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THE ACADEMIC IMPACT OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

EXPLORING HOW PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AFFECTS THE CAREERS OF FACULTY MEMBERS AT MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY.

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<https://www.mun.ca/publicengagement/>



SUMMARY

Academic public engagement (PE) is often less understood, and less recognized, in professional advancement processes than research and teaching activities. This project used questionnaires and interviews to explore the experiences of publicly engaged faculty members at Memorial University who have been funded through the Office of Public Engagement's Quick Start and Accelerator programs, both of which fund publically engaged activities featuring community partners, examining their perceptions of how PE has shaped their career trajectories.

A number of findings emerged, including:

- Over 69% of the interviewees consider PE Extremely Valuable, Very Valuable or Valuable in their academic trajectory.
- 59% of the interviewees incorporated work from Quick Start / Accelerator projects into their academic CV.
- Most respondents also conveyed that their involvement in PE work adds a more profound sense of meaning to their academic careers.
- Respondents reported that PE projects had multiple positive impacts on their academic careers. PE has led to the production of both traditional and non-traditional scholarly products. Engaged faculty have established relationships and collaborations with community partners, and other universities. Conducting PE projects has

opened up opportunities for additional funding at the national and international level.

- All faculty participants who took part in follow-up interviews expressed that they encounter difficulties in obtaining formal recognition for their publicly engaged work when the project scope does not land traditional outputs (e.g., peer-reviewed publications).

All together, these results indicate that faculty members at Memorial see PE as beneficial to their careers: as a way to establish and maintain meaningful relationships with the public; as an opportunity to provide students with useful research and professional experiences; and as a source of examples and approaches to be included in their teaching activities.

Yet, the lack of recognition of PE within promotion and tenure processes emerged as the main barrier encountered by faculty members who integrate PE in their teaching and research. Further work needs to be done at Memorial to better understand the current state of PE valuation within promotion and tenure processes, and to consider improvements that could help address this commonly cited barrier to faculty PE activities.

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Introduction

Public engagement (PE) is a core aspect of the academic mission at Memorial University, alongside research and teaching & learning. The initiation of the Public Engagement Framework (PEF), a pan-university framework for PE at Memorial, in 2012, and the subsequent creation of the [Office of Public Engagement](#) (OPE) signaled a renewed commitment to research and teaching & learning in collaboration with the public at Memorial.

Memorial was the first, and is still the only, university in Canada with an academic senate-approved PE strategy. The Framework defines PE at Memorial as:

Encompassing collaborations between people and groups within Memorial and people and groups external to the university that further Memorial's mission. Drawing on the knowledge and resources of all involved, PE involves mutual respect, mutual contributions, and mutual benefits for all participants.

Along with this definition, the Framework provides a vision, values, goals and objectives for Memorial's PE work. As the definition notes, there is the potential for significant benefits to universities that prioritize PE. By promoting PE best practices and providing funding for PE activity, Memorial helps to generate knowledge beneficial to the public, recognizing that this contribution also enriches both research and teaching & learning. For example, students are given the opportunity of experiencing diverse perspectives and applying their learning in real-world settings. Additionally, in research, scholarship, and creative activities, insights from the public provide a practical

and empirical view. This approach contributes to the development of data, theory, and research products, resulting in more accessible and broadly applicable results (Püttmann, 2022).

When the Framework reached the end of its first phase in 2020, OPE undertook a significant evaluation of the success of the first phase of the PEF. During this process, OPE and partners collected primary data from multiple sources, including dozens of interviews with key informants, a number of focus groups, and hundreds of responses to internal and external surveys; OPE also collected secondary data in a variety of forms, including internal documents, reports, and analytics. [Full results of the evaluation are available at OPE's website.](#) The PEF evaluation confirmed that faculty are conducting a significant amount of PE: faculty respondents indicated around 40% of their total research, and around 20% of teaching, was publicly engaged. It also suggested that a large percentage of faculty (75%) would like to introduce more PE activities in their research and teaching. The motivations for faculty and staff to engage in PE included contributing to the province and its communities, expanding the university community, and a sense of moral obligation to give back to the province and Canada. At the same time, respondents indicated a number of barriers that are currently limiting their ability to approach PE: lack of time, lack of support and training, the need for additional funding, and not enough recognition for PE activities in terms of career advancement. This latter aspect, in particular, emerged as one of the key barriers to faculty wanting to integrate PE activities in their research and teaching: 50% of respondents

indicated that PE activities are not adequately valued in promotion and tenure, and 54% would like to see increased recognition for their publicly engaged projects.

Currently, there are still many unanswered questions about the role that publicly engaged research and teaching can, and should, play in the development of an academic career. How does an engaged approach affect scholarly work? How will this work affect career progression? What kinds of challenges and opportunities are likely to arise when academics choose a publicly engaged path? All of these considerations were raised by faculty members that took part in the PEF evaluation. Memorial doesn't stand alone in this, and similar conversations are happening in other Canadian and non-Canadian institutions. The issues raised by faculty members at other institutions appear to align with the results of the PEF evaluation, and highlight a need for removing institutional barriers (such as the lack of support & training opportunities), as well as a need for the full recognition of PE activities in promotion and tenure (Calice et al., 2022; Changfoot et al., 2020).

