

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 392 109

CS 509 207

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 TITLE The Boyer Commission Report on Evaluation of Teaching: Implications in the Basic Course.
 PUB DATE Nov 95
 NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (81st, San Antonio, TX, November 18-21, 1995).
 PUB TYPE Book/Product Reviews (072) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS College Faculty; *Faculty Evaluation; Higher Education; *Instructional Effectiveness; *Introductory Courses; *Speech Communication; *Student Evaluation of Teacher Performance; Student Needs; *Teacher Effectiveness; Teacher Qualifications; Teacher Role
 IDENTIFIERS *Boyer (Ernest L); Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching

ABSTRACT

In his book "Scholarship Assessed" and in a speech summarizing the book, Ernest Boyer, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, considers faculty evaluation issues. Applying Boyer's ideas to the basic communication course allows the integration of new insights and perspectives into the daily operations of the basic course--where many faculty spend a great deal of time. Boyer outlines four major principles that should guide the evaluation of faculty work: (1) evaluation should focus initially on the professional characteristics of the scholar (honesty, etc.); (2) evaluation of scholarly work can be successfully accomplished only if academe has agreed-upon standards of faculty performance; (3) evidence of a scholar's research, teaching, and outside activities must be "broad and rich and varied"; and (4) faculty members must have confidence in the evaluation process. The best-prepared faculty should be teaching the beginning course in communication. For many students, this is the only communication course they will take, so the best teaching of the best skills should be offered. Assessment in the beginning course must focus on student understanding and practicing communication skills. In addition to the assessment of students' competence, the other kind of assessment necessary is the evaluation of the instructor by the students. Finally, periodic analysis of the course and assignments by instructors, including self-evaluations and peer reviews, as well as student evaluations, would lead to improvement of the quality of the student experience in the course. (CR)

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THE BOYER COMMISSION REPORT ON
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IMPLICATIONS IN THE BASIC COURSE

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Paper presented during the Speech Communication Association Convention, San Antonio, TX (November 1995).

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Abstract

This paper grew out of an ongoing dialogue about influences on the basic communication course. Taking the ideas on faculty evaluation of Ernest Boyer, President of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and applying them to the basic course seemed natural. Last year, a panel during the Speech Communication Association convention in New Orleans explored the implications of the Foundation's research summarized in Scholarship Revisited. A problem arose when the text that was to be the data for this analysis was not published when originally intended. The people at the Carnegie Foundation were extremely helpful in sending a copy of a speech delivered by Ernest Boyer summarizing the highlights of the Foundation's new book, Scholarship Assessed.

This manuscript attempts to take the skeleton of the book summarized in Boyer's speech and talks about issues of assessing faculty as they relate to the basic course. Since for many of us the basic communication course is where we spend a great deal of our careers, it is important that we integrate new insights and perspectives into the daily operations of the basic communication course. The information included in Scholarship Assessed might help us think about or rethink issues related to goals of the basic course, assessment of these courses, evaluations of the instructional staff, and much more. Books, like Scholarship Assessed, stimulate our interest on issues of assessing faculty and prevent us from relying on routines and failing to consider improvements through innovation.

THE BOYER COMMISSION REPORT ON
THE EVALUATION OF TEACHING: IMPLICATIONS IN
THE BASIC COURSE

In February 1994, Denise Magner reported on the forthcoming book from Ernest Boyer, President of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching entitled, *Scholarship Assessed* (A22). She reported this volume, which was to be released in the Fall of 1994 "will outline four major principles that should guide the evaluation of faculty work:

- Faculty evaluation should focus initially not on the standards or procedures of assessment, but on the professional characteristics of the scholar, such as honesty, persistence, and courage.
- The evaluation of scholarly work can be successfully accomplished only if academe has agreed-upon standards of faculty performance.
- The evidence of a scholar's research, teaching, and outside activities must be 'broad and rich and varied,' including self-evaluation, peer review, and student opinions.
- Faculty members must have confidence in the evaluation process." (p. A22)

This book, which was to serve as the impetus for this paper, will not be published until early 1996.

