

When Doing Good is Not Good Enough!

Good to Great: The Scholarship of Engagement

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Introduction

Our luncheon speaker just lauded us by saying that we are doing good work. And in the context of our required reading of *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001), I assert that doing good work is not good *enough* in the engagement movement. Going from good to great involves understanding and making operational the “scholarship” of engagement.

. . . [T]he academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic and moral problems, and must reaffirm its historic commitment to what I call the scholarship of engagement. (Boyer, 1996, p. 11)

In his last published essay, Ernest Boyer expressed his thinking in its most evolved form and made the case that higher education’s mandated mission is the scholarship of engagement. He maintains that

the scholarship of engagement means connecting the rich resources of the university to our pressing social, civic, and the ethical problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teachers, and to our cities. Campuses would be viewed by both students and professors not only as isolated islands, but staging grounds for actions... ultimately the scholarship of engagement also means creating a special climate in which the academic and civic cultures communicated more continuously and more creatively with each other . . . (p. 21)

A significant and growing number of universities are accepting Boyer’s challenge by pursuing an agenda of public and civic engagement and by considering the resultant faculty and student roles. While Boyer postulates desired outcomes, the means for achieving those outcomes have raised significant, fundamental questions. Some of

these questions focus on what engagement is, what the characteristics of engaged institutions are, how higher education deepens its community connections and collaborations in educationally meaningful ways, and defining the roles of students, faculty, and administrators in an engaged institution.

Similar to recent Extension reports, I too sense zest about the engagement concept in many sectors—certainly within the land grant universities, but as much so in member institutions of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), metropolitan universities, and private liberal arts colleges. Some of the recent books on the topic have come out of Yale (*Beyond the Campus*, Maurrasse, 2001) and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (*A Time for Boldness*, Zimpher, Percy, Brukardt, 2002). Institutions are deeply embedding the principles of engagement to the point where they are using them as a basis of accreditation—as noted by the recent accreditation review of Indiana University - Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI), and the upcoming review at University of New Hampshire (UNH). One of the UNH's themes in meeting the standards of Northeast Association of School and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation is “engagement through research and scholarship;” that is, using research to serve the public good. Not only has NASULGC advanced the engagement agenda, but so have Campus Compact, American Council on Education, American Association of Higher Education, AASCU, and numerous other special efforts such as the Wingspread Declaration on the Civic Responsibilities of Research Universities, and the Kellogg Forum for Higher Education and the Public Good. Of significant importance is growing international notice... much of what I am drawing from today comes from an article I wrote that was published by the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (Sandmann, 2002).

Following on universities' commitment to undertake studies of engagement, new definitions of scholarship, including the scholarship of engagement, are taking hold. But from its earliest definition as scholarship, engagement has presented challenges to higher education, including its relationship to more common understandings of the “service” category of faculty work, its relationship to the “scholarship of application,” and the question of whether it is a new, integrated form of scholarship. So while it is useful to talk about the engaged agenda from the institutional perspective, I find it very limiting. I

have found that examining the *practice* of engaged faculty provides the greatest insights into the scholarship of engagement.

If the engagement movement is to mature, scholars need to document and share the values, beliefs, and approaches that guide their work. Otherwise engagement efforts will be buried in unarticulated perspectives and characterized by unexamined perspectives and by unexamined practices. (Fear, Bawden, Rosaen & Foster-Fishman, 2002, p. 55)

I'll address the nature of the scholarship of engagement that has been discovered by examining the work of faculty—particularly the “boundary crossing” characteristics—and I'll highlight how the documentation and evaluation of such scholarship can help in understanding and advancing the scholarship of engagement.

Scholarship of Engagement: Boundary-Crossing Scholarship

What has been learned about the scholarship of engagement since Boyer highlighted the phrase in 1996? One key finding is that the landscape of scholarly work is changing dramatically. Frank Fear and I highlighted some of these changes in two recent articles (Fear & Sandmann, 2001-2002, Sandmann & Fear, 2002). One example is service learning. Service learning—once operating largely as a student-services function—has become, in recent years, an important curricular and faculty expression. Many faculty view service learning as a means of discovery as they are able to research and document service learning experiences and to publish articles on the processes and outcomes.

