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ABSTRACT

The emphasis in community colleges on teaching as a primary faculty responsibility has frequently caused classroom teaching to be divorced from scholarship. Although the teaching role is not a necessary condition for successful scholarship, some form of scholarship appears to be a necessary condition for successful teaching over an extended period of time. Therefore, the stress on teaching in community colleges may have actually led to a decline in the quality of teaching. The facts that new colleges are not being opened, that enrollments are declining, that funds for professional development are scarce, and that community college faculty are aging all reinforce the importance of scholarship as a means of enhancing faculty members' performance and image as professionals. While at the university level scholarship is equated with research, at the community college level a more liberal definition of scholarship should be employed, including professional activity, research/publication, artistic endeavors, engagement with novel ideas, community service, and pedagogy. The systematic processes involved in each of these activities will do much to strengthen teaching and combat boredom and burnout. Though examples of scholar-teachers exist on every campus, there is a need for the formal encouragement, support, and reward that would institutionalize the role of the scholar-teacher, and, in doing so, revitalize the teaching role. (EJV)

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DIGEST

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

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THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROFESSOR: TEACHER AND SCHOLAR

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The community college developed, in part, as a response to the preoccupation of elite universities with research (Parilla, 1986). Indeed, one of the strengths of the community college has been its commitment to student development. This commitment is evident in the amount of resources devoted to counseling and tutoring, and in the emphasis on teaching as the primary faculty responsibility. Unfortunately, this emphasis has frequently caused classroom teaching to be divorced from scholarship. If it is often assumed at the research university that superior or popular teachers are inferior scholars, it is often assumed at the community college that scholars cannot be good teachers. One consequence of this assumption is a reluctance to hire Ph.D. holders as community college faculty (Harrison, 1979; Smith, 1979).

Scholarship and Teaching

Although the teaching role is not a necessary condition for successful scholarship, some form of scholarship appears to be a necessary condition for successful teaching over an extended period of time. As a result, the stress on teaching in community colleges may have led to a decline in the quality of teaching.

In an autobiographical essay on the importance of research for teaching, Hans A. Schmitt (1965), a Tulane history professor, argued that teaching wears one out, that one gets tired of it, and that it can become monotonous. Only the excitement of research can keep the teacher vital: "Take research out of a teacher's life and you condemn him (or her) to a robot existence" (Schmitt, 1965). Twenty years after the appearance of Schmitt's comments, Parilla (1986) and Vaughan (1986) made similar observations. Since Schmitt's time, the terms of the argument have changed to scholarship, faculty renewal, and burnout, but the message remains the same: teaching should not be separated from scholarship. Vaughan places his plea within a historical context and suggests that recent developments in the community college world have made the case for scholarship

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particularly compelling. The fact that new colleges are not being opened, that enrollments are declining, that funds for professional development are scarce, and that community college faculty are aging all reinforce the importance of scholarship as a means of enhancing "both our performance and our image as professionals" (Vaughan, 1986, p. 14). These developments, along with the fact that community college professors have relatively few opportunities to teach a variety of courses, necessitate the development of a mechanism to prevent boredom and burnout.

In short, the concern that universities have expressed about the impact of the aging of the faculty on the quality of scholarship (Oromaner, 1981) should be paralleled at community colleges by a concern for the impact of the graying process on the quality of teaching. This concern must involve an analysis of the contribution of scholarly activities to the quality of teaching.

Research on Scholarship and Teaching

Faia (1976) notes that the literature studying the relationship between teaching and scholarship is contradictory and limited. However, Faia's own research has implications for community colleges. Analyzing data collected from over 50,000 faculty members at 30 colleges, he examined the relationship between teaching proficiency, awards received for teaching, and research productivity. At colleges where research was not strongly emphasized, faculty members who published extensively were nearly twice as likely as nonpublishers (31 percent vs. 17 percent) to have received teaching awards. At research-oriented colleges the relationship was much weaker (20 percent vs. 15 percent). Although further study is needed, Faia's data should help alleviate fears that faculty members who engage in scholarship and publication will not be able to function as effective instructors. This is particularly true at institutions, such as community colleges, that do not stress publishing.

This is not to suggest that community colleges should adopt a "publish or perish" policy or even that they should stress research and publishing activities. Something more modest is being suggested: community colleges should institutionalize the scholarship component of the teaching role. This may include research and publishing; however, as will be made clear below, scholarship is not limited to these activities.

