

The Teacher-Scholar Model at Cal Poly Pomona

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Part I: Defining “Teacher-Scholar”

The notion of faculty as 'teacher-scholars' has a relatively short history within higher education, yet a consensus exists about the general contours of this notion.

First, it should be emphasized that teacher-scholars are not simply scholars engaged in teaching, nor simply teachers engaged in scholarship. Rather, a teacher-scholar approaches the tasks associated with teaching and with scholarship in a holistic manner, integrating these so that they inform and enrich one another. The teacher-scholar model thus encompasses but also extends the traditional picture of faculty work within the CSU, namely, faculty as classroom teachers.

Second, 'teacher-scholar' is a model of faculty activity, not a type of faculty member. Faculty will of course realize this model in different ways and to varying degrees. But it would be a mistake to suppose that faculty become teacher-scholars and then revert to some other model of faculty activity. Rather, the teacher-scholar represents a way of dynamically organizing and directing faculty members' professional activities throughout their careers.

A task force at Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville summarizes the salient features of the teacher-scholar model:

“Teacher-scholars integrate a range of academic activities: they have a firm and advanced command of the material; they introduce students to controversies within their fields and to interdisciplinary connections; they create assignments that encourage students to be scholars themselves; they mentor students who view themselves as the initiators of inquiry rather than the subject of inquiry alone; they offer manifold opportunities for students to pursue their own scholarship; and they connect students to broad academic and professional circles which can help with internships, jobs, and opportunities for graduate study; and perhaps most significantly, they model how to be lifelong learners who actively contribute to the production of knowledge and the expansion of intellectual inquiry. ... In sum, teacher-scholars are vital to a vibrant intellectual community – the kind of community realized by outstanding undergraduate institutions.”
(Task Force on the Teacher-Scholar Model at TCNJ Final Report, 2006)

This typical statement of the teacher-scholar model highlights four elements of the model:

1. Faculty Members Have Firm and Advanced Command of Material They Teach

The teacher-scholar model asks faculty members to have a firm and advanced command of the material they teach. The teacher-scholar model does not expect faculty to define the cutting edge of research in their disciplines, but it does require an

involvement with scholarship that permits faculty to comprehend and engage with the cutting edge.

2. By Exposing Students to Cutting Edge Aspects of Their Disciplines, Including Controversies, Faculty Help Students Acquire Habits of Inquiry Necessary for Lifelong Learning

The teacher-scholar model proposes that faculty will expose students to the cutting edge aspects of their disciplines enabling students to become active initiators of scholarly work rather than passive recipients of received knowledge. Ultimately, such exposure will encourage the habits of inquiry necessary for lifelong learning.

3. Faculty Expose Students to Wider Worlds of Scholarship, Practice, and Engagement, Both for Their Own Sake and to Enhance Students' Professional and Vocational Opportunities.

4. Faculty Approach Teaching as a Scholarly Endeavor

Implicit in the teacher-scholar model is that faculty approach their teaching as a scholarly/creative endeavor where scholarship encompasses the act of discovery. This may involve teaching as an object of scholarly investigation, but it need not. Rather, to approach one's teaching as a scholarly endeavor is to apply existing theoretical understandings of teaching and learning in a fashion appropriate to one's discipline and to periodically assess, reflect upon, and (if appropriate) revise one's teaching strategies.

Finally, by pursuing the four elements of this model, teacher-scholars serve as role models for students and cornerstones of their educational institutions. As one university outlines it, faculty operating under the teacher-scholar model,

“are deeply committed to the potential of their disciplines to enhance our understanding of the human condition and the world. As teachers, the faculty are dedicated to modeling the intellectual values they seek to impart to students, including a learned, reflective, and critical approach to life. As scholars, they take joy in the process of inquiry and sharing their knowledge with others. As active members of the academy, the faculty participate in professional activities that keep them current and enlarge the intellectual and practical opportunities available to students. And finally, as responsible members of the university community, teacher-scholars also dedicate their talents, experience, and leadership skills to activities that sustain, develop, and improve the entire institution.” (Elon University, 2008)

Part II: Teacher-Scholars as Teachers

One of the primary responsibilities and goals of the university is to offer undergraduate and graduate students the most current and relevant body of knowledge available in their chosen content or disciplinary field. This tremendous responsibility falls on faculty to make the knowledge available to students based on their expertise and effective pedagogy. When faculty are actively engaged in scholarly work, as teacher-scholars, they are able to fulfill their responsibility by continuing to update their knowledge and in turn, share this valuable knowledge with their students.

