

The Academic Department as a Locus of Changing the Rewards for Teaching

Leverne A. Barrett

NACTA: Leadership for Improved Learning

Planning sessions at recent NACTA Conferences have been devoted to assessing the successes of our organization and visioning to effectively carry out our mission into the next century. Since the birth of NACTA, the organization's goal has been and continues to be the improvement of postsecondary teaching in agriculture.

At the September NACTA Executive Committee meeting, Leverne Barrett, Chair of the Teaching Improvement Committee, was asked to write the first position paper for our organization related to the topic of Rewarding and Evaluating Teaching. The first draft of the paper, *The Academic Department as a Locus of Changing the Rewards for Teaching*, follows. The paper relates to NACTA's primary purpose and to the theme of the next national conference at the University of Minnesota at Crookston, Minnesota.

Further discussion of Dr. Barrett's paper and consideration of its adoption as an official NACTA position paper will occur during the conference in Crookston, June 15-18.

Larry Erpelding
Kansas State University

After the first call for proposals by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE, USDEd) in 1987, many voices began calling for change in the system of rewarding teaching. One of the most notable among these voices was that of the late Ernest Boyer, who was president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. He and his colleagues suggested that if teaching was to take its rightful place in the reward system in higher education a new kind of scholarship was needed. In Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered* (1990) he accepted the fact that the scholarship of discovery was going to be the cornerstone of scholarship in research oriented universities. However, Boyer envisioned three new forms of scholarship:

1. The *scholarship of integration* gives meaning to isolated facts, "putting them into perspective — making connections across disciplines, placing the specialities in larger context, illuminating data in a rewarding way — ."

Barrett is a professor in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE 68583-0709, and Chair, NACTA Teaching Committee

2. In the *scholarship of application* "the scholar asks, 'How can knowledge be responsibly applied to consequential problems? How can it be helpful to individuals as well as to institutions?'"
3. The *scholarship of teaching*, which "beginning with the teacher knows." means not only transmitting knowledge but *transforming* and *extending* it as well.

NACTA's position is that if the dream of redefining teaching is ever going to happen it must start with the faculty in the academic department. Faculty leaders at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln came to this conclusion after working with faculty and administrators in some 30 departments through a grant from the Fund for Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE).

Departmental Norms and Values

It is within the department where norms and values are established where "what is done" gets rewarded. Unfortunately in most departments that which gets done and rewarded with promotion, tenure and merit is research. This perception of many faculty was evidenced in a 1995 study by the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning and Assessment at Pennsylvania State. They found that at all four-year institutions, faculty spending more time on research and publishing and less time teaching earn the highest salaries. If Ernest Boyer's dream is ever to happen, the present norm, that of technical rationality, must be changed. Many faculty in departments accept and believe that the only true worth of a faculty member is their ability to discover new knowledge and publish it, often in obscure journals that only like-minded read. As long as publications are the "coin of the realm" of academia, the scholarship of teaching will not be recognized beyond teaching awards.

One strategy that faculty who are committed to changing the reward system for teaching may consider is conducting and practicing the scholarship of action research in teaching. In doing so, we would be achieving what Boyer believed, that "new intellectual understanding can arise out of the very act of application." For a wealth of ideas as to how to conduct scholarship of action in teaching see *Classroom Assessment Techniques* by Angelo and Cross (1993).

The problem with conducting action research is what every academic cynic knows — it will not be acceptable in the

minds of promotion and tenure committee members who use the paradigm of technical rationality to judge the worth of scholarship. Here is where true academic leadership and risk taking begin if change is to occur.

What Is To Be Rewarded?

Serious dialogue between *all* parties involved must pursue the idea that possibly “what is right and good is rewarded,” rather than “what is done gets rewarded.” Of course, if we are going to persuade the techno-rationalists, sound examples of action scholarship need to be available. Perhaps senior faculty, working in cooperation with faculty members not fully promoted or tenured, would conduct several projects as demonstrations. Donald Schön (1995) states that the epistemology appropriate to the new scholarship must make room for the practitioner’s reflection in and on action. It must account for and legitimize not only the use of knowledge produced in the academy, but the practitioner’s generation of actionable knowledge in the form of models or prototypes that can be carried over, by reflective transfer, to new situations.

Although Boyer’s ideas are good, they are only part of the picture as to why teaching is not rewarded. Most faculty in departments submit scant bits of evidence supporting the effectiveness of teaching. Typically a listing of courses taught, with student evaluations, is the evidence presented. Student evaluations may be high, as is typically true unless the faculty member is in trouble in their teaching. So what are members of the promotion and tenure committee and the department head to conclude? Since many faculty don’t trust student evaluation data, they begin to look for other “more quantifiable evidence,” like research publications. Thus, the teaching function in the job description is discounted.

Teaching Portfolio — A Possibility

One of the early lessons learned in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln FIPSE-sponsored project (Barrett, 1994) was that if teaching was to take its rightful place in the reward system, evidence beyond student evaluations was essential. On many campuses around the country the *teaching portfolio* is being touted as one answer to the lack of evidence for one’s teaching.

The teaching portfolio usually consists of two parts. The first is that information provided by the faculty member, and the second part is that information provided by others (students, peers, etc.). For more detailed and helpful suggestions on how to compile a teaching portfolio see references: Seldin, P. (1991), *The Teaching Portfolio: A Practical Guide to Improved Performance and Promotion/Tenure Decisions*; Seldin, P. (1993), *Successful Use of Teaching Portfolios*; Edgerton, R., et al. (1993), *The Teaching Portfolio: Capturing the Scholarship in Teaching*; Shore, B., et al. (1991), *The CAUT Guide To The Teaching Dossier, Its Preparation and Use*; Lane, B. (1995), *The Teaching and Advising Portfolio: A Guide for NACTA Members*.

Finally, what do you do when you have evidence about your teaching assembled? Institutions like the University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and others are participating in the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) sponsored project on peer review. The peer review is the “hallowed” system revered by the techno-rationalists. Employing the peer review process for the teaching portfolio and a systematic review of the teaching act itself provides a strong case for the evaluation of the scholarship of teaching.

Summary

The scholarship of teaching within the department must become a centerpiece in the effort to change the reward system for teaching. The end result will be that teaching will regain its stature in the American system of higher education that it once enjoyed and that the present publics now demand. None of this can happen unless faculty within departments working in close concert with college administration take the necessary risks.

The process of change has begun on many campuses; the time is right. Much patience and dialogue is needed. Change comes very slowly in the minds of faculty, but there is hope.

References

- Angelo, T. and Cross, K.P. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques. A handbook for college teachers*, 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Barrett, L., Narveson, R. et al. (1994). From regard to reward: Improving teaching at a research-oriented university. Department Plans: Documentation, Evaluation, and Reward. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- Barrett, L., Banset, E., Gilbertson, O. (1995). A model for the evaluation and reward for teaching in agricultural education. *Journal of Agricultural Education* 36(2).
- Boyer, E. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered. Priorities of the profession*. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Lawrenceville, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Edgerton, R., Hutchings, P., Quinlan, K. (1993). *The teaching portfolio: capturing the scholarship in teaching*. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.
- Lane, B., Armstrong, J. (1995). The teaching and advising portfolio: A guide for NACTA members, *NACTA Journal* v. 39, No. 3, Sept. National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning and Assessment (June 1995). Pennsylvania State University.
- Seldin, P., et al. (1993). *Successful use of the teaching portfolio*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Co., Inc.
- Seldin, P. (1991). *The teaching portfolio: A practical guide to improved performance and promotion/tenure decisions*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Co., Inc.
- Shore, B., et al. (1991). *The CAUT guide to the teaching dossier, its preparation and use*. Canadian Association of University Teachers, Centre for Teaching and Learning Services, McGill University, revised 1986.
- Schön, D. (1995). The new scholarship requires a new epistemology. *Change, the Magazine of Higher Learning* 77(Nov/Dec), No. 6.