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Faculty Development and the New American Scholar*

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The author of this article suggests that to address the public's distrust of higher education, we must reaffirm the importance of teaching. He argues that a significant part of that reaffirmation includes a new notion of the American scholar and new, more complex, ways of assessing what that scholar contributes to higher education. He suggests that if we are to re-emphasize what teaching is all about and to help our institutions re-emphasize it, we must build communities in which teaching is supported and encouraged. A re-emphasis on teaching in all of its diversity and a new understanding of scholarship in all of its complexity can help us recognize what our mission is all about and help us find ways to support one another in doing a better job of teaching.

This is not a happy time for education. In fact, this is the great depression. I believe that some day we will look back upon these times, perhaps a decade from now, and we will wonder how we ever made it through. Higher education is in a state of massive disarray. The professoriate suffers from an incredible lack of trust on the part of its public, and the operations of higher education are a source of general skepticism.

There is a growing literature of academic criticism. Charles Sykes has produced *Profscam* (1988) and *The Hollow Men* (1990). Roger Kimball has given us his *Tenured Radicals* (1990), and Alan Bloom *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987). Many other authors can be included in this list. Our society is distrustful of professionals across the board, but it seems to be

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especially distrustful of professionals in higher education. As a result of Watergate, we really do not believe politicians any more. As a result of the Kansas City Hyatt Regency disaster, we are not sure that engineers can design a good building. We have always had a distrust of lawyers, and the rise of the discipline of medical ethics is some evidence of a lack of trust in the medical profession as well.

Across the land budget cuts for higher education seem to be almost universal, and they are certainly occurring in the state of Missouri. Not only is the state higher educational system in Missouri taking reductions, but the citizens of Missouri, in the fall of 1991, rejected a tax increase that would have helped higher education enormously. Around the state there are two views as to why that tax increase failed, and I doubt that Missouri is any different from any other state in the land: 1) there is a distrust of professors because they are believed to be highly paid already and substantially under-worked, and 2) people are distrustful of university administrators because they believe that administrators have created a massive bureaucracy to keep higher education running and to help themselves. The distrust here extended also to politicians because many people believed that, should the tax increase pass, the politicians would not spend the money in appropriate ways. Similar views can be heard across the country.

But, even in these dark days, we need to reaffirm the mission, the heart and soul, the very being of the Academy, which amounts to nothing more than first-rate teaching. It amounts to saying once again that we take teaching very seriously and that like Chaucer's clerk, we gladly teach and gladly learn. A reaffirmation of teaching, however, is not going to solve all the problems of higher education, nor is it necessarily going to bring the enormous amounts of money needed for faculty, staff, programs, and buildings. Nevertheless, that reaffirmation is one way of renewing the Academy, and our task is to find ways that it might best be done.

Scholars and Professing

We need to rethink, I believe, a great deal of what we do. A part of that rethinking, for me, has been stimulated by a most interesting book, *Scholarship Reconsidered* (Boyer, 1990). In that text there is, in many ways, a new model for considering what faculty do and how they might be assessed.

If we are to have a new American Scholar, then we, as faculty, must realize that we are all called to be scholars in one way or another. Scholars are people who have mastered a body of knowledge. They are people who become current in that body of knowledge and remain so as that body of knowledge grows and develops. Scholars are able to see how what they know

relates to other areas of inquiry and how it relates to the broader issues of life in general. Every teacher is a scholar in some sense, and scholarship in its best sense, involves professing. There is a wonderful movie, *Lucky Jim*, based on a novel of Kingsley Amis, the great British comic writer. There is a scene in that movie that I come back to time and time again. An aging British don, a historian and the essence of Oxbridge academic life, is having a discussion with a new member of the faculty about what one has to do in order to get ahead and be a success at the university. He talks about the rules, the regulations, how to make it up the academic ladder, how to get to be a full professor. In the midst of that conversation held in the don's paneled study, the phone rings. The don picks up the phone, and in a wonderful resounding voice says, "History speaking."

That scene contains much about what we do as academics. When I speak and when I teach my students about Plato, I have to represent that great mind to them. There is no one else to do that at that time. When I teach philosophy to my beginning students, I am, for them at that moment, what that intellectual enterprise is all about, and it is my vision of that discipline that I communicate to them so that they know about that important human undertaking as they see it in me and as they see me doing it. Simply put, we profess our disciplines. We stand up and display an existential commitment to those disciplines; and, by our act of teaching them, we show that those disciplines are embodied in our own lives. Our commitment to our discipline is our way of saying to our students, as we profess, that it is worthy of their consideration and their time. It is not unlike standing up and giving witness, in the best evangelical sense of that term. When we teach, we represent to our students the power and importance of our disciplines, the effects that they have had on our own lives, and the importance that they have for other human enterprises. At the moment we teach, we are the only connection between the rich tradition of our disciplines and the students before whom we stand. That is an awesome and humbling responsibility, but any attempt to improve teaching must begin with the realization that true teaching is professing.

