

Are All Forms Of Scholarship Considered Equal?

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ABSTRACT

*Boyer's four forms of scholarship were detailed in his 1990 book *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. In the 18 years since publication of that book, universities struggle with changing the promotion and tenure criteria to include all four forms of scholarship. Faculty members often focus on publications as they prepare for promotion and tenure. They are not comfortable immersing themselves in other forms of scholarship, like engagement, for fear it may be viewed unfavorably by the university and/or the review committee. This paper focuses on the scholarship of engagement as it struggles to break through the institutional barrier and become an accepted form of scholarship.*

Keywords: Scholarship of engagement, promotion and tenure, Boyer.

INTRODUCTION

In 1990, Boyer's book entitled *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* provided new and unique possibilities on assessing scholarship for faculty. It expanded the view of scholarship from the conventional peer-reviewed (or refereed) publication to encompass the scholarship of teaching/learning, scholarship of discovery, scholarship of integration and scholarship of application/engagement. Many universities have reconfigured or considered reconfiguring their promotion and tenure criteria to more closely resemble the flexibility and comprehensiveness of Boyer's model. But has the evaluation of faculty changed? Are all four forms of scholarship considered equal? What are some of the barriers to change? This paper will focus primarily on the scholarship of engagement and its struggle to be recognized as a respected form of scholarship.

THE BOYER MODEL

Each form of scholarship (teaching, discovery, integration, application) merits a more detailed explanation as discussion, research, and interest emerges among faculty, administration, the public, and accrediting bodies. There is a considerable amount of overlap between the four forms of scholarship.

The scholarship of teaching and learning has garnered a great deal of discussion. Old models of teaching, such as the 'sage on the stage' or the 'chalk and talk' are being scrutinized for their effectiveness. "Building and using knowledge to improve curricula, classroom teaching, and the quality of learning is no longer just a priority for specialists in education (O'Meara, 2005, p. 34). All disciplines and programs are expected to embrace more effective teaching methodologies. Professors are being challenged to develop more effective and innovative teaching methodologies, assess and determine the effectiveness of those techniques, then share the lessons learned by presenting at conferences or publishing in peer-reviewed journals. Venues to share best practices in teaching and learning have cropped up recently with conferences (for example SoTL) being held and papers being published.

The scholarship of discovery most resembles the typical view of scholarship – publication. Its focus is on developing new knowledge and the dissemination of that knowledge in mostly peer-reviewed journals and nationally or internationally recognized conferences but can also be expanded to include grants. Federal Acts, such as the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980, allowed universities who used federal funds to do research which resulted in inventions, to retain ownership of patents. The royalties can then be split between the university (college and/or

department) and the inventor. “One can make the argument “ states O’Meara (2005), that the professoriate’s focus on prestige and personal material advancement has heightened, during the past decade, because of personal competition for jobs and institutional competition for funding and prestige among research universities” (pp. 43-44). This is clearly evident in job descriptions as peer-reviewed publications and substantial research is expected, especially in the health, medicine, and the science fields.

The scholarship of integration requires making new connections across disciplines. These new insights would likely take isolated or fragmented facts and put them into a broader perspective thus making connections within and between disciplines not previously discovered by one area. This more holistic approach promotes conversation and discovery between disciplines that previously worked in isolation. It also allows “our institutions to become more vibrant by performing differently with fewer resources in the shifting context of funding for higher education” (O’Meara, 2005, p. 51).

The fourth form of scholarship is application, often termed engagement. Research indicates this scholarship can also be called civic engagement or service learning. This type of scholarship typically manifests itself when service activities in the community are tied directly to a faculty members area of expertise or professional field. The W.W. Kellogg Foundation as well as the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) helped provide guidelines for institutions and continue to promote this type of scholarship. Engagement was most eloquently defined in the CIC guide as “the partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical social issues; and contribute to the public good” (p. 2). Schwab (2003) added “We believe institutions of higher education that fail to recognize the need for good teaching and for engagement in society are falling out of step with the expectations of parents, students, politicians, and the larger public, as well as with their own stated goals” (p. 1).

Separating these forms of scholarship is not in the best interest of the student, faculty member, university or the public as they are meant, at the core, to be mutually enhancing. The issue remains, however, on changing the credibility of some forms of scholarship, valuing those professors who chose to embrace different types of scholarship, and breaking free of the publication as the most revered form of scholarship.

WHAT IS HOLDING US BACK?

The ‘publish or perish’ debate has raged for decades. Job descriptions often expect a candidate to have a proven track record of publishing, articulate and support an outstanding teaching philosophy, mentor and advise students, participate in service to the community, and maintain a strong professional development record. While this is admirable, doing all of these at a high level is nearly impossible. New faculty often struggle with the demands of the job and are pulled in different directions. O’Meara (2005) stated, “It is not uncommon for administrators to advise new faculty to wait until after they have been granted tenure before pursuing the scholarship of civic engagement” (p. 42). She went on to comment, “There is a spirit (even on engaged campuses) of being “safe”, of staying within the box of traditional scholarship to protect academic positions” (p. 42).

New faculty members also witness the lack of support when their more senior colleagues seek promotion or tenure with less traditional scholarship, making it less likely that they will spend their time on civic engagement. Professors find it difficult to locate journals willing to publish articles that do not contain quantitative or innovative research and journals who are willing to share this information are often relegated to a lower status by review committees. Colbeck (2000) found “The costs of communicating with the “lay audience” of practitioners have been high for some assistant professors of higher education, who have been told that their articles in *Change*, *Academe*, or *Phi Delta Kappan* would not be included in the count of publications for tenure” (p. 38). He also noted an example of an “assistant professor who was denied tenure because his seventeen publications were primarily in professional-level journals” (p. 38). This mentality, however, may not serve the faculty members well nor may it be in the best interest of the students. It certainly is not in the best interest of the community.

