

Editor's Corner: Impact Beyond the Profession

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Universities across the country are starting to recognize that traditional research is not the only legitimate form of scholarship. The scholarship of teaching and learning and the scholarship of extension and engagement are gaining recognition, and universities are working to define what the terms mean within the context of their missions. More than 10 years ago, Ernest Boyer discussed the concept of "scholarship and community," and how the work of faculty must relate to the world beyond the campus (Boyer 1990).

When I founded *The Forum for Family and Consumer Issues* 7 years ago, I had never heard of Ernest Boyer or the phrase "scholarship of extension and engagement." However, I fully embraced Cooperative Extension Service's mission of "helping people put knowledge to work," and upon this premise, *The Forum* was built. My goal was to provide publishing opportunities for extension faculty by creating a refereed e-journal that addressed the concerns and needs of individuals, families, and communities. I wanted to produce an academic e-journal that had a direct impact on people's lives. A review of the past 7 years shows a fair measure of success with many examples of *The Forum's* impact.

One of the more recent examples of impact resulted from my [editorial](#) about a proposed on-line, state-sponsored, central registry for advance directives ([living will](#) and [health care power of attorney](#)). I asked our readers what they thought about the proposed registry and included a survey so they could voice their opinions. The [results of the survey](#) showed that unless key points to the proposed legislation were reconsidered, the public was unlikely to use it, making it a black hole for tax dollars. I sent the results of the survey to the Legislative Study Commission. They invited me to present the survey results at their next hearing and to discuss what the results might mean to the success of the registry. They listened, and they drafted the legislation accordingly.

The legislation was passed by the North Carolina General Assembly last October and became law on January 1, 2002. *The Forum* survey showed that almost no one was willing to pay more than \$10 to register their documents, and the legislation sets the registration fee at \$10. *The*

Forum survey showed that consumers needed to be assured of confidentiality and security for their documents, and the legislation gives the consumer exclusive control over who has access to his or her documents (as opposed to giving access to all medical providers as the committee originally proposed). *The Forum* survey showed that the registry's success depends upon educating the general public about the existence and benefits of the registry, and the legislation provides for public awareness education.

To our readers who took the time to complete the survey, I thank you. Your opinions counted and helped shape North Carolina legislation so that it meets the needs of consumers. For a critical analysis of the legislation, see the [Perspectives](#) column in this issue of *The Forum*.

What other impacts has *The Forum* had? Some examples of impacts that have come to my attention over the years include

- A mother wanted more information about [The Baby Think It Over Program](#)TM to help her teenaged pregnant daughter decide whether to keep the baby or give him up for adoption.
- A family who was dealing with guardianship for a family member found much needed guidance from "[Assisting the guardian of an incompetent adult.](#)" A family member told *The Forum* editor that the article had saved her family a great deal of stress from uncertainty and confusion.
- A financial adviser contacted *The Forum* editor for permission to use the article "[Estimating retirement savings: are ballpark estimate type worksheets accurate enough to help consumers?](#)" to educate his clientele.
- The article, "[Ethical will: passing treasures of the heart,](#)" was reprinted in a publication of a state bar association. Several lawyers told *The Forum* editor that they now incorporate information about ethical wills in their consultations with estate planning clients.
- A doctoral student in gerontological nursing wrote the author to say that she was using the article, "[Successful aging: what does the 'good life' look like?](#)" in developing the conceptual framework for her planned research study.
- A parent educator wrote *The Forum* editor requesting more information on the article, "[Family and Consumer Sciences and schools -- a perfect partnership for parent education.](#)" She was interested in assessing whether it was appropriate for use in the county school system. The article was forwarded to all school principals in the county.

- A nursing home administrator in Virginia used "[Quality of life in long-term care settings: a look at some trends in humanizing nursing homes](#)" to assist in the process of deciding whether to Edenize their long-term care facility.

The Forum knows no geographical boundaries. It can bring an educational program originating in New Jersey to a rural county in North Carolina. An article written by a Kentucky Extension specialist can change the way lawyers in another state advise their clients. *The Forum* can help a nursing home in Virginia evaluate a proposed change in the way it cares for its patients. A survey taken of readers' opinions can help shape state legislation. True to its mission, *The Forum* publishes articles that make a difference -- that have "[impact beyond the profession.](#)"

References

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