The main barrier that academics are experiencing when integrating PE in their research and teaching activities is the absence of appropriate structures for the recognition and documentation of their efforts and achievements in PE, especially in terms of promotion and tenure (PnT) (Miller et al., 2023; Sdvizhkov et al., 2022). The criteria for assessing academic excellence in promotion and tenure are still largely based on peer-reviewed publications, with other forms of scholarly production (e.g., community programs and reports, policies, services, and creative

products) having a secondary and lower-ranking role. Furthermore, promotion and tenure processes often rely on references provided by other members of academia, excluding the many voices of community collaborators and public partners that could testify to the excellence and advancements brought forward by publicly engaged scholars.

Recognizing, documenting, and measuring the breadth of contributions that PE brings to scholarly activities and academic careers at Memorial University are the first steps toward establishing clearer evaluation criteria to be integrated into promotion and tenure processes. Memorial University already recognizes how creative scholarship, partnership building, and service provision are all aspects that are relevant to the promotion and tenure process¹. However, although PE provides many opportunities to faculty members for fulfilling these criteria, there is still a lack of across-the-board recognition of publicly engaged scholarship in promotion and tenure processes, at Memorial.

This report explores the academic side of PE, with emphasis on its relevance to the careers of Memorial's faculty members. In particular, we explore how PE has supported the careers of Memorial's faculty in developing academic and non-academic products for community groups and the public, in establishing long-lasting and mutually beneficial collaborations within and outside the university, and in supporting the professional and academic growth of both graduate and undergraduate students. We do this through the lens of projects that have been funded by OPE's seed

¹ <https://munfa.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/MUN-MUNFA-CA-2023-Article-10.pdf>

funding programs (i.e., the Quick Start Fund for Public Engagement and the Public Engagement Accelerator Fund).

OPE recognizes that fostering the growth of PE activities at Memorial University requires providing support to faculty members, staff, and students through funding programs. Both the [Quick Start Fund for Public Engagement](#) (\$2,500.00) and the [Public Engagement Accelerator Fund](#) (\$10,000.00) funds promote projects aligned with the goals and objectives of Memorial's PEF. Quick Start aims to support new PE partnerships, projects and initiatives such as preliminary meetings, events and service-learning projects. Accelerator aims at increasing the capacity of our faculty, students and staff to collaborate with partners outside the University and supports the initiation or extension of PE projects that link to Memorial's academic mission. The two funding programs are not intended for supporting traditional research (i.e., the conduction of studies, or activities that would require ethics approval within Memorial's research policies) and are open to both faculty and staff. Students can apply to the funds provided that a staff or faculty member is willing to be involved as the main applicant for the project.

We focused our study on a population of Memorial's faculty that have been active in PE over the past five years, with at least one project funded through either the Quick Start or the Accelerator funds. Specifically, we aimed at answering the following questions:

- What is the impact of PE in the types and number of research output produced by faculty members when conducting engaged projects?

- What is the role of OPE funding and helping faculty leverage further funding?
- Did PE projects lead to new and long-lasting partnerships between faculty members and public partners, other Memorial's faculties, and other universities?
- How are PE project outcomes and experiences being integrated in teaching activities? What is the role of students in such projects?
- What is the overall impact on academic careers of PE projects at Memorial?
- What are the main barriers and opportunities that faculty at Memorial encountered in their career as publicly engaged scholars?

The results presented here demonstrate the relevance of PE not only in furthering the university's third mission (i.e., supporting economic and social growth, and contributing to communities and territories), but also its research and teaching activities, and highlight PE's role as an approach to scholarship that enhances academic careers. We discuss the results of our study in the context of the promotion and tenure process, and provide recommendations and next steps for the integration of PE in the portfolio of experiences that are considered valuable to the advancement of academic careers.

Methods

The report includes the results of two projects conducted by co-op students from Memorial's Master in Applied Psychological Sciences (MAPS) and MA in Political Science, respectively. The first project, developed by MAPS student, Katherine Rorke, focused on the development of a study design and approach that included a questionnaire and in person-interviews. The study was developed using the book "Service-Learning and Civic Engagement: Principles and Techniques" (Gelmon et al., 2018).

The questionnaire included both multiple-choice and open-ended questions, and was organized in five thematic sections: *Research Outputs*; *Student Involvement and Teaching & Learning*; *Partnerships*; *Funding*; and *Career Development*.

The *Research Outputs* section asked participants to indicate what types (traditional and non-traditional) and number of publications were produced through projects funded by either Quick Start or Accelerator, or both. With the term *traditional outputs*, we define all publications that are broadly recognized as highly valuable contributions for the promotion and tenure of faculty members. These include all peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations and posters, books and book chapters, and guest lectures for academic audiences. With non-traditional outputs, we define all other products that do not fit within the definition of traditional academic outputs. These include but are not limited to, podcasts, blogs, social media posts, exhibits, and performances.

