'Evolving academic culture to meet societal needs' by Kateryna Wowk et al.

Summarised by Hong Ching Goh

Title: Academic culture must evolve to remain societal-relevant

Our societal and environmental challenges are ever growing in scale, complexity and urgency with problems such as population growth and migration, job displacement, climate crisis, availability of quality freshwater, waste reduction and management, pandemics.

There have been persistent barriers to collaborating across disciplines and with external decision-makers due to a high degree of scepticism in trusting sources of information and/or unwillingness to act. An example is found in coastal zones of which sea level rise is an issue but the scientific data which shows different projection updates raise confusion and can be controversial. Wide range of players are involved include politics, economics, technology and even psychology where a balance of development and adaptation must be weighed by decision-makers. This tension was recently highlighted in the U.S. state of Georgia, where a proposed bill passed the State House of Representatives that includes a 25 ft. setback rule on coastal private property. While this is improved over the current 20 ft. setback, it is far from the 100 ft. recommended by some scientists.

Furthermore, despite decades of studies highlighting the need for interdisciplinary research and science for decision-making, academic institutions are still not structured to facilitate or reward such collaboration. The article highlights recommendations made to overcome the continuous cultural and administrative barriers in academia base on a study conducted to identify the causes of these issues.

They collected data using two methods, i.e., (1) literature search through major search engines and a university database; (2) participatory workshops involving experts, decision-makers, and educators/academic administrators to identify new information than (1) and to test emerging recommendations.

Eight recommendations under three themes were made by the authors as below: -

Theme	Recommendations
Establish the role of research in linking to policy.	1. Encourage shared definitions towards balanced solutions.
	2. Provide internal guidance on research collaboration and linking to decision-making.
	3. Leverage partnerships for collaboration and problem solving.
Incorporate and measure new standards of success at individual and institutional levels.	4. Offer incentives and improve reward structures. 5. Institutionalize science to policy action.
Draw the line between academic and activism while building trust	6. Maintain neutrality and uphold scientific integrity. 7. Build trust through dialogue and knowledge co-production. 8. Develop policy options that explain risk and uncertainty.

In summary,

1. Academia across disciplines need to work better with different stakeholders to offer innovative solutions that benefits our society.
2. Persistent barriers include collaboration across disciplines and with external decision-makers due to scepticism in trusting sources of information and/or unwillingness to act and there is little or no incentive to engage in interdisciplinary work to support decision-making.
3. Eight recommendations centred on three themes were made to address the cultural and administrative barriers in academia.