

## Scholarship Reconsidered for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Ian J. McCoog, Ed.D.

5/23/22 Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine Career Advancement Program

### Abstract:

This paper explores higher education faculty evaluation systems through the lens of Ernest Boyer's definition of scholarship and a 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning model. Topics include: taxonomies of teaching and learning, the scholarship of teaching and learning, "unbundling" and the use of non-tenure professors, higher education funding, tenure systems, and a new model which attempts to strike a balanced between research, teaching, and service while preparing graduates for the knowledge-based economy.

Keywords: scholarship, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, higher education, tenure, reward systems

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In 1990, the world was moving out of the Cold War Era as the Soviet Union began to crumble. One of the many de facto battlegrounds of this conflict between superpowers took place in the realm of education. Both the United States and Soviet Union had directed their efforts to building strong research and science institutions for the purpose of keeping up with the other. Research and development was paramount. Academic values such as university service and teaching became secondary to pragmatism and positivism in America between the end of World War II in 1945 and the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Reisch, 2009). This reality set the stage for the landmark publication of *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* by Ernest Boyer in 1990. There are many lessons that can be learned from this “coup d’état to publish or perish” (Moser & Ream, 2015, p. 20) and applications that can be implemented in the 21<sup>st</sup> century university.

### **Lessons from *Scholarship Reconsidered***

Boyer’s (1990) influential work was received as a move beyond the academic debate of teaching versus research and more so an expansion of the definition of scholarship (Glassick, 2000). The role and function of an academic professor had been frayed into separate camps of scholarship, teaching, and service with disparate responsibilities and values placed on each; traditionally 40% teaching, 50% scholarship, and 10% service (Bailey & Monroe, 2013). By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, acceptable faculty work had become delivering curriculum in a satisfactory manner, publishing regularly, presented at peer-reviewed conferences, and serving on university committees. Boyer and researchers that followed him (Bailey & Monroe, 2013; Gehrke & Kezar 2014; Glassick, 1993, 2000; Moser & Ream, 2015) have attempted to bring these fragmented threads together to create an approach that integrates the intellectual and social values of academia.

The separate but overlapping principles established by Boyer in 1990 were the scholarship of discovery, scholarship of integration, scholarship of application, and scholarship of teaching. Each domain represented a part of what it meant to be an effective scholarly professor. The scholarship of discovery refers to conducting original research and publication. The scholarship of integration refers to scholarship conducted across disciplines. The scholarship of application refers to service-oriented and community-based work. Lastly, the scholarship of teaching refers to innovation in pedagogy and instructional methods (Bailey &

Monroe, 2013; Boyer, 1990; 1996, Moser & Ream, 2015, Wendling, 2020). Boyer theorized a shift from a research heavy agenda to one based on a more balanced approach to original research, university service, and effective teaching. Boyer and his team at the Carnegie Foundation found that professors were not only disproportionately rewarded for published research at the expense of teaching and service, but also by quantity of publication rather than quality (Boyer, 1990; Glassick, 2000).

The research that became *Scholarship Reconsidered* was conducted by Boyer and Eugene Rice for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Glassick, 2000). They gathered data from more than 5,000 faculty members from a 25 year reporting period at higher learning institutions of different types. These data focused on attitudes and values related to research, criteria for tenure, and faculty satisfaction. The methodology criteria used in the study were the six standards of research established by the Carnegie Foundation: clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, achievement of outstanding results, effective communication, and critical reflection (Glassick, 2000). The results of this study indicated that higher education needed a reward system that reflected both the diversity of academic institutions and breadth of scholarship (Boyer, 1990). Boyer and Rice believed this goal could be accomplished by striking a balance between research, teaching, and service. Nearly two third of faculty stated that they felt higher education needed a better way besides publication to evaluate scholarly performance. More than 70% said their interest lay in teaching with many stating that teaching should be the primary criterion for tenure and promotion (Boyer, 1990; Glassick, 2000). Faculty expressed the desire to have greater time and depth of interaction with students. The majority said they enjoyed interacting both professionally and informally with students outside of class and office hours. In terms of research, most faculty reported that the reward system heavily relied upon published research. More than a third responded that publications were counted in quantity as opposed to measured by quality. Even at research institutions, 42% of faculty reported this was the case (Glassick, 2000). It is unlikely that Boyer intended for the four frames of scholarship to be viewed as separate and distinct as he considered academics to be first and foremost scholars. Nevertheless, the holistic nature of the four scholarships evolved into a model for what it means to be a successful academic in the 21<sup>st</sup> century university (Stefani, 2011).