Embracing all forms of scholarship, however, may not be in the institution’s best interest. The definition of engagement and commitment to it must align with the institution’s identity and mission. Some institutions’ mission

and goals may not coincide with accepting and promoting all forms of scholarship and some faculty may not be equipped to participate in all forms of scholarship. Expectations can be heavily influenced by academic leadership, disciplines, and even departments. Adopting the Boyer model can be tricky. “CAOs should be aware of ‘academic ratcheting’”, noted O’Meara (2005), “in terms of lost distinctiveness and ability to fulfill multiple institutional missions and goals. Different strategies should be considered by CAOs for alleviating the need for faculty to excel in every area of work and scholarship simultaneously” (p. 508). For many institutions, the solution appears to lie in candidly evaluating the institution’s reappointment, promotion and tenure (RPT) expectations in an open forum among faculty and administration. If adopted, integration of the model may take years to fully understand and articulate.

But what do we do in the interim? Do we really want to encourage faculty to wait until they have achieved promotion and tenure before they pursue a philosophy of civic engagement? Convincing faculty to engage in civic development activities, however, can present a dilemma. As noted in Antonio, Astin and Cress (2000), faculty are already overextended and the concept of service scholarship is undervalued. So who will lead the reform?

ENGAGEMENT AND ITS BENEFITS

In the past decade, several significant reports and articles have been published regarding engaged scholarship. Boyer’s 1990 book, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, opened the door to valuing different forms of scholarship. In 2005, the Committee on Institutional Engagement published a resource guide on engaged scholarship. They recommended the following element of engagement:

1. Engagement is scholarly
2. Engagement cuts across the mission of teaching, research, and service.
3. Engagement is reciprocal and mutually beneficial (p. 5)

In addition, the CIC believed that among other qualities, engagement should be a win-win for the institution, students, and the partners in the community and when mature, the university is viewed as a resource of choice by stakeholders when dealing with an issue or problem. Students are able to engage in service work through participation in a student organization, student affairs (like Campus Compact), or as part of a course. There is data to support the benefits of students participating in service activities. Astin and Sax (1998) found that “...education-related service enhances the student’s college grade point average (GPA), general knowledge, knowledge of a field or discipline, and aspirations for advanced degrees and is also associated with increased time devoted to homework and studying and increased contact with faculty” (p. 257). They also found that service learning positively affected many life skills such as leadership ability, conflict resolution, and the ability to work cooperatively. Other benefits included an acceptance and knowledge of other cultures and a better understanding of the problems facing their community.

While there are some disciplines that are inherently more likely to engage in service, such as social sciences or education, there are opportunities for both faculty and students to be a part of community growth and problem solving in many more disciplines. Business programs can assist entrepreneurs in drafting business plans, develop creative marketing strategies, research the impact of specific economic development strategies, and help develop more efficient processes for local government and schools.

CHALLENGES FOR THE INSTITUTION AND FACULTY

According to O’Meara (2002), both institutions and faculty cling to the tried and true form of scholarship for one or more of the following reasons:

- Our institution should try to climb the academic ladder
- Scholarship is discovering theoretical knowledge which sets the scholar apart from others (service is often considered the application of existing knowledge)
- Research is harder and requires more professional knowledge than service
- They (new faculty) should have the same standards I did

- Real scholarship is published in Tier I journals
- The best scholarship brings the most prestige to the institution
- We must appear to have higher standards (pp. 71-75).

Understandably, institutions are facing financial constraints, are under pressure from accrediting bodies, and find themselves in an increasingly competitive global environment. This may limit an institution's willingness to change the culture, values and reward systems, but perhaps it is time to reconsider. There are ways to document work in the application of knowledge (engagement) that will satisfy external constituencies.

Recent work noted by Rice (2002) shows a parallel between the traditional elements of faculty work (teaching, research, and service) and the scholarship of engagement components. These components include engaged pedagogy, community-based research, and collaborative practice. These practices are the application of knowledge through engagement. Stanton (2008) noted "... the quality of engaged research should be identified and assessed not only on how well knowledge claims can meet conventional scholarly standards, but also on how well the research findings 'work' in particular contexts with particular people to achieve particular purposes. "The research results can be deemed 'replicable' in the sense that they are generalizable from one community setting to the next" (p. 24). Sharing best practices and benchmarking is hallmark to business and these practices must begin to be shared with our community through faculty knowledge and expertise. Projects involving non-profit organizations, schools, government and many small business owners can be developed with the intent of sharing successes.

CONCLUSION

In order to embrace the diverse interests of faculty, become more sensitive to the needs of the community, and to fully develop our students, all forms of scholarship should be endorsed and rewarded equally by institutions of higher education. It will take aligning faculty priorities and reward systems with institutional goals and objectives. If faculty embrace the scholarship of engagement, will it help or hurt their chances of promotion and tenure? If, as O'Meara (2005) commented, "... there continues to be an unspoken message that these products and results must be accompanied by traditional, referred publications to be rewarded as scholarship" (p. 42), the likelihood of faculty embracing the scholarship of engagement is slim. As O'Meara and others who attempt to advance the scholarship of engagement, let us hope this is not the case.

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