Service learning is one of many contemporary examples of scholarly boundary crossing, ways that faculty connect—in coherent, thematic, and scholarly ways—the traditionally discrete activities of teaching, research, and service. When viewed this way, engagement becomes a connective expression as the scholarship *of* engagement becomes scholarship *in* engagement. In other words, engagement becomes a crosscutting phenomenon—engagement *in* teaching, *in* research, and *in* service—guided by an engagement ethos (Fear & Sandmann, 2001-2002, Sandmann & Fear, 2002). Faculty are discovering the value of engaged learning forms, such as collaborative learning, in the classroom (Bruffee, 1999). Engaged forms of inquiry,

discovery, and change, such as participatory and action research (Greenwood & Levin, 1998), are gaining popularity as well.

“Engaged scholars” certainly include faculty, staff, and students in service to society through the scholarship of engagement. Yet, there is also a new breed of engaged scholar, persons whose work is defined by “engaged” forms in teaching, in research, and in service. For example, the engaged scholar may use impact assessment designed to measure the effects of community programs and services with reference to their intended outcomes. Another scholar might analyze policy directed at framing new policy approaches or assess the impact of current policy initiatives.

In seeking a definition of the scholarship of engagement, we find that “scholarship of engagement” is a term that captures scholarship in the multiple aspects of teaching, research, and/or service. The National Review Board for the Scholarship of Engagement (<http://www.scholarshipofengagement.org>) defines the scholarship of engagement as *faculty engaged in academically relevant work that simultaneously fulfills the campus mission and goals as well as community needs. In essence, engagement is a scholarly agenda that incorporates community issues that can be within or integrative across teaching, research, and service.*¹

Although many faculty members are involved in connected, practical, applied work, typically there is a need to frame and to conduct the work in a more scholarly manner. In a study that examined portfolios of candidates (with outreach responsibility) for tenure from land grant universities, Alan Knox (2001) found that the proportion of outreach within an assistant professor’s total contribution was less important for promotion than convincing evidence of balanced attention to high-quality performance and accomplishments. Further, this and other studies have found that “there has been a gradual acceptance of outreach forms of teaching, research and service as legitimate with both similarities (quality and impact) and differences (recipients, collaboration) compared with disciplinary research, resident instruction and institutional service” (p. 74). It appears that institutional promotion and tenure guidelines are not constricting consideration of engagement as scholarship if it is deemed of quality and having impact.

¹In this context, community is broadly defined to include audiences external to the campus that are part of a collaborative process and that contribute to the public good.

So, what is quality scholarly engagement? The work that has been done on documentation and evaluation criteria for the scholarship of engagement provides groundwork for closing the gap between the rhetoric and the reality of the scholarship of engagement.

Scholarship of Engagement: Toward an Understanding of the Work

The scholarship of engagement continues to emerge and expand as campuses manifest context-driven characteristics reflecting the correspondence between their notions of scholarship and individual histories, priorities, circumstances, and locations. One of the ways these characteristics become clear is through documentation of the work. Documentation also assists faculty and campuses in the process of reflection and examination of the application of the scholarship of engagement.

The National Project for the Documentation of Professional Service and Outreach, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, was designed to provide institutional models and resources to advance documentation, evaluation, and review of the scholarship of engagement. At the same time, the project addressed the basic question of what scholarly engagement is and further, what *quality* engagement is. With the collaboration and work of sixteen faculty and administrators from numerous campuses across the United States, the participants took part in the process of documentation to provide guidelines, examples, and a framework for the scholarship of engagement. The result, *Making Outreach Visible: A Guide to Documenting Professional Service and Outreach* (Driscoll and Lynton, 1999), provides campuses a way to reformulate faculty roles and rewards systems to reflect the scholarship of engagement. The *Guide* acts as a resource early in an institution's reform process, as well as later when explicit "how to" instructions are needed. Additionally, the *Guide* provides actual faculty documentation examples, resources, and guidance while posing questions and issues for campus exploration.

The work of this project provides supportive recommendations for faculty wishing to provide scholarly evidence that most effectively communicates and makes visible the scholarship of engagement. The participants of the National Project for the

Documentation of Professional Service and Outreach found that it took careful planning and description to provide scholarly evidence of engagement. While encouraging diversity of documentation within common criteria and guidelines, the results of the project offer a format and a framework.

