Faculty, Chairs, Directors, Deans, and others often ask some version of the question: what defines quality in research and creative activity? Defining and assessing the quality of faculty scholarship (research and creative activity, hereafter research), using both qualitative and quantitative measures, is critical for attracting the best and brightest students and faculty, and thus for ensuring success in achieving the University’s mission. It is also critically important for OU as a public institution to be able to communicate the value and impact of scholarship in its diverse forms to a wide audience, within and beyond the University.

This document is meant to serve as a shared guide for members of the OU community to begin to define the characteristics of quality research that can be applied in a wide variety of circumstances, ranging from individual faculty and department evaluations to assessment of potential hires and identification of faculty to be nominated for prestigious national awards. Measures of quality research are always influenced by metrics that are discipline specific; for some disciplines, certain categories and metrics within them will be far more important than others. Moreover, these criteria of quality research manifest themselves at different stages, and in various ways, in the life-cycle of research.

The literature and sources included at the end of this document provide insight into the importance of and the challenges to defining characteristics of quality research. These sources caution against narrowly defining metrics and emphasize identifying opportunities to value a variety of activities in the process of defining quality research. The broad definitions of the characteristics below are meant to appeal to all disciplines. Discussions within and sharing effective practices with metrics and measures across disciplines are recommended ongoing steps in the process of defining quality research at the University of Oklahoma.

**CHARACTERISTIC #1: RESOURCING**

All research requires resources, ranging from faculty salary to external funding to networks and partners. In many disciplines, internal or external funding provides both validation of the potential impact of research and essential resources to carry out a plan of research. In general, the more competitive the funding process, the more meaningful the validation. However, financial resources are not the only possible resources that contribute to quality research. Built infrastructure, human capital, and collaborative networks are examples of essential assets for successful and quality research and scholarship programs. These assets often need the support of financial resources, but strategically building, connecting and sustaining these resources are vitally important as well to supporting quality research. The ability of a research program to identify and secure resources with which to build and sustain its activities is a measure of quality research.
CHARACTERISTIC #2: LEADERSHIP OF A SYSTEMIC PROGRAM

Quality research is part of a programmatic plan to develop, organize, and execute a research agenda that might include creating collaborations within or across disciplines, mentoring students, creating and leading centers, or building toward larger or systemic questions. Strategically developing this program and measuring progress along its timeline are measurable steps often overlooked when measuring quality research as it evolves over time.

CHARACTERISTIC #3: DISSEMINATION

Quality research is disseminated in visible and recognized outlets. There are different venues and media for disseminating scholarly research, including conferences, lectures, journals, books, performances, exhibits, etc. Peer review can be an important validation of the quality of research. Dissemination in prestigious and/or high-impact venues (measured for instance by journal citation indices) is also a reflection of the quality of research. Increasingly, open access is an important part of scholarly dissemination, at times mandated by funding agencies, and can enhance the impact of scholarly research. With collaborative and interdisciplinary work, dissemination will include featuring scholarly research beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries and translating that work for varied audiences.

CHARACTERISTIC #4: IMPACT IN THE DISCIPLINE AND ON THE WORLD

Independent of the means or venue of dissemination, quality research, in the long run, has an impact in the discipline and, potentially, on the world. Impact could be assessed by the contribution to the field in the form of citations, commercialization including patents and licensing, or other signs of attention. Impact in the world may be the most difficult to measure but ultimately is the most important. The value of research is that it impacts lives (both directly and indirectly).

CHARACTERISTIC #5: PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

Recognition follows impact and often comes last in the life-cycle of quality research. Recognition might focus on the scholarship - as in book prizes - or on the scholar - as in awards, fellowships, editorships, prizes, national service, and memberships in scholarly societies. Collectively, recognition at the individual level also influences impressions about the quality of our departments, colleges or the University.

[1] Here, we define quality as a standard of excellence measured against other things of a similar kind. In higher education, this typically refers to aspirational peers or standards established by organizations such as the National Research Council, professional societies, and the Carnegie Foundation.