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**Reconceptualizing the Teacher-Scholar Model in University-Level Communication
Education**

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Abstract

University-level conceptualizations of the teacher-scholar model usually obligate faculty members to engage in both teaching and research, yet studies demonstrate that few faculty members are concomitantly productive in both areas (Fairweather, 2002). Marsh and Hattie (2002) suggest that teaching and research may be separate constructs, explaining why only about 25% of faculty achieve the required balance. Implementation of this traditional teacher-scholar model is further complicated by various difficulties in assessing teaching competence, resulting in disproportionate reliance on research and publication as the predominant criterion in making promotion and tenure decisions. In this report, modifications to the traditional teacher-scholar model are proposed based on the work of Boyer (1990). A more compliant model is advanced that will allow faculty to teach and conduct research at a variable ratio, based on individual skills, preferences, and the needs of the supporting program. Individuals may also be allowed shift their focus, in varying degrees, at different stages in their career development.

Reconceptualizing the Teacher-Scholar Model in University-Level Communication Education

The concept that teaching and research are both critical activities in higher education dates back nearly 200 years to a time of reform for Prussian Universities (Brown, 2002). In the United States, the Morrill Act of 1862 established land grant colleges so that higher education could be made more accessible to the American public. It was not until after World War II that American universities sharpened their focus on research in response to changes in federal funding and a revised national agenda (Boyer, 1990; Fairweather, 1996; United States Government, n.d.). Today, many academic administrators and some faculty members believe that teaching and research are mutually reinforcing and can be simultaneously pursued by faculty members. The relative value that an institution places on each activity is ultimately certified by its promotion and tenure decisions. The notion that both research and teaching can be managed together implies that each faculty member is expected to be “the complete faculty member--simultaneously productive in both research and teaching” (Fairweather, 2002). Thus, the teacher-scholar model provides a conceptual and operational definition of the high goal for American university faculty (Crimmel, 1984; Fairweather, 2002).

To examine the feasibility of the teacher-scholar concept, Fairweather (2002) examined and analyzed the ability of faculty to be productive in both teaching and research, engaging in both activities separately and simultaneously. In his study, Fairweather defined a “highly productive researcher” as one whose refereed publications during the past two years were higher than the median number for the appropriate discipline and institution type, or who met a combination of criteria including publications, conference presentations and generation of research dollars. “Highly productive teachers” had to be above the median in student classroom contact or an alternative combination of student classroom contact, overseeing independent studies, or participation on thesis and dissertation committees. Results indicated that about 50% of faculty were highly productive teachers while 39-50% of individuals were highly productive researchers, depending on institution size. Only about 22% of faculty members were able to achieve high productivity in both research and teaching at the same time, regardless of institution size.

This finding undermines the common doctrine that faculty can and should excel at both teaching and research at the same time. Thus, the “complete faculty member” appears to be a rather rare individual (Fairweather, 2002, Tighe, 2003). In fact, Lance, Buckley, and Deetz (1984) reported that only 8 of 260 Communication faculty respondents spent as much as half their time in research activities. The discrepancy between the theoretical teacher-scholar model and operational reality can be explained, in part, by a careful examination of contemporary views of teaching and research.

Teaching and Research as Constructs

Marsh and Hattie (2002) note that while teaching and research are the major endeavors of academics today, arguments can be made that “teaching and research activities should be complementary, conflicting, or unrelated to each other” (p. 603). The complementary nature of teaching and research is supported by the argument that researchers should be on the leading edge of their disciplines, that research provides more current information than textbooks, and that researchers provide a sense of excitement by infusing teachings with fresh discoveries. These students then develop critical skills to understand complex research findings rather than passively accepting established facts (Marsh & Hattie, 2002).

Teaching enhances research because gaps in knowledge become evident and the exchange with students helps a scholar refine the research focus (Marsh & Hattie, 2002). Tighe (2003) further supports this notion when he states, "Joining the creation of knowledge and the teaching of knowledge is held to vitalize and enrich both functions" (p. 93). Marsh (1987) warns, however, of the danger that research and teaching may conflict because of time demands created by opposing motivation and reward structures. This notion is further supported by a 1996 meta-analysis and a 2002 study by Marsh and Hattie revealing that research productivity and teaching effectiveness are largely uncorrelated and appear to be independent constructs. In roughly equal numbers, academics were found to be (a) competent researchers and teachers, (b) competent teachers and poor researchers, (c) competent researchers and poor teachers and (d) poor at both activities. Marsh and Hattie (2002) suggest that personnel decisions should be made based on separate and distinct measures of teaching and research capability because competence in one does not guarantee competence in the other. Therefore, if teaching effectiveness is to be bolstered, academics should be selected, retained, and promoted on the basis of teaching ability. If research is the emphasis, then selection, retention, and promotion criteria should be established accordingly (Marsh & Hattie, 2002).

