



ATG¹ Brief | Leadership blog post, August 2019

THE 'TEACHER-SCHOLAR MODEL' AND BOYER'S DEFINITIONS OF SCHOLARSHIP

David V. Rosowsky, Ph.D.

In my writing and speaking about US higher education, I frequently highlight the three pillars of our mission at University of Vermont (UVM) as a land-grant university: teaching, research and scholarship, and service. This includes our pedagogical innovations and commitment to excellence in teaching; our research activity; our investments in support of faculty research and scholarship; the success of our faculty in securing extramural support for their research and scholarship; and the impact of our research, innovation, and discovery. This also includes the meaningful and important work our faculty, staff, and students are doing in our communities and throughout the state of Vermont, whether in education, agriculture, family business, social services, or rural health.

In many ways, the *Teacher-Scholar* model we embrace at Vermont embodies all three pillars of the land-grant mission. UVM's *Teacher-Scholar* model has been part of our university's ethos for generations, likely from its very inception. It has been embraced and emulated by other leading universities over the years. But, I believe, we are unique in our long record (more than 228 years) of consistent and unwavering commitment to this modality of teaching, learning, discovery, and discourse. We recruit faculty who are committed not only to undergraduate teaching, but to engaging undergraduate students in scholarship and discovery. We maintain a diverse and robust portfolio of graduate and professional programs, many highly ranked, but never at the expense of our commitment to undergraduate education. We have created a continuum of learning and discovery engaging undergraduate students, graduate and professional students, and faculty and staff. In part because of our size and in part because of our culture, our undergraduate students are afforded opportunities not found at most research universities.

The *Teacher-Scholar* model at UVM is a beacon to would-be students, attracting those who seek an intimate and engaging undergraduate experience but also the benefits and opportunities of a research university. It also is a signal to would-be faculty of the value we

¹ *Across the Green* was started as a series of periodic letters from Provost Rosowsky to provide updates on current initiatives and information on topics of interest to the broader UVM academic community. Started in 2013, *Across the Green* was published three times per year during the six years Dr. Rosowsky served as UVM's Provost and Senior Vice President. The *ATG Brief* series continues in the spirit of this communication with topics focused on higher education and leadership.

place on teaching excellence, student mentoring, and bringing their scholarship into their classrooms and their students into their laboratories.

We continue not only to promote our commitment to the *Teacher-Scholar* model, but to invest in it as well. During my six years as provost, we have added new resources to enable and expand opportunities for students as well as for faculty; new recognitions of excellence and exemplars; and new professional development opportunities for faculty around teaching effectiveness, advising, and mentoring.

At one of senior leadership retreats, we dedicated a session to the Teacher-Scholar model, its place at UVM, and definitions of scholarship that could capture and excite (reflect and inspire) the greatest number of faculty on our campus. The discussion, which I led with our Vice President for Research, was intentionally provocative and unexpectedly robust. It ended up becoming a highlight of the retreat for me and others, a focal point for the new academic year, and a presentation that we repeated to other audiences (including the board of trustees, the faculty senate, and other campus leadership and governance groups). There was broad support for the definitions of scholarship first articulated by Ernest L. Boyer (1990) in his seminal report, “Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate,” published by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Boyer proposes four different categories of scholarship: (1) the scholarship of discovery, (2) the scholarship of integration, (3) the scholarship of application (also called the scholarship of engagement), and (4) the scholarship of teaching and learning.

The *scholarship of discovery* refers to original research that advances the state-of-the-art or our knowledge. The *scholarship of integration* refers to the synthesis of information across disciplines. The *scholarship of application* refers to the application of disciplinary expertise beyond the university, in such a way that it can still be evaluated by peers. Finally, the *scholarship of teaching and learning* refers to the systematic study of teaching and learning processes, also in a form that can be evaluated by peers. (Note this final category is not the same as scholarly teaching, which generally is not shared publicly or subject to peer review.)

Three of Boyer’s categories of scholarship map directly onto the three missions of land-grant universities: teaching, research, and service. The fourth category explicitly identifies interdisciplinary scholarship. This is both timely and relevant as it reflects the trends toward greater interdisciplinary teaching, research, and scholarship. This is especially relevant for our faculty as it has long been a priority for the University and, in fact, is both protected and incented.

What I find so compelling about Boyer’s categorization is that it spans the breadth of scholarly activities, allowing all members of the professoriate to align their scholarship with one or more categories, and provides both a justification for our work and a confirmation of its value and importance. It also smooths the continuum between teaching/learning and research/discovery – a hallmark of our *Teacher-Scholar* model. I often asked our deans to engage their colleges and schools in a discussion of Boyer’s scholarship classifications, to seek ways to incorporate them into their strategic plans, and ensure high achievement in all four types of scholarship is both valued and recognized.

Nearly three decades later, Boyer's definitions of scholarship still ring true. Taken together, they offer a compelling and enduring framework for our universities seeking to promote and protect the *Teacher-Scholar* Model and elevate the visibility and recognized value of scholarship in all its dimensions. Since Boyer's seminal 1990 report, universities have faced a new challenge, defining and recognizing another category: the scholarship of intellectual property (patents) and tech transfer (including the launch of startups). Perhaps Boyer's *scholarship of application* is closest, but this new form of scholarship is a byproduct of a new role of research universities that is far more entrepreneurial.

As universities' roles evolve and we expand our recruitment of scholars to include faculty having different skills, expectations, and opportunities, we should continue to revisit definitions of scholarship upon which we base promotion and tenure decisions, identify institutional goals and priorities, and seek to fulfil our mission to society.



David V. Rosowsky is Professor of Engineering at the University of Vermont and served for six years as UVM's Provost and Senior Vice President. These personal reflections are based on 15 years of experience leading organizational and institutional change in higher education. Prior to joining UVM in 2013, he served as Dean of Engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and before that as Head of the Zachry Department of Civil Engineering at Texas A&M University. He previously held the A.P. and Florence Wiley Chair in Civil Engineering at Texas A&M University and the Richardson Chair in Wood Engineering and Mechanics at Oregon State University. He is a Fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Structural Engineering Institute, and the Institute of Science, Technology, and Public Policy at the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University. In 2019, he was a Fellow and member of the inaugural cohort of the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) Institute for Leadership and Governance in Higher Education.

Twitter: @DavidRosowsky

LinkedIn: David Rosowsky