborations, mentoring, and demonstrations of eminence that allow scholars to shape the direction of fields demonstrate increasing scales of impact.

Scale of influence

Two dimensions to illustrate "impact"

Broadening the definition of scholarly "impact" against two dimensions—the scale of contributions' influence and new types of audiences—can help institutions recognize and reward a wider variety of academic achievements and outcomes.



Researcher Katalin Karikó's work on mRNA immunogenicity

was repeatedly dismissed by

elite journals and funders, yet

of Covid-19 vaccines.

became key to the development

While non-academic works and

peer review, communicating the

value and importance of scientific

social media lack the rigor of

advances to wider audiences makes scholarly knowledge more approachable and meaningful.

Scaled magnitude

resulting in significant reach, scope, or stature

Collaborative Teaching

and advisory roles through partnerships and shepherding others' work career guidance

Direct contributions through deep disciplinary expertise

FOR EXAMPLE

Leadership roles in disciplinary societies or editorial boards

Transformative methodological advances

FOR EXAMPLE

Mentoring, advising, and

FOR EXAMPLE

Journal articles and conference publications

Datasets, software, or products

Disciplinary or field-specific audiences

Recognizing the impact created by cultivating future generations of scholars also rewards contributions of women and minoritized individuals who tend to bear heavier expectations and loads for mentoring.

FOR EXAMPLE

Policy advisory roles

Contributions to institutional policy (e.g. diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI))

FOR EXAMPLE

Team research or interdisciplinary collaborations

Peer review and conference roles

Open science/data and open access

Preprints

Asynchronous education

Institutions or broader academic settings

Open datasets and open science are increasingly valued for their contributions to replication and research transparency. This broadens access and rewards a mindset of collaboration over competition.

FOR EXAMPLE

Real-world societal (e.g., cultural, patient, community, environmental, or economic) impact

FOR EXAMPLE

Industry collaborations and commercialization

FOR EXAMPLE

Popular press books and publications

Social media or altmetric profile

Contexts external to academia

Reaching audiences outside of disciplinary or academic peers can broaden the societal value derived from scholarly work.

New

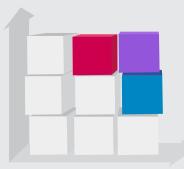
audiences

Expanded definitions for "impact" can help individuals identify and embrace different goals.

While some scholars may naturally be more oriented toward disciplinary work, seeing a broader set of "impact" characteristics allows academics to define, plan for, and pursue more personally meaningful career aspirations.



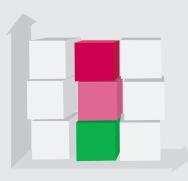
Pursuing a traditional path of deep specialization within a discipline will continue to provide credibility of expertise and a significant base of influence within one's field.



Applied research, perspectives, and project work provide new forms of visibility and societal value through scholarly activities that directly contribute to real-life challenges.



Emphasizing how expertise can enrich other individuals, collaborations, or entire fields rewards scholarly activities that value interdisciplinarity and fostering new capabilities.



The explicit recognition of efforts that support open research or diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) can enhance their status as critical components of academic values.