

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 438 571

CS 510 234

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TITLE "We Are Who We Are": Repositioning Boyer's Dimensions of Scholarship.  
PUB DATE 1999-11-00  
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Communication Association (85th, Chicago, Illinois, November 4-7, 1999).  
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*Higher Education; Liberal Arts; Models; \*Scholarship; \*Small Colleges  
IDENTIFIERS \*Boyer (Ernest L); Identity Formation; \*Institutional Image

## ABSTRACT

This paper deals with issues of identity--lately, many institutions of higher education, especially small and medium-size colleges, seem to be confused in terms of function. Pointing out that all institutions seem to have been encouraged to balance their scholarship in terms of Ernest L. Boyer's prescribed functions of research discovery, integration, service application, and teaching set out in 1990's "Scholarship Reconsidered," the paper argues that a misapplication of Boyer's conception of scholarship has contributed to the mass frustration, demoralization, and disillusionment of the American professionate. It argues further that while all four types of scholarship need to be included at any given institution, any single institution needs to clarify its primary purpose, and the remaining types of scholarship should be implemented and assessed to the extent that they contribute to that primary purpose. The paper proposes a model for the small liberal arts college which demonstrates how research, integration, and service can be considered, but clearly subordinated to teaching. Finally, the paper attempts a "reality check" to determine in what direction educators are actually headed. (Contains 14 references.) (NKA)

# **“WE ARE WHO WE ARE” REPOSITIONING BOYER’S DIMENSIONS OF SCHOLARSHIP**

**Paper Presented at:  
85<sup>th</sup> NCA Annual Convention  
Chicago, IL, Nov. 4-7, 1999**

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## INTRODUCTION

### *The Present State of Mixed Messages*

As the quote from Garrison Keillor indicates, this paper deals with issues of identity. Lately, many institutions of higher education, especially small and medium-size colleges, seem to be confused in terms of function.

Since the publication of *Scholarship Reconsidered* (Boyer, 1990) by the Carnegie Foundation, American institutions have scrambled to answer this indictment of higher education. All institutions seem to have been encouraged to “balance” (or at least appear to balance) their scholarship in terms of Boyer’s prescribed functions of research discovery, integration, service application, and teaching (pp. 17-25). This “balancing act” has generally resulted in mass confusion of institutional roles and expectations for both small liberal arts colleges and large research universities.

The hoops that professors must jump through for promotion and tenure are now all shaped differently and appear to be dangling at different, constantly changing heights. Furthermore, the size of the hoops seems to continually change, from institution to institution, department to department, and cohort year to cohort year. Such a situation provides the perfect environment for mass frustration, demoralization, and disillusionment of the American professoriate.

### *Clarifying Issues*

This paper will argue that a misapplication of Boyer’s conception of scholarship has contributed to the sad state of affairs just described above. It will be further argued that while all four types of scholarship need to be included at any given institution, any single institution needs

to clarify its primary purpose, and the remaining types of scholarship should be implemented and assessed to the extent that they contribute to that primary purpose. We need to eliminate “wannabe” and “pretending-to-be-something-we’re-not” syndromes, and focus instead on what we do best, given our traditions, resources, and constituency.

A model for the small liberal arts college will be proposed, demonstrating how research, integration, and service can be considered, but clearly subordinated to teaching. Finally, a reality check will be attempted to determine in what direction we are actually headed.

### BOYER’S VIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP

#### *Three or Four Functions?*

Boyer (1990) traces the historical meaning of “scholarship” and shows how it has shifted from the four functions cited above to the sole function of discovery research. Sometimes, in fact, Boyer himself slips into using the term “scholarship” to refer to research as he did in his earlier work (1987), “Professors are expected to function as scholars, conduct research, and communicate results to colleagues. Promotion and tenure hang on research and publication. But undergraduate education also calls for a commitment to students and effective teaching” (p. 4). Also Boyer’s categories are confusing, because in later writing he sometimes abbreviated them to three categories “teaching, research, and service” (Boyer, Altbach, and Whitelaw, 1994). Where “integration” falls in such a scheme is unclear. Still later, following his death, Boyer’s associates (Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997) seemed to be using the three category system, lumping integration into research, but at other times they seemed to link integration to service and teaching (p. 11). Yet, in a 1994 speech delivered at Emory University Boyer (1997) reemphasized integration as a category particularly important in maintaining a “community of scholars.”

Because of the conceptual importance of integration, this paper will consider Boyer's four original categories of scholarship: research, integration, service, and teaching.