Bailey and Monroe (2013) presented their own taxonomy based on Boyer's work that highlighted the interlocking parts of 21<sup>st</sup> century scholarship. Their theory supposed that modern scholarship can be categorized into four groups: events from which scholarship can arise, communications from which scholarship can be reported, formats for peer review, and common scholarly roles that are not generally viewed as generating scholarship. Events from which scholarship can rise include designing and developing coursework, running workshops or webinars, and review of materials related to curriculum and/or assessment. Communication from which scholarship can be reported include not just books and articles but also technology-based products such as contributing to blogs and curating dedicated websites. While traditional peer review formats such as editorial or department review are still vital, it is also important to consider participant evaluations of a session or classroom observation by peers. Lastly, roles that are not commonly viewed as scholarship but are certainly part of a scholar's life such as board member, conference organizer, or technical advisor should also be part of this holistic definition (Bailey & Monroe, 2013). These four groups set an interesting baseline and serve as a basis for further discussion since the publication of the article. Today, debate rages in academic departments concerning the scholarship of products where dissemination and review relies of metrics such as viewers and subscribers such as podcasting and sharing of resources via social media channels (Sherbino et al, 2015).

Moser and Ream (2015) built upon Boyer's model outlined in *Scholarship Reconsidered*. A focus of academic life is to conduct original research to meet the scholarship of discovery, however, to meet the standards of the scholarships of integration, application, and teaching; professors must step back from their research, look for connections between theory and practice, and communicate that knowledge to students (Moser & Ream, 2015). This approach creates a connectivity of service, language, and teaching. By challenging the existing reward structure, Boyer outlined a model where scholars were more likely to critique each other's work thereby working collaboratively to contribute ideas with broad application to the greater field of study. Required with that paradigm shift is professional development for professors to find ways to share in the spirit of collaborative research as opposed to guarding new ideas. Professors would be able to identify areas of scholarship according to Boyer's definition where they are strong and where they need further improvement with the ultimate goal being more balanced across the realms of research, teaching, and service (Moser & Ream, 2015).

## Unbundling and Non-tenure Faculty

The process of earning tenure in American higher education institutes is steeped in tradition. The initial intent of granting professors tenure was to create a safety net that would allow scholars to investigate possible paradigm-shifting theories as opposed to conducting safe studies that would simply move them along the career continuum (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996, Wendling, 2020). This quality over quantity approach to reward has in large part not been the case. What developed was a system of *publish or perish* which put stress on scholars to publish as often and as quickly as possible to gain tenure. This approach neglects high impact academic practices, namely teaching and service (Cross & Goldenberg, 2011).

Boyer's theory has an interesting relationship to his tenure as Chancellor of the SUNY system. Years before *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Boyer was one of the founders of the Empire State College which served as an early standard for adult education and degree completion (Gehrke & Kezar, 2014, Hill, 2010). Empire State College focused on innovative and flexible approaches to higher education. The university's founding mission was to transform communities by providing programs that helped connect the unique needs of people's lives to their individual learning and career goals. A curious outcome of this idea was that most faculty at Empire State College were non-tenure track or adjunct faculty. While it is not known if this experience directly impacted Boyer's later work, it is interesting to note that the use of adjunct faculty rose 300% beginning in 1975 while tenure track faculty increased by only 26%. The huge rise in adjunct faculty has led to a phenomenon known as "unbundling" (Gehrke & Kezar, 2014).

Unbundling refers to the partitioning of full time professors' duties into part time adjunct positions in order to meet budget, respond to last minute increases in enrollment, and/or address the inability to secure funding for tenure track faculty (Gehrke & Kezar, 2014). The problem with unbundling is that part time faculty, even if they feel wholly invested in the university, hardly have time to research, write, present, and teach in innovative ways. Cross and Goldenberg (2011) found that a heavy emphasis on use of adjunct faculty creates an environment which is less student-centered and lacks high impact teaching practices. This leads to higher student transfer rates, lower student and faculty retention rates, lower graduation rates, and ultimately significant drops in overall student satisfaction. At the institutional level, this can

create a decentralized hiring process with little formal evaluation which can ultimately affect the goals of the university. A more proactive approach can negate reactionary thinking in times of turbulence such as the 2008 recession when hiring non-tenure faculty greatly increased in response to unsure funding.

Cross and Goldenberg (2011) identified future trends for hiring professors which could meet high standards such as those outlined by Boyer. They found approaches such as analysis of internal and external data to support and understand issues related to the individual university environment and climate, conducting cost-benefit analyses to weigh non-tenure and tenure-track options, broaden decision making to include more levels of leadership in the hiring process, targeting explanations of the rationale behind hiring decisions to affected groups, and keeping an open line of communication between leadership and faculty for response and feedback. Unfortunately, the results of a 2012 survey of the American Conference of Academic Deans (ACAD) and the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences (CCAS) found that universities don't always adhere to sound decision making processes like those outlined in the Cross and Goldenberg study (Gehrke & Kezar, 2014, Wendling, 2020). The ACAD and CCAS were designed to evaluate deans' opinions, values, and beliefs of the professoriate pertaining to the use of non-tenure faculty. The 278 participants came from public and private universities including doctorate, masters, bachelors, and associates granting institutions. Respondents stated that non-tenure track faculty tend to teach introductory courses, professionally oriented courses, or highly specialized courses that match the faculty member's professional expertise. This approach can be a positive to the university as it adds special knowledge and flexibility to course offerings. Negatively, relying heavily on part time faculty creates a potential unavailability to students if the professor has a different full time job, a potential lack of creativity in curricular design, and a potential breakdown of shared governance. The Deans stated that pressures such as surging enrollment, a need to fill positions at the last minute, a need to fill temporarily vacant positions (faculty on leave or sabbatical), budgetary constraints, and pressure to meet institutional goals all lead to less than ideal staffing solutions. The unavailability of time leads to hiring decisions that do not consult stakeholders such as department chairs, faculty council, university administration, or trustees. The study concluded that data is being collected concerning the hiring of non-tenure faculty, however, there is a lack of information concerning planning, collective responsibility, and accountability for those hiring decisions (Gehrke & Kezar, 2015).