Student Involvement was assessed as the estimated number of undergraduate, MSc, and PhD students

that participated in the funded projects, while *Teaching & Learning* activities in the classroom were assessed through an open-ended question. Participants were also asked to indicate whether the projects funded by Quick Start or Accelerator supported establishing new and long-lasting partnerships outside Memorial University (i.e., either with other universities or public partners) and/or helped leverage additional funding opportunities.

Lastly, participants were asked to provide details on how their involvement in PE projects contributed to their academic career.

In total, 174 faculty members that received one or both funding programs were contacted and invited to complete the online questionnaire. The questionnaire was open for four weeks during the summer of 2023.

A second Masters in Political Science student, Victor Borba, developed a plan that involved conducting in-person interviews with the questionnaire participants to complement the questionnaire results and identify challenges and opportunities faced by faculty in their PE experiences. Six academic members, comprising 15.6% of all participants and representing various fields, were individually interviewed to provide them with the opportunity to elaborate and offer a comprehensive perspective on their views regarding the impact of PE on their careers. The questions posed during these interviews included inquiries about the metrics used to evaluate the impact of PE initiatives on their research and teaching, the challenges encountered in the process of engaging in PE work, and the significance of PE-oriented teaching. The in-

person interviews consisted of two sets of questions: personalized questions, asking participants to elaborate on the open comments they provided in the questionnaire, and the following three questions, shared by all interviewees:

- Why have you decided to include PE in your research and teaching activities, and what are the main barriers/difficulties you have encountered?
- How can Memorial further support and promote the integration of PE in your academic work?
- How do you assess the effectiveness or impact of your PE initiatives on research and teaching?

Each interview lasted approximately 15-20 minutes and the interviewer collected notes for use in this report. The results presented below summarize the information we gained from both the questionnaire results and the interview notes.

Results

Of the 174 faculty members contacted, 39 completed the online questionnaire, corresponding to an overall response rate of 22%. Most respondents (n=28, 72%) completed all sections of the questionnaire, while the remaining 28% provided partial answers. In the questionnaire, 21 participants indicated their interest in a follow-up interview, and of these, six were still available at the time scheduled for the interviews.

Between 2019 and 2024, Quick Start and Accelerator supported more than 200 projects developed by Memorial's faculty and staff. Among the 39 questionnaire respondents, the

funds supported 61 publicly engaged projects. Out of the 32 participants who provided information about the funding programs, 6 (19%) received funding through Quick Start, 11 (34%) through Accelerator, and 14 (47%) benefitted from both programs (Fig. 1). On average, participants completed two projects each. Six participants reported being awarded one or both of the funding programs more than two times ranging between three and six projects each.

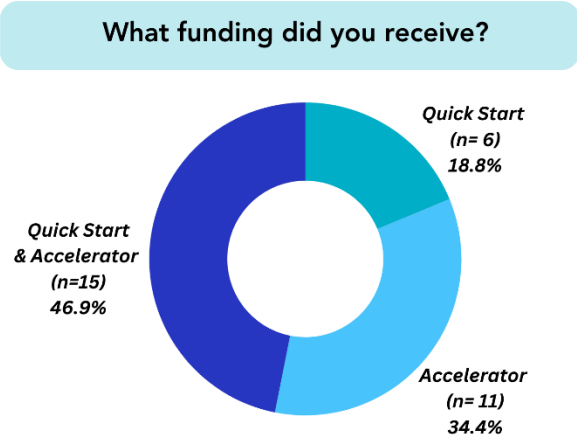


FIGURE 1. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FUNDS AWARDED TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS (N=32).

Career Development

Most participants indicated that PE enriched their academic career, and 89% reported having included PE activities in their academic CV (Fig. 2). Most respondents perceive PE activities as being valuable to their academic career (Fig. 3). The positive aspects of PE included motivating faculty to explore new fields of research, developing creative approaches to work with communities and the public, and expanding the reach of research conducted at Memorial. Respondents also indicated that PE activities led to long lasting partnerships, opportunities for new projects, and additional funding opportunities, all contributing significantly to their academic career. One-fourth of the respondents indicated that PE activities were either not relevant or mildly valuable to their academic career.

Have you incorporated work from the Quick Start or Accelerator project(s) into your academic CV?



FIGURE 2. PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS THAT REPORTED HAVING INCLUDED PE ACTIVITIES IN THEIR ACADEMIC CV.

When asked, one participant indicated that PE promotes advancements in research and academic production, as it diversifies not only the outputs of research, but also how academia interacts with local realities: *“These opportunities have impacted community engagement both locally, nationally and internationally in areas that are outside of areas of research and scholarship we are not known for such as teacher education”*.

