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Charting Pathways of Intellectual Leadership:

An Initiative for Transformative Personal and Institutional Change

By Sonja Fritzsche , William Hart-Davidson , and Christopher P. Long 



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Christopher P. Long is MSU Foundation Professor, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters, and Dean of the Honors College at Michigan State University. Dean Long is an expert in ancient Greek and contemporary continental philosophy, and his extensive publication record includes four books. His research has received over \$6M in funding, including the Less Commonly Taught and Indigenous Languages Partnership (<https://lctlpartnership.celta.msu.edu/about/>) with the Big 10 Academic Alliance; the Public Philosophy Journal (<https://publicphilosophyjournal.org/>), and the HuMetricsHSS initiative (<http://humetricshss.org/>), a values-enacted framework designed to empower faculty to tell more textured stories about the impact of their scholarship and pedagogy.

In Short

- Across higher education there is a misalignment between the policies and practices of evaluation and the core values for which universities profess to stand.
- Values of inclusion, transdisciplinarity, and publicly engaged scholarship are routinely undervalued in university practices of evaluation.
- Shifting attention toward high-impact ends of sharing knowledge, expanding opportunity, and mentorship and stewardship empower all members of the academic community, from faculty to staff, to create meaningful careers that contribute to the mission of the university.
- Implementing the Charting Pathways of Intellectual Leadership initiative in the College of Arts & Letters at Michigan State University has required reckoning with practices of exclusion and the privileging of tenure-system faculty.

We write as scholars and educators with careers as professors, department chairs, and deans at an American research university. Each of us has encountered stories of colleagues who were pulled by institutional forces away from the work that most aligned with their values. They were trying to enact positive change through their scholarly work on and off campus: transferring knowledge to the public, energizing community-based action to address inequity, changing laws and policies, and creating support networks and academic career pathways for diverse persons, and more. Yet our colleagues faced resistance during annual reviews from administrators and senior colleagues who refused to honor the genuine value of the intellectual work they found most meaningful—even when their work was also valued by their peers. They were alienated by policies and practices

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that prevented them from achieving their full academic potential. Here is an example:

A pretenure faculty member collaborated successfully with a state museum and overseas partner institution to curate a large historical exhibit with a substantial permanent, bilingual online component. Now she sat frustrated in her office. She explained that mentors dissuaded her from organizing a follow-up exhibit, this time with a major national museum and the partner institution overseas, one that would have deepened her global faculty connections and positioned her research to shape national public discourse. Her mentors said they were “protecting” her from service, that she should focus on publishing, as her museum work would not count for much when it came time for tenure. Pulled away from the work about which she cared most deeply, she was struggling with her decision to stay in academia.

This story is symptomatic of a deeper misalignment in higher education between the values for which universities profess to stand—values, for example, of inclusion, transdisciplinarity, and community engagement—and the lived experiences of staff and faculty attempting to align their work with their values. This article presents one

intervention developed to redress the alienation inherent in such “symptomatic stories,” composite accounts shaped by staff and faculty experiences but not tied to specific individuals. The Charting Pathways of Intellectual Leadership (CPIL) initiative is designed to empower staff and faculty to put their values into intentional practice by aligning institutional practices with the values that animate university life. Even as we continue to refine and implement the CPIL initiative, we share it with you here as fellow travelers who seek genuine transformation in higher education, even with the recognition that this intervention is growing and changing in response to our reciprocal engagement with faculty, staff, students, and administrators. The theory of change that animates our work draws on the reality that institutions of higher education are emergent (Doyle & Brady, 2018). That is, institutions are constantly undergoing change shaped largely by local interactions, with change originating from within connected and relational educational communities (Tuck, 2018) and guided in important ways by grassroots leaders (Kezar & Lester, 2011). The transformative power of the CPIL approach stems from its origin in and attunement to the lived experience of staff and faculty within a major research university.

We begin with a description of the CPIL initiative, which builds on a variety of existing studies that expand scholarly evaluation to include new areas like community engagement (Boyer et al., 2015), advancing the public good (Austin et al., 2020; Kezar et al., 2005), and entrepreneurship and innovation (Carter et al., 2021). The CPIL initiative is designed not only to expand the range of *faculty* activities rewarded but also to provide a mechanism by which to recognize the work of *all members of the academic community* as integral to the university’s vital mission. After providing a brief overview of the CPIL initiative, we turn our attention to the practices of exclusion that prevent transformative change in higher education. Here the discussion is framed by two symptomatic stories that lend determinate voice to the identified habits and assumptions that perpetuate exclusion and give urgency to the values-enacted interventions we hope will lead to meaningful change.