The Balancing Act of Research and Teaching

The amount of time that faculty members spend on teaching and research varies depending on the institution and nature of the individual department within an institution. Fairweather and Beach (2002) evaluated the variation in faculty work at three research universities: The Ohio State University, The University of Tennessee-Knoxville, and The University of Texas-Austin. This study revealed a wide variation in emphasis that universities place on teaching, research and service as well as a substantial amount of within-institution variation among the various departments. For example, departments that are able to get outside funding can perform in a more autonomous fashion, while departments that perform solely on the basis of internal funding suffer more from institutional budget aberrations, a phenomenon that creates even greater variability among departments.

Disparity between departments was noted when comparing The University of Tennessee and The University of Texas. Fairweather and Beach (2002) found that the bifurcation of departments, or the splitting of responsibilities for teaching and research, created disparate messages about the value of undergraduate teaching. Business faculty at The University of Tennessee believed that non-productive researchers were redirected to teaching to "ensure equity in overall productivity" among faculty (p. 112). At The Ohio State University, the Physics faculty teaching undergraduate students were perceived as bearing the teaching load in order to enable their colleagues to engage in research. In contrast, the business faculty at The Ohio State University thought that faculty members should be allowed to function according to their individual strengths, including teaching. Despite the variation in workload, faculty rewards were seen as *a function of research performance* rather than teaching or service. Thus, policies intended to improve the quality of undergraduate teaching did not produce a commensurate increase in faculty rewards.

How Should Faculty Be Evaluated and Promoted?

McLean (2001) notes that, while most university mission statements boast about the quality of teaching, these same institutions lack clear criteria for recognizing teaching excellence. In general, the notion that promotion-in-rank is based on teaching ability also lacks support. Moreover, new faculty are typically hired because of their publication record rather than their teaching effectiveness (McLean, 2001; Gray, 1999).

Though often a subject of considerable debate, student evaluations have been used to measure teaching effectiveness for over 70 years (Cooper, Stewart, & Gudykunst, 1982; Berk, 1979). Students' assessment of a teacher as an individual often impacts the overall course evaluation, since students find it difficult to separate the two concepts (Clevenger & Todd-Mancillas, 1981). Because of the pervasive nature of these evaluations and the potential impact on a professional career, communication scholars have studied extensively the factors that contribute to positive teacher evaluations. Cooper, Stewart and Gudykunst (1982) found that teachers who graded accurately tended to be favorably rated by the students, even if the grade was low, and that maintaining a positive relationship with the student was a key factor in receiving a favorable evaluation. Beatty and Zahn (1990) also found that positive teacher evaluations were not based on easy grading policies. As to the validity of these evaluations, researchers (Beatty & Zahn, 1990; Beatty & Behnke, 1980) confirmed that students are indeed able to differentiate between the sociability and the competence of a teacher. Beatty and Zahn (1990) revealed that communication instructors tend to be rated more favorably than instructors in other departments, and that "experts in communication *should* be expected to be better teachers than those who are not experts" (p. 281).

McCroskey and colleagues have conducted studies on the impact of teacher immediacy on student ratings (McCroskey, Richmond, Sallinen, Fayer, & Barraclough, 1995; Rocca & McCroskey, 1999; Teven & McCroskey, 1996). In particular, McCroskey, Richmond, Sallinen, Fayer, and Barraclough studied the effect of teacher immediacy on student learning and confirmed that nonverbal immediacy had a similar positive effect on teacher evaluations. This study helped clarify the findings of Beatty and Zahn, lending support for the idea that if communication teachers utilize what they know about immediacy and good delivery, their teaching is superior to that of their colleagues, and this superiority is reflected in higher student ratings. Thus, despite the ongoing debate over the validity of student assessments of teaching quality, the above research suggests that these evaluations do not appear to be detrimental to communication teachers.