Furthermore, they highlighted how establishing connections with communities and public partners can expand the reach and relevance of research conducted in academic settings, and provide opportunities to explore new areas of research: *“[public engagement] has enabled me to make substantial connections and establish networks that I would not otherwise have been able to do”*.

How valuable do you feel your publicly engaged work is within your academic career trajectory?

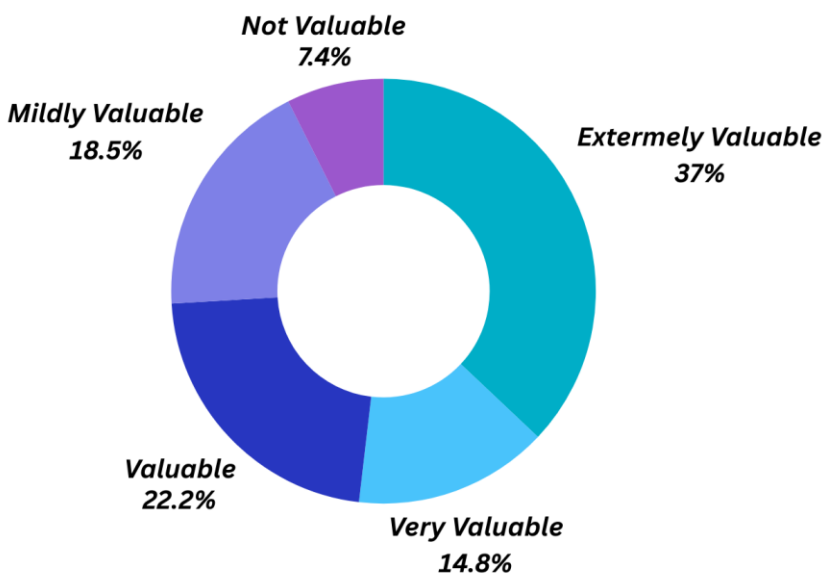


FIGURE 3. OVERVIEW OF HOW MEMORIAL'S FACULTY MEMBERS VALUE PE AS SOMETHING THAT CAN BENEFIT THEIR ACADEMIC CAREER.

Another account states that the connections created through PE have *“been a help to bolster my scholarly activities with opportunities I might not otherwise have had.”* PE completes and complements traditional academic work as it provides researchers with new perspectives, methods, and approaches for answering research questions, and, at the same time aims at materializing tangible impacts on the community and the public:

“I think the public engagement projects have completed the loop of my research, which started with ground level data collections and publications. Being able to collaborate with the local partner, whose members are critical to my previous funded projects, has empowered the local educators in the field and given them a strong voice. Such partnership has also gauged attention from the Department of Education and the School District and positively affected ESL educators and newcomer students. Seeing the impact of my work on the local communities is the best reward for my research.”

However, PE efforts from Memorial faculties are either not recognized or not always given enough recognition in promotion and tenure processes. In this context, early career faculty might be discouraged from undertaking PE projects, as these will not necessarily result in scholarly products that will support their career advancement. The metrics used to evaluate faculty performances are often incompatible with the timelines and outcomes of PE projects:

“So you need to be able to measure something that happens within an academic term, usually. And with public engagement, sometimes it takes a long time to build relationships. [That] happens with research as well. And people kind of shy away from research where it's going to take a while to build relationships, especially if they're primarily thinking about the metrics that they get used for promotion and tenure.”

Some of the faculty members involved in PE activities at Memorial have established their own criteria for evaluating success. These include approaches that provide tangible measures, such as evaluation and satisfaction surveys for community members and public partners, presence in media outlets, and tracking participation of the public in project activities.

However, as one respondent explains, other positive outcomes are more challenging to measure: *“Community partners are very satisfied with the work we do. But in terms of how the rest of the community or the population is impacted by our activities, that's a great question that I have to think about.”*

Research Outputs

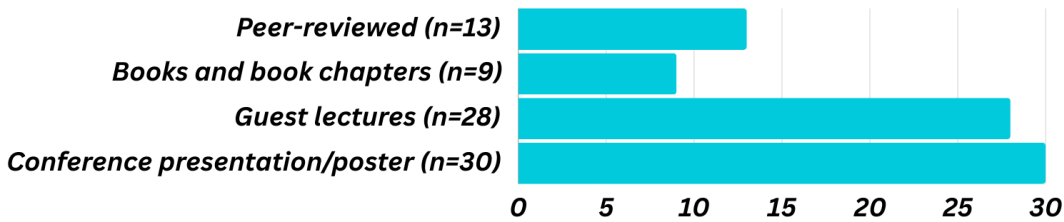
The reported PE projects have led to a range of traditional and non-traditional academic outputs (see Methods section for the definitions of traditional and non-traditional outputs). Respondents reported 313 publications in total, with the majority being non-traditional publications (74%) (Fig. 4). The creation of traditional scholarly publications is not a goal for the Quick Start and Accelerator funds: the resources

provided by OPE to faculty members and community organizations are all to be directed towards PE activities. Nonetheless, 26% of the publications belonged to traditional academic outlets. Traditional publications included 30 conference presentations or posters, 28 guest lectures, 13 peer-reviewed articles, and nine books or book chapters (Fig. 4). Non-traditional publications included a large number of social media posts (n = 184), 13 blog posts, 11 performances, and nine exhibits.

