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Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate

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THIS afternoon I have been asked to talk about the role of faculty in American higher education, and I would like to begin by reflecting on how the view of the professoriate has changed throughout the years.

When little Harvard College was founded in 1636, the focus was on the student. Teaching was a central—even sacred—function, and the highest accolade a professor could receive was the famous one Chaucer extended to the clerk at Oxford: "gladly would he learn, and gladly teach." Educating the whole person was at the very heart of the colonial college, and for a century and a half, that is what scholarship in America was all about.

But following the War of Independence, the focus of higher learning slowly shifted from the shaping of young lives to the building of a nation. In 1824, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute was founded in Troy, New York, and according to historian Frederick Rudolph, RPI became a "constant reminder that America needed railroad-builders, bridge-builders, builders of all kinds." American higher education was beginning to move out of its ivory tower.

The Land Grant College Act of 1862 linked higher learning to the nation's agricultural revolution. When Lincoln Steffens visited Madison in 1909, he said that "in Wisconsin the university is as close to the intelligent farmer as his pigpen or his tool-house." At the turn of the century, David Starr Jordan, president of Stanford, declared that the entire university movement in this country "is toward reality or practicality." To put it simply, the scholarship of teaching had been joined by the scholarship of building.

Meanwhile, another vision of scholarship was emerging. In the late nineteenth century, distinguished American academics who had studied at the European universities of Heidelberg and Humboldt were influenced profoundly by the emerging scholarship of science. Men like Daniel Coit Gilman, who founded Johns Hopkins in 1876, were convinced that a new kind of university was required in America, one that focused almost exclusively on science and research. And Harvard and Berkeley and Johns Hopkins, to name a few, began to emulate this pattern. But most of the nation's colleges and universities continued to give priority to service, and especially to teaching.

Following World War II, however, the academic culture in American higher education shifted. A veritable army of newly minted Ph.D.s fanned out to campuses from coast to coast, determined to clone the research model they themselves had experienced, and determined also to get a piece of the new federal

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research pie. Indeed, with the creation of the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and the Department of Defense, research possibilities increased dramatically, not just for those at the Harvards, the Johns Hopkinses, or the Berkeleys, but for professors at all the other places, too.

This new spirit was described vividly by Talcott Parsons, who wrote in 1968 that the typical professor now resembles the scientist more than the "gentleman scholar" of an earlier generation, when teaching was more highly prized. And it is also revealing that just before Derek Bok became president of Harvard in 1971, another university president advised him to abolish the Harvard undergraduate program. By getting rid of the college, Bok was told, you will acknowledge that teaching undergraduates has become an anachronism in the university today.

To put it simply, we have, since World War II, defined the academy as a home for the professoriate, rather than the student. And today the faculty and undergraduates live in two separate worlds.

But there was a problem in all of this. At the very time the renewal of the professoriate was being increasingly restricted with a focus not on teaching, but on research, American higher education was experiencing yet another profound change—what some have called the revolution of rising expectations.

Following the G. I. Bill, we built new kinds of colleges in this country, in response to new kinds of students. And almost overnight, American higher education moved from elite to mass higher education, to use the words of sociologist Martin Trow. To put it as simply as I can, in the postwar period, academic hierarchy was pulling American higher education vertically in one direction, while students and institutional diversity was pulling it horizontally in another. And the faculty role in all of this was ambiguous at best. Which master should be worshipped?

Today, it's the myth that almost all professors are researchers. But according to Carnegie data, 44 percent of today's professors say that their interests lie primarily in teaching, rather than research. And 68 percent say that their institution needs better ways to evaluate the scholarly performance of faculty.

Sociologist Everett Ladd, in commenting on the crisis, put the problem this way. The current model of research, he said, "is seriously out of touch with what [the faculty] actually do and want to do." Further, while academics in this country continue to speak glowingly about the diversity of American higher education, the harsh truth is that the only way for a college to gain national status or recognition is to become a carbon copy of the Berkeley or Amherst models.

In the early 1960s, when I was at the University of California at Santa Barbara, I watched a former teacher training and home economics institution being folded into the prestigious University of California system. It was a wrenching process, as faculty expectations were redefined. I then joined the State University of New York, where we struggled to protect diversity in a 64-campus system at a time when everything was "drifting upward," and when research and publication became the single yardstick of success.