THE CHARTING PATHWAYS OF INTELLECTUAL LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

The CPIL initiative includes a framework and a process. The framework is designed to expand our understanding of what counts as valuable university work. The process provides structure to mentoring conversations that empower colleagues to imagine and enact the meaningful contributions they hope to make. At the core of CPIL is the potential for “intellectual leadership,” a term that expresses the possibility that individuals can have a positive impact across the course of their careers, regardless of staff or faculty appointment type. Intellectual leaders share knowledge broadly and expand opportunity widely, contributing to greater transparency of processes and practices while catalyzing creativity among students and peers alike. Intellectual leaders engage in mentoring, formally as instructors, advisors, and supervisors and informally as colleagues committed to the success of others. They also engage in stewardship of institutional resources and professional organizations, creating equitable spaces for learning and research that empower discovery and innovation.

The Framework

The CPIL framework was first developed in response to tenure-stream faculty frustrated by the way the traditional categories of teaching, research, and service were pulling apart their holistic approach to academic work. Rather than empowering faculty to articulate the impact of their community-engaged practice, for example, the tenure system that exists at our research-intensive institution requires them to parse a given activity or accomplishment into one of these three categories. When faculty stressed how their students helped a community group accomplish a meaningful goal, what mattered more to review committees was whether it fit under teaching or service. To address this disconnect between what the faculty valued and what the categories recognized, we shifted the system’s focus toward higher impact activities and the processes undertaken to achieve them.

Rather than teaching, research, and service, we began asking colleagues how they shared knowledge, expanded opportunities, and engaged in mentoring and stewardship activities. These dimensions of intellectual leadership are captured in [Figure 1](#) (Fritzsche et al., 2017).

The semitransparent circles included in the figure—sharing knowledge, expanding opportunity, and mentorship/stewardship—represent the ends toward which high-impact activities in higher education are directed. The solid ovals—teaching, research, and service—are recognized as possible means by which we undertake these high-impact activities. When we focus too much on the means, we lose sight of broader ends toward which they are directed. The values of equity, reciprocity, transparency, and creativity appear in the background of the figure because they are some of the core values to which intellectual leadership might hold itself accountable. Of course, these values may be adapted to align with articulated institutional values and to the personal values of scholars that emerge in structured mentoring conversations. What is important is that, for intellectual leaders, both the means and the ends are accomplished through practices that enact their articulated values.

The CPIL framework remains supportive of traditional criteria—books, journal articles, federally funded research—but it also allows for the articulation of new criteria—meaningful mentoring; digital, multimedia, and publicly oriented scholarship; and community-engaged and nonprofit work, among others. Based on this framework, which expands what counts as valuable work to achieve the university’s mission, we are working with each unit to adjust their governing documents to explicitly affirm this more inclusive approach. Indeed, the more we began to integrate the framework’s expanded range of scholarly contributions into the tenure process itself, the clearer it became that we also needed to provide more structure to annual review conversations leading up to the tenure bid so that our mentoring is aligned with the expanded criteria. It also became clear that the more inclusive framework might apply to the important contributions to university life made by staff and faculty colleagues outside of the tenure system.

The Formative Feedback Process

The notion of intellectual leadership defines a conceptual horizon that is not limited to

