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 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 Professorate (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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2 Horticulture Professor Emeritus and Dean Emeritus, College of Agricultural Sciences.
encouragement of departments to assign two peer counselors to new faculty members to assist them in their early career development.

Deans of other colleges at the university participated in describing and defining scholarship, and recommended its consideration by the entire university. Faculty understanding and acceptance of this concept of scholarship was remarkably widespread and enthusiastic. Essentially, all faculty members who considered the matter, and all college deans, were comfortable with the simple definition of scholarship proposed, and with the idea that discovery, application, integration, and creative artistry are fundamental forms of scholarship. One point that troubled a substantial number of faculty was inclusion of teaching as a form of scholarship. Interestingly, faculty members who expressed the greatest reservations about teaching as a form of scholarship included many effective teachers in agriculture with large teaching assignments, faculty members in education departments, and faculty members in departments with large undergraduate teaching loads, such as English and chemistry. Subsequent university-wide adoption of an improved definition and description of scholarship resolved these reservations by considering teaching, research, and extension as vital university activities, not as forms of scholarship.

Another perception that troubled some faculty members (but not the distinguished researchers on campus) was the notion that defining and describing forms of scholarship as discovery, development, integration, and artistry somehow lowered standards or diminished the importance and value placed on research by the university. Most faculty members realized that standards of performance were probably being raised rather than lowered, and that research continues to be highly valued. In a similar vein, one faculty senator expressed concern that recognizing faculty contributions to collaborative team efforts somehow diminished the importance and value placed on individual achievements by the university. Both examples reflect zero-sum game thinking that fortunately was rare among members of the faculty.

The definition and policies adopted by the College of Agricultural Sciences were subsequently studied, refined, and endorsed by an Extended Education Transition Committee that was appointed and chaired by the Provost to advise the President on implementation of a major new initiative that established extended education as the university’s third mission. This initiative required each college and department to develop an extended education plan for delivering educational programs beyond the campus. Extension faculty (agents and specialists) are now assigned to, evaluated by, and tenured in colleges and departments—rather than in Cooperative Extension, as was the case previously.

The Provost appointed a Faculty Senate Committee to consider recommendations and propose revisions in the OSU promotion and tenure guidelines.

This highly diverse cross-disciplinary faculty senate committee devoted a year to intensive weekly deliberations to revise promotion and tenure guidelines. The new guidelines were presented to and approved by the Faculty Senate in May 1995, and subsequently adopted in June by the university president. The new guidelines draw substantially from concepts developed initially by the College of Agricultural Sciences and the Extended Education Transition Committee, but the Faculty Senate Committee improved on several points, including the definition of scholarship, as described below.

OSU’s new promotion and tenure guidelines define scholarship more broadly, value team efforts, and use position descriptions as a basis for evaluating faculty performance. The guidelines have eliminated any need for several separate supplemental promotion and tenure guidelines previously used to assess faculty performance in library and information services, extension, international development, veterinary medicine, and several other specialized areas. The new guidelines are helping to alleviate the concerns of extension agent faculty members who wondered how well their work would be understood and valued by teaching and research colleagues in campus departments.

Key elements of the newly adopted OSU promotion and tenure guidelines include the following:

- Four forms of scholarship are described: discovery of new knowledge; development of new technologies, materials, and uses; integration of knowledge leading to new understanding; and artistry that creates new insights and interpretations.
- Recognizes that teaching, research, and extension are vital university activities—that are not scholarship in themselves—but that can each involve creative, communicated, peer-validated scholarship in any of its several forms (discovery, development, integration, artistry).
- Recognizes that peer validation and communication can occur in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, peer refereed publications. Emphasizes documenting whether, how, and the significance of publics beyond the University, or for the discipline itself.
- Identifies performance of assigned duties and scholarly achievement as the two primary areas for evaluating faculty performance. Service is considered to be a less important area of performance evaluation.
- Requires that a position description identifying assigned duties, relevant areas of scholarship, and the relative balance of effort in these two areas provide the basis for evaluating a faculty member’s performance. States that “the responsibilities of individual faculty vary and will be specified in position descriptions developed at the time of initial appointment and revised periodically as necessary. Faculty with assignments in research, extension, international development, information services, student services, diagnostic and analytical services, and administration will be evaluated by the standards appropriate to the field.”
- Recognizes that some faculty positions are devoted primarily to conducting scholarly work, with few additional assigned responsibilities, and that other faculty positions have extensive assigned duties (in areas such as teaching, advising, extension, or administration) and a small but significant expectation of scholarly achievement.
- Affirms that scholarly achievement is expected of all professorial rank faculty members, regardless of their assigned duties (including administrators such as the university president, provost, deans, and department heads). Administrators’ scholarship can be in a subject matter discipline, or in creative intellectual work developing better management methods (that are validated by peers and communicated) in their area of administrative responsibility.
- Recognizes that teachers and extension educators also have the option of focusing their scholarship either in a subject matter discipline or in developing, providing for peer validation, and communicating improved education materials, methods, and programs.
- Recognizes that international disciplinary peers are the primary audience for most types of research scholarship, but that the primary audiences may be regionalized or localized for some of the scholarship in teaching, extension, and field research that is locally adapted. The promotion and tenure guideline language was changed to reflect this reality from “professors must achieve a national or international reputation for their scholarship” to “professors must achieve distinction in scholarship as evident in the candidate’s wide recognition and significant contributions to the field or profession.”
- States that the University values and encourages collaborative work, and asks faculty members to report specifically the results of their team efforts in documenting their contributions.
- Recommends that documentation of achievements focus (whenever possible) on what was accomplished rather than how it was accomplished; on substance rather than form; on accomplishments rather than activities. In short, documentation should describe what has changed or improved as a result of a faculty member’s efforts.

**SUMMARY**

The definition of scholarship developed and adopted by OSU differs from that proposed by Ernest Boyer. Specifically, Dr. Boyer...