Teacher-Scholars engage in scholarly activity across a wide range of endeavors, which ideally lead to the production of deep learning activities in their courses to increase students' general knowledge and skills. According to the Teagle Foundation White Paper (2007), "student learning outcomes are powerfully and positively affected by repeated encounters with teachers who are active scholars. Student learning flourishes precisely in the interplay between teaching and scholarship" (p. 5). Teacher-scholars who remain immersed in current debates in their field and aware of new aspects of knowledge are able to make this the foundation of their course content. This is particularly important as time away from graduate-level training grows and theoretical approaches, methodologies, and investigative techniques continue to transform their fields.

By engaging in scholarly activities, faculty may modify their thinking and pedagogy in response to new ideas in their fields. Teacher-scholars who remain open to new findings in their discipline can renew their pedagogy and benefit students tremendously. By embedding the most relevant and up-to-date material and debates in their fields into the university classroom, teacher-scholars remain students themselves and model the importance of ongoing engaged learning and critical inquiry.

According to results from the 2005 and 2006 Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), as cited in the Teagle Foundation White Paper, "there are positive relationships between faculty emphasis on educationally purposeful activities and student engagement in those activities, as well as between student engagement and such desired outcomes as critical thinking, grades, and deep learning" (15). When teacher-scholars are involved in research, students may participate alongside faculty in meaningful and purposeful research practices to deepen their knowledge of the field. Through this close proximity, discussion and modeling, students can witness valuable and authentic production of knowledge. Teacher-scholars may also share their insights from research during student advising and teaching-related work.

PART III: Scholarship at Cal Poly Pomona

In his classic book on this subject, Scholarship Reconsidered, Boyer states that the most important obligation now confronting the nation's colleges and universities is to break

out of the antiquated debate of teaching versus research and define, in more creative ways, what it means to be a scholar. It's time to recognize the full range of faculty talent and the great diversity of functions higher education must perform.

For American higher education to remain vital we urgently need a more creative view of the work of the professorate. In response to this challenge, we propose in this report four general views of scholarship: Discovery, Integration, Application, and Teaching. In suggesting these activities we underscore the point that our intention is to spark discussion, not restrict it.

Finally, we need a climate in which colleges and universities are less imitative, taking pride in their uniqueness. We candidly acknowledge that the degree to which this push for better education is achieved will be determined, in large measure, by the way scholarship is defined and, ultimately, rewarded.

Boyer also points out that the three major activities of educators over time in the U.S. have been teaching, research and service. Different eras have emphasized various mixes of these activities with the last major era being toward research. Interestingly he also states, "At no time in our history has the need been greater for connect[ing] the work of the academy to the social and environmental challenges beyond the campus" (p. xii).

The Meaning of Teacher-Scholar in the Polytechnic Context

The discovery-integration-application-teaching model fits well with the "learn-by-doing" and hands-on philosophies of undergraduate education at a comprehensive, polytechnic university and its relation to what teachers do,

Scholarship of Discovery is what most people typically think of when referring to research. Basic research can contribute to the overall intellectual climate of the university and vitality of faculty members. Even when teaching fundamentals, knowing how they are needed to prepare students for more advanced thinking, engagement in scholarly activities may help the students in their later work as well as provide a greater sense of purpose to their academic studies.

The Scholarship of Integration includes, but is not limited to, interpreting what new discoveries mean and how new knowledge relates to other disciplines. The baccalaureate degree implicitly attempts to do this through interdisciplinary work. When asked to respond to the statement in a national survey of faculty, "Multidisciplinary work is soft and should not be considered scholarship", 73% disagreed, 17% were neutral and 8% agreed (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1989).

The Scholarship of Application refers to using knowledge in a responsible way to address consequential problems. This is accomplished by connecting theory with practice and can manifest itself through various forms of service. Service has not been historically regarded as scholarship among academic circles but can be included as scholarship if properly engaged and understood. As Boyer points out, "The scholarship of application,

as we define it here, is not a one-way street. Indeed, the term itself may be misleading if it suggests that knowledge is first 'discovered' and then 'applied'. The process we have in mind is more dynamic. New intellectual understandings can arise out of the very act of application—whether in medical diagnosis, serving clients in psychotherapy, shaping public policy, creating an architectural design, or working with the public schools. In activities such as these, theory and practice vitally interact, and one renews the other” (p. 23). Service, consulting work, and creative activities are scholarly activities under this definition.