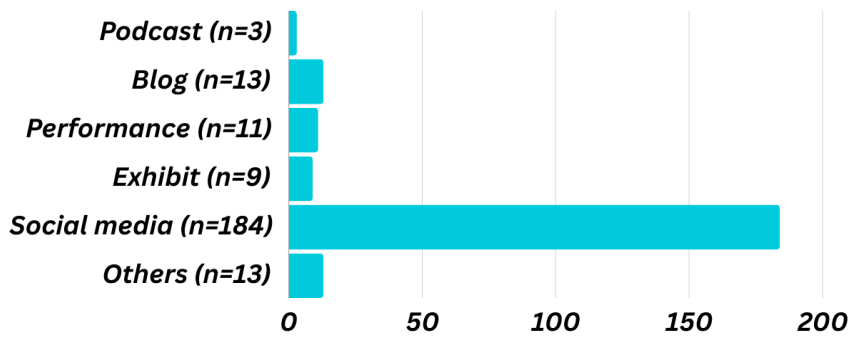
Other than the output channels listed above, other reported outcomes for projects funded by Quick Start and Accelerator included films and documentaries, how-to and curriculum guides, public reports, datasets and databases, reports for internal use of the public partners, radio appearances, public talks and conferences, workshops and community support sessions. This diversity of outputs showcases how PE projects can reach different audiences through knowledge-sharing that relies on less traditional but more accessible dissemination outlets. However, promotion and tenure processes at universities are not always able to appropriately recognize and value such non-traditional publications. The in-person interviews provided a more in-depth understanding of how relevant different types of PE publications are within the careers of Memorial's faculty members. Even though PE generates more diverse research outputs than traditional research projects, its recognition in terms of career development is notably limited unless it transforms into a formal research outlet. In other words, as one academic member expressed, *"I can't effectively include public engagement in my Google*

Scholar profile." This underscores the crucial need to acknowledge and consider PE when evaluating tenure implications. Nevertheless, the diversification of perspective on a research project is of great value to academic production itself: *"PE has been a great framework for integrating various dimensions of scholarly work while also feeling like it has relevant stakeholder impact and contributes to public conversations."*

How many and what types of traditional publications were produced your Quick Start/Accelerator project(s)?



How many and what types of non-traditional publications were produced your Quick Start/Accelerator project(s)?



Beyond that, most interviewees acknowledged that PE contributes significantly to communities and generates a sense of personal gratification. In reflecting upon the partnerships resulting from a project funded by Accelerator or Quick Start, a researcher said that *"it has been integral in building connections"* and that *"it has strengthened my drive to give back to the communities"* through their

FIGURE 4. TRADITIONAL (E.G., PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS) AND NON-TRADITIONAL (E.G., ARTISTIC PERFORMANCES) REPORTED BY QUESTIONNAIRE PARTICIPANTS. PERCENTAGES ARE RELATIVE TO THE TOTAL REPORTED OUTPUTS FOR EACH ONE OF THE TWO BROAD TYPES OF PUBLICATIONS. ADDITIONAL NON-TRADITIONAL OUTPUTS REPORTED IN THE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS ARE NOT INCLUDED HERE BUT ARE DISCUSSED IN THE TEXT.

projects. This rapport between university and community is, as seen by the research outputs published, greatly productive, but the production it yields has yet to receive full recognition. In other words, while PE projects are inherently public-oriented and should seek to produce beneficial outcomes for partners outside of the realm of universities, such projects should also have a positive impact on academic careers, that is, the results should be seen as achievement in academic endeavor. This is a matter of perspective: as another faculty member put it, PE has *“expanded the type of outputs we can do (away from peer reviewed articles, thankfully), so the work gets into many new venues and reaches different audiences, which in turn expands who contacts us for collaboration, information, etc. This has impacted my career by broadening it.”*

Leveraged Funding

The funding provided by the Office of Public Engagement is intended to support applicants in initiating and developing PE collaborations with public partners; however, they also have the additional impact of providing existing funds to help faculty leverage other, larger, funding opportunities to extend their projects. Out of the 28 participants that completed the questions relative to funding, more than 50% indicated that their funded PE projects opened up possibilities for applying to additional funding programs (Fig. 5). In particular, nine respondents have applied or received funding from Canadian Federal agencies to continue their PE projects.

Such funding programs included:

- The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Connections Grant;
- The SSHRC Partnership Engage Grant;
- The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) Promo Science Program;
- The Canadian Institute of Health Research Operating Grant.

In addition to these federal funding opportunities, a number of respondents reported receiving additional funding from multiple provincial and local organizations. PE projects at Memorial supported through OPE funding often evolve into strong and competitive projects that can leverage larger funding opportunities. Furthermore, many of the larger funders identified by respondents have explicit goals in terms of PE, knowledge mobilization, and partnership development that are in strong alignment with the definition and practices of PE brought forward by Memorial University.