The Varieties of Scholarship

But not only must teachers profess, they must be scholars as well; and the book by Boyer (1990), *Scholarship Reconsidered*, outlines four important dimensions of scholarship. In the widest sense scholars understand a body of knowledge, are committed to its enhancement, profess it to their students, keep up with its changes and developments, and consider its implications for the rest of human life. But scholarship can be divided into four parts or aspects, and this is what the book is all about.

First, according to the book, there is one kind of scholarship that involves the creation or the discovery of new knowledge. Virtually every faculty member can think of a member of his or her field who is working at the frontiers of knowledge, someone who has made the new discoveries, who has created the new ideas, or who has done the leading-edge experiments. We all know what ground breaking research in our fields can be, and many of us have been fortunate enough to study with those great minds as we proceeded through our graduate work. In the great research universities of the land, this kind of scholarship has been the overwhelming model of what it means to be a member of the academic profession.

Second, there is the scholarship that involves not the discovery of new knowledge, but rather its integration and synthesis. Most of us as graduate students knew a faculty member who may not have been the very best researcher and who may not have gotten all the grants but rather was the person who seemed to understand how the field fit together and where the important issues were located, and had ideas about new directions in research. There is the scholarship of creation and discovery, but there is also the scholarship of integration and synthesis. There are many fine academic minds who are able to take a broad overview of a field and discover its directions and its important issues. Research scholars are often absorbed in the complex details of a single problem, but synthesizing scholars often see a broader range of issues across the entire discipline.

Third, there is a scholarship of the application of knowledge. The great land grant universities of the land have been committed to the notion that there are faculty who discover new formulas, or products, or processes, and then it is the task of other scholars to apply that information to the solution of practical problems in a social context. Researchers discover new facts about the genetics of animals for example, and then more practically-oriented scholars apply those facts to the production of better farm animals. Theory and practice often go hand-in-hand but can be carried out by different kinds of scholars.

Thus, there is one kind of scholar who specializes in the discovery of new knowledge, another kind of scholar who specializes in its integration or synthesis, and a third who can apply knowledge to solve practical problems. And fourth, there is the scholarship that deals with the communication of knowledge or its teaching. All four kinds of scholarship require a knowledge base, but each kind has its own way of proceeding and its own methods. If we are to have a broad notion of scholarship and recognize the diversity of faculty roles, then we need to understand the various kinds of scholarship and the roles of those faculty who carry out these important tasks. We need

to recognize that not every faculty member can do each kind of scholarship equally well. Some faculty are good creators of knowledge; others are good synthesizers; others are good teachers, and so on. Scholarship, in all of its forms, requires a solid knowledge base, a deep understanding of the discipline, and an ability to work in it at some level. If we are to rediscover the importance of teaching in higher education, then we need to realize that good teaching requires good scholarship.

We also need to realize that what counts as good teaching, just as what counts as good research, is not one and the same thing across all the disciplines. The notion that the disciplines are diverse is as old as Aristotle, who distinguished the sciences into the theoretical, the practical, and the productive. By the same token, research and teaching are different across all of those modes of knowledge, and it simply does not make any sense for there to be a single standard for research or a single standard for teaching.

This notion of scholarship, I think, is extraordinarily powerful. We might argue about the details of the four kinds of scholarship, and we might want to include other kinds of scholarship as well. But this new way of looking at scholarship destroys the old dichotomy between research and teaching. I think it also might help to destroy a hierarchy of values that tends to place those who create new knowledge at the top of the academic hierarchy and those who communicate it and teach it far below them. The many critics of higher education have pointed out, much to our embarrassment in the past several years, that there are many places where teaching is not very highly valued, where students have little contact with full-time members of the faculty, and where research is the dominant kind of scholarship. There are even places where teaching is relegated to the work of teaching assistants, adjunct members of the faculty, and others who do not have full academic status. Given that situation in so many institutions across the country these days, it is no wonder that the public thinks that academics are not doing their proper job.

