David W. Szymanski wanted to work at a college where he could do what he does best: teach students how science can be used to solve real-world problems, help policy makers understand the link between science and the policies they create, and produce scholarship about teaching and learning.

But he worried that the kind of work he does—much of it interdisciplinary and public-oriented—wouldn't amount to much in the faculty-reward systems in place on many campuses.

What often counts most in decisions about promotions, pay, and performance evaluations is having lots of highly cited research published in well-known, peer-reviewed journals, and being able to win large amounts of grant money.

But a growing number of institutions are adopting more-inclusive reward systems for faculty, with increased recognition for nontraditional kinds of research, service in local communities, and innovative teaching. The change reflects shifts in scholarship and research in a world of rapidly changing technology, in which new forms of digital work are emerging. The new systems are also creating avenues for professors to pursue work that matters to them without fear that they will derail otherwise promising careers.
Mr. Szymanski, a geologist and forensic scientist, started working at **Bentley University** in 2009 as an assistant professor of natural and environmental sciences. Bentley, in Waltham, Mass., is one institution that is broadening the scope of faculty work that it recognizes and rewards, not least in decisions about salary increases and bonuses.

He has received a merit-based raise to reward his successes, particularly his creation of a popular undergraduate course that gives students hands-on experience in how science and scientific data relates to federal environmental policies. Students in the course go to Washington to share their research with policy makers.

"I came to Bentley because I knew that I could do this kind of work here," says Mr. Szymanski, who won the university's top teaching award for 2011 in recognition of the course. He was also an author of a peer-reviewed journal article, published last year, about how to use public-sector research projects to engage undergraduates.

Professors like Mr. Szymanski are among the kinds of people the business-oriented university is interested in considering for new bonuses, says Daniel L. Everett, dean of arts and sciences. Bentley will decide in mid-April which several dozen professors will receive one-time awards of about $5,000. Department chairs will recommend candidates, and the decisions will be made by the provost. One goal is to include professors whose work is beneficial to Bentley but may fall under the radar of the traditional faculty-reward structure.

"People often think, 'You're only going to reward me if I do research,'" Mr. Everett says. "Publishing in journals isn't going away, but we're not overlooking everything else. We want to make sure that we also reward people for the work that matters to them."

That kind of recognition can go a long way in an environment where salary increases have barely kept pace with inflation in recent years. A new report on the economic state of higher education, released this week by the American Association of University Professors, found that, on average, pay for faculty members rose only 1.7 percent this academic year. The increase matches inflation, but only because inflation is so low.

**Undervalued Scholarship**

Other institutions, too, have taken steps to embrace nontraditional forms of scholarship. Michigan State, Portland State, and Syracuse Universities are among those that have changed their tenure-and-promotion policies to recognize public scholarship as much as more-traditional activities like writing books and publishing in scholarly journals.

James S. Fairweather, a professor of higher, adult, and lifelong education at Michigan State who studies faculty roles and rewards, says conversations about how to best document and reward the full scope of faculty work have gained traction. He expects that to trigger "some support for broader concepts of faculty contributions."
KerryAnn O'Meara, an associate professor of higher education at the University of Maryland at College Park, agrees. There are routine tasks, she says, that faculty do that "don't show up on their CV and don't show up in annual reports of their time."

Among those, she says, are mentoring graduate students, directing institutional programs, writing letters of recommendation, and marketing programs to attract new students.

Also often undervalued is scholarship in which professors use their expertise to explore issues in their communities. There are more people involved in community engagement than ever before, Ms. O'Meara says. Yet the path for career advancement for such scholars is still largely unpredictable.

Mary C. Hutchinson became involved in community-engaged scholarship while teaching writing at Pennsylvania State University at Lehigh Valley. She pursued her interest in ways teachers could better support English-as-a-second-language learners enrolled in the public-school system.

"Because I wasn't in a tenure-track position, I was free to do what I wanted," says Ms. Hutchinson, who once worked as an administrator and then as a lecturer in English for seven years. She earned a doctorate in education and with the degree was hired as an assistant professor of ESL education at Penn State. Then she began to face pressure from senior administrators and colleagues, on and off the campus, she says, to acquire a solid publication record that reflected what she was doing in the community.

"I wanted to just go ahead with what I was doing," says Ms. Hutchinson, who also does research on service learning. "It only took the second-year review to see that wasn't going to cut it."

So she "did double the work," she recalls, both to continue the research that mattered most to her and to make sure she was getting articles published to bolster her case for tenure, which she earned last year.

What can help public scholarship become more important to academics' careers? A critical mass of professors involved in such work, or of high-profile scholars who have made a commitment to it, Ms. O'Meara says.

"I've also seen that the larger the campus, the more important it is that people are on board at every level," she says. "You need to have a provost or a president advocating for it, but you also need the faculty on a campus saying, This is something that we really want to do."

At Syracuse University, for instance, the institution's chancellor, Nancy Cantor, is a vocal supporter of public scholarship on her campus—and throughout higher education, while the Faculty Senate at Syracuse voted to make changes to the university's tenure and promotion policies so that assessing public scholarship in its many forms would be possible.
Overhauling the faculty-reward system won't work without a broad shift in the attitudes of professors, especially the ones who determine whether the scholarship of their peers measures up. Simply adding metrics or categories of work to evaluate as part of faculty-reward systems won't work, says Michigan State's Mr. Fairweather, unless colleges make more of an effort to try to encourage people to "think about what really matters—and that's a different kind of conversation."

"Unless administrators are willing to have conversations with people who are on promotion-and-tenure committees, nothing changes," he says. "What matters is what those people value. At some point, institutions are going to have to confront that."

Mary T. Huber, a consulting scholar at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, says she's confident that new forms of scholarship will get the standing they deserve.

"There is a growing cadre of people who have done scholarship in these new areas, and they will be the ones to educate others about it and serve as peer reviewers," Ms. Huber says. "If the work that's being done is actually meritorious, expands the imagination, expands knowledge, and improves practice, I believe it's going to win out in the end."

At Bentley, Mr. Szymanski is hopeful that his work will mean success when he goes up for tenure.

"They've already said the kind of work I do is valued," he says, "so that's why I keep doing it."