FIGURE 1. VALUES, OUTCOMES, AND ACTIVITIES OF INTELLECTUAL LEADERSHIP

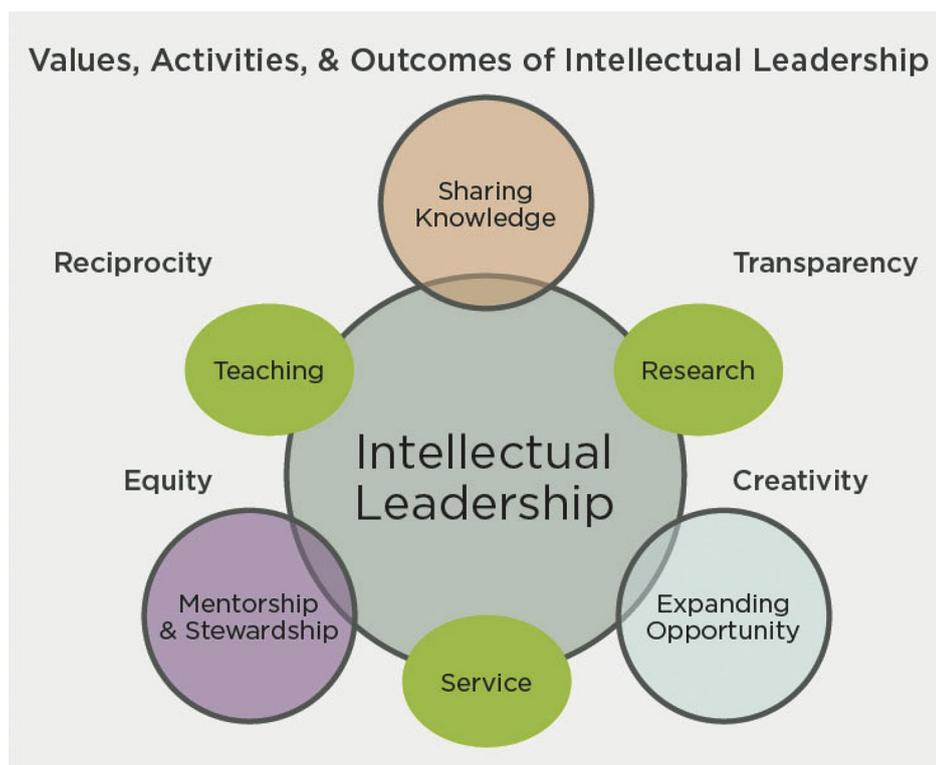
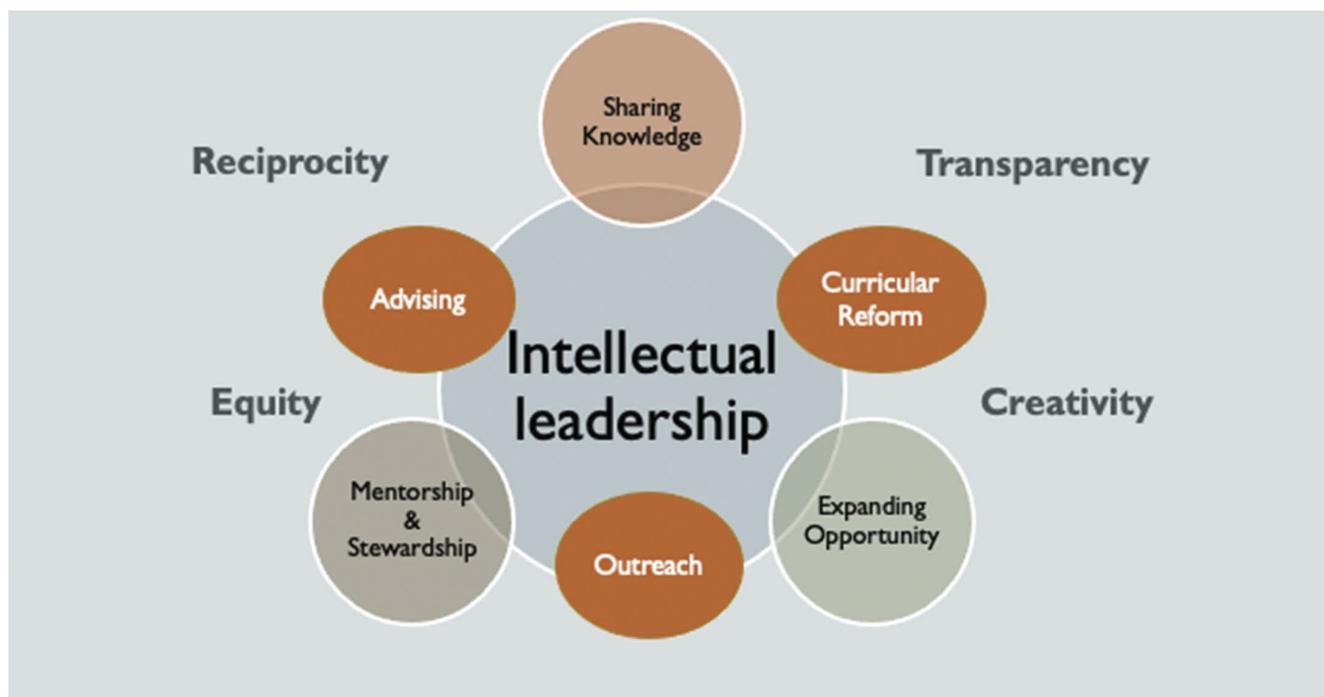