The documentation framework consists of three major components: *purpose*, *process*, and *outcomes* (see Figure 1). The overriding feature of this framework is the ongoing collaboration with external partners along with continuous reflection, feedback, and adaptation on the part of the faculty member.

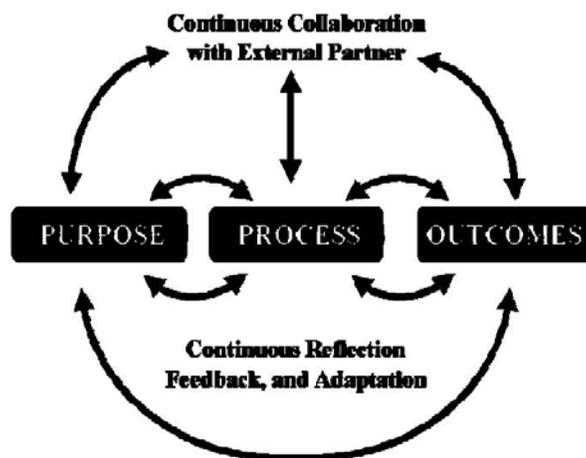


Figure 1. Engagement Documentation Framework

“Making Outreach Visible: A Guide to Professional Service and Outreach,” a publication of the American Association for Higher Education, Washington, D.C. Copyright 1999 by Association for Higher Education, Washington, D.C. Reprinted with permission.

I. The *purpose* section of a faculty dossier provides a foundation for the scholarship of engagement. Here, a faculty member refers to the university, school, or department mission and priorities that support the engagement work. The needs and priorities of the situation or external partners are described along with those of the school or college as a rationale for engaging in the work. The purpose also assists in the establishment of the faculty member’s situation, its specific characteristics, and its

impact on his or her professional development. A case is made for the faculty member using and expanding professional expertise through the engagement activities.

II. The second component, *process*, is a record of the design and methodology faculty use in engagement work. To achieve specific and desired goals in an engagement, faculty design and deliver a product using appropriate methods. Further, adaptations made in the process of collaboration with the community or partners are provided as evidence of reflective scholarship. Reflection and adaptation are constant needs in community-based work because such contexts have few of the controls common to traditional research. Other dimensions of reflection include pondering new questions raised by public engagement and highlighting insights that emerge from community collaboration.

III. The third component, *outcomes*, is multifaceted, including descriptions of benefits to the community or external partners, to institution and units, to students, to the discipline or profession, and to the individual faculty member. Outcomes can be used both for evaluation of the work as scholarship and as a foundation for future engagement endeavors as successes and failures are illustrated.

In sum, the content of documentation includes the following elements: a statement of purpose, a list of objectives and participants, the context of the engagement, a demonstration of the use of scholarly foundations and methodology, the process used by the faculty member, a critical reflection and outcomes, the impact of the work and any products created as a result of the engagement, and, lastly, a plan for dissemination of the information and work resulting from the process. All of these components of documentation possess their respective, individual use and, as a whole, provide a basis for evaluation for the scholar and the institution. See *Making Outreach Visible: A Guide to Documenting Professional Service and Outreach* for further explication and examples (Driscoll & Lynton, 1999).

Scholarship of Engagement: Toward Evaluation Criteria

The National Review Board for the Scholarship of Engagement was established in 2000 in response to a growing critical need for a pool of peer reviewers who could

provide credible, standardized assessment for the scholarship of engagement. The board's purpose is to review and evaluate the scholarship of engagement of faculty who are preparing for annual review, promotion, and tenure decisions. The board is composed of leaders in areas such as community or civic engagement, institutionalization of service learning, and economic development and professional service. Also, the board includes individuals from a wide range of disciplines in higher education institutions, as well as individuals in roles such as program directors, vice presidents, provosts, presidents, and tenured faculty. The National Review is supported by the Clearinghouse for the Scholarship of Engagement, co-directed by Amy Driscoll and Lorilee Sandmann.