### *The Relationship of the Functions*

For high education to serve society and the nation (Boyer, 1981), all four functions must be present. This is also true for the survival of any given institution, though different institutions may emphasize different functions. All functions must be present because they are integrally related. There can be no research without researchers who have been taught. There can be no meaningful research if it does not integrate with other areas of knowledge. There can be no useful research without practical application. Likewise, integration requires basic discoveries to work with. It also requires an acquired (taught) ability to see relationships and applications. Service is not possible without basic knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge to situations and human activity (teaching). Finally teaching is not possible without knowledge, the ability to make it meaningful, and the ability to make it relevant. So for the college or university to work, all elements must be present to some degree.

It could possibly be argued that the small, liberal arts college need not concern itself with basic research. But can a teacher who never does basic research, meaningfully harvest the fruits of such effort and legitimately offer them to students? Unfortunately, most empirical studies have not indicated that there is any particular positive relationship between research and teaching, even though most institutions weigh research as an element of teaching (Luehrs & Brown, 1992). However, these conclusions may not be valid because of the way research is being defined. Cronin (1991) explains:

It is one of the paradoxes of scholar-teachers' lives that teaching and research simultaneously enrich one another just as they also steal time from one another. The answer, of course is balance—and a 90-hour week.

Personal scholarship and effective teaching are highly correlated. Personal scholarship need not always be the same as published research. The connection between keeping current in one's field, revising course outlines regularly to include new books and articles, and quality performance in the classroom are critical considerations for every teacher. Scholarship and research freshen and enliven the substance of teaching, and they usually also enhance one's teaching by setting the example of an inquiring mind that relishes the challenge of new questions and knows how to go about getting answers.

Good teachers plan their schedules and careers so they can be self-renewing professionals. (pp. 489)

The same case could be made for application, especially in the current climate of vocational concern (Boyer, 1981).

### *The Pragmatics of the Functions*

As a previous quote above indicates, Boyer fully realized that professors can't possibly perform all functions at a maximum performance level. The same is true for institutions and also for students. In order for any institution or individual to reach maximum performance in a given function of scholarship, specialization must occur. Boyer (1990) speaks of a "mosaic of talent" that should be "celebrated not restricted" (p. 27). Some are primarily researchers, some primarily integrators, some primarily appliers, and some primarily teachers. This does not imply exclusive functions, only specialization. And this specialization needs to be taken into consideration when it comes to tenure and promotion (p. 28). The same is true when it comes to evaluating institutions as a whole. Boyer (1997) states that it should be possible "for a university to describe with more confidence and courage its own distinctive mission, working out the formulas and the relationships between those forms of scholarship that fit uniquely that particular campus" (p. 78).

Furthermore, different kinds of students will be seeking different kinds of institutions focusing on different kinds of scholarship.

If any academic field lends itself to functional specialization, it is communication. The author, for example, sees himself as primarily an integrator and researcher, secondly a teacher, and lastly an applier. Other colleagues are clearly identifiable as teachers or appliers first. Furthermore, specialization can, and perhaps should, change over the course of one's career. At one time the author considered himself primarily a teacher, and at another time, during a time of international service, he considered himself primarily an applier. Scholars obviously cannot do everything at the same time, but they can do everything over the course of a career.

#### A MODEL FOR THE SMALL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

According to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997, pp. 115-117), two possible classifications would apply to the following proposed model: Liberal Arts Colleges I and Liberal Arts Colleges II. Probably the first category would be most applicable, because of the smaller size and lesser selectivity of students. Both of these factors would indicate the probability that the scholarship function of teaching would and should be emphasized. (This is how the author's institution was categorized twenty years ago when he arrived; now it has "moved up" to the "Comprehensive Universities and Colleges II category.")

#### *Nested Functions of Scholarship*

There are good reasons why teaching should be emphasized at the small liberal arts college. First of all, students may need and expect it. Many students who attend such schools pick them because they are small. They may come from small, rural high schools and fear the

anonymity of the large university classroom and campus. They also may have identified their own learning style as personal and intimate, seeking individualized attention and instruction. This then is simply a matter of meeting the needs of a particular market.

Conversely, the size of the institution and student body makes good teaching possible. Smaller classes, accessibility, identifiability, mobility all contribute to better teaching. With less papers, there is more time to spend with each paper. With less speeches, there is more time to spend with each speech. There is less hurry and stress. Students actually seek out teachers whom they feel they know personally.

Finally the institutions themselves can more readily afford good teachers than good researchers. This is true both of paying scholars and of paying for their resources. Teaching facilities are almost always cheaper than research facilities. Although Boyer would disagree with the premise that researchers should be paid more than good teachers, such is the reality. People “make names for themselves” in research, not in teaching.

