
The Role of Departments in Promoting Scholarship

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Defining Scholarship

- Oregon State University defined scholarship as “creative work that is validated by peers and communicated.”
 - Scholarship is academe’s version of quality control.
 - This broad definition of scholarship allows a broad scope of faculty contributions to be recognized and their quality assessed.
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The Challenge

- Mostly this broad definition of scholarship has not been adopted and accepted . . .
- because it has not been operationalized at the department level where faculty are evaluated, promoted, and tenured.
- What is the role of departments in promoting the acceptance of a broader definition of scholarship?
... assuming a multi-mission department.

Why is Boyer's View of Scholarship not Accepted?

- We have not established the processes for facilitating peer review/validation.
- Faculty being evaluated have not invested the time to document the acceptance of their peers?
- Faculty evaluators and department heads have not been willing to accept alternative forms of scholarship.

Why is Boyer's View of Scholarship not Accepted?

- Presidents and deans can write new policies and procedures, but the P&T vote is still anonymous.
 - Regardless of what it says in the policy book, the P&T committee members will vote their own definitions of scholarship.
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What if we expanded the forms of scholarship used to assess faculty?

- Faculty could be evaluated based on what they were hired to do.
 - We could take advantage of Adam Smith's division of labor.
 - We could more fully realize the synergy of the research, teaching, and extension missions.
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Are We Making Progress?

- Research - easy to count articles, but we are not measuring impact. Grade = B
 - Teaching - student evaluations are not adequate, but peer evaluation of teaching is increasing. Grade = C
 - Extension - research and teaching faculty colleagues don't understand it, or how to evaluate it. Grade = D
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Changing Scholarship

- Fundamental change is needed at the department level.
 - How do we effect that change?
 - Changing the perceptions and practice of scholarship at the department will require a change in the culture.
 - We must reassess what's important, what we value, what we reward, and how we rank programs.
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Counter-productive attitudes

- Extension faculty with “inferiority complexes,” who defer to other faculty to tell them what’s important when it comes to assessing scholarship.
 - Extension faculty who take an arrogant approach. “My work is so important that it’s obvious.” “If I have to explain it, you won’t understand it.”
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Counter-productive Attitudes

- Research faculty who believe that they can’t evaluate extension work. They would rather abstain than learn how to evaluate extension contributions.
 - Senior faculty who are unwilling to mentor young extension faculty in developing the documentation needed to demonstrate the scholarship inherent in their work.
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The Devil in the Details

- Regardless of what you call it (scholarship of application, extension, engagement, etc.) . . .
 - or how you rationalize it (why scholarship is important) . . .
 - you have to make it operational.
 - How do you measure and document it?
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The Questions to Answer . . .

- What constitutes creative intellectual work?
- Who are considered peers?
- What are legitimate forms of validation?
- What constitutes an appropriate level of rigor during the validation process?
- How do we define "communication?"

From Dan McGrath, "The Scholarship of Application."

Acceptance of Broader Forms of Scholarship

When all is said and done,
will more be said than done?