However, the four ideas mentioned above have some direct bearing on the basic or beginning communication course. In fact, Boyer et al. (1994) report that 63% of the faculty in the United States responded to the statement, "The undergraduates you teach at this institution are adequately prepared in written and oral communication skills," negatively; while only 20% responded positively (p. 78). The beginning or basic communication course is important, then, at least in part to address this inadequate preparation of our students. The focus of this paper will be to elaborate on the principle ideas from *Scholarship Assessed* from the point of view of the basic communication course.

Qualities of a Scholar

Boyer (1995) suggests that we be able to assess the qualities of the scholar. These qualities are more important than the procedures for assessing scholarship, teaching, and service. Boyer states, "Early in our study we could see that faculty evaluation should focus first of all not on procedures, but on the qualities of the person -- the professional characteristics of the scholar" (p. 2). I agree with Boyer that the character of the person or the qualities of the individual are more important than any other piece of their professional life to measure. Minimally, these characteristics should be included with our standard evaluation procedures -- assessing scholarship, service, and teaching. Boyer (1995) elaborates on

the importance of the scholar's character in reporting, "I suggest that scholarship relate, in the first instance, not to a catalogue of accomplishments but to qualities of character. Standards and procedures are, of course, critically important. But even more important are knowledgeability, integrity, creativity, and productivity, all of which are at the very heart of academic life" (p. 3).

The Character of the Instructors

The issue of character is important for the basic communication course for two reasons. First, the beginning communication course is typically the *only* exposure students in colleges and universities have of the discipline. Who the instructor is and how she or he teaches, interacts with students, and portrays the characteristic of a "good" teacher become increasingly important. The over-reliance on part-time faculty and graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) as the common practice in the basic course portrays the character of the basic course in a couple of ways. The character of that part-time faculty member or GTA reflects on the character of the other faculty, the department, and the communication discipline. Basic course directors (BCDs) need to be aware of and assess the character of the individuals teaching the basic course. In addition, the character of the faculty and the department is reflected to students in this over-reliance on part-time faculty and/or GTAs to teach the basic course. What message does this practice send

to students? One possible message is that the student is not important enough to us to commit one of our full-time faculty to your section of basic communication course -- you will have to get by with the part-time faculty member or the GTA. The BCD has the responsibility to train, educate, supervise, monitor, and evaluate GTAs (whose primary duties are focused on the completion of their masters or doctoral degree) and part-time faculty (whose primary duties are focused on a career or other projects). These issues are important to the character and, therefore, the reputation of the basic course; but are not as central as the character of the BCD.

The Character of the Director

Second, the character of the individual directing the basic course is important. At many colleges and universities, the practice is to give the job of directing the basic course to the newer, usually non-tenured, faculty. [If you have difficulty believing this, take a look at the ads in *SPECTRA* or the *Chronicle of Higher Education* when the responsibilities include directing or supervising the beginning communication course.] At the beginning of their academic careers, these young faculty are asked to supervise and monitor the basic course and everything associated with it (textbook selection, examinations, course policies, student complaints, training, selection of instructors, etc.), engage in significant research efforts, maintain a good teaching record in their own classes, and serve on other

university committees. Some senior faculty might say this builds character in the younger faculty -- it seems to me all we are doing is frustrating young faculty who eventually give up on the basic course because of the current reward systems at many colleges and universities. Administrators ask new faculty to be one of the super heros on campus -- they are probably asking too much from them when they are assigned the added responsibilities for the basic course as well. If we want the basic course program to be handled with integrity, we have to reward the sacrifices made by basic course directors who coordinate successful basic course programs all across the country.

As a philosophical question, are we not better off asking senior faculty who have developed an identity in our discipline and on our campuses to direct the basic course and let the younger faculty work on developing that identity? Boyer (1995) concludes, "I'm suggesting that in defining scholarship we must consider first characteristics that are at the very heart of professional performance, even though such virtues may be difficult to measure" (p. 3). Although difficult to measure, these characteristics are the foundation of the basic course and all the efforts by the instructors and the BCDs. We ought to be able to identify the important elements of the character of the people we want involved in teaching and directing our basic communication courses (directors, full-time faculty, part-time faculty, GTAs, tutors, and undergraduate teaching assistants) -- and develop some way of assessing them.