The Scholarship of Teaching is based on the premise that the value of the work of the professor only becomes consequential as others understand it. Teaching begins with what the teacher knows, but extends to how to encourage and “create critical, creative thinkers, with the capacity to go on learning after their college days are over” (p. 24). Recognizing how students learn and being part of the process of improving learning are necessary parts of the scholarship process. The “learn-by-doing” philosophy implies that such pedagogy is valid and effective. As demographics change and new technology arises in many areas, there are rich opportunities to explore and understand how to use them to improve and foster learning.

The comprehensive, polytechnic university is the ideal place to nurture all four types of scholarship and maintain broad interpretations that foster innovation and uniqueness.

Part IV: RTP and the Teacher-Scholar Model

Retention Tenure Promotion (RTP) documents within the polytechnic context should and often do allow for new faculty to engage in scholarship of various types as mentioned earlier, beyond traditional peer reviewed publishing of basic research. The teacher-scholar model calls for every program to review the balance between teaching and scholarship and raises questions about the degree of scholarship that should be part of the criteria.

Incentives for faculty have always been a difficult issue. While certainly monetary rewards are always a factor, what is emphasized in the RTP process is certainly a huge factor in determining what teaching and scholarship actually takes place. Including a broad definition of what is considered scholarship and having a clear understanding and acceptance among the faculty is valuable in creating a vibrant teacher-scholar culture. Many RTP criteria across campus embody this broader definition of teacher-scholar.

Teaching loads are a large factor in determining how much scholarship takes place in the life of the teacher-scholar. Large teaching loads often do not leave adequate amounts of time for research, especially basic research. The polytechnic university does, however, provide opportunities to integrate the research of discovery, integration, application, and teaching with existing teaching activities. These efforts can be assisted with grants, assigned time to work on specific projects, and support of scholarly activities through sabbatical leaves, travel to conferences and workshops, and teaching assistants.

Part V: Realizing the Teacher-Scholar Model at Cal Poly Pomona

As the aforementioned discussion makes clear, the teacher-scholar model builds upon but also extends and enriches the existing conception of faculty work at Cal Poly Pomona. Supporting the teacher-scholar model for the university's faculty will thus require drawing upon existing campus resources while also tackling barriers that keep the teacher-scholar model from being made fully available to the faculty.

Existing Resources

The campus has many resources that provide the kind of support faculty require to pursue the teacher-scholar model. The resources listed below are merely representative and do not exhaust the campus' resources in this area:

The Faculty Center for Professional Development: The FCPD's programs are resources that support faculty in their roles as reflective, scholarly teachers eager to expose students to the problems of their disciplines, and as scholars striving to participate in scholarship, whether that scholarship be discipline-centered or the scholarship of education. Further, the FCPD's activities, which include learning communities, workshops, and reading circles, help to build intellectual community and multidisciplinary collaboration among faculty.

The Provost's Teacher-Scholar Program: This program provides summer stipends in two consecutive summers to faculty members who show the potential to develop into exceptional teacher-scholars. Participants develop a career plan for each quarter and are expected to submit a proposal for significant external funding (public or private) of their teaching or scholarship by the end of the second summer of support.

ASI and Co-Curricular Activities: ASI and Student Affairs provide many opportunities that deepen students' ties to the faculty and extend student learning outside the classroom. Their efforts thus support the 'deep learning' that teacher-scholars aim to provide.

“Learn-by-Doing” Pedagogical Philosophy: By exposing students to the intellectual challenges of various disciplines, the university's long-standing “learn-by-doing” philosophy appeals to students' desire to understand not only settled, uncontroversial knowledge but also to engage controversies and problems, thereby enhancing their ability to reach critically discerning and autonomous conclusions.

Support for Research Activities: The university supports faculty as researchers in multiple ways. The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs assists faculty in seeking financial support for their research activities; the university library is highly responsive to faculty seeking materials relevant to their research; the university supports programs such as sabbaticals, RSCA, and other leave opportunities.

Center for Community Service Learning: The CCS-L encourages opportunities where faculty, staff, and students actively support and engage in service-learning activities that build meaningful and sustainable community partnerships. Students, faculty, and community partners foster civic competence and engagement. Occasionally, financial incentives are offered to encourage the creation of classes that meet established criteria for service-learning.