Although these results indicate that PE funding opportunities allow faculty to expand their PE projects and access additional local and federal funding opportunities, in the questionnaire's open comments, participants reported a number of barriers and areas of further expansion that could improve the impact of the PE

Did your project(s) lead to or support any additional funding opportunities?



FIGURE 5. PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS THAT WERE AWARDED ADDITIONAL FUNDING LEVERAGING THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS.

funding opportunities offered by Memorial's Office of Public Engagement.

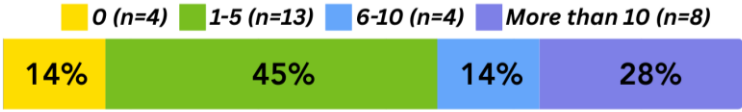
In particular, respondents highlighted the need for increased funding as well as for a funding structure that supports PE projects in the long term. As a respondent indicated: *“Currently, project proposals must be short (several months to 12-months long). This is a missed opportunity for building stronger, more sustaining collaborations with public partners.”* Memorial's administrative processes were also identified as a barrier. Delays and complications when processing payments for public partners (e.g., honoraria, artist fees, space rentals, and local vendors) make it more challenging for faculty seeking to build trust and long-lasting relationships with public partners. This aspect is particularly relevant when projects involve Indigenous communities, vendors located in rural communities, and segments of the public that are socio-economically vulnerable.

Students' Involvement and Teaching & Learning

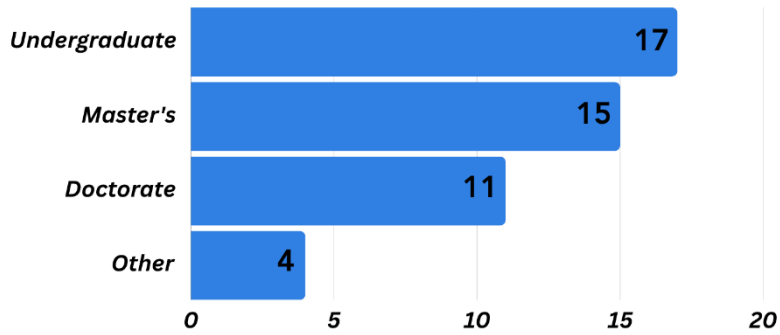
Our results show that students have been extensively involved in PE research projects at Memorial University. In total, 29 participants completed the questions relative to students' involvement. Only four respondents (14%) indicated that no students were involved in their PE projects, while the majority of projects (86%) involved students from a wide array of programs (Fig. 6). Most projects provided opportunities for 1 to 5 students (45%); however, a significant number of PE activities

reported a high level of participation, with more than 10 students contributing to a project.

How many students were involved in your Quick Start/Accelerator project(s)?



What was the degree level of the involved students?



Participation was highest among undergraduate students, with 17 respondents indicating that undergraduate students were involved in their PE projects. The participation of Master's and PhD students was slightly lower but still comparable to undergraduates: Master's and Ph.D. students were reported as being involved in PE activities by 15 and 11 participants, respectively. A small number of respondents (14%) reported that their projects involved post-doc researchers and exchange students ("Other" students in Fig. 6). Also worth mentioning is that 13 respondents (45%) indicated that students from multiple programs contributed to their projects at the same time, suggesting that PE can provide opportunities for students at different stages of their academic journey to connect and develop

FIGURE 6. NUMBER OF STUDENTS (TOP) AND THEIR PROGRAM OF STUDY (BOTTOM) INVOLVED IN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS AS REPORTED BY QUESTIONNAIRE

skills together. Student opportunities ranged from participating in stakeholders and community engagement events, showcasing their research at public events, building connections to develop research projects in collaboration with public partners, professional skill development, and employment opportunities.

Faculty members perceive the high involvement of students in PE projects as a positive aspect, and more than one respondent indicated that their participation in PE at Memorial should be further expanded by including more structured learning opportunities. As a faculty member put it: *“It would be ideal to have opportunities for student learning factored within public engagement projects, for example having accredited learning for students being involved in public projects as being equal to professional workplace learning.”* Experiential activities allow students to interact with the public, understand challenges from a real-life perspective, and build knowledge through collaboration and practise rather than passive learning.

Another researcher stated, *“I feel like public engagement has been a good way to integrate the pillar of teaching and learning with the pillar of research”*. Faculty members reported that conducting PE activities had an impact on their approach to teaching and learning. Insights from projects and experiences gained through PE are routinely integrated into teaching and learning activities. Such experiences included sharing PE projects results in the classroom, designing new exercises focused on PE, and discussing the importance of public partnerships, among others.

Only two respondents indicated that PE projects did not have an impact on their teaching activities.

