

Café Salon Notetakers' Template for Café Salon #4 - Note-taker Jean Van C.
#4 The politicization of research and researchers; university researchers as “the enemy” - Facilitators: Jay Walsh, Executive Director, AAUP, Miriam Reumann, Teaching Professor, History – Ballroom rear tables

Summary Notes

1. *What would it look like for URI to take leadership in this area?*

We don't stand for censorship for political gain. The Metcalf Institute sees this as Increase public literacy, public outreach, we realize when we are being politically co-opted. Deans from red states are sensitive to putting research up on website.

Defaazation and vilified of scientists.

Trolling and threats.

Public education is highly politicized and regulatory pressure.

Government -Politicizing and producer of research.

Public policy and marketing to advance social issues.

Student's not valuing data vs. story.

AAUP functions is protecting academic freedom - Jay studies discourse analysis; people don't have the language to move forward.

Op-ed examples - richer dialogue on policies and data (achievement gap)

Over the last 50 years research has been paid by large companies.

Public work gets trolled on - vs. then it's not visible enough.

Open Access on federal grants - helps but then can't get to the backing articles.

The role that URI plays as THE public institution. What can we URI do to increase public literacy?

-We are also living in a period of information glut. If the general public doesn't know what peer review means, than we are combating that (deluge). The university helps filter and understand it. We need a more discerning general populace.

-What is information and what is knowledge - peer your community vets; on the other hand you have a propaganda arm, to weaken trust in these systems. Do we take an active role in this? In the past we ignored it.

-2 levels: we know how biases exists but naive .. atheoretical and against what I know, Nothing is truly unbiased.

The cooperative extension center, originally created to get information out to the farmer, etc. a trustworthy agency - a model to look at.

People then find what they need help with - the public has a need. It's there to help then.

It's the way they get the information out.

Having a network who are vested in the program and it's progress. They are giving good information - ownership.

The issue of the enemy -

Corporatization of the University

*State/local/national politics and outside groups (NRA)
Downplaying knowledge - fake news*

*More concrete we can think - what kind of perception of research is the enemy.
We look at who we are or who people see us as - our identity.
Newer mantra from legislators - "I'm not a scientist but" ... there is no need to have that gap; we
can all be on the same page. Ivory tower scientist vs. common man.
Researchers vs. practitioners - diminishing of science. We need to value expertise.*

Maybe we need a script - to talk to each other within the University.

Touchpoints through our students - the opportunity to bring parents in when our students are
doing scholarly activity. Help our students decipher what's a good source. Students can
influence people around them. Students are powerful messengers to the public.
Indirect education to the public.
Teaching students: Expressing the diversity of expertise - picking appropriate authority for
research.

*The word "enemy" - looking at knowledge faith and belief - Some of the challenges is to weaken
/ attack research - power relations.*

The University faculty play too nice - they don't fight back - middle of the road.

*Stages of intellectual growth - if you've had a liberal education; evidence supported. We've been
trained to not say "I'm right, your wrong"
Pragmatic -*

*We are also fettered by source funding - maybe we are being too nice and push back, before it's
too late.*

Prioritizing what we're interested in - rigor and fidelity to make it work.

Education, Health care.

How to do we pick our battles to get funding we need to move forward.

ie. PBN looking for a reason why fewer people are going enrolling in teaching..

*Red states - college sports are revered and when you watch a game, they tout a message
about a school, is there a way to tap into this?*

*The Alzheimers Association - 5 years ago there was a dirth in funding - pairing scientists with
rock stars and it grabbed the public interest/awareness.*

The scholar athlete at the games and maybe could do something with researchers.

Hedi Lamar - designed the foundation for Wifi.

*Einstein was seen as a rockstar in 1900 - and now it's sports stars.
Now people don't see the connection b/t science and products they're using.*

*Academics are bad about blowing our own horns, and bad at getting the word out.
Marketing and communication are trying to do that, but who reads it? Does the public.*

*Look at the Cooperative Extension is really a great thing - faculty and agriculture
A cooperative extension - of how to understand, evaluate and use knowledge - it was about
solving problems... they want things to help them make money.*

Expand a coop to show value of university to the state - like business consultation.

