Journal of the Association for Communication Administration
29(2000), 260-264

Is Boyer Misguided or Misused? The Scholarship of Confusion

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IN *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Ernest Boyer (1990) argued that scholarship requires a "broad intellectual foundation," and that we should celebrate, rather than restrict, the richness or "mosaic" of faculty talent. It is hard to disagree with such sentiments. In the book's preface, Boyer identified faculty time as the key issue in the debate about the core curriculum of undergraduate education and the quality of campus life. He also addressed the reward system and noted that the key issue here is, what activities of the professoriate are most highly prized? He linked these two thoughts about time and reward by saying that we cannot address improving the quality of teaching if faculty members "are not given recognition for the time they spend with students" (p. xi). So, one basis for redefining scholarship appears to be finding faculty more time to spend with students and improving the quality of teaching.

Boyer (1990) emphasized that the Carnegie Commission was focusing on undergraduate education. He argued that many professors enter the profession because they enjoy teaching and serving, but that faculty members were losing out because achieving academic status depended on research and publication. Boyer's solution to this problem was not to revisit "the tired old teaching versus research debate," but to "define, in more creative ways, what it means to be a scholar" (p. xii).

FOUR SCHOLARSHIPS

Toward this end, Boyer (1990) and the Carnegie Commission proposed four views of scholarship: *discovery* (what we typically think of as primary research); *integration* (i.e., synthesizing and interpreting knowledge); *application* (of knowledge from one's discipline to solving "consequential" problems); and *teaching* (i.e., transforming, extending, and communicating, but not just transmitting, knowledge). Discovery is typically regarded as the preeminent form of scholarship because it seeks new knowledge. In this symposium, Carole Barbato argued that the scholarship of integration can be equally innovative, as it suggests new ways to approach, interpret, integrate, and challenge older findings and assumptions. And Rozell Duncan and Mary Anne Higgins summarized two cases studies whereby communication faculty engaged in the scholarship of application with a government agency and area farmers.

Boyer (1990) presented the redefinition of scholarship against the backdrop of the profound change confronting the academy and the need to redefine our priorities to reflect those changing realities. He suggested that, although the "principal mission at most of the nation's colleges and universities [has] continued to be the education of undergraduates" (pp. 9-10), emphasis on graduate education and research has overshadowed undergraduate education: "for America's colleges and universities to remain vital a new vision of scholarship is required" (p. 13). That vision of the "New American College" sees scholarship addressing "pressing social, economic, and civic problems," as higher education becomes committed to "societal service" and serves "a public good" (Boyer, 1994, p. POV). Such goals are praiseworthy. The New American College is one connected to society and "celebrates teaching and selectively supports research, while also taking special pride in its capacity to connect thought to action, theory to practice" (Boyer, 1994, p. POV).

Some Concerns with the Approach

It is easier to define denotatively what the four scholarships are than to understand them connotatively. The categories, though, often seem to be treated as being exhaustive and mutually exclusive, leading to questionable validity and reliability.

First, there is a sense that everything an academic does should now be defined as scholarship (i.e., that, somehow, all work fits into at least one of the four categories). Departments write their tenure and promotion guidelines to be inclusive and to embrace diverse points of view. They often disagree, though, on what typical examples of these forms of scholarship might be. It is often an instance of trying to squeeze square pegs into round holes. For example, although we used to call it service, I have heard colleagues argue that advising a student organization or chairing a convention session is now a form of scholarship.

Second, we might think we know when an activity fits into one of the four categories, but can we get a tenure or promotion committee to agree? This sometimes leads to colleagues advocating that an activity (that may not actually be scholarship) may fit in more than one category. So, if we can't get everyone to accept the idea that advising a student group is the scholarship of application, maybe we can get some to accept it as the scholarship of teaching?

Third, and even more distressing, departments and committees typically fail to consider how to assess or to evaluate the quality of the scholarship. Indeed, some committee members simply look for evidence of the existence of one or more of the scholarships and forget that it is the quality and impact of the work or activity that should be considered.

Basically, Boyer (1990, 1997) asked for a re-alignment in what we do in academia. That realignment is pleasing to the amorphous public and to those in political power in state government, who enjoy hearing that the academy really cares about its young people and social issues. However, such a re-alignment is reactive rather than proactive. It reacts to those in academic leadership positions who have been unable to get the message out as to the important knowledge/discovery and integration role and mission of universities. It is a "watch your back" approach that has evolved with restricted state budgets, limited state support for public education, and accreditation concerns. Given the focus of private universities on gifts and endowments, though, I hardly think this is limited to public colleges and universities. It is a troubling situation when only teaching and service become positive values at the expense of research at the university. That not only reenergizes the old "teaching versus research" debate, it does so unfairly and to the detriment of education. Students are taught and educated better by those who are actively involved in producing, informing, synthesizing, and sharing knowledge. As a former dean noted, what do we tell the students who complain that they are learning nothing new in the classroom?

Universals of Scholarship

To be fair, Boyer (1990) did emphasize several mandates, whereby some dimensions of scholarship are universal.