Drawing from criteria presented in *Scholarship Assessed: A Special Report on Faculty Evaluation* (Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997) and work of other institutions such as Michigan State University, Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis, and Portland State University, evaluation criteria have been adapted for a unique fit with the scholarship of engagement. The criteria guide the work of the National Review Board for the Scholarship of Engagement in the external review process. The criteria can be used at not only the evaluation level but they can also act as a roadmap during planning, implementation, and documentation stages. (Variation in institutional contexts, the breadth of faculty work, and individual institutional promotion and tenure guidelines should be kept in mind when using these criteria.)

Goals/Questions

Does the scholar state the basic purposes of the work clearly?

Does the scholar define objectives that are realistic and achievable?

Does the scholar identify intellectual and significant questions in the field?

Is there an "academic fit" with the scholar's role, departmental/university mission?

Context of theory, literature, "best practices"

Does the scholar show an understanding of existing scholarship in field?

Does the scholar bring the necessary skills to the work?

Does the scholar bring together the resources necessary to move the project forward?

Is the work intellectually compelling?

Methods

Does the scholar use methods appropriate to the goals or questions?

Does the scholar effectively apply the methods selected?

Does the scholar modify procedures in response to changing circumstances?

Does the scholar describe rationale for selection of methods in relation to context and issue?

Results

Does the scholar achieve the goals?

Does the scholar's work add consequentially to the field (significance)?

Does the scholar's work open additional areas for further exploration?

Does the scholar's work achieve impact or change? Are those outcomes evaluated?

Communication/Dissemination

Does the scholar use a suitable style and effective organization to present the work?

Does the scholar use appropriate forums for communicating work to the intended audience?

Does the scholar communicate/disseminate to multiple audiences?

Does the scholar present information with clarity and integrity?

Reflective Critique

Does the scholar critically evaluate the work?

Does the scholar bring an appropriate breadth of evidence to the critique?

Does the scholar use evaluation to improve the quality of future work? Does

the scholar synthesize information across previous criteria? Does the

scholar learn and describe future directions?

At first glance, the evaluation criteria may look simple and straightforward, but instead they are rigorous and demanding. Faculty find that the criteria are not easily met by merely engaging in community work and partnerships. The criteria ensure the scholarly aspects of engagement and can serve as significant guides for multiple levels of the scholarship of engagement: for the initial level of decision, when faculty make a commitment to civic engagement; for the planning and implementation level; for the documentation level; and for the review and evaluation level.

Documentation and evaluation provide the tools to move toward the actual understanding, practice, and rewards of scholarly engagement. These tools can be used to resolve the dilemma of institutional touting of an engaged agenda and the tensions that face faculty who strive to apply the principles of the scholarship of engagement.

Finally, while it is tempting to try to substitute engaged scholarship for traditional discipline research scholarship, the scholarship of engagement does not aim to do so; rather, the scholarship of engagement represents a new paradigm. Within these views of the “new scholarship” rest the richness and the promise of the work, its demonstrated community impact, and recognized benefits for the faculty member, profession, and higher education.

Challenges for Extension

One of the defining features of a “good to great organization,” according to Collins (2001), is the “hedgehog concept”—that clarified understanding of what the organization can be the *best* in the world at accomplishing. At this time, I don’t see evidence that Extension has developed this clarified understanding with regard to engagement, and specifically the scholarship of engagement. That is work I would encourage you to do on your campus as well as collectively. In so doing:

- don’t go it alone—have conversations with the rest of your campus;
- link with existing initiatives on your campus;
- work with others on your campus to define a contextually appropriate understanding of the scholarship of engagement;
- do not try to frame all work as scholarly engagement; and for that which is or could be, frame it appropriately, and communicate in terms faculty and others can understand. This is the opportunity to raise the bar on what Extension is doing as well as raise the bar on on-campus teaching and research;
- collaborate with the efforts of NASULGC particularly through the Council on Extension, Continuing Education and Public Service; and
- once you develop the “hedgehog concept” let all of us know so we can encourage and support the “flywheel.”

And in working together, we may move ever closer to resolving the paradox between the rhetoric of engagement and the realities of our practice (as noted by Boyer when quoting Oscar Handlin): “‘Scholarship has to prove its worth, not on its own terms, but by service to the nation and the world.’ This, in the end, is what the scholarship of engagement is all about.”

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