Challenges

At the same time, though, the university clearly faces numerous challenges in making the teacher-scholar model available to its faculty in coming years. Please note that the list is not intended to be exhaustive, but to represent some of the more pressing challenges to implementation of a teacher-scholar model:

Class Size and Teaching Load: Student-to-faculty ratios, and teaching loads in general, are high on our campus. Moreover, recent budgetary pressures have only intensified calls for increased class sizes and teaching responsibility. Yet it is almost inconceivable that faculty at Cal Poly Pomona can pursue the teacher-scholar model if class sizes and teaching loads were to be increased significantly. Increased class sizes lead to increased competition for faculty energies, energies that therefore cannot be dedicated to the other activities constituting this model. Each additional student translates into additional faculty responsibilities, such as grading, providing constructive feedback on student work, additional office hours and student meetings, etc. Moreover, additional students mean reduced opportunities to engage in those activities that are central to the teacher-scholar model, such as reflection upon one's teaching methods, disciplinary inquiry and research, and intellectual and professional collaboration with students. There is thus a reasonable basis to fear that, absent a systematic effort to moderate faculty teaching loads and class sizes, only a tiny but fortunate group of Cal Poly faculty will enjoy the benefits of a career modeled on the teacher-scholar.

Support for Faculty at Different Career Stages: The phrase 'teacher-scholar' model might imply that becoming a teacher-scholar is a goal that, once achieved by a faculty member, is no longer relevant to his or her professional life. However, the model is clearly a dynamic and evolutionary one. Faculty teacher-scholars are continually invigorated by teaching, research, and the synergies between these. Hence, teacher-scholars do not simply enter their careers with a set of research plans and pedagogical approaches that are static over time. Instead, they continually seek to rejuvenate their professional lives. Yet at present, though Cal Poly has specific programs for younger, pre-tenured faculty, incentives for post-tenure development, specifically effecting mid-career or advanced faculty, are comparatively meager.

Physical Facilities: Not only is there an overall space crunch on campus, much of the space allocated to teaching is homogenous and not especially conducive to the more collaborative or discursive methods of teaching that teacher-scholars value. Furthermore, faculty who need specific physical settings in which to conduct research (laboratories, etc.) often find the university's existing facilities unsuited to their needs.

Incentives to Reward and Encourage the Teacher-Scholar Model: Departments and Colleges diverge significantly in the conception of faculty work implied by their RTP processes and criteria. Some academic units have evolved so that the incentives provided by RTP reflect a teacher-scholar model, while others have not. Furthermore, the university community should consider developing additional incentives to reward and encourage faculty teacher-scholars outside the RTP framework.

Support for Research at All Stages of Conception: The teacher-scholar model places significant emphasis on research as an activity that grows from faculty members' reflective engagement with the problems of their disciplines. While the university supports research and scholarship in various ways, the support often flows toward research and scholarly endeavors at their middle and later stages. Such support is welcome, but does little to assist faculty teacher-scholars in developing new trajectories in their research and scholarly endeavors.

A minimum expectation of the teacher-scholar is an awareness of current activities in their own field that may have application to their teaching. Support for activities such as reading books and articles published in professional society trade journals, attending professional society meetings, following websites that are appropriate and interacting with colleagues both within and outside one's discipline are critical.

Multidisciplinary Collaboration in Teaching: One way for teacher-scholars to enrich both their teaching and their research is through multidisciplinary collaboration. However, the university often places administrative obstacles to such collaboration, especially with respect to teaching.

Intellectual Community: Teacher-scholars thrive on sustained interaction with like-minded scholars. Yet as has often been observed, Cal Poly Pomona is less successful than other CSU campuses in fostering a sense of intellectual community. Rarely do significant portions of the university's faculty come together in fora to share ideas and insights and to pursue common intellectual concerns. Indeed, efforts to foster intellectual community on campus often appear precarious (e.g., Campus Forum).

Sabbaticals, Leaves, and Assigned Time: Having an academic career that reflects the T-S model is energy- and time-intensive. In order for faculty to realize this model, they require more, rather than fewer, opportunities to reinvigorate or reorient their teaching and research efforts, as well as reduce other professional obligations that will facilitate engagement in the T-S model.

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