FIGURE 2. CPIL VENN DIAGRAM FOR ACADEMIC ADVISORS



tenure-system faculty. So, we began to ask colleagues—regardless of appointment type or career stage—to imagine specific scenes that they would recognize as moments of intellectual leadership. The details of these scenes vary depending on the person and their career stage. Anyone can look toward that horizon and narrate a moment in time when they might be recognized as an intellectual leader. This requires future-perfect thinking: what positive contributions will they have made when, looking back on their career, they consider the impact they have had? With that horizon in view, we then identify milestones and stepping-stones as two kinds of waypoints that guide their journey. A milestone is a marker placed at recognized moments of accomplishment by travelers who came before: for example, publishing an article or being elected to a position on the local school board. Stepping-stones, by contrast, are those deliberate choices individuals make to move toward a broader milestone. Stepping-stones are concrete actions, such as submitting an article for review and registering one’s candidacy for an upcoming school board election. By adopting rubrics that give structure to staff and faculty annual review conversations across the college, we seek to empower each of our colleagues to identify horizon, milestone, and stepping-stone goals that align with personal and institutional values.

Intentional mentoring practices play a critical role in supporting colleagues as they align their

activities with their core values. Formal mentoring programs typically exist only for tenure-stream faculty and are often oriented to institutional needs rather than those of the person being mentored. Mentoring is also distinct from advising, which Montgomery (2017) defined as institutionally oriented and hierarchical, whereas impactful mentoring “focuses deeply on personal growth as one recognizes and considers the whole person, and also seeks to support an individual’s values-based personal advancement in a specific domain” (p. 3). Mentorship and evaluation should empower all university employees to put their values into daily practice, rather than assess the extent to which an individual knowingly conforms to the narrowly circumscribed disciplinary or institutional expectations defined by privileged groups.

REDRESSING REGRESSIVE HABITS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The transformative change we seek remains hindered by habits and assumptions that are deeply entrenched within the institution and that constrain the capacity of staff and faculty to ground their work in their articulated values and to make contributions that lead to recognized, meaningful change on and off campus. Such habits and expectations are engrained presuppositions that are

enacted through institutional policy and the atmosphere in which colleagues work. They lead to behaviors that are taken for granted and assumed typical, escaping examination of whether they enhance the university's mission. Here we identify two entrenched habits and assumptions that hinder meaningful change: practices of epistemic exclusion and privileging those in the tenure system.

Practices of Exclusion

Practices of exclusion obscure and distort the faculty evaluation and promotion process. Here, we mean the multifarious ways that organizational structures, policies, practices, and behaviors limit the types of activities that are recognized and rewarded in academic life. At research-intensive institutions, evaluation and promotion processes are often based on an extremely limited number of recognized and measurable scholarship activities, marginalizing all other contributions (Agate et al., 2020; Alperin et al., 2021; Butterwick & Dawson, 2005; O'Meara et al., 2021; Saltmarsh et al., 2009). Faculty, chairs, and deans perpetuate this culture of exclusion when they invoke or apologize for regressive evaluation processes that marginalize colleagues rather than disrupting those very processes. Such alienation too often leads to unhappiness (Griffin et al., 2013) and, in some cases, to decisions to leave the institution or academic employment altogether (DeChavez, 2018). Settles et al. (2021) described the impact of epistemic exclusion in the following way:

the combined impact of formal institutional systems, or established systems for the evaluation of scholarship, and individual biases in determining what knowledge is valuable and who is deemed a credible contributor to knowledge production. (p. 10)

Epistemic exclusion also extends to other ways of knowing, such as the experiential knowledge that staff and nontenure-stream faculty can contribute to program planning and student support. Such practices of epistemic exclusion must be strategically redressed if institutions are to make good on their promise to create diverse, inclusive, and equitable educational communities.