***RI Research collaborative** - sponsor research on state needs*

Untenured faculty don't put their neck on the line too much risk; it won't be valued at the

***URI - Explicitly clear that to do public good is as valuable as a massive grant or highly
publicized research***

Funding/ resources / staff

*There has to be university support for the endeavor. Cooperative extension scholars are not as
valued now.*

The culture has to change - where your colleagues don't see your contribution.

If URI starts taking leadership in this area -

APLU - we can lead this and bring other land grant institutions with us.

We are a small state and that's an advantage

If we envision ourselves as agents of change

*How are we going to have time for this and fear of a lawsuit. We have to know that the
University is behind us ... We need time to do this. Engaging lawmakers.. There has to be
voicing from us that we need legislators to champion us and allow for freedom of thought.*

The University needs to commit to support.

It's not just financial, but takes ability to speak and training to speak with the media.

*They train athletes to speak with media, workshop for us. **Media training workshop - very
useful and practical for us. Specialized training on negative attacks (Vaccaro)***

Need a dedicated marketing / media person that was a scientist.

Academic support and not cow towing

*AAAS Fellowships for people to go to congress - bridge the divide to (Science and Technology
Fellows for faculty).*

The PhD students in ND (legislative requirement) have to do a 5 minute video geared to an 8th grade level.

Professional liability insurance - to have an extra level of insurance. Student Affairs workers have it. AAUP has it for members to purchase it in addition.

*Proposal development grants - **URI division of community engagement** - another bucket of resources for scholars*

- *AM Vaccaro - trolling issue: What support do you want in that situation? It's not hurting her re: p&t. She doesn't feel threatened but would contact Jay if she did. She doesn't engage in the negative comments.*

2. *How does work in this topic open up research/scholarly activity across disciplines? - Who is already working on this topic?*

3. *What is the right breadth of areas to be covered?*

4. *What are the University's strengths that would build out this topic well?*

Funding it

Offer Communications training

Work towards a Cooperative Extension Model for Community engagement- Politics involved Engaging our congressman / senators and create a position letter - Jay speaks to Langevin, Whitehouse etc. we could send out a letter from us (interdisciplinary) - They love this stuff.

Statewide - lobby day with our local reps. Kelly already does a lobbying day. They discussed it as a Union.

Attacks on climate scientists - early 2016 climate change summit with Senator Whitehouse. Aaron and Jay went to the legislation re: freedom of information act.

Reframe the messaging - what do we need in the state of Rhode Island and this is our expertise.

What are the local concerns and the federal opportunities for funding that address our state's needs.

Different messages and engaging students - powerful impact.

The influence we can have in the state to impact

We're the partners not the enemies - we're problem solvers and facilitators.

Performance based funding passed four years - we are the only institution that hit the numbers but got the least amount in the budget.

*How to convince the general assembly of our worthwhile work - how do we
Affiliation as a land grant Universities - leader of the land grant universities and leverage some of our bigger relationships. These are the federal funding we receive,*

Science communications - publish outside their disciplines and bridge the divide.

See it more so at the federal level not so much the state level.

Land and Sea grant are aimed at the state - make the state better. This is the only state in the country to not get the match. (equates to 5-6 million that the state should kick in).

5. *What areas of the topic would be a main focus for URI?*

Strong agreement:

Need for cultural change at URI

Build on what's going well and address what needs to be worked on

More support for collaboration - for workload adjustment and relate that to extension activities

Need for protected time and access for resources to engage more with the public and policy makers.

Relating that to pre-tenure /contingent faculty for engagement

University support for academic freedom

Help from University on delivering

We need to use language that we are partners not enemies

What we need for collaboration from the university:

Extension activities -

Protected time and resources to engage from

More university support for academic freedom

Media training for faculty

Professional liability insurance

More URI internal grants for community engagement endeavors

Correlate to workforce development

Ask politicians what they are interested? - What do you need?

Come to the University for expertise.

Updates the expert list - Peter is updating the database

Think about it as impact - impact factor

You can do the peer reviewed journal but after that it can be publicized in other context - press release or website.

When moving from associate to full professor - it seems more applicable regarding community engagement.