The Standards of Scholarly Work

Another clear and challenging message from Boyer (1995) is that there needs to be a clear set of goals and agreed upon standards of scholarly performance. He contends the problem is:

Each campus and each discipline and each form of scholarship all seemed to be marching to a different drummer. But with further study, we discovered an emerging pattern. We repeatedly found references to six dimensions of good scholarship that were used to judge teaching, research, and service -- leading us to conclude that all scholarly work, regardless of the form, can be held to common standards. (p. 4)

These standards include: [1] clear goals, [2] adequate preparation, [3] appropriate methods, [4] significant results, [5] effective communication, and [6] reflective critique. Let's examine of these standards in light of the basic communication course.

Clear Goals

Boyer (1995) writes, " A well-defined purpose is critical not only in research, but also in the integration and application of knowledge, and in teaching" (p. 4). In the basic course program on any campus, there are multiple layers of goals and objectives; with each layer developing multiple goals and

objectives. These layers range from goals from the university or college oral communication requirement as part of a general education program to the goals instructors have in their individual classes to the goals the students have in taking the beginning communication course. More important than what the goals are is the consistency between these multiple-layered goals.

Let's talk about the goals for the basic course from the department level -- to the instructor level -- to the student level. There should be clear goals for the basic course developed within the department, with the assistance of the BCD. These goals drive the overall instructional mission and delivery system in the course. These goals should be articulated for everyone in the standardized course syllabus. It is important the students read and comprehend the goals of the course. The only way to insure this occurs is for the basic course to have a standardized syllabus that includes them. If there is not a standardized syllabus, basic course programs run the risk of having students being unaware of course goals. This is not to impute the integrity of any member of any instructional staff -- but things do get lost in the transfer from department to BCD to instructor to student. The instructors can then develop their own specific goals for the course that supplement or contribute to the department goals for the basic course.

However, an item many of us usually fail to execute in our beginning communication courses is to ascertain the goals of the

students in the course. (If we teach audience analysis and rhetorical sensitivity in our classes; shouldn't we demonstrate this in our own communication practices with the students?) If we would take the time to discover the students' goals, we might be astonished. This activity on the first day might be more productive to the course that term than the ol' standard introduction speeches.

Similarly, a faculty member could set up goals to research instruction in the basic course. This is a viable line of research -- although there are many of our brothers and sisters in our discipline that look down their noses at pedagogical research. If the faculty member develops a productive, goal-oriented line of research in the basic course, this should be supported and rewarded by university and department administrators as well as our discipline.

Adequate Preparation

Boyer (1995) writes, "Scholarly work also requires the professor to be professionally well prepared. Whether engaging in discovery, integration, application, or teaching, the scholar must bring the wealth of knowledge, depth of experience, and combination of resources the project needs" (p. 5). The key to successful teaching is adequate preparation for all classroom contacts with students. Boyer writes, "Teaching, too, can and should be judged on the basis of preparation" (p. 5). Teachers in the basic communication course, whether tenured, full

professors or first-quarter GTAs must be prepared each time they enter the classroom or interact with their students.

It is the department's obligation to make sure they are hiring only the very best teachers in the beginning communication course. However, in reality, it is the BCD's job to try and prepare each instructor to teach the basic course -- especially the new part-time faculty member or the new GTA. Higher education has been attacked for, among other things, the tendency to over-rely on the least prepared persons to teach beginning or introductory courses -- the graduate teaching assistant (Anderson, 1992). Our discipline shares in this responsibility with our colleagues in history, psychology, mathematics, English, and many other departments. I must commend many of our basic course directors for developing training programs for their instructional staff. The question that begs to be asked is: *How sure are they that the instructors are "adequately" prepared for teaching the beginning communication course at the completion of the training programs?* This is a dilemma for us -- is a one-day training program enough? A one-week training program? How much is enough?

There is also a philosophical issue here regarding the placement of instructors. Do we place our most talented, most gifted instructors in the beginning course? Or do we do what most departments do and place our most talented and most gifted instructors in our upper division courses? We have colleagues who view teaching the basic communication course as a punishment

worse than being sentenced to Siberia and the dead of winter. Those of us interested in the basic communication course have to do something to change these perceptions and reiterate the importance of the basic course to the instructional mission of the university or college and department; not to mention to the educational, personal and career successes of our students.