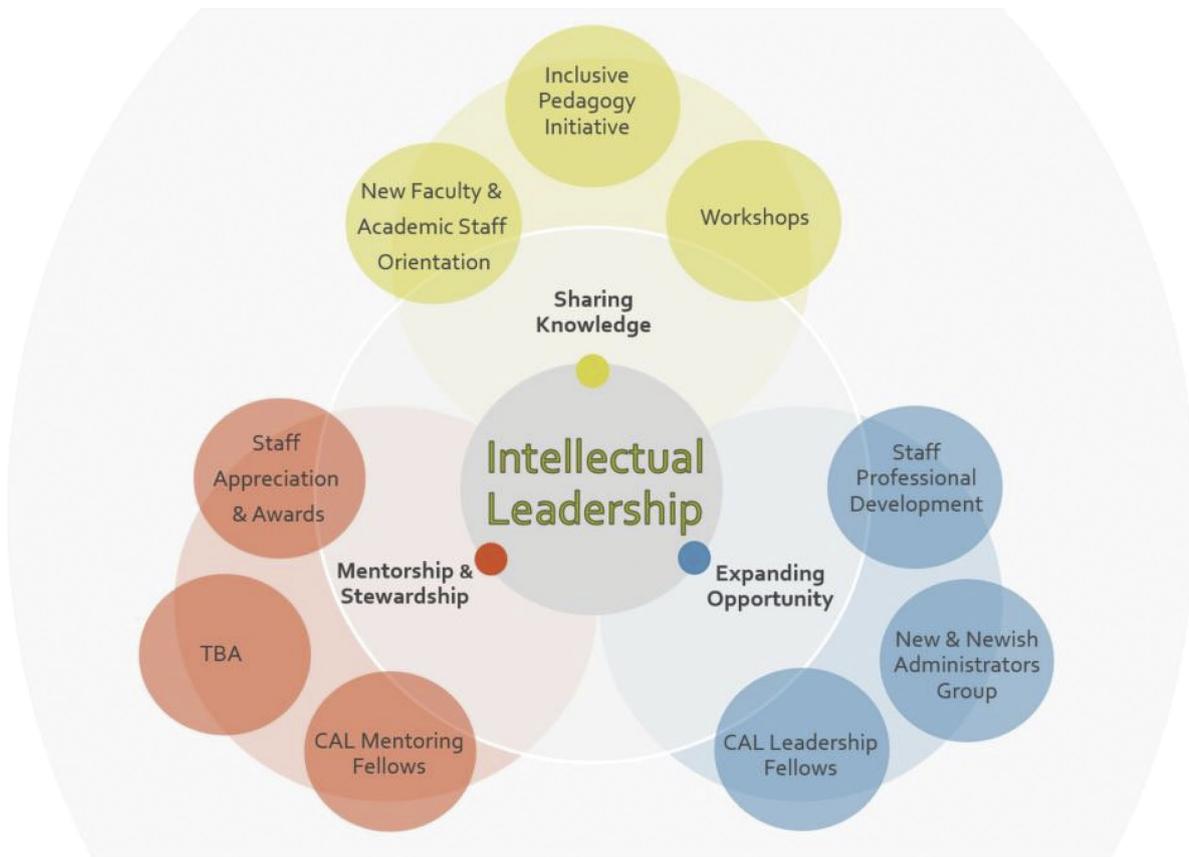
Another symptomatic story lends some determination to the dynamics of epistemic exclusion at work:

A mid-career scholar from a minoritized group took on a new project. His scholarly output also took on new shapes as a large dataset that would become a publicly available, curated digital collection and a video game. The scholar worked collaboratively with colleagues in other areas, including the library, and built a multidisciplinary team of student research assistants. Grant seeking became a new priority. Over three years, beginning with small internal seed grants and culminating with international awards and new products in app stores, his Curriculum Vitae filled up with scholarly achievements that were very different from those of his predecessors. Some were quite unfamiliar to senior department colleagues, who refused to recognize his emerging expertise and kept urging him to “get back to your real work” of media and cultural criticism, ideally published in scholarly monographs.

