

Editor's Corner

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Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure for Extension and Teaching Faculty -- Are We Close to Getting It Right?

Abstract

For the past twenty years, there has been a growing dissatisfaction with the way higher education rewards its faculty. While most universities give lip service to all three of their educational missions ---- teaching, extension, and research ---- most universities have rewarded primarily research activities. The university culture is on the brink of a major paradigm shift, with teaching and extension regaining the prestige they have historically held. The key to realizing this goal is to develop a single set of standards for judging scholarly performance, regardless of whether the activity is research, teaching, or extension.

Since World War II, faculty have attained reappointment, promotion, and tenure at institutions of higher learning through the publication of research findings in refereed journals.⁽¹⁾ This has been true for all faculty regardless of whether their academic appointment was research, teaching, or extension. Outstanding teachers and extension faculty have been denied tenure and/or promotion because they lacked the requisite "scholarship." The bean counters, ignoring long lists of accomplishments, have given a thumbs down on many a qualified faculty member who lacked sufficient number of refereed journal articles. The prevailing view has been that refereed journal articles are the only legitimate way of assessing "scholarship."

Happily, this view of scholarship is teetering on crumbling foundations. The rumblings in universities throughout the country that are shaking the foundations acknowledge that this view is not only unfair, but misguided because it limits the potential of a university to achieve excellence in all areas of its educational mission. The view of scholarship that rewards most faculty based upon activities outside their primary job responsibilities is in its death throes.

As well it should be. Applying the concept to a business setting illustrates its absurdity. Imagine hiring someone to sell widgets, and then telling him that he will receive salary increases and promotions based upon the number of widgets he assembles. I don't need a research study to tell me that widget sales will go down. Of course, you can argue that someone who knows how to assemble widgets will make a better salesperson. That may be true to some extent. But so what? How does that knowledge help if the salespeople spend their time assembling widgets rather than selling them? And what about the people who are hired full time to assemble widgets? Aren't they likely to build a better widget than people who dabble in widget assembly just so they can be promoted? What about the people who buy those poorly assembled widgets? Aren't they likely to tell their friends about the lower quality? Widget sales will drop even further, and no one wins.

Rewarding people for achieving excellence in their assigned job responsibilities is a good practice in business, and it is a good practice in academics. Two cases illustrate this point.

Recently, I talked with parents of a graduate from NC State. Their son had been an accounting major, and they praised that department for the fine education he received. They particularly were grateful for the adjunct faculty members who were in private practice and who had prepared their son for the "real world." Obviously, their son had spoken highly of non-tenure track faculty who were excellent teachers. The parents and student had been impressed with the faculty members' ability to teach, not with the number of refereed publications on their dossiers.

The second case involves a non-tenure track Extension faculty member who was overwhelmingly voted as most valuable Extension Specialist by the field faculty a few years ago. Freed from the "publish or perish" specter, she was able to concentrate her scholarship on activities needed, and obviously appreciated, by the field faculty. The ultimate beneficiaries are the taxpayers who gain from her programming efforts and who really don't care how many refereed journal articles she has published.

Yet, in both cases, the academic brass ring of promotion and tenure would be outside the grasp of these outstanding faculty members because excellent performance of assigned duties is not sufficient under the publish or perish mentality -- unless the assigned duties are research. By failing to adequately reward teaching and extension activities, land-grant universities suppress the pursuit of excellence in two of their three missions, and they "are falling out of step with the expectations of parents, students, politicians, and the larger public, as well as their own stated goals." (Glassick, 1997).

But the paradigm is shifting, and universities all over the country are reconsidering the definition of scholarship(2) and how to assess it. NC State University started the process of reevaluating the assessment of scholarship several years ago and has adopted guidelines for

evaluating [teaching](#) and [extension](#) activities. The adoption of the guidelines for evaluating extension activities should have been cause for celebration, and Extension faculty should have been dancing in the streets. It didn't happen.

Despite the new guidelines and the support from the highest levels of administration at NC State, there remains a disconnect between practice and theory. Consider the following:

- New guidelines for evaluating extension activities have been part of the Faculty Handbook since 1996. Yet, many extension faculty are unaware they exist, including faculty who have recently been through the promotion and tenure process and faculty who serve on the college-level promotion and tenure committee.
- A junior faculty member who has a 100 percent extension appointment was encouraged to add at least one more refereed journal article to her dossier before submitting her papers for promotion and tenure.
- A survey of Extension Specialists conducted in February 2000 showed that the majority of extension faculty members perceived that they had a 60 percent or less chance of attaining promotion and tenure as compared to their colleagues in research and teaching.