Well, what are we to do about all of this? In a recently released Carnegie report entitled *Scholarship Reconsidered,* we concluded that it's time to move beyond the tired old teaching versus research debate and instead begin to ask the much more compelling question: What does it mean to be a scholar? And in response to that intriguing question,

we propose a new paradigm of scholarship with four interlocking parts.

I. THE SCHOLARSHIP OF DISCOVERY

First, we take the position that research is at the very heart of academic life, and we celebrate what we call the scholarship of discovery. Fifty years ago, Vannevar Bush, former president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, put it this way: "Universities," he said, "are the wellspring of knowledge and understanding. And as long as scholars are free to pursue the truth, wherever it may lead, there will surely continue to be a flow of new scientific knowledge."

We urgently need great universities that excel in the scholarship of research, and frankly I worry about federal cutbacks in research dollars. I also worry about grant-making policies that would direct government funds away from basic research and, in the process, undermine the integrity of the investigative process. Research is a central ingredient of the academic life, and sustaining this creative process within the academy itself is absolutely crucial if scholarship is to be vigorously advanced.

II. THE SCHOLARSHIP OF INTEGRATION

But in addition to the scholarship of discovery, we also need what we call the scholarship of integration. We need creative people who go beyond the isolated facts, who make connections across the disciplines, who help shape a more coherent view of knowledge and a more integrated, more authentic view of life. And in our fragmented academic world, this task of integration becomes more urgent every single day.

Barbara McClintock, the Nobel laureate, said on one occasion that "everything is one. There is no way," she said, "to draw a line between things." Frank Press, the president of the National Academy of Sciences, recently suggested that the scientist is, in some respects, an artist, too; he went on to observe that "the magnificent double helix is not only rational, but beautiful, as well." And several years ago, when the world renowned physicist Victor Weiskopf was asked what gave him hope in troubled times, he replied, "Mozart and quantum mechanics." Weiskopf also said that to understand the Big Bang theory, you should listen to the works of Haydn. But how, in our fragmented academic world, can students make connections such as these?

The good news is that the most exciting work going on in the academy today is in the new hyphenated disciplines—psycho-linguistics, bio-engineering, and the like—in what Michael Polanyi calls the "overlapping [academic] neighborhoods." In his provocative essay, "Blurred Genres," Clifford Geertz of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University suggests that the old categories of knowledge are breaking down. "Something is happening," Geertz says, "to the way we think about the way we think." New disciplines are emerging in response to compelling intellectual questions.

In the days ahead, we urgently need scholars who move beyond the traditional academic boundaries and begin to put their learning in intellectual, social, and ethical perspective.

Nearly fifty years ago, Mark Van Doren wrote: "The connectedness of things is what the educator contemplates to the limit of his capacity." He concludes by saying that those who can begin early in life to see things as connected has begun the life of learning. And this, it seems to me, is what good scholarship is all about.

III. THE SCHOLARSHIP OF APPLICATION

This brings me to category number three. We say in the Carnegie report that beyond the scholarship of discovery and beyond the scholarship of integration, we also need what we call the scholarship of application; we need to relate the theory and research to the realities of life. This uniquely American view of the usefulness of knowledge is rooted in the land-grant colleges, in the polytechnic institutes, in the normal schools, in the conservatories—institutions that were, in the nineteenth century, "in the nation's service," as Woodrow Wilson put it.

But we are no longer in the nineteenth century: we are standing today on the threshold of the twenty-first. And there is now, I am convinced, an urgent new service agenda to be considered. Today our shorelines are polluted, the ozone layer may be threatened, our schools are dangerously deficient, our cities are imperiled.

I am convinced that university scholars urgently need to respond to the crises of this century just as they responded to the needs of agriculture and industry a century ago. How can we justify a university that is surrounded by pressing human needs and essentially ignores them? It's a failure not only intellectually, but ethically as well.