Substantive institutional transformation requires intervention in three specific areas, as outlined in Settles et al. (2021): “heightening awareness of epistemic exclusion, realignment of values and practices, and accountability” (p. 12). As O'Meara (2021) has argued, faculty members have an enormous amount of discretion to redress inequitable practices of evaluation. The CPIL initiative seeks to address all three areas by (a) providing a more inclusive framework that recognizes and supports a wider diversity of scholarship, (b) connecting quality to the demonstrated practice of articulated and shared values, and (c) establishing rubrics to facilitate accountable dialog among faculty and chairs during annual evaluation periods. In implementing the CPIL initiative, we have worked with faculty colleagues to ensure that unit bylaws and tenure and promotion guidelines, already flexible enough to recognize a wide range of work, will be interpreted fairly by colleagues who hold firmly to a limited range of scholarly outputs as indicators of excellence.

These interventions, however, revealed to us the need for a broader transformation in higher education that can only occur if we reckon with the practices of exclusion associated with tenure-system faculty privilege.

FIGURE 3. FACULTY AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT AS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF THE CHARTING A PATHWAY TO INTELLECTUAL LEADERSHIP MODEL



CONFRONTING TENURE-SYSTEM PRIVILEGE

Most institutions of higher education privilege “tenure system” faculty in pernicious ways that marginalize the vital work undertaken in support of the educational mission by faculty outside of the tenure system and by administrative staff. Many tenure-line faculty fail to recognize “nontenure-system” faculty and administrative staff as colleagues who pursue meaningful careers. Indeed, many institutions deny these colleagues a career, providing only successive 1-year contracts with no clear promotion trajectory. This too is a form of epistemic exclusion given the failure to recognize teaching, for example, as a valued category of knowledge creation and to see faculty without tenure-system appointments as credible knowledge producers.

A final symptomatic story illustrates this point:

A nontenure-system faculty member spent countless hours creating asynchronous learning modules for a general education curriculum

that expanded program course availability and helped to recruit and retain new majors. During the pandemic, these curricular innovations, based in Universal Design, became a model for other departments. Yet despite this valuable program stewardship, the contributions of this faculty member are undervalued because the university is unable to reward them for activities that extend beyond teaching.

Here the approach to change involves opening career evaluation and planning processes to all colleagues equally. We have augmented the CPIL framework to be more inclusive of the many contributions made by individuals with all types of appointments at our institution: research, teaching, service, advising, outreach, and curriculum reform (Figure 2; Fritzsche et al., 2021).

Perhaps the most radical transformation implied by the CPIL initiative is that it applies to anyone who works at the university. Rather than marginalizing the many professionals who are not directly part of the research mission, the CPIL model shifts the lens slightly to allow for nontenure system faculty and staff to be equal partners in a more

holistic understanding of the mission of higher education. Indeed, we are beginning to structure annual conversations about horizon career goals framed within the high-impact achievements of the CPIL model in order to also orient staff career pathways toward the higher-order goals of the university's mission. Being a chef or groundskeeper in a learning organization can mean that your work not only involves cooking and caring for the landscape, but creating sharable knowledge about those endeavors, teaching others, and expanding opportunities by creating spaces on the campus where a garden or a kitchen can be a place for experimentation and research as well as teaching and learning. By integrating this framework and approach into regular institutional processes of evaluation and review across the university, we recognize the multifarious ways everyone can contribute to the learning mission.

TOWARD A VALUES-ENACTIVE UNIVERSITY

The cycle of alienation we encounter in the contemporary university is the result of a misalignment between the values about which we care most deeply and the policies and practices that shape university life. The CPIL initiative is an ongoing attempt to redress this inconsistency by establishing a framework that extends the range of activities recognized as valuable and developing a process that empowers colleagues to identify shared values and put them into intentional action through policies, practices, and relationships. As we

continue to refine our implementation of CPIL, we have worked directly with units to develop rubrics for annual mentoring conversations, revised governing documents in departments, included CPIL language in solicitations of external review letters for tenure and promotion, worked with the provost to include an expanded approach to scholarship in the university's statement of tenure and promotion (Woodruff, 2021), extended the framework to include the nontenure system faculty and staff, and integrated the CPIL approach into our professional development activities, exemplified in Figure 3 (Dalimonte & Fritzsche, 2019).

Ultimately, personal and institutional change require a deep and ongoing commitment to values-enacted and intentional transformative practices at all levels of the university. □

All authors contributed equally and are listed in alphabetical order. The article was originally drafted based on discussions among the authors facilitated by Kyle Whyte during 2020/2021. We thank Cara Cilano for her thoughtful contributions.

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