It seems to me we should be placing the most prepared and gifted faculty in the beginning course. Of the many reasons, one emerges as preeminent: it is the only communication course many of these students will take so we should have our best faculty teaching them so the skills we can offer them might be taught and, therefore, learned better.

Appropriate Methods

Boyer (1995) asserts, "As a third standard, scholars must use appropriate methods, a yardstick that can and should be used in all aspects of academic work" (p. 6). For those of us interested in the basic course, arriving at a consensual definition of "appropriate" is difficult. We don't even know which basic course is appropriate for students taking only one communication course. Some colleges and universities the hybrid or blend course is the "appropriate" course, on other campuses the public speaking course is the "appropriate" course, while on other campuses there are many other beginning communication courses (interpersonal, group, business and professional, communication and/or theory, etc.) As you might be able to tell,

for the basic communication course, "appropriate" means a variety of things. This can be viewed as a strength or a weakness; depending on which side of the argument you are comfortable with and support. Some of us believe there should be one basic course that is more or less a national standard -- like beginning psychology, economics, or history. Others of us believe the variety of basic courses is an acceptable way of introducing the discipline to thousands and thousands of students each year.

Since we already have difficulty in determining "the" approach to the basic course, there is also difficulty in developing a set of discipline-endorsed methods that are deemed "appropriate" for instruction. If there were one basic course we would teach on all our campuses, it would be easier to develop some set of guidelines for appropriate methods for teaching beginning communication skills and/or theories. This debate would be an interesting to resolve here; but this is not the appropriate forum.

As Boyer (1995) points out, "In teaching, of course, methods and procedures make all the difference -- from the logic of the syllabus to pedagogical procedures to evaluation" (p. 6). What instructors do to help students learn is the crux of our pedagogical mission in the basic course. A problem in many basic course programs is too frequently the individual instructor is permitted to determine "appropriate" methods. This means in many instances the least qualified individual, acting alone, makes these determinations. Those of us interested in the basic course

need to work together instead of against each other to facilitate a clear direction for the basic communication course. This will allow us to focus on the seminal issue: *developing instructional delivery systems to facilitate student learning and growth.*

Significant Results

Boyer (1995) concludes, "In our new report, we conclude that any act of scholarship ultimately must be judged by the significance of its results" (p. 7). The results of our teaching in the basic course is improved student understanding of, awareness of, and skill at their oral communication skills. Without mentioning it, Boyer suggests assessment in the beginning communication course must focus on student improvement at understanding and practicing communication skills. Assessment issues are already important in our discipline, Boyer merely reiterates these issues when explaining this element of scholarly work.

There are multiple ways to assess student work in the basic course. Instructors assess student knowledge through tests and their skills through the evaluation of assignments. This is one form of assessment in the classroom. The other kind of assessment is the evaluation of the faculty member. Students are the best judges in assessing the results of their experience in the basic course. Boyer (1995) claims, "And the evaluation forms we studied ask students questions that clearly seek to measure the significance of the results of teaching: 'Was your interest

in the subject stimulated by this course?' 'Did you improve in your competence due to this course?' 'Did you learn something you consider valuable?'" (p. 7).

The issue of communication competence is also popular in our literature, our textbooks, on our campuses, and in our classes. There are different approaches to communication competence summarized in our research and teaching. One approach emphasizes specific communication skills in differing communication situations. This orientation to competence is currently popular approach in our discipline. A second approach to competence emphasizes knowledge (Do students know what to do in specific communication situations?). This approach, although initially popular in the communication literature, is currently less popular than the skills orientation. The final orientation to competence examines the abilities of the students. In this approach we examine whether students have the abilities to communicate competently in different communication situations. These differing approaches to communication competence suggest we have miles to go before we can agree on the significant results of our beginning communication courses.

Effective Communication

Boyer (1995) argues "As a fifth standard, all scholarship requires good communication. . . . I would add that good communication means not just good teaching but scholarship in all its forms. All scholarship must become 'community property'

through effective communication" (p. 7). The obvious point about effective communication is that our instructors in the basic course must be effective (good) communicators.