The Varieties of Scholarship: A Case Study

If we are able to have a new notion of the American scholar, then we ought to be able to claim that there is a wide variety of things that faculty do and, given that variety, come up with equally diverse means of assessment. To have a single scale for faculty advancement is simply untrue to the diversity of academic life and to the variety of roles that faculty/scholars play in their institutions. This point, I think, can be illustrated by an interesting case that I have dealt with over the past several years. I happen to be the Director of the University Concert Series in addition to teaching philosophy

and working in other fields. It is a rather typical concert series, similar to those sponsored by many other universities across the country. We present orchestras, opera companies, ballet, modern dance, solo instrumentalists, etc. One of the things that I have done in connection with concert series in which I take a great deal of pride, is to have secured sufficient grant funds about eight years ago to inaugurate the position of audience educator. We hired a musicologist to join our staff and to add a new educational dimension to our programming.

This person does a variety of things for the concert series, all of which have an important educational value. First, he writes the program notes for each event so that the audience can learn about the artists, their work, the selections they are going to play, and relevant biographical and musicological information. Second, he gives a series of concert previews usually starting about an hour before the performance in which he provides an introduction to the performance that evening. These concert previews can be quite imaginative. On occasion, before a string quartet performance, he has members of the University String Quartet come and give examples of what will be heard. Before some dance performances, he has had faculty from the dance department explain some of the dances, perhaps perform brief examples of the works on the program, and talk about dance technique. These concert previews have a very loyal following, and there are many people in our audience who would not think of attending a performance without attending the concert preview beforehand. And third, he teaches a class each year for which the concert series events in that semester form the text. The students meet for regular class sessions at which he prepares them for what they are going to see and hear. They study parts of the history of the performing arts, and they learn about composers, musicians and performers, styles and ways of criticism. We provide the class with a block of seats for that semester's performances, and they attend as a group. His activities have had a wonderful educational effect on our audience. They appreciate the performances they attend because of his preparation for them, and students find his classes are a way of having experiences in the arts that they had never even considered before.

The case of this young man presents an interesting issue for those of us who are concerned about re-emphasizing teaching, finding new ways of understanding what scholarship is all about, and helping faculty to develop.

This young man is now at the beginning of his fourth year as an assistant professor in the Department of Music. He is very concerned about what he needs to do to obtain tenure, and he is concerned about whether what he does for the Concert Series will count towards his gaining tenure at the University

of Missouri. Being on a tenure track appointment is a difficult time for a young faculty member; the anxiety can be quite high. He is well-published, serves on numerous university committees, and has a fine reputation as a teacher. But he wonders, as he might, whether what he does for the Concert Series will add to his tenure dossier. He has questions as to whether his program notes for concert series events will count as a kind of publication. He wonders whether his concert previews will count as a kind of teaching. He wonders whether his class with its experiential component of attending concerts will be considered to have enough academic rigor. If faculty members are asked to be very strong researchers, with additional commitments to teaching and service, then how does what this person does for the Concert Series fit into those traditional categories?

I have no doubt that what this young man does for the Concert Series is scholarship in the best sense of the word, but it should be rather clear that what he does does not fit into the usual categories. If universities of the land cannot accommodate in the notions of scholarship what this young man does so incredibly well, then we will have, indeed, lost our commitment to what the diversity of teaching and scholarship is all about. If this young man is to get his tenure, as I believe he will, then we are going to have to change some standards, some descriptions, and some notions of what it means to be a scholar, and then we have to find new ways of evaluating the quality of that scholarship.

I think the Boyer text provides an interesting way of more adequately describing what this young man does far better than the traditional dichotomy of teaching and research can ever do. If countable publications are all that matter, then this young man may have some problems. But if scholarship can be more widely considered, then I think what he does can be adequately assessed and evaluated. It is ironic to note that when he writes his program notes, which require a great deal of time in the library and a genuine synthesis of recent scholarship, those notes are read by more people in a single evening than the average academic article is read in a lifetime.

The Diversity of Teaching and Scholarship

Thus, if we are to recognize the diversity of what faculty members do and to take teaching seriously, then we have to recognize that the means of evaluation are far more complex than the ones we use at present. This issue applies to the evaluation of teaching as well. Even when there are efforts to take teaching seriously, there seems to be a kind of hierarchy of teaching activities as well. Most of the awards seem to go to those faculty members who are able to deliver inspiring lectures to large groups of students. The

platform performer often gets most of the awards, and the more students taught and the more basic the level the more likely that the instructor will receive an award.

As far as it goes, there is nothing wrong with recognizing that kind of teaching. Lecturing is indeed a dying art form, and I hope that we can recover an understanding of what a good lecture is all about because it is certainly important. But, we also need to realize that it is not the only mode of teaching, and it should not be getting the only rewards. Good teaching is writing a good syllabus; good teaching is writing a good programmed instruction text; good teaching is training teaching assistants to do their jobs well; good teaching is organizing informative and instructive laboratory assignments; good teaching involves mentoring, guiding, coaching, and inspiring. The range of teaching activities is just as diverse as the range of research activities, and to believe the lecture model is the only one is to misconstrue the entire enterprise of teaching.