## **A New Model for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Professoriate**

How we view learning has changed. Learning is no longer a cycle of memorize, retain, and report. We, as professors, ask students to turn information into knowledge, develop insight based upon that knowledge, and then reflect and report what has been learned. For this reason, knowing how people learn has become a vital skill of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Cambridge, 2007). How we hire, retain, develop, and evaluate faculty must reflect this notion. If a university is to market itself to students as research-led and student-centered, it must reflect a value for the scholarship of teaching and learning. The need is even more evident as scholarship moves toward globalization and a knowledge-based economy. Remaining financially viable has in many ways forced universities into a balancing act of retaining the values of the academy while making enough money to keep the doors open (Stefani, 2011).

The current hiring environment within higher education appears to not align with the progressive definition of scholarship suggested by Boyer over 30 years ago. We must not conclude, however, that the professoriate has taken a step back since 1990. A 21<sup>st</sup> century model should reward professors for their ability to collaborate and integrate research within and across disciplines. Boyer's scholarship of application has continued to enlighten research agendas and helped professors to consider the connections between original research and service. Values such as collaboration, creativity, and effective communication are a large part of many models of 21<sup>st</sup> century education (Battelle for Kids, 2019; Bybee, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006).

The model suggested by the author is based upon three categories where each is tied to a set of 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies. In such a model, items that lead to tenure can be classified as research, teaching, and/or service. These categories are defined by Boyer's (1990) four definitions of scholarship with discovery and integration falling under research, teaching defining the teaching block, and application being the category that covers service. Establishing each category would allow professors to tag a scholarly activity to a competency within each track therefore creating a reward system that is both balanced and tied to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Competencies can be based upon any model the university feels best fits its mission and values, however, the previously mentioned Battelle model of 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning is a good fit for what is required by professors to prepare graduates to enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace or further their academic pursuits in graduate school. The Battelle model (2019) identifies 21st

century skills that are related to technology and also to skills that are necessary for students to be successful in the modern work place such as flexibility, effective communication, and critical thinking skills. By professors focusing on fostering these skills in their students, they are not only preparing their students for the world they are entering but also helping to spread the knowledge and skills required to be successful in the modern economy for future students and employees.

Model for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholarship

	Research (Scholarship of Discovery, Scholarship of Integration)	Teaching (Scholarship of Teaching)	Service (Scholarship of Application)

\* Horizontal categories based upon Boyer's Scholarship Reconsidered

Life and Career Skills	Explanation of activities related to research, teaching, and service in the areas of promoting the following skills for students: flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility
Learning and Innovation Skills	Explanation of activities related to research, teaching, and service in the areas of promoting the following skills for students: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity
Information, Media, and Technology Skills	Explanation of activities related to research, teaching, and service in the areas of promoting the following skills for students: information literacy, media literacy, and ICT (information, communications, and technology) literacy.
Key Subjects and 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Skills	Explanation of activities related to research, teaching, and service in the areas of promoting the following skills for students: global awareness; financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy, health literacy, and environmental literacy

\* Vertical categories attributed the Frameworks for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning created by Battelle for Kids (For more information, visit: <http://www.battelleforkids.org/>)

**Figure 1.** Model for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholarship

## Conclusion

While not directly addressing the issue of a limited student experience caused by unbundling, this model creates a roadmap for a more refined level of scholarship which is student-centered and directly focused on graduate preparation. Defining the professoriate in a comprehensive manner focused on research, teaching, and service can increase the effectiveness of professors if they are given the time and resources necessary to fulfill their job duties while focusing on research, teaching, and service. A professor who conducts new and innovative



research, is a progressive teacher, and connects with stakeholders in the university and community to create a positive partnership is the exact kind of a professor a forward-thinking university wants to employ. Ultimately, the issue of overuse of non-tenure faculty and unbundling comes down to funding and professional development. As knowledge-driven job markets cause universities to expand, schools seek to find a balance between public and private money. This expansion is vital for American universities to remain a global standard considering the social, political, and economic context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Tierney & Perkins, 2015). Increases in funding have not been sufficient to maintain hiring and services at an even level and contribute heavily to the use of adjunct and non-tenure faculty (Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2016). If funding and training can meet demand, a new scholarship system can be created which can more effectively meet the needs of the knowledge-driven economy and once again reconsider scholarship using Boyer's standards and the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century college graduate.

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