The Nature of Scholarship

Both Parilla (1986) and Vaughan (1986) point out that the concepts of research and scholarship must be clearly differentiated and that definitions of scholarship that are appropriate to community colleges must be developed. I had the experience of offering a staff development workshop at Hudson County Community College with the title, "Writing About the Community College: Professional Obligations and Personal Opportunities." My goal, to stimulate staff members to write publishable articles (preferably based on research), was inappropriate. I should have discussed ways of stimulating professional growth through an array of scholarly activities. The audience for the workshop was comprised of members of the student services department, mainly counselors, and not faculty members. The point here is that the role of scholarship in the enhancement of professional performance should be explored across professions. Community college personnel should be particularly sensitive to the role of all professionals, not only teachers, in the development of students.

I suggest that commonly accepted definitions of research and scholarship equate the two activities because these definitions have, in general, been developed by university-based scholars for whom publishable research is by far the most significant, or only, form of scholarship. This research is valued not for its ability to contribute to teaching, although it may make such a contribution, but for its ability to contribute to the advancement of a research area, to the solution of an empirical or theoretical puzzle, or to the development of a discipline.

Consequently, university scholarship is often evaluated on the degree to which it is cited in subsequently published research (Oromaner, 1981). If a work is a contribution to the discipline, the norms of scholarship require that it be cited. The existence of the Science Citation Index, the Social Sciences Citation Index, and the Arts & Humanities Citation Index makes such evaluations quite easy. However, citation analysis is an inappropriate measure of the value of scholarship conducted at the community college. Although community college professors may contribute to their disciplines, and such contributions should be evaluated on the same criteria as are the contributions of others, these evaluations are of concern to the discipline and are not of primary concern to the community college. What is of concern here is the contribution of the work to teaching.

In a study conducted by Pellino, Blackburn, and Boberg (1984), almost 90 percent of the respondents at research-oriented universities replied in the affirmative when asked "Are you actively involved in research which you expect to lead to publication?" Predictably, only 22 percent of the respondents at community colleges gave an affirmative response. In addition, approximately 60 percent of the community college respondents stated that they had not been active in such research since graduate school. From an institutional perspective, however, the question is not appropriate for community college professors; it is certainly not relevant. An appropriate and relevant question is: "Are you actively involved in scholarship which you expect to lead to an increase in the quality of your teaching performance?" When asked to indicate the amount of time spent on an "activity you consider to be of a scholarly nature," excluding teaching and immediate classroom preparation, 95 percent of the community college professors indicated at least one hour per week; and over 20 percent indicated eleven or more hours.

Unfortunately, although a great amount of knowledge has been generated concerning the development of quality research at the university, relatively little knowledge has been generated concerning the relationship between various forms of scholarship, including research, and the quality of teaching at the community college. In part, this reflects value and stratification systems in higher education and, in part, it reflects the separation of scholarship and teaching at the community college.

At present, given the state of our knowledge, I propose that we adopt the principle, "Let a hundred flowers blossom." That is, the most liberal definitions of scholarship should be employed. Pellino, Blackburn and Boberg (1984) have identified six dimensions of scholarship: professional activity; research/publication; artistic endeavor; engagement with novel ideas; community service; and pedagogy. Examples of each include reviewing articles for a journal; publishing an article; performing or exhibiting an artistic work; engaging in systematic study to gain new knowledge or acquire a new research technique; delivering a talk to a local civic or religious organization; and preparing a new (and extensive) syllabus for a course. The systematic processes involved in each of these activities will do much to strengthen teaching and to combat boredom and burnout.

Institutionalization of Scholarship

Examples of scholar/teachers exist on every campus. What is missing is the formal encouragement, support and reward that would institutionalize the role of the scholar/teacher. A number of positive consequences would follow from the creation of such a role.

The quality of teaching candidates would increase if they were informed that scholarship is an integral part of the teaching. (This is certainly more likely to attract quality candidates than is the statement, "We are a teaching institution and not interested in research," or "If you do research, you are on your own.") Criteria for tenure and promotion evaluations would include, as one element, the demonstration of scholarly activity and of its relationship to teaching. Finally, in terms of ongoing support, faculty development programs would become more content-oriented, and stress "what to teach" rather than "how to teach" (Parilla, 1986, p. 2).

Intellectual concerns are at the heart of teaching. The institutionalization of scholarship provides an opportunity for community colleges to stress these concerns and, in so doing, to revitalize the teaching role.

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