
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN ACTION

Assessment of Unpublished Scholarly Activity: An Informal Rubric for Evaluating Faculty Performance

Robert W. Ward, DC, CID Management

Some forms of scholarly productivity, such as peer-reviewed publications, are easily recognized and incorporated into processes involving evaluation, retention, and promotion of faculty. A method for initiating peer review of unpublished scholarly activity may serve to permit recognition of such work in faculty evaluation. This article shares an instrument for the peer review of unpublished scholarship, such as scholarship of integration or teaching. A nonquantitative rubric for the evaluation of scholarly activity was developed, based on previously proposed standards from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Such a process for forms of scholarly productivity other than publication provides potential for intellectual growth and development for both reviewers and reviewed faculty. (*J Chiropr Educ* 2008;22(1):17-22)

Key Indexing Terms: chiropractic; education; educational assessments; teaching

INTRODUCTION

The expectation that faculty will have responsibility in teaching, service, and scholarship is a long-standing and ubiquitous tradition. Over time, the concept of scholarship eventually narrowed, such that all activities, other than research and subsequent publication, were effectively excluded from the definition of scholarship.¹

This narrow definition of scholarship has widened considerably over the past 15 years or so, in large measure due to the impact of the work of Ernest L. Boyer. His seminal 1990 monograph on the meaning of scholarship¹ proposed that there were at least four areas of intellectual effort that should be considered as scholarship. The first was scholarship of discovery, viewed as activities or inquiry that contribute to the existing base of knowledge or information. The second was scholarship of integration, which was described as the process of collecting isolated facts and integrating them into a larger context in a way that brings new insight and

understanding. Scholarship of application was used to describe activities involving the use of information in a way that is practical, useful, and applied to various real-world problems. The last form of scholarship proposed by Boyer was the scholarship of teaching. This included ensuring that pedagogical practices were carefully planned, continuously evaluated, and directly related to the subject being taught. This process was seen as not being merely the transmission of information to students, but the process of “transforming and extending” information in a way that encourages critical thinking by students and stimulates new and creative approaches to teaching by the faculty.

Boyer’s monograph stimulated much thought and dialog within academia, and his proposal that the concept of scholarship should be widened and diversified has been widely accepted.² However, this expansion of the nature of scholarship created a new challenge: determining when “scholarship” has actually taken place and assessing scholarly activities for the purposes of quality improvement and faculty performance appraisal. Publication-based scholarship of discovery or application is relatively easy to assess, because the publication provides tangible evidence of the nature and quality of scholarly productivity, and such materials have generally been

The Journal of Chiropractic Education

Copyright © 2008 the Association of Chiropractic Colleges

Vol. 22, No. 1. Printed in U.S.A.

1042-5055/\$22.00

vetted by peer review. Tangible evidence of scholarship of integration or teaching is often not readily available.

A second monograph in 1997 by Glassick et al.³ was a direct follow-up to Boyer's work, and represented a proposal of standards that should be applied to all forms of scholarship that were intended to be considered for recognition or reward. While Boyer's categories of scholarship are today widely recognized by most chiropractic faculty, the subsequent proposed standards are not well known. As a result, there is often significant confusion or disagreement in determining what constitutes teaching and what constitutes scholarship of teaching.

At the Southern California University of Health Sciences (SCUHS), there was a determination by the Professional Personnel Committee (a standing committee of the faculty senate charged with handling issues involving faculty assessment) that all forms of scholarship should be subjected to peer review to be considered for recognition in the faculty performance appraisal process. This determination arose from the observation by the committee that there were no clear or consistent criteria or process for determining what types of unpublished effort should or should not be considered as meaningful scholarship in the context of annual faculty performance evaluations. For scholarship resulting in peer-reviewed publication, tangible evidence of a meaningful quality assessment process was readily available. However, for other forms of scholarship, such as scholarship of teaching, there was a need to implement a peer-review process and to communicate the standards of scholarship to both the reviewers and the faculty being reviewed.

The purpose of this article is to provide the instrument that was developed and to discuss some aspects of its use, in the hope that it may prove useful to others and that meaningful suggestions for improvement and revision may arise.

METHODS

At SCUHS, there exists a standing committee with a mandate to implement and evaluate methods of faculty performance evaluation. The committee also makes recommendations for amendments to that process, and those recommendations are subject to subsequent discussion, revision, and ratification by the faculty senate and the administration. In

the process of annual review of faculty performance, there emerged a perception that there was no clear consensus among faculty or evaluators as to what constituted scholarship arising from teaching activities and what constituted simply teaching. For example, if a faculty member were to review one of the lecture series and update the references without altering the content, some viewed this as a form of scholarship and others viewed this as maintenance of curricular materials without significant intellectual effort.