Partnerships

Supporting the establishment of respectful and mutually beneficial partnerships with public partners is a primary goal of the OPE funding programs. In total, 28 participants responded to the questions relative to partnerships and collaborations within and outside of the university. For 43% of the respondents, PE projects led to additional public collaborations (Fig. 7). In the open comments, participants reported PE as being integral to building connections with public partners, which then led to researchers being invited by communities to work on specific locally defined goals.

Partners are also directly involved in research activities, as a participant indicated: *"We do provide consultations and some of the group members act as patient investigators in research projects"*.

In some cases, projects funded by Accelerator and Quick Start were used as models for the development of additional community-based projects. The majority of respondents (64%) indicated that their PE projects did not generate additional collaboration opportunities within the university, while 36% reported having established a new partnership with another faculty



FIGURE 7. PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS THAT REPORTED DEVELOPING NEW PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PUBLIC.

member (Fig. 8). A different scenario emerged for external collaborations with other universities: 54% of the respondents indicated that their PE projects facilitated the establishment of research partnerships with faculty at other Canadian and international universities (Fig. 9). Collaborations

stemming from PE projects included collaborations with Trent University, University of Saskatchewan, University of British Columbia, York University, Brock University, and the Ontario College of Art & Design University, among others. Interestingly, a few respondents reported being contacted by faculty members from other institutions regarding their approach to knowledge mobilization and PE, suggesting that Memorial faculty are being recognized as leaders in their PE activities. One interesting input from an interviewee highlights how PE can be seen as something that goes beyond academic research and academic career development, as it provides an opportunity to benefit local communities: *“I have never undertaken such projects with an eye to ‘academic career’; my concern has been with the activity itself and its benefit to the community. Affecting my academic career one way has never*

Did your project(s) lead to partnerships with other faculty at Memorial?

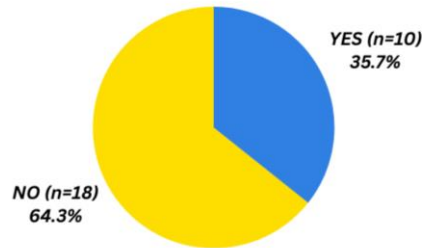


FIGURE 8. PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS THAT REPORTED DEVELOPING NEW PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY.

Did your project(s) lead to partnerships with other universities?



FIGURE 9. PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS THAT REPORTED DEVELOPING NEW PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER UNIVERSITIES IN CANADA OR INTERNATIONALLY.

been an issue. That career has developed just fine on its own ground".

Discussion

Overall, our results show that Memorial's faculty members see PE as beneficial to their careers, as a way to establish and maintain relationships with the public, as an opportunity to provide students with research and professional experiences, and as a source of examples and approaches to be included in their teaching activities. More than one account referred to PE as something that completed the loop of their research efforts by providing a bridge to reach communities.

Conducting PE activities at Memorial requires the involvement of public partners. The PE framework recognizes that the benefits of PE need to be mutual: on one hand, such activities should further the University's mission, and on the other hand, the involved public partners should have access to expertise and resources that can help tackle specific and practical issues. It is then not surprising that most projects resulted in the creation of long-lasting relationships between faculty and public/community organizations. PE projects, however, also supported the expansion of faculty's research networks providing opportunities to promote collaboration between academics at Memorial and from other universities. Another interesting result is that although PE projects are publicly oriented and geared towards the creation of knowledge that is easily accessible to non-academic audiences, the PE projects

considered in this study still contributed to the production of traditional academic knowledge (i.e., peer-reviewed articles, conference posters and presentations, lectures, and books). With contributions ranging from podcasts to artistic performances, faculty conducting PE activities have produced a wide range of publications that make research more accessible to the public. Both these aspects (i.e., expanding research networks and producing traditional publications) are generally considered beneficial to the career of academics.

Faculty members that developed their PE projects have an interest in seeing such projects expanded and funded on a more regular basis. Overall, almost 50% of the respondents held both Quick Start and Accelerator, suggesting a continuity in their PE effort. For some of these projects, the initial funding opened up opportunities for accessing larger national (and sometimes international) funding programs. This delineates a trajectory where faculty start building their PE portfolio, availing of internal funding and then expand or initiate new and larger PE projects funded through national funding programs. However, faculty reported that Memorial could improve its financial support for PE activities by providing additional funding opportunities as well as long-term funding programs to sustain projects over multiple years.

In the assessed PE projects, student involvement was high and varied: approximately 1/3 of projects reported ten or more students being actively involved in their execution. In addition to this, the principles, experiences, and practices of PE are finding their way into the classroom and are being integrated in teaching and learning activities. Keeping this flow of

experiences and practices alive (i.e., from research to teaching and learning), however, requires better recognition and support of students' PE activities, including credit within academic programs.

All of these positive outcomes deriving from PE projects are, to a certain degree, relevant to the promotion and tenure process. Engaged faculty have the opportunity to expand research networks and increase the reach and relevance of their research, apply new methods and explore creative approaches to both research and teaching, develop partnerships with community organizations, and provide professional development for their students.

The results presented here, however, have some limitations. The questionnaire and interviews were carried out on a population of faculty members that have already taken the step of integrating PE in their research and teaching. Additionally, there do seem to be some disciplines that are more, or less, likely to avail of OPE's funding programs. There are a lot of possible reasons for this, including different approaches to PE between disciplines, alternative funding available within some disciplines, and even different valuing of PE across units. These limitations might have biased the results towards more positive answers and additional barriers – not considered here – might be limiting opportunities for faculty to integrate PE in teaching and research. Nonetheless, our results provide an initial insight on the value that Memorial's faculty see in conducting publicly engaged scholarly activities, and could be beneficial to the discussion on how PE can be best integrated in the university structure, especially in promotion and tenure processes.

Conclusions and recommendations

In the past decade or so, the expectation that universities work with the public to make positive contributions to their communities and societies has increased. University PE can help focus research attention on areas of public need, increasing impact, building trust and accountability between institutions and the people that fund them, and providing rich, real-life learning opportunities for students, among many other benefits. Universities and their funders have responded to this interest in a variety of ways, from dedicated partnership and collaboration streams within the Government of Canada's Tri-Agency Funding programs^{2,3}, to the inclusion of public-impact and partnerships focused language within university strategies⁴, and, in some cases, the creation of units with specific PE support mandates (e.g., OPE, the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Applied Health Research, the Harris Centre, and Grenfell's Go Engagement to note a few at Memorial). It is in this context that many faculty are considering how PE might figure within their individual academic work, either through research, teaching & learning activities, or both.

Publicly engaged scholars and institutions are proposing a number of approaches and frameworks for the integration of PE in promotion and tenure. These approaches can provide insights on how Memorial University could give more emphasis to the

² <https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/societe-societe/community-communite/index-eng.aspx>

³ https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programmes-programmes/partnership_engage_grants-subventions_d_engagement_partenarial-eng.aspx

⁴ <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/public-engagement/>

PE work undertaken by faculty. For example, Wendling (2023) proposes a set of four steps/needs that institutions can follow to appropriately recognize and reward PE scholarship:

1. Desire to institutionalize and community engagement and reward faculty within the promotion and tenure system;
2. Creation of new PE structures or through the re-alignment of existing ones (e.g., units, offices, committees);
3. Change in all institution-level guidelines, with clear definitions of what community engagement means within all organizational levels (departments & schools, faculties, and institution);
4. Creation of specific metrics that departments and faculties can reference and use to evaluate the quality of their PE activities.

The meaningful inclusion of PE in promotion and tenure can be achieved through the adoption of formal and standardized definitions, the documentation and assessment of activities, and the establishment of promotion and reward mechanisms (Sdvizhkov et al., 2022). This objective, as suggested by Sdvizhkov et al. (2022), could be achieved by following a set of actions:

- Expanding the notion of what is considered as evidence of good scholarships beyond peer-reviewed publications to include outputs that are common in PE projects (e.g., community

programs and reports, policies, creative products);

- Recognizing the relevance and impact of local and regional funding as evidence of their invested efforts in working with communities;
- Acknowledging the reputation of faculty at the local and regional level by including community and partner voices in their recommendation packages for promotion;
- Expanding research impact metrics beyond journal impact factors, for example by evaluating the depth of relationships established with communities or assessing the number of community members and organizations impacted by PE scholarly activities;
- Adjusting the definition of “peers” to encompass community partners as legitimate reviewers that can speak to the community-based work undertaken by publicly engaged faculty.

Memorial University has already initiated several of these actions. Besides OPE, multiple units are dedicated to supporting, promoting, and expanding PE within the university. The PE Framework provides clear definitions of what constitutes PE at Memorial, and the document outlines core principle, values, and practices for students, faculty, and staff to engage successfully with the public. Through its funding opportunities, OPE has also started documenting and tracking PE efforts happening at Memorial, providing a starting point for assessing

projects and measuring impacts on both the academy and the involved communities.

Our results show that PE activities are of relevance for the advancement of faculty members teaching and learning practices, promote the creation of new knowledge, and expand the horizons of scholarly research. However, greater weight is given to peer-reviewed publications – with the products of creative scholarships being often considered as secondary. This poses a barrier to the professional growth of faculty members that have a desire and will to invest time and effort in PE. Formally including PE as an appropriate and accepted form of scholarly production – accompanied by clear definitions and evaluation criteria – would help remove this barrier. Another possible action could be to increase recognition of faculty's positive contributions to communities. Currently, community contributions are amalgamated with service activities (e.g., serving in internal committees and organizational boards) in the promotion and tenure criteria. Considering activities that benefit communities as a stand-alone criterion, one that constitutes scholarship, rather than amalgamating it with other university-related activities, could help improving recognition for the efforts of engaged faculty. Lastly, allowing community voices to express their support for faculty members by expanding the current appraisal system for promotion and tenure could help ensuring that the University appropriately rewards faculty's contributions to local realities.

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