

Many of the challenges of higher education have only intensified in the 25 years since the publication of *Scholarship Reconsidered*. Drew Moser and Todd C. Ream argue that given the changing nature of the professoriate, Ernest Boyer's revolutionary ideas about professional productivity might be even more pertinent now than when he originally proposed them.

By Drew Moser and Todd C. Ream

Scholarship Reconsidered: Past, Present, and Future

THIS ISSUE OF *ABOUT CAMPUS* celebrates a milestone: 20 years of engaging conversation on student learning in the college environment. Likewise, another landmark publication is approaching a milestone worth celebrating. The year 2015 will mark the 25th anniversary of *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* by Ernest Boyer. Written by Boyer and his team at the Carnegie Foundation with then Senior Fellow Eugene Rice, *Scholarship Reconsidered* argued for coherence in the academy for the common good and sought to shift the paradigm of scholarship to value community, service, and teaching, in addition to original research. This enduring and seminal work in higher education has sold more than 35,000 copies since Jossey-Bass took over its publication in 1997 and has been cited over 6,675 times, according to Google Scholar. Rarely does such a work achieve these heights in both sales and citations. Beyond statistics, the ideas put forth by *Scholarship Reconsidered* remain at the forefront of conversations surrounding higher education reform in the United States. Its 25th anniversary provides an opportunity to explore, reflect upon, and critique Boyer's views and their impact on the academy, including their usefulness for future generations of higher education practitioners, policymakers, scholars, and graduate students.

The Academy in the 1980s

WHEN FIRST PUBLISHED in 1990, *Scholarship Reconsidered* was a timely report. The nation was still trying to make sense of the tumult of the 1980s and the conversations surrounding faculty reward systems, which were heavily weighted toward published research even at the expense of teaching and service. Though research was exalted, its quality was difficult to measure, leading institutions to focus on quantity over quality. As Charles Glassick points out in an article in *Academic Medicine*, over a third of faculty respondents to a 1989 survey by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, led by Boyer, reported that their institutions simply counted publications, regardless of their quality. Even at research institutions, 42 percent of respondents agreed that systemic quality control was lacking. Simultaneously, the public was questioning the credibility of higher education and the application of funded research within a struggling economy, and the heightened tensions of the Cold War caused the nation to cast doubt on the value of scholarship that did not pertain to the arms race with the Soviet Union.

During this time, *Scholarship Reconsidered* was seen as a *coup d'état* to the publish-or-perish status

quo that dominated the academy at the expense of teaching and service and robbed faculty of the time needed to contribute to a vibrant learning community. In *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Boyer proposed four scholarly domains, as opposed to a singular research focus: discovery (original research and publication), integration (scholarship conducted across disciplines), application (scholarship as service), and teaching (the pursuit of innovative pedagogy).

Ernest Boyer's Influence

A SURVEY OF BOYER'S previous writings and speeches reveals a convergence of his key philosophical tenets of education: connectedness, service, language, and teaching. These tenets, which are reflected in his four domains, highlight Boyer's commitment to integrated, holistic education: an education of coherence. He believed that scholarship must have a connection to the community and that scholarship for scholarship's sake was not an option.

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As I (Drew Moser) note in an article for *American Educational History Journal*, Boyer came to these ideas through a long career in higher education, beginning with a position as a professor and administrator at a liberal-arts college, which was marked by small, tight-knit communities of students and faculty. The idealism spawned by this experience carried over when he took the helm as the Chancellor of the State University of New York (SUNY) system, then the largest, most complex state system in the country, and during his stint as United States Commissioner of Education under President Carter.

While with SUNY, Boyer faced a set of challenges similar to what faces us today—to increase access and student learning with fewer resources. Part of his answer was to create structures such as Empire State College, a campus-less institution that served as an early template for adult education and degree completion. This effort drew heavily upon the emerging realities of the college student experience and the phenomenon of what is now referred to as adjunct professors. Even today, Boyer's hand is reflected in Empire State's mission to “use innovative, alternative, and flexible approaches to higher education that transform people and communities by providing rigorous programs that connect individuals' unique and diverse lives to their personal learning goals.”

After wading through grinding economic recessions during his time at SUNY and the US Office of Education, Boyer steered the resources and expertise of the Carnegie Foundation toward addressing a public's growing demand for college faculty to be accountable to powers other than themselves. At the same time, college faculty members were growing more disillusioned with their own vocational culture. Laments over the demise of the academy were surfacing at that time in greater numbers and with greater force.