This is the responsibility of the faculty in the department -- especially the basic course director. All GTAs, part-time faculty, and full-time faculty must possess good listening and oral communication skills. To do less does the basic course, the faculty, and the discipline a dis-service. For example, students who demonstrate the cognitive abilities to compete in our graduate programs, but who struggle with their command of spoken English, should be kept from teaching in the basic course programs on our campuses. The rationale here is clear enough and the assertion easy to defend. Boyer (1995) offers a clear defense in writing, "The point is most obvious, of course, when it comes to teaching. The evaluation forms we studies are full of questions such as these: 'Did the instructor speak with good expression?' 'Did the teacher explain course material clearly?' 'Did the instructor introduce stimulating ideas?' 'Was he or she dynamic?' (p. 8).

The role of effective communication in the basic course program extends beyond the classroom. BCDs have to communicate effectively to receive the necessary resources in faculty and technology to meet the goals of the basic course. BCDs have to persuade administrators that the basic communication course is a valuable asset for students and the university.

Finally, communication scholars must research pedagogy in

the basic course and its effects on students. Once this type of research is completed, it is requisite to share the results with the community of communication scholars -- especially those interested in the basic communication course. This research needs to be communicated effectively so results are readily understood and applied, as appropriate, to other basic course programs. Those of us interested in the basic course need outlets for our research on the basic course so our ideas can be shared with others like us in the trenches of the basic communication course. We currently have a valuable asset, the *Basic Communication Course Annual*, which was established for this purpose. We also two other Speech Communication Association publications available to us: *Communication Education* and *The Association for Communication Administration Bulletin*. It is important to send appropriate research to these publication outlets so our research becomes part of the knowledge base of the communication discipline.

Reflective Critique

Boyer (1995) writes, "Our final standard is that scholarly work should be accompanied by reflective critique. In discovery, integration, application, or teaching, the scholar thinks about her or his work, seeks the opinions of others, and develops his or her learning over time" (p. 9). The faculty evaluation process in the basic course should stimulate self-reflection by each instructor. Whether the faculty evaluation process is

collecting student comments, peer reviews, data from administrators' classroom visitations, or a combination of these and other evaluation methods, the process should culminate with each instructor reflecting on her or his classroom experiences.

Once the results of the evaluation are made available to the instructor, she or he should assess whether certain pedagogical strategies were effective or not, whether the goals and objectives of the course were met, how to improve the use of the evaluations of student performances, how to facilitate student learning, whether the testing procedures could be used in a more pedagogical manner, and more. Boyer (1995) writes, "Insightful reflection begins with self-conscious practice, which continues after a project is done. This is especially important in teaching" (p. 9).

Boyer would support a program of mid-term or post-assignment analysis of the course and/or assignments. For example, an instructor in the basic course might spend some time reflecting on a particular class discussion or activity as it related to the achievement of course or instructor goals. Boyer suggests that this needs to be done at the end of each term. We could conclude that once a particular assignment is completed, a test is administered and graded, the term comes to an end, the effective instructor initiates a process of self reflection. The director of the basic course can facilitate this process by commencing a dialogue with each instructor about assignments and their reactions to them. This process must not be perceived as an

overbearing, "telling-the-instructor-what-to-do" session, but as a session where the director tries to get the instructor to reflect on specific aspects of how the course are going; whether it occurs in the middle of the term or at the end of the term.

If the conscientious instructor and/or director in the basic course can begin to contemplate the implications of these six areas, the quality of the student experience in the course will likely improve. Instructors will find ways to improve their teaching and BCDs of the basic course will find new and innovative methods for delivering the basic course program on their campus.

Documenting Your Analysis

Boyer (1995) presents an argument for a portfolio form of faculty documentation of evaluations. Ninety-seven percent of faculty in the United States report that their teaching is evaluated regularly (Boyer, et al., 1998, p. 85). Although everyone agrees that evaluation of faculty is important, there is much dissatisfaction with evaluation processes and procedures. Boyer, et al. (1994) report, "we found widespread dissatisfaction with faculty evaluation. Replies from all countries overwhelmingly indicate that better ways are needed to evaluate teaching performance. Many academics have doubts about research evaluation, too" (p. 12).