Emmert and Rollman (1997) conducted a survey of tenure and promotion standards in the Communication field and generated several important findings. In terms of promotion expectations, the level of scholarship required from faculty members is related to the highest degree students can earn in the program. For example, to attain the rank of Professor in a doctoral program, faculty members are expected to publish 1.03 more articles per year than faculty in a bachelor's program. This means that individuals who wish to publish less should not seek positions in doctoral programs. However, the study did confirm that scholarship is expected from all faculty at the rank of Assistant Professor and above. This scholarship may take the form of convention papers, journal articles and books. About 25 scholarly contributions are expected for the rank of Professor in a terminal bachelor's program. To be promoted to Professor in a doctoral program, about 43 scholarly contributions are required. A third finding of this study is that Communication departments do not adequately adjust the scholarship and service requirements to accommodate teaching loads. The conflict between service and teaching/research is more pronounced in bachelor's programs than programs granting advance degrees. Finally, the relatively large standard deviations for teaching assignments and expectations in the bachelor and master's programs indicate a wide variety of teaching requirements across these programs.

Hickson and his colleagues have conducted several studies of research productivity among communication scholars. For example, Hickson, Stacks, and Amsbary (1989) reported that 64

percent of communication scholars had published only one article. A subsequent study revealed similar results, with greater than 63% of scholars having published only one article (Hickson, Stacks, and Amsbary, 1993). It is unclear whether these publications were based solely on dissertations, and there is debate about whether the mode is zero or one (Hickson, Stacks, & Bodon, 1999), but the data clearly indicate that *most academics publish very little*. In their analysis of research productivity during the period 1996-2001, Hickson, Turner and Bodon (2004) reported that the top five percent (5%) of scholars published an average of one article per year, and nine articles over the 5-year period elevated a scholar to the top one percent (1%).

According to Becker et al. (2001), tenure requirements vary considerably depending on the institution and the department. The relative weights of research, teaching and service (as well as what constitutes effective performance in each area) differ substantially. Although criteria for promotion and tenure must be clearly communicated to candidates, these scholars caution against expressing these criteria too precisely or in strictly quantitative terms (Becker et al., 2001).

The issue of tenure in relation to the teacher-scholar model is found throughout the literature (England, 1996; Ovington, Diamantes, Roby, and Ryan, 2002). Given various time restraints and the fact that one person is not equally good at everything, there is little wonder that many faculty struggle in their efforts to achieve tenure. Individuals who are not tenured often leave the profession. Paradoxically, Ovington et al. (2002) state, "Administrators who have used the tenure system to encourage the race for publication and institutional recognition later complain that faculty are disinterested in teaching" (p. 4). The institution typically does not quantify what it means to "publish enough," thus, by its very nature, the criterion remains arbitrary.

In pondering why research is used as the primary criterion for making tenure decisions, Park (1996) presents several possible explanations. For example, Park ventured that administrators may presume that all faculty will teach and participate in committee work, so it is primarily their research record that differentiates them from others. Alternatively, it is widely believed that research productivity is the only way faculty can be objectively evaluated, as it is difficult to define and measure the quality of teaching and service performance. A chief concern in this analysis is the tendency to emphasize "quantity over quality," leading many faculty to focus on research that can be completed, submitted, and published on an appropriate timeline rather than focusing on the refinement of their ideas while taking a long-term approach to carrying out their research programs.

Leslie (2002) investigated attitudes about the relative weight of teaching and research in tenure and promotion decisions. Considerable variation was present in different institutions and departments. For example, community college faculty were likely to view teaching as the primary factor in promotion, while faculty at research universities were least likely to hold that view. Among disciplines, engineering and social sciences faculty valued research as a promotion criterion more highly than business and education professors. Faculty acknowledge the value of teaching and its associated intrinsic rewards. However, in all but research universities, faculty seem to prefer teaching over conducting research, even if the rewards are somewhat less. This value system appears to apply across disciplines. Even in most research institutions, teaching is considered important. Despite that pervasive view, the rewards of promotion and tenure are clearly linked to research productivity. According to Leslie (2002), this discrepancy leads to certain policy and practice challenges and suggests that a "one size fits all" compensation approach is not suitable for our diverse post-secondary educational system.

Deficiencies in the Current Model

There are several reasons why the current teacher-scholar model is inadequate. As mentioned earlier, few individuals have the abilities and talents that this model requires. Many institutions are either unclear about their missions or are insensitive to the realities that variously talented teacher-scholars face. Research has indicated that many full-time faculty report working at least 55 hours per week and, even at research-oriented institutions, the majority still do not complete their research program goals (Ovington et al., 2002). Many responsibilities fall under “other duties as assigned,” including time dedicated to advising, committees, and other service-related duties. While such tasks are commonly deemed essential, faculty generally are not clearly recognized or compensated for these activities.

Few universities budget adequately to meet the extensive requirements of the teacher-scholar model dictated by their mission (England, 1996). Moreover, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) is monitoring the increased reliance on adjunct faculty to teach undergraduate courses. Such faculty certainly do not enjoy the same status in the academic community as their tenured colleagues, and these “inequities can weaken the whole profession and diminish its capacity to serve the public good” (AAUP, 2003, p. 6).

