

Colloquium Papers and Authors

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The Professional Career—Issues and Concerns: Introduction to the Colloquium

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Faculty are a key resource of academic departments, and departmental productivity is related to faculty performance. If a department is to fulfill its mission, it is important that faculty have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and work toward achieving not only their personal goals, but also those of the department. This is especially important since many significant changes have occurred in recent years. There has been a reduction in support for higher education, and many academic departments have been downsized or merged with others. Based on current state and federal budgets, it appears unlikely that funding for higher education will show any appreciable increase in the immediate future. Besides issues of fiscal support, there will be greater accountability for the funding that is provided to higher education. In recent years, many individuals have questioned the relevance of education not only at land-grant universities (Meyer, 1993) but at institutions of higher education in general (Myers, 1993). Some of this criticism has been severe (Anderson, 1992). In addition to the pressures associated with obtaining research grants, publishing research findings, enhancing teaching effectiveness, and obtaining tenure, faculty stress has been increased by economic and personnel constraints at most institutions. When one considers changes in society and the environment, including emerging information technologies, it is obvious that higher education is facing a period of difficult challenges as well as tremendous opportunities. If institutions and departments are to successfully meet these challenges and position themselves to prosper in this new environment where they are expected to do more with less, they will have to carefully evaluate their mission and goals. A major factor in achieving success will be to maintain faculty productivity throughout their careers. Therefore it is important

to provide an academic environment that encourages faculty to maximize their personal and professional development.

This colloquium covers four major topics that span the entire spectrum of a faculty member's career, from the initial hiring through retirement. Conrad Weiser sets the stage with his review on what constitutes scholarship, a term that has been generally poorly defined. He describes the results of the deliberations at Oregon State Univ. that should be of interest to faculty and administrators at other institutions. Delineating faculty scholarship and productivity expectations is an essential prerequisite for instituting a meaningful recognition and reward structure. In a discussion of faculty reward systems, Diamond and Adams (1993) stated "Unfortunately, the reality of conflicting demands and priorities has been reduced by some to a tired debate, pitting teaching as an academic pursuit against scholarly research endeavors... In order to properly recognize and reward faculty work, we must reconsider the role of the professoriate and develop promotion, tenure, and merit reward systems that are appropriate for individual faculty members and consonant with the priorities of the institution and the values of the individual discipline." The definition of scholarship embraced by Oregon State Univ. should serve as useful model for other land-grant institutions.

In his essay on the needs and professional development of junior faculty members, Dee Fink provides information that is not only valuable to faculty members who are beginning their academic careers but should also be useful to department heads and other administrators working with these individuals. The willingness of departments to invest time and effort in assisting new faculty to get established will pay dividends in the long run.

Daniel Wheeler discusses the changes in vitality and productivity that occur with midcareer and senior faculty. He provides useful information on faculty development and the role that administrators can play in assisting faculty to maintain and enhance their productivity.

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Finally, Bruno Moser has written an excellent essay on the subject of retirement, a difficult transition for many faculty, especially regarding nonfinancial concerns. He has dealt with a number of issues ranging from retirement planning, alternatives, incentives, and the impact that retirements can have on a department. Faculty approaching this milestone still have much to offer, and, although their roles and contributions may change, they must remain productive department members.

This colloquium focuses on the issues and concerns faculty have during their professional career. These challenges and concerns change during the span of an individual's academic tenure. The presenters

have provided information that can assist individuals and departments to remain productive and accomplish their goals.

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Faculty Scholarship and Productivity Expectations— An Administrator's Perspective

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The value system of a university is most clearly described by its promotion and tenure policies, and by the criteria it uses to evaluate faculty members' performance. In American universities, all professors are expected to engage in scholarship, and each professor is also expected to perform other job responsibilities assigned to his or her position. These assigned responsibilities typically include specific teaching, research, extension, advising, or administrative assignments.

The balance of emphasis between scholarship and other assigned duties varies from one faculty position to another—ranging from faculty with few assignments beyond engaging in scholarship, to faculty with extensive responsibilities for other assigned duties who devote a small but significant effort to scholarly achievement.

All faculty members are also encouraged to perform service relevant to their assignment and of value to their institution or profession, but tenure and promotion decisions are typically based on evidence of significant scholarly contributions and effective performance of assigned duties—not on outstanding service. Scholarship and performance of assigned duties are both valued highly at most universities, and faculty members are denied tenure if performance is inadequate in either area. Excellence, not adequacy, is the performance goal for university faculties.

Evaluating a faculty member's scholarly contributions and assessing how well he or she has performed the specific duties assigned to the position seems appropriate and fairly straightforward. Unfortunately, it is often neither simple nor straightforward, in part because:

- Scholarship is undefined and poorly understood at most universities. Scholarship is often oversimplistically thought to be synonymous with research.
- A faculty member's performance is sometimes evaluated by peers without reference to the position description—as if all faculty positions were the same.
- Emphasis on individual achievement in faculty performance is interpreted by some peer evaluators to imply that faculty contributions to team efforts are not valuable and important—as if it were not possible to value both individual achievement and collaborative effort.
- It is easier to document and evaluate form and activities, rather than substance or consequences, in describing and assessing faculty contributions.

There are discussions underway at many American universities of ways to improve faculty evaluations and the processes of promotion

and tenure. These discussions are prompted in part by the limitations mentioned above, but also by growing public dissatisfaction and distrust of universities' values, which are perceived to be:

- primarily focused on research and research funding, rather than on undergraduate education;
- introspective, with communications of faculty accomplishments directed predominantly at specialized peer audiences; and
- overspecialized, discipline focused, and not particularly relevant or responsive to real problems, which tend to be complex.

Publication of *Scholarship Reconsidered—Priorities of the Professoriate* (Boyer, 1990) stimulated much of the discussion of scholarship currently taking place within universities and professional societies. In this book, and in frequent public talks, Dr. Boyer makes an eloquent case for the importance of valuing teaching more highly in assessing faculty performance. He poses the question "Is it possible to define the work of faculty in ways that reflect more realistically the full range of academic and civic mandates?" and answers it by proposing "that the work of the professoriate might be thought of as having four separate, yet overlapping, functions. These are: the scholarship of *discovery*; the scholarship of *integration*; the scholarship of *application*; and the scholarship of *teaching*."

At Oregon State Univ. (OSU), Dr. Boyer's book *Scholarship Reconsidered* provided the starting point for discussion by a group composed of faculty members in the College of Agricultural Sciences whose primary assignments were in diverse areas, including teaching, research, extension, and international programs. The group's objectives were to develop a collective understanding of what scholarship is, and to describe the nature of scholarship across the university in concise terms that would be understood by faculty in all disciplines and by nonacademics as well.

In the course of a year, this faculty group defined scholarship simply: scholarship creates something new that is validated and communicated. They described five forms of scholarship that were similar to the four proposed by Boyer, except that *creative artistry* was added as a fifth form of scholarship, and learning was added to propose the scholarship of *teaching and learning*. This definition and these concepts were subsequently improved, as described later.

This simple definition and description of scholarship provided the basis for widespread faculty discussion, especially within the College of Agricultural Sciences at OSU. These discussions resulted in five iterations of review and revision, and evolved over a 2-year period into:

- adoption of revised promotion and tenure guidelines for the College, based on the definition and description of *scholarship*;
- incorporation of a *position description* for each faculty member into annual evaluations and into the promotion and tenure process;
- addition of a category on *results of team effort* into the format for faculty documentation of their achievements; and

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