



Faculty Forum

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Community Service – An Alternate Interpretation

By Erin McNelis

Those who know me well will probably not be surprised at the subject of this submission ... SERVICE. It's a topic close to my heart, and in all honesty, central to my personal identity. Yet service, more specifically university service, seems to be the least valued of the three activities by which all faculty are measured: teaching, scholarship, and service.

I am proud to be a member of a university that has been recognized for its innovation in the areas of teaching and scholarship, in particular enhancing educational opportunities for our students through engaged learning and implementing a progressive model of scholarship in the collegial review process. Still, I challenge you to think about the following: central to the mission of engaged learning and at least three of the four areas of scholarship as defined by the Boyer Model is the concept of collaboration – working together for a common goal. In terms of engaged learning, students take an active role in their education, working in collaboration with faculty members and oftentimes with their classmates or community, to achieve the educational goals they seek. Scholarship of Integration can involve inter- or intra-disciplinary work requiring communication and collaboration between areas with the anticipation of adding value to both. Scholarship of Application or Engagement promotes advancement through the collaborative sharing of disciplinary expertise. Pivotal to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is the dissemination of results to enhance the community of educators. My question for us is “Why don't we extend this sense of collaboration and engagement to our university service work?”

Service, by its nature, should be work done for a greater good, be it in terms of a unifying belief, a valuable cause, or the well being of a community. Too often university service can be seen as a chore, busy work, or a means of satisfying a category on a tenure check-sheet. I know there have been times that I have felt that way towards some of my committee work. But I believe that we as a community can change that perception.

First, we must make deliberate choices. Don't say yes (or no!) to every call for participation. Take a careful look at what opportunities there are and choose to get involved in what matters to you! A user's guide to university service at Western Carolina University is nearing completion, developed over the summer by a small group directed by Laura Cruz, and should enable all faculty, especially those in their first year or two of service, to make careful and informed choices about committee membership.

Second, approach your work with a community attitude. Recognize that you and your colleagues have a common interest and goal, and each person brings valuable knowledge, experiences, and talent to the effort. Make community-minded decisions rather than personal decisions. Also, keep in mind that as a part of a team, we must all take our responsibilities seriously and come prepared to do the work at hand.

The final and most difficult adjustment we must make to change the perception of university service is a change of attitude. **We must value work done in service to the university – in our attitudes, in our actions, and in our decisions.** How do we do this? Of that I'm not certain. My personal view is to have that change start with yourself and trust that your attitude will positively influence those around you.

With that, I would like to say that I am honored to represent the Faculty of Western Carolina University as their Chair, and I want to better enable myself, and all members of the Faculty Senate, to make informed and thoughtful decisions on your behalf. In order to do this, I hope that each faculty member will feel comfortable and compelled to share their thoughts with me and with their Senate representatives. A guide to the Faculty Senate including photos and contact information for the members of Senate has been created to help make it easier for faculty to know how to make those connections. I also intend to provide more opportunities for the Senate to directly update faculty on issues at hand and progress on Senate actions. Please join your Senators in strengthening this body of community service.

Erin McNelis joined Western Carolina University in August 2002. She is an Associate Professor of Mathematics and currently serves as the Faculty Chair and the Coordinator of the Applied Mathematics Graduate Program. She is active in interdisciplinary research, particularly mathematical biology and computational science, and has led national workshops for scientists and educators in these areas. Currently preparing an introductory text on scientific computing, Erin has also published and presented work in incorporating simulation and modeling in mathematics courses.

**Coulter Faculty Commons for Teaching and Learning
Responses to the May 2010 Faculty Forum article by Mary Jean Herzog
entitled
36 Hours in Greater Cullowhee**

*Our April and May 2010 Faculty Forum features by Marie Line Germain and Mary Jean Herzog, respectively, generated a lot of lively discussion among faculty about what it means to live and work in Cullowhee. The articles and discussion reflect the greater Cullowhee community dialog of the future of this community, its growth and leadership in relation to the rapidly growing university. This month's article by Erin McNelis takes that discussion of the community/university interface one step further, placing it into an academic realm. Those who follow up twenty years down the road will know from these Faculty Forum archives that WE were thinking and talking about this university and community of the future. Keep talking!
Vera Holland Guise, Faculty Fellow, Coulter Faculty Commons*



Mary Jean makes a good point: some rural prejudiced people think there is nothing to do in Cullowhee. I think it is due to lack of a broader living knowledge and imagination. I do a lot of shopping in Asheville for some specialized foods or certain shoes, etc. But that does not mean I don't have a few choices for food purchase here as well. Maybe this little piece will help out those that have a narrow view of country or suburbia living.

*Cheers,
Dan*