So the small liberal arts college is the ideal place to emphasize teaching; but exactly how should this occur within the context of Boyer’s four functions of scholarship? Since teaching is most important to such an institution, the three other functions of scholarship should be *nested* within the function of teaching. Research should occur for the primary purpose of helping students understand the basic process, from beginning to end. The quality of discovery should not be as important as going through the process with students. Student learning, not publication, would be the ultimate test of this kind of research. Likewise, integration is something that the student ought to be able to do and understand. Lectures are integrated; courses are team taught; teachers teach in courses outside of their specific field of expertise. Service is also part of the



learning process for students. Students can accompany teachers into the community to apply principles; teaching takes place as students develop promotional materials for a highway cleanup campaign conducted by the local Jaycees; they are being taught by their teachers and peers as they work for the school newspaper, radio station, or television facility.

### *Contextual Evaluation*

So, when it comes time to evaluate scholarship, the other functions—research, integration, and service would be evaluated to the extent that they contributed to teaching. If they did not contribute to teaching, or if they should in some way weaken teaching (by diverting time and attention), they would be valued as minuses, not pluses.

How do we determine whether these other scholarship functions have contributed to teaching? Among various means (Russell & Pavelich, 1996), these can be determined subjectively by self-evaluation reports, colleague evaluations, and finally student evaluations. They can be determined even more accurately through objective testing. Can students do a research project on their own? Can students make sense out of research done by others? Can students tie different theories together? Can they tie theories from different disciplines together? Can students produce and direct a radio or television program? Can students conduct a moving worship service? Can students produce effective advertising copy or press releases with no mistakes? These sorts of tests are the most accurate of good teaching, but they are also the scariest. If students have not learned, teachers have not taught well somewhere along the line, maybe they have not motivated their students, maybe they have been unclear in presentations, maybe they have not demanded enough individual initiative, maybe they have not expected enough in-depth work, maybe they have been uninspiring and poor role models. For teachers to just complain that

they have poor students or that communication is a dumping ground for failures in other majors will not fly, even though it is generally accepted that there is “a mismatch between faculty expectations and the academic preparation of entering students” (Marty, 1987, p. 661). If students upon graduation do not know, do not understand, and cannot do; to some extent their teachers have failed. If, on the other hand, students can demonstrate a certain level of expertise, they can relate ideas creatively, and they can communicate effectively in real life and work situations, teachers have done their job well and ought to be amply rewarded. (On a personal note, the teacher’s teacher who inspired the author to become a communication professor was Gladys Borchers, for years editor of *Speech Education*, a true scholar-teacher, incorporating all Boyer’s functions with integrity, perseverance, collegiality, encouragement and respect.)

### MODELS AND REALITY

#### *Institutions in Transition*

Is there an institutional Peter Principle of higher education? *All good colleges become mediocre universities.* There does seem to be a natural pattern of growth and expansion for many colleges, though occasionally some wither and fold. It is only a few that seem to be able to maintain a steady state over an extended period of time. With such institutional changes comes instability in terms of scholarship functions. Usually, as a college takes on the complexion of a university, it devalues teaching functions in favor of research functions. Initially integrative and service functions are valued, but with further growth, new discovery research begins to become a priority. Even disciplines that do not make “hard” discoveries are devalued. In communication, areas such as rhetoric, which is strongly integrative, and broadcasting, which is strongly practical, lose their value in terms of being considered scholarship. So as institutions change their priorities,

so must scholars in order to survive. Despite Boyer's call for a broader definition of scholarship, expanding, growing institutions tend to value research at the expense of other functions. In fact, sometimes these "would-be's" are more crass and brutal in quantitatively demanding publications than are major universities.

### *Teaching in Transition*

Teaching is out, learning is in. This may portend something either healthy or ominous. The healthy aspect draws from the psychology of Carl Rogers (1961), emphasizing that only self-appropriated learning is meaningful; from the social theory of Parker Palmer (1983), emphasizing learning as a communal act of critical thought and creativity; and from the educational theory of Neil Postman (1995), emphasizing *what* students learn.

The new emphasis on learning is ominous if it degrades the role of the teacher. One suspects that this old idea has been brought back to life first in public education with the mass introduction of "learning machines," supplied free by the computer industry. The "learning" paradigm has now worked its way into higher education. The only difference is that colleges and universities are paying through the nose to support such technology. The money going to technology must come from somewhere, and it is coming from teaching. So with technology being as important to learning as classroom teaching, the paradigm shifts from teaching to learning. But just what are students learning? What kind of communication is possible when we take away attributes only learned through human interaction? Attributes such as consideration, self-control, respect, empathy, cooperation, patience, and understanding. The author's college has considered giving four hours of "learning" credit for three hours of classroom contact with a teacher, as is the policy at some other colleges. This supposedly frees college teachers for

research activities. They sit in front of their computers as “co-learners,” along with students. But is this really “co-learning,” learning together, or is it learning independently? The specter of directionless, unguided, over-broadly defined “learning” looms. If Perelman (1992) is right that schools, teaching, and education are dead, replaced by computerized “hyperlearning,” we are all in serious trouble. We will live in a world of scholarship, not only devoid of teachers, but devoid of scholars.

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