Ever the educational populist, Boyer decided that the issue of scholarship should be a national conversation that reached beyond the ivory tower. He pointed his audience back to the scholars who predated modern universities, noting that scholarship was once measured by the ability to think, communicate, and learn. In addition, he highlighted the introduction of original research within American higher education and the way it quickly overtook teaching and service as the sole focus of the professoriate. According to Boyer, the dominant structure of the university rewarded faculty who successfully removed themselves from the classroom (often to be replaced by graduate assistants) so that they could spend more time conducting research, despite the fact that the majority of faculty truly desired to teach and spend time interacting with students.

Boyer challenged the reward structures and what he viewed as a narrow perception of scholarship. How, he asked, can scholarship simply be evidenced by publications? In *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Boyer looked to the past and the future to propose a broader vision, where “the work of the scholar also means stepping back from one’s investigation, looking for connections, building bridges between theory and practice, and communicating one’s knowledge effectively to students” (p. 16).

Assessing *Scholarship Reconsidered's* Impact

ACCORDING TO DEREK BOK, president emeritus of Harvard University, *Scholarship Reconsidered* “introduced a more novel and controversial thesis than most of [Boyer’s] books.” In a personal communication, Bok noted, “Here he really did advocate for a fundamentally different way of classifying the work professors do.” Yet while Boyer’s broadened view of scholarship has remained a significant part of the national conversation on higher education, as evidenced by its sales and citations, it has perhaps done so more in spirit than in practice. Published research is still the dominant lens through which scholarship is understood. Academic disciplines are still siloed, and research that pushes the boundaries of traditional department structures is still discouraged.

However, the professoriate is also continuing to undergo sweeping changes that provide new opportunities for Boyer’s views to be considered. In fact, his ideas may be more relevant to the modern iteration of the professoriate, with its radically shifting priorities, than it was to the professoriate of Boyer’s day. The faculty landscape has undoubtedly changed in significant ways since the release of *Scholarship Reconsidered* and is likely to continue to do so. For example, the rise of the non-tenure-track class of professors is well documented and, to many, troublesome. In *The Atlantic*, Jordan Weissman reported a 300 percent rise in adjunct faculty since 1975 (compared to a meager 26 percent rise for tenured/tenure-track faculty during the same period). Most conversations regarding this new faculty majority are framed in economic terms, as adjuncts are simply less expensive to employ. While important, this perspective sheds light on only part of the problem: the new faculty majority represents not only a fiscal crisis, but also one of ideology and utility, which may have a long-term impact on the academy at the macro level. The traditional duties of a faculty member are now being distributed among many individuals, most of whom are part-time, a process that Sean Gehrke and Adrianna Kezar refer to

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as “unbundling.” The fragmentation is pursued, they argue, with little attention to institutional impact, and the strategic vision of the future has given way to the fiscal tyranny of the urgent.

Beyond institutional impact, these changes may have taken a toll on individual disciplines. Central to the cultivation of a discipline-specific guild is the generative production of research in which scholars come to convene, critique, share, and contribute to their field. If the new norm for scholars is cobbling together part-time teaching positions, where is the time to research, write, and present (not to mention *teach* effectively)? Even if faculty members have such time afforded to them, a critical incentive in tenure has been removed, along with some of the motivation to publish in the first place. No doubt many scholars will continue to conduct research simply to cultivate the life of the mind, yet there are many hindrances to such work. These include the lack of sufficient time and resources, little to no support for such endeavors, and an increasingly fragmented academic department structure, where departments function more as pit stops for adjuncts than as affinity-based support centers for research and teaching.

Faculty trudging along the tenure track may not have the luxury of complaining about the pressures of publishing in comparison to many of their adjunct colleagues, and adjuncts may not have the luxury of time to engage in scholarship. Thus, the subtitle of *Scholarship Reconsidered*, “Priorities of the Professoriate,” is timely and poignant. As we seek to define future priorities, Boyer’s views serve as a helpful correction to what Gehrke and Kezar characterize as the unbundled fragmentation of the present. His four domains of discovery, integration, application, and teaching are a call for scholarship to be diverse and flexible enough to serve the common good and advance higher education in the ways it needs in order to thrive. And enduring sales of *Scholarship Reconsidered* and the wisdom afforded by a quarter century of reflection yield an opportunity to consider new applications of Boyer’s model, which poses several questions worthy of further consideration.

Central to the cultivation of a discipline-specific guild is the generative production of research in which scholars come to convene, critique, share, and contribute to their field.

First, if higher education is resting its future on a majority part-time workforce, what will its leaders do to develop and support this new class of professors? This development should include, but move beyond, establishing a fair wage. If the quota of journal publications no longer makes sense in this brave new world, we must develop processes to cultivate, not merely subdue or tolerate, this emerging class. For example, centers for teaching and learning should develop programs that seek to encourage and equip adjunct faculty in their craft. These programs should be created with adjuncts' complex schedules in mind, including the use of information technology as a mechanism for sharing ideas with adjunct faculty at times and in ways that best suit their schedules and needs.