Boyer (1995) presents 4 sources of evaluative information to include in the faculty portfolio. However, there are only three most appropriate to the instructor in the basic communication course (the fourth being client evaluations). These include:

1. Self-Evaluations
2. Peer Reviews
3. Student Evaluations

Lets talk about each of these briefly as they relate to the basic course.

Self-Evaluations

In developing the portfolio, the work completed by the basic course instructor becomes the most valuable to include. Boyer (1995) suggests that these "include journal articles, course outlines, videotapes of teaching, or in the case of service, evidence of fieldwork and documented results" (p. 11). There are multiple opportunities for the basic course instructor to document her or his teaching efforts. These might include sample syllabi, copies of written directions for assignments, videotapes of teaching sessions, etc.

Peer Reviews

There seems to be increasing support for peer evaluations of teaching. Boyer, et al. (1994) indicate that 49% of the faculty in the United States report that peers in their department evaluate them; 78% reported that their department heads evaluate

them; and 34% reported that other administrators on their campus evaluate them (p. 80). Having the BCD visit the classroom and assess the instructor is a valuable source of evaluation for the instructor. If the director then writes comments, these can become part of a faculty member's portfolio. It doesn't have to be just the BCD visiting classrooms, it can also be other part-time teachers or GTAs in the basic course or maybe other communication faculty not teaching the basic course. Boyer (1995) explains, "Senior faculty should, we believe, observe colleagues in the classroom, talk with clients, review publications, and submit their findings both orally and in writing" (p. 11).

Student Evaluations

The most popular form of evaluation data is the accumulation of student evaluations of the faculty. Boyer, et al. (1994) indicate that 73% of faculty in the United States believe that student opinions are an important element of faculty teaching evaluations (p. 85). Boyer (1995) concurs in writing, "When it comes to teacher evaluation, students clearly have a role to play" (p. 11). The easy-to-administer forms of student evaluation are the survey type with little circles to darken that can be scored by machine and the quantitative results tallied and manipulated statistically. Although easy to administer and tally, this form of student evaluation of teaching may not be the most useful to the instructor. Boyer (1995) argues that "The

process, we believe, should include questionnaires, essays, and even interviews not only of current students by also of alumni" (p. 11).

Taking the time to read questionnaires or conduct interviews is necessary for a thorough evaluation of basic course instruction. These forms of teaching evaluation offer the instructor (and the institution) a collection of student perceptions about what occurred in the classroom. The results are more difficult to tally due to the nature of the data; but this is acceptable if the data are more useful to the instructor and her or his supervisors. There are obvious constraints to this process. The biggest obstacle is creating the time needed for the BCD or others to read a complete set of evaluations and/or conduct the interviews on each instructor in the basic course. There must be a reward system in place for these activities to take occur and be effective -- in terms of teaching load reduction *and* in the promotion and tenure procedures on campuses.

How many of us involved in the basic course survey or interview students at a specified period after they exit our basic communication courses? These data might prove interesting to the overall assessment of the instruction in the basic communication course. If the interviews or questionnaires were prepared and executed appropriately, these data might also be used to offer commentary on the long-term effects of the basic course and/or instructor on the student.

Discussion

Boyer (1995) and Boyer, et al. (1994) offer valuable insights for the evaluation of faculty involved in the basic communication course -- whether as an instructor or as the director. There are practical suggestions regarding the evaluation of faculty scholarly work. In addition, Boyer includes some helpful hints to improving the documentation by faculty of their scholarly work.

How these ideas are applied to the basic course depends on your institution, your course, and your faculty. There are time constraints inferred by several items discussed in this manuscript; as well as budgetary considerations. The overall thrust of this article is to inoculate each of us interested in the basic course with the desire and willingness to return to our campuses and do something about how faculty who are involved in the basic communication course are evaluated in the 3 standard areas -- teaching, research, and service (university & community).

Boyer, et al. (1994) conclude, "Clearly, the challenge is to move beyond the teaching versus research debate and give to scholarship a broader, more efficacious meaning, one that not only promotes the scholarship of *discovering* knowledge, but also the scholarship of *transmitting* knowledge in the classroom" (p. 22).

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