Changing the culture of an academic institution is a slow process. Educational efforts are needed to encourage faculty and administration to embrace the new definitions of scholarship. More importantly, educational efforts are needed to teach faculty and administration how to assess the different forms of scholarship. Assessment is the sticking point. The first concern expressed by many academicians is the difficulty in assessing scholarship that is not documented in refereed journal articles. They are concerned that if different methods are used for evaluating various activities, different standards for scholarly performance will result.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching advocates that each form of scholarship can be held to the same standards of scholarly performance by applying a single standard. (Glassick, 1997). The Carnegie Foundation compared faculty handbooks and promotion and tenure guidelines from universities across the nation. They identified six common qualitative standards that can be used to evaluate activities in all forms of scholarship, be they discovery, integration, application, or teaching.

Glassick, C. E., Huber, M. T., Maeroff, G. I. (1997) *Scholarship Assessed*, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, p. 36

Standards of Scholarly Work:	Questions to Ask:
Clear Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the scholar state the basic purposes of his or her work clearly? • Does the scholar define objectives that are realistic and achievable? • Does the scholar identify important questions in the field?
Adequate Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the scholar show an understanding of existing scholarship in the field? • Does the scholar bring the necessary skills to his or her work? • Does the scholar bring together the resources necessary to move the project forward?
Appropriate Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the scholar use methods appropriate to the goals? • Does the scholar apply effectively the methods selected? • Does the scholar modify procedures in response to changing circumstances.
Significant Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the scholar achieve the goals? • Does the scholar's work add consequentially to the field? • Does the scholar's work open additional areas for further exploration?
Effective Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the scholar use a suitable style and effective organization to present his or her work? • Does the scholar use appropriate forums for communicating work to its intended audiences? • Does the scholar present his or her message with clarity and integrity?
Reflective Critique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the scholar critically evaluate his or her own work? • Does the scholar bring an appropriate breadth of evidence to his or her critique? • Does the scholar use evaluation to improve the quality of future work?

Glassick also added that a scholar should have the personal qualities of integrity, perseverance, and courage. Integrity means that the scholar's audience must trust his or her work. Perseverance means that a scholar must devote his or her career to the pursuit of scholarship because a university cannot waste valuable appointments on people who abandon scholarship once they are tenured. Courage means that a scholar, at times, risks disapproval in the name of candor; takes

on difficult or unpopular work; transcends traditional ideas, rules, and patterns; and imagines new questions and problems. (Glassick 1997).

Developing, adopting, and implementing standards for assessing the quality of scholarship, regardless of the form it takes, is critical if the new paradigm is to succeed at a university. Glassick provides a framework within which to assess all forms of scholarship, and the ultimate success of the new paradigm lies with the recognition that all forms of scholarship can be held to the same standards of quality. When this basic tenet is accepted into the university culture, teaching and extension activities will enjoy the recognition and respect they deserve.

Endnotes:

(1) Historically, teaching was the central function of the faculty. After the Civil War, higher education's mission of teaching was joined by a mission of service beyond the campus, and extension and outreach activities were held in high esteem. Research did not begin to dominate academic life until after WW II. (Glassick, 1997) [\[Return to text.\]](#)

(2) In *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Ernest L. Boyer defined the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching. (Boyer, 1990). The **scholarship of discovery** contributes to the advancement of knowledge and comes closest to what is meant by "research." The **scholarship of integration** gives meaning to isolated facts, putting them into perspective. The **scholarship of application** responsibly applies knowledge to problem solving. The **scholarship of teaching** "stimulates active, not passive, learning and encourages students to be critical, creative thinkers, with the capacity to go on learning after their college days are over." Extension activities involve all four forms of scholarship with primary emphasis on the scholarship of application.

Another term, sometimes used interchangeably with the scholarship of application, is the **scholarship of engagement** which encompasses the application and dissemination of knowledge through outreach, community service, service learning, and professional services. The National Review Board for the Scholarship of Engagement was created to review and evaluate the scholarship of engagement of faculty who are preparing for annual review, promotion, and tenure. Contacts for the National Review Board for the Scholarship of Engagement are:

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The opinions expressed in this editorial are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions of *FFCI*, its Editorial Board members, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, or North Carolina State University.

Cite this article:

Schwab, Carol. "Editor's Corner: Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure for Extension and Teaching Faculty -- Are We Close to Getting it Right?." *The Forum for Family and Consumer Issues* 5.1 (2000): 13 pars. 31 March 2000.