As part of this effort to cultivate adjuncts' professional development, peer-mentoring programs, which are common among tenure-track faculty, should be extended to adjuncts in an effort to provide them with a sense of community, support, and research development. While information technology can also be a powerful tool for mentoring, personal, face-to-face interaction with colleagues—particularly full-time faculty—is still needed to test and refine ideas surrounding scholarship. Therefore, service requirements for full-time faculty should recognize the value of their efforts to mentor adjuncts, including formative in-class assessments of their mentees. In addition, funds should be provided for full-time faculty and adjuncts to meet over coffee and meals as a way to foster connections.

Along with a focus on developing mentoring relationships, institutions should carve out physical spaces, such as offices and lounges, so that adjuncts have a sense of place and belonging, as well locales for collaboration. This effort is essential, for relationships are often limited by the nature of the spaces we inhabit. For example, office space is often viewed as a place where individuals dwell in isolation from one another. What if certain spaces were established on campus that not only provided people with a place

to keep their personal items but also to come together around certain questions or social challenges? High-tech firms have established such spaces to help their employees focus on particular projects; perhaps higher-education institutions could do the same.

Second, in today's landscape of higher education, is "pure," discipline-specific research still the pinnacle of scholarly work? Given the isolated state of adjunct and full-time contract faculty in the midst of more aptly labeled multiversities, institutions may benefit from Boyer's vision by rewarding collaborative scholarship that draws scholars, the disciplines they represent, and, dare we say—their students—together. We recommend that universities encourage and reward professors for their ability to collaborate and integrate their research within and across disciplines by redesigning reward systems to recognize, or at least not penalize, collaborative work. Too often, faculty who do collaborative work do not receive the same recognition for it than if they had conducted the work on their own. In contrast, reward structures need to be designed to recognize that collaborative work in classes, the recital hall, the library, the laboratory, or even the larger community may be necessary, given the complexity of many research questions. Such structures need to then also include mechanisms that assess the quality of that collaboration.

Once reward structures are redesigned to value collaborative work, faculty-development programs need to add opportunities for educators to think through how to put together and carry out such work. This task will be challenging in an environment in which faculty most often think about questions they alone can answer and in an age when students still receive semester grades as individuals, despite the fact that group work is on the rise in almost all sectors of education. In contrast, faculty-development programs

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can reshape this thinking by helping faculty think in larger terms about their work and by teaching them to think through how to build and sustain teams to answer those questions.

Third, is it possible to adapt reward structures to encourage scholars to connect research to service? Boyer was a forerunner and strong advocate of what we now call “service learning,” where the best and brightest could apply their expertise to the world’s most pressing needs. The scholarship of application provides excellent opportunities for collaborative research directly within the realm of teaching, a hopeful (and potentially more feasible) means to rebundle certain faculty roles. For example, faculty-development centers could create means to receive open requests from members of the community for projects and/or opportunities for consultation. Those opportunities could then be made available to the faculty as a whole, and faculty could gather teams with the needed expertise. In ideal terms, those opportunities could become key components of classes and, thus, allow for ongoing student involvement. Opportunities of a more long-standing nature could even become the focus of living-learning communities, drawing together members, students, faculty, and student-development professionals in a common endeavor.

Finally, the unbundling of the faculty should not cause us to shrug our shoulders and watch the academy crumble. Rather, it provides an opportunity to restructure the very nature of promotion and tenure. Adam Grant, professor at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business, suggests in a recent *New York Times* op-ed that the old guard of promotion

and tenure attempts to force together what are now two distinct pursuits: teaching and research. He suggests universities adopt a “teaching-tenure” track and a “research-tenure” track, equally important to the life of a university. Boyer and his Carnegie Foundation colleagues charted a comparable course nearly 25 years ago. In addition, while Boyer served as Chancellor of the SUNY system, he instituted the title “University Teacher,” a distinction equal to that of a “Distinguished Professor,” reserved for the state system’s master teachers.

Clearly, Boyer’s ideas remain relevant almost 25 years after the publication of *Scholarship Reconsidered*. In fact, the publication’s best days may not be in its past but in its future. However, that future, at least in the foreseeable sense, is likely to be marked by further challenges. If we reconsider Boyer’s four domains and his call for diverse and flexible scholarship that serves the common good while also meeting the needs of educators, perhaps we can focus our future efforts less on the survival of higher education and more on ways to foster its thriving.

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