Even though they exhibit excellent teaching skills, faculty who do not publish as often as expected are frequently deemed inferior to their more research productive counterparts. Campbell (1998) observes that many PhD students are chastised for displaying an interest in teaching over research. This caste-system mentality among colleagues runs counter to the more the more effective departmental view in which individuals contribute to the overall departmental mission according to their individual skills and abilities. According to Goodlad (1993), a clear sense of equality among colleagues is crucial to maintaining a collegial and cooperative atmosphere. Respect for varying levels of education and time demands for research and teaching should be evaluated on an individual basis (Goodlad, 1993). Friedrich and Michalek (1983) observe that their students sometimes perceive more active researchers as less knowledgeable. From this perspective, total immersion in a narrow research area can compromise the ability to support the general knowledge that many students appreciate in their professors.

A More Progressive Teacher-Scholar Model

In *Scholarship Revisited*, Boyer (1990) addresses some of the deficiencies of the current teacher-scholar model. While emphasizing that “the richness of faculty talent should be celebrated, not restricted” (p. 27), Boyer reiterates that certain aspects of scholarship should be required of all faculty. These *mandatory* requirements include the ability to do original research, to remain abreast of developments in the field, to maintain high integrity, and to demonstrate a high level of performance in each of these endeavors. He acknowledges that research and publication are often used as the primary performance measures, even though 60% of faculty believe that teaching effectiveness should be the primary factor for academic advancement. Rather than relying solely on student evaluations of teaching, Boyer recommends a three-way approach including self, peer, and student assessments.

Boyer proposes the development of “*creativity contracts*--an arrangement by which faculty members define their professional goals for a three- to five-year period” (p.48). Such contracts provide flexibility for faculty to shift emphasis from one activity to another, and contracts are then renegotiated. As an example, the creativity contracts might allow a scholar to focus on research early in her/his career, work on service projects during the next stage, and then concentrate on teaching innovations later on. Diversity and individuality are the key elements of these contracts, along with a focus on personal and professional growth over many years.

Emphasis for some faculty can be a bit heavier on research while others focus somewhat more on teaching. The associated evaluation of faculty must then be consistent with these individualized contracts.

Based on the foregoing, a variation on the traditional Teacher-Scholar Model is herein proposed called the Teacher-Scholar Continuum (TSC). As the name implies, the TSC would allow communication scholars to negotiate contracts that specify varying levels of research and teaching, depending on personal talents, capabilities, and interests. Universities could recruit faculty for their relative skills in teaching and research based on the current overall needs of a department, and performance criteria would be tailored and specified in each individual contract. Each faculty member is required to engage in both teaching and research; however, the proportions could vary over time, a feature that is consistent with Boyer's (1990) concept. Performance evaluation would be adjusted to suit the faculty member's contract. In the Communication field, Hickson et al. (2004) documented the publication rates of top communication professors. Such normative data could be used to establish individual and departmental publication goals and requirements. Teaching would then be evaluated based on self, peer, and student ratings, as advanced by Boyer (1990). Finally, faculty performance contracts would be reevaluated regularly, based on past performance, in order to adjust the teaching-research ratio to meet a faculty member's current focus and the department's established needs.

Conclusion

Researchers and university professionals commonly agree that teaching and research and publication are very important, but that it is difficult, if not impossible, for individuals to be equally effective at both. University students want professors who are experts in their subjects and capable of disseminating information effectively and in an enjoyable manner.

Colleagues want co-workers with whom they can share ideas about teaching and collaborate on research projects. The Communication field seeks new research studies to expand and advance its knowledge base. Meanwhile, the institution wants good teachers and published researchers in order to advance and elevate its standing in the academic community.

Support for the Teacher-Scholar Continuum model can be found in the 1992 report from the Presidential Young Investigator Colloquium on "America's Academic Future." In this report, the conclusion is drawn that "there is a strong need to promote a higher quality of faculty life that more fully recognizes and develops the diverse talents and interests of all the faculty" (p. 22). Developing this complete scholar concept serves as a lifetime career objective, focusing on various aspects of scholarly work as the institutional mission and personal faculty interests change over the years (Rice, 1996). The Teacher-Scholar Continuum (TSC) model allows the flexibility to maximize individual faculty talents while meeting the changing needs of the university. Finally, the TSC provides a reward system that recognizes the nature of both beginning and established professors, while promoting individuals based on their personalized and previously contracted set of contributions.

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