Donald Schön of MIT writes about what he calls "the reflective practitioner" and proposes a new epistemology of practice in which scholarship relates to service. The good news is that professional schools—from architecture, to medicine, to journalism, to education and accounting—increasingly are linking scholarship to real life. They are demonstrating that not only can knowledge be applied, but that theory can, in fact, emerge from practice and that good scholarship can occur in hospitals, in gyms, and in the schools, as well.

In the end, theory simply cannot be divorced from practice, and in developing new priorities for the professoriate, we simply must give new dignity and new status to the scholarship of application.

IV. THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING

This brings me to my last category. We say in the Carnegie report that scholarship means not only the ability to discover and integrate and apply knowledge; it also means to inspire future scholars in the classroom—a process we call the scholarship of teaching.

Several years ago, I could not sleep, and instead of counting sheep, I tried to recall all the teachers I have had. I must confess there were a few nightmares in the bunch. But I also remember three or four outstanding teachers who not only knew their subjects, but knew their students, too. These wonderful mentors had a huge impact on my life. And I suspect that almost everyone in the audience today is here because of at least one inspired teacher.

I am suggesting that to keep scholarship alive, we need classrooms where there is active, not passive, learning; where students are creative, not conforming; and where undergraduates learn to work together, rather than compete, since in the coming century the truly consequential human problems will be resolved only through collaboration.

But there is a dark cloud to this silver lining. The problem is that in the academy today, good teaching simply is not adequately rewarded. We assign undergraduate instruction to teaching assistants. And very often it's far better for a professor to deliver a paper at a convention at the Hyatt in Chicago than it is to meet with undergraduates back home. And this is truly sad, since to

short-change teaching is to short-change scholarship itself.

If students are not stimulated by great teachers, if they do not become intellectually engaged in creative learning, then all the talk about scholarship in its richest, fullest sense will be simply a diversion.

Robert Oppenheimer, at the 200th anniversary of Columbia University, put it this way. He said, "It is proper to the role of the scientist that he not merely find the truth and communicate it to his fellows, but that he teach, that he try to bring the most and intelligible account of new knowledge to all who will try to learn." And surely this means inspiring future scholars in the classroom.

Here, then, is my conclusion. Scholarship surely means the discovery of knowledge, as in research, but that is only the beginning of the process. Scholarship, to be complete, also means the integration of knowledge. It means the application of knowledge. And it means the presentation of knowledge, as in great teaching. And while this full range of scholarship can flourish on a single campus, I am convinced that every college and university should also seek to find its own special niche within the spectrum.

Let us have great research centers, for example, where undergraduate instruction also will be honored. Let us have campuses where the scholarship of teaching is a central mission. Let us have colleges and universities that promote integrative studies through a core curriculum, through interdisciplinary seminars, and through team teaching. And let us also have colleges and universities that give top priority to the scholarship of applying knowledge, in schools, in hospitals, in industry and business, much as the land-grant colleges worked with farmers. What I am suggesting is a national network of higher learning institutions in which each college and university takes pride in its own distinctive mission and seeks to complement, rather than imitate, the others.

Where do faculty fit into all of this? In the days ahead, I would like to see faculty members be given lots of freedom to be creative and to build on their own unique aptitudes and interests. Those who are "integrators," for example, or those who enjoy field work, or those who excel as scholars in the classroom should be rewarded for these special talents alongside researchers—and be considered of equal worth. What I am proposing, in short, is a mosaic of faculty talent on the campus.

A final observation. In the Carnegie report, we focused on the work of scholars across a lifetime and concluded that faculty should have a change of pace from time to time. Specifically, we propose what we call "creativity contracts" for professors—or arrangements in which members of the faculty could move from one scholarly endeavor to another.

During one contract period, for example, a professor might focus primarily on research. Later, he or she might take time to integrate and interpret findings. At another period in life, the professor might work full time on the scholarship of teaching. Any of these activities would be carefully assessed and appropriately rewarded. In other words, a "broken field" approach to scholarship would keep faculty intellectually alive and bring creativity to a restrictive system.

You at the American Accounting Association have focused on theory, to be sure. But you also have been integrative; you know that teaching is essential; and of course you have applied the skills of your profession. Let me conclude my remarks today by congratulating you for your leadership in honoring all forms of scholarship.