Building a Teaching Community

However, if we are to re-emphasize what teaching is all about and to help our institutions reemphasize it, then we need to build communities at our institutions in which teaching is supported and encouraged. I had the privilege of being a part of a small series of conferences, the Wakonse Conferences on College Teaching, which have helped to create, on several campuses, a genuine and supportive climate for teaching. The idea for the Wakonse conferences is a very simple one that grew out of some experiences that a group, including me, had in teaching at a leadership camp in western Michigan over the past dozen years. At that camp we were dealing with juniors and seniors in high school and freshmen and sophomores in college, and we believed that the experiences at that camp were so positive for young people that there might be some way of translating those experiences for faculty members.

Thus, the Wakonse Conference on College Teaching began in the summer of 1990. Seven institutions from the midwest sent teams of six to eight faculty members. The participants were selected from across the disciplines and across the age ranges, with due representation of women and minorities. They came to Camp Miniwaca in western Michigan for a series of presentations on teaching.

Before the conference began, surveys were sent out to each participant to see what each one might like to talk about and what role that person would like to have in the activities of the conference. The expectation was that every person at the conference would either present, lead a discussion, or be

involved in some other kind of activity. We deliberately decided not to have any outside speakers but rather to make the conference entirely self contained. Over the five days, we had presentations on teaching in the various disciplines, on teaching honor students, on teaching the academically less-talented, on issues of multi-cultural teaching, and a wide variety of other topics. A multitude of teaching styles was represented, from the large lecture to the small group discussion. There were sessions on educational technology, on using the computer, on teaching laboratories, and on experiential education. I believe it is fair to say that the group of faculty members who came that summer learned something about their own teaching styles and skills and came away with a renewed commitment to improving their own teaching.

The simple device of letting teachers interact with one another, having their presentations critiqued by other teachers, and having certain master teachers as examples proved to be a very inspirational experience. We chose the word *Wakonse* for the conference because it comes from a Lakota Indian word meaning: "to teach" and "to inspire." The fact that institutions sent teams of faculty has had some interesting consequences as well. First, many faculty there got to know other faculty at their own home institutions whom they simply had never met before. It is discouraging sometimes to realize how truly lonely the life of a teacher can be, especially in the large complex universities.

Second, those teams returned to their institutions and continued to get together to talk about teaching during the academic year. New friendships were formed, and new interests in teachers helping other teachers do their jobs better began to spread across their campuses. At the University of Missouri-Columbia, the *Wakonse* group has met on almost a monthly basis ever since first meeting in the summer of 1990, and they have added to their ranks a new group who attended the conference in the summer of 1991. That effort has resulted in an annual week of teaching-renewal activities each spring. Similar kinds of activities have occurred on the campuses of other participants.

We are expecting an expanded set of teams at the conference in the summer of 1992. We are planning a *Wakonse* conference for faculty who teach honors students, and similar conferences are planned for the east and west coasts. It is simply a matter of building a supportive community for teaching, allowing those faculty who are committed to teaching to help their colleagues do a better job. It is a matter of inspiration, support, and community that changes our institutions from multiversities to true universities, one not many. Alan Bloom (1987) called universities a collection of fiefdoms

separated by parking lots; an emphasis on building a teaching community can help break down that insularity.

Conclusion

If teaching is to be renewed, it must be renewed from within by building a teaching community. This approach may not revolutionize the academic enterprise, and it may not go a very long way toward restoring our lost credibility. But a re-emphasis on teaching in all of its diversity and a new understanding of scholarship in all of its complexity can help us recognize what our mission is all about and help us find ways to support one another in doing a better job of teaching. Harold Taylor once used a most interesting example to make this point. He talked about an ancient group, the Druids, who lived about the time of the Romans and interacted with them. They lived in forests because they believed that trees were the location of the sacred and that life was best lived among the trees. They literally worshipped the trees. Harold Taylor asked what we would do if we wanted to make better Druids. He said that it would be of little help to give an award for Druid of the Year, but it would make all the difference in the world to plant better forests.

By the same token, if we want to have good teaching, we do not need to give awards for Teacher of the Year. That is fine, as far as it goes; but if we really want to improve teaching, we need to build a climate of support, reward, and encouragement so that teaching is nurtured, honored, sustained, and recognized. Creating that kind of climate for teaching will not solve all of the problems of higher education but it will help us discover the centrality of teaching in our mission.

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