It was readily perceived that it would not be possible for faculty members to adequately document unpublished scholarship, nor to serve as peer reviewers, unless there was a wider appreciation of the standards. In order to communicate the standards for scholarship to all involved parties, a rubric was developed that incorporated all of the standards proposed in the work of Glassick et al.³ That rubric is presented as an appendix to this article and is available in a downloadable form from www.journalchiroed.com.

The instrument was intended to prompt peer reviewers to consider each of 17 separate standards and to provide useful feedback for each to the faculty member being reviewed. The rubric has no scoring or numeric values, because the determination of whether a work does or does not constitute scholarship is fundamentally a qualitative assessment, and because not every standard need be met for every scholarly work.

The final item on the rubric is a global assessment by the reviewer as to whether he or she believes the work is scholarship or is not scholarship, or whether the reviewer is unable to reach a determination. Thus, while the instrument is essentially an informal "sniff test" for the presence of scholarship, it prompts the peer reviewer to consider and comment on each standard in turn. It also provides the faculty member being reviewed an opportunity to integrate the assessment of his or her peers with a self-assessment for each standard and to determine which standards represent areas that are fertile for personal development as a scholar.

The instrument has been piloted through a small number of peer reviews, most of which involved scholarship of integration in the preparation of teaching materials. Each peer review was performed by at least two reviewers, selected by the immediate supervisor of the faculty member being reviewed. Reviewer participation was entirely voluntary. No more than one reviewer could be from the same

department as the faculty member being reviewed. Materials to be reviewed were sent to reviewers by the faculty member's supervisor, and written responses from reviewers were returned back to the supervisor. Reviewers involved in the process were asked to provide suggestions for improvement of the instrument and process, and faculty members reviewed were asked to comment on what they liked or disliked about the instrument and process. Neither the instrument nor the described peer-review process had been formally adopted by the faculty at the time of this writing.

DISCUSSION

The instrument and process described are intended to make a positive impact in several different areas, including increased awareness of what constitutes scholarship and hopefully an improvement in the quality of scholarly activity and intellectual reflection among the faculty. Benefit of this type is likely to accrue to both reviewers and those being reviewed. Contributions to the quality of the institution's educational offerings and contributions to the community are also likely to improve, as faculty members are more likely to prioritize their personal resources toward activities that will be recognized and rewarded. Some form of assessment of these parameters before full implementation and reassessment after a reasonable interval would be necessary to determine whether such impact has taken place.

There is likely to be value in developing some introductory materials for faculty and reviewers regarding the meaning of the standards before implementation of a peer-review process. This could be useful in preventing misunderstanding of the primary intention of such a process (eg, continuing improvement and growth rather than denial of recognition or validation) and could also serve to help achieve consistency and fairness of evaluation.

Additionally, before peer review, there would need to be some tangible evidence or documentation of the scholarly activity. Often there is a readily available work product, such as a publication, course manual, or teaching materials. However, in some cases meaningful scholarly activity would require the creation of some form of documentation to enable the peer-review process. Faculty members may be encouraged to engage in such documentation if the institution develops and provides guidelines or specific instructions regarding what should be

provided. The monograph of Glassick et al³ contains extensive discussion of the qualities and elements that should be present in such documentation. Although there is a fairly extensive body of educational literature describing the need for the consideration and evaluation of unpublished scholarship, there is relatively little information available on the practical approaches that have been attempted for this purpose, and this author was unable to identify any source of information that included meaningful outcomes of such attempts. Thorough descriptions of development and implementation of processes for the documentation and assessment of unpublished scholarship are available for the University of Wisconsin.⁴ Key pragmatic aspects of that process included workshops for both faculty and assessors on the nature and benefits of scholarship, and subsequent to those workshops, 165 documented peer reviews of unpublished scholarship were completed in a span of 3 years.

To date, all reviewers at SCUHS have been SCUHS faculty, but the use of external reviewers could be a valuable resource for future reviews of this type. Before adoption of any process or instrument for the formal review of scholarship unassociated with peer-reviewed publication, a sequential process of review, amendment, and approval would have to be undertaken by the Professional Personnel Committee, the faculty senate, and the institution's academic team. It appears at this juncture that this process will not be completed in the foreseeable future, because peer review has not been deemed of sufficient priority to be discussed in any of these venues for more than a year.