- All faculty members "should establish their credentials as *researchers*" (p. 27), and "every scholar must . . . demonstrate the capacity to do original research, study a serious intellectual problem, and present to colleagues the results" (p. 27). To Boyer, though, doing a dissertation or a creative work should be sufficient to achieve this. That is not enough.
- All faculty members should "stay in touch with developments in their fields and remain professionally alive" (p. 27) throughout their careers. Boyer also noted, though, that "it is unrealistic . . . to expect *all* faculty members . . . to engage in research and to publish on a regular timetable" (p. 27). Why not?
- All faculty "must be held to the highest standards of integrity" (i.e., no plagiarism, no manipulation of data, no misuse of human or animal subjects, no deceptive or unethical conduct that discredits the work of professors).
- All work —"regardless of the form it takes—must be carefully assessed. Excellence is the yardstick by which all scholarship must be measured" (p. 29). It is not as easy to assess the contributions of some forms of scholarship that appear outside the traditional system of peer-reviewed work. The yardsticks are not straight. This creates a heavy burden and time strain on faculty members to assess work deemed to be scholarship that may not have been previously evaluated in some objective fashion.

ASSESSMENT OF SCHOLARSHIP

The Carnegie Commission's subsequent publication, *Scholarship Assessed*, sought to provide some consistency to this evaluation by offering six qualitative standards for evaluating faculty scholarship: (a) clear goals (realistic and important purpose and objectives); (b) adequate preparation (locating and gathering essential resources); (c) appropriate method (employing sound methods); (d) significant results (achieving stated goals and having an impact); (e) effective presentation (using suitable style and organization, reaching intended audiences, and maintaining integrity); and (f) reflective critique (appropriately and critically evaluating others' work) (Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997, pp. 25-35). These are standards we have seen applied to refereed work such as journal articles, but they must be applied to all forms of scholarship.

In this symposium, Jean Dobos noted that quantitative criteria (i.e., numerical counts) may not be useful for evaluating all these scholarships, although other qualitative criteria (e.g., rejection rates of journals, peer reviews, citations, external evaluations, eminence) are additional indices for forms of scholarship such as discovery. Jerry Feezel and S-A Welch reiterated the need for multiple indices to assess the scholarship of teaching, perhaps highlighted by the development of teaching portfolios (see Boileau, 1993).

Given the range of projects that may be identified among the four scholarships, it is essential that departments and tenure/promotion committees at all levels of the college and university fairly and consistently apply such assessment standards. Glassick et al. (1997) noted that institutions require trustworthy processes of faculty evaluation. These processes stress the need for continuity over time, flexibility, and integrity. Integrity implies honesty, objectivity, and fairness. It is not enough, though, for a colleague to proclaim that a particu-

lar work acceptably represents a category of scholarship without establishing its clarity of purpose, importance, knowledge and synthesis of prior and relevant work, literacy, methodological appropriateness, significance, impact, and integrity. Carole Barbato suggested in this symposium that it is useful for departments to seek objective peer reviews of portfolios of work; such reviews need to be impartial and follow consistent evaluation criteria. Such reviews should not be obtained from former mentors or students. It is regrettable that implementations of the four scholarships do not mandate precise criteria of quality to assess the value of what faculty members include within each category.

Academic campuses also differ in their missions. Boyer (1990) and Glassick et al. (1997) acknowledged this. Applbaum (1993) argued that, "It is critical to align an institution's reward system with the fulfillment of its articulated mission" (p. 29). For example, Boyer noted that, "original research and publication should remain the basic expectations and be considered the key criteria" for judging faculty performance at *research universities* (p. 57). He also stressed that research universities need to support teaching in an aggressive manner, again setting up an unproductive dichotomy between research and teaching. He asked whether it is ethical "to enroll [undergraduate] students and not give them the attention they deserve?" (p. 58), apparently assuming that those who conduct research at research universities do not attend to their students. Boyer saw the need for different approaches to scholarship at doctorate-granting universities, comprehensive colleges or universities, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges.

As mentioned in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Kent State University, a Carnegie Research University II, has been one institution that adopted Boyer's and the Carnegie Commission's ideas (Magner, 1997). Toward that end, departments revised their promotion and tenure documents to reflect the four scholarships plus a category called university citizenship. A former provost was quoted as saying that, "Not all people contribute to the productivity of a department in like ways . . . We want to value those varied contributions as long as faculty are maximally engaged" (p. A18). The former provost argued that, "This doesn't mean that Kent State is ready to start handing out tenure to people whose research record is weak but who are excellent teachers" (p. A18). Given the recency of the changes, that remains to be seen. However, I recall an instance whereby a department argued its candidate for tenure and promotion had nine publications because the candidate wrote an op-ed piece for a local newspaper that was picked up by the wire services and reprinted in eight other newspapers. We may be able to apply the six criteria of quality to assess the value and impact of this single op-ed piece, but how could the author or departmental colleagues honestly argue with any sense of integrity that the piece should count nine times?

The revised system of scholarship creates problems of consistency and quality of expectations as guidelines change and units formulate different criteria. Reviews of tenure and promotion decisions may occur for reasons other than quality (e.g., such as by contending that a record is a true example of the Boyer model rather than focusing on the quality, significance, and impact of the work contained within that record). Criteria and justification become uneven. Some have even created different labels to describe activities as being "public scholarship" or the "scholarship of practice."

All this leads to the scholarship of confusion. It fosters the potential for superficial work, isolation and division, and the lack of common or shared values, as faculty and units are unable to explain, support, understand, or appreciate each other's definitions and criteria of significant and productive scholarship. If universities choose to go the Boyer route without careful implementation and application of consistent standards of assessment, scholarship and faculties will be of uneven quality and substance, creating a mosaic of shattered tiles.

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