CONCLUSION

A rubric for the qualitative evaluation of unpublished scholarship has been developed and piloted at the Southern California University of Health Sciences. Use of an instrument of this type presents potential for benefit through improved quality of scholarship of teaching and integration and through increased awareness and appreciation of the nature of such scholarship. The rubric has been provided for consideration and use by interested parties.

Received, April 21, 2007

Revised, October 18, 2007

Accepted, October 21, 2007

Address correspondence to: Robert Ward, DC, 762 W. Lambert Road, #11, La Habra, CA 90631; robward13@earthlink.net.

REFERENCES

1. Boyer EL. Scholarship reconsidered: priorities of the professoriate. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; 1990, pp. 15–25.
2. Boileau DM. “Scholarship reconsidered”: a challenge to use teaching portfolios to document the scholarship of teaching. *J Assoc Commun Adm* 1993;3–4:19–24.
3. Glassick C, Huber M, Maeroff G. Scholarship assessed: a special report on faculty evaluation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; 1997, pp. 22–49.
4. Wise G, Retzleff D, Reilly K. Adapting “scholarship reconsidered” and “scholarship assessed” to evaluate University of Wisconsin-extension outreach faculty for tenure and promotion. *J High Educ Outreach Engagement* 2002;7(3):5–18.

Appendix: Rubric for Evaluation of Scholarship of Teaching

(Available for download from www.journalchiroed.com)

Faculty peer review of “scholarship of teaching”

Reviewer: _____

Reviewee: _____

Date: _____

Title of reviewed material: _____

Type of work product:

- Classroom/workshop presentation
- Lecture manual
- Lab manual
- Other: _____

Review of scholarship:

Goals

- | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| – Basic purpose clearly stated | – Purpose implied | – Purpose omitted |
| – Objectives are clear, realistic, and achievable | – Objectives either unclear or unrealistic | – No discernable objectives |
| – Important questions in the area of inquiry identified and stated | – Important questions in the area of inquiry omitted or unclear | |

Comments: _____

Preparation

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| – Good understanding of the existing scholarship in the area/topic demonstrated | – Fair understanding of the existing scholarship in the area/topic demonstrated | – Deficient understanding of the existing scholarship in the area/topic demonstrated | – Reviewer unable to assess level of understanding of the existing scholarship in the area/topic demonstrated |
|---|---|--|---|

Comments: _____

Appropriate methods

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| – Selected methods are appropriate to stated goals | – Selected methods are appropriate to some, but not all, goals | – Selected methods are inappropriate to stated goals |
| – Selected methods have been effectively applied | – Selected methods have not been effectively applied | |
| – Methods/procedures were appropriately modified in response to changing circumstances | – Methods/procedures were inappropriately modified in response to changing circumstances | – There is no evidence of a need to modify methods/procedures in response to changing circumstances |

Comments: _____

Results

– Goals were achieved	– Goals were partially achieved	– Goals were not achieved, or achievement cannot be assessed
– The work adds meaningfully to the topic/area of inquiry	– The work adds marginally to the topic/area of inquiry	– The work does not add to the topic/area of inquiry
– The work opens AND identifies additional areas of future exploration	– The work opens OR identifies additional areas of future exploration	– The work neither opens nor identifies additional areas of future exploration

Comments:

Presentation

– Style of presentation was excellent	– Style of presentation was suitable/satisfactory	– Style of presentation needed significant improvement
– Organization of presentation was excellent	– Organization of presentation was satisfactory	– Presentation was ineffectively organized
– Venue/forum/medium was appropriate to the intended audience	– Venue/forum/medium was inappropriate to the intended audience	
– The message was presented clearly throughout	– The message was generally clear	– The message was not presented clearly

Comments:

Reflection

– There was meaningful, critical self-evaluation of the work	– There was minimal critical self-evaluation of the work	– There was no critical self-evaluation of the work
– An appropriate breadth of evidence was brought to the self-critique	– An insufficient breadth of evidence was brought to the self-critique	– No evidence was brought to the self-critique
– There were significant or meaningful suggestions for improvement to future similar works	– Suggestions for improvement of future works were made, but were not particularly meaningful or significant	– No suggestions for improvement to future works were made

Comments:

Global assessment

– This work constitutes a meaningful scholarly effort	– It is not clear whether this work constitutes a meaningful scholarly effort	– This work does not constitute a meaningful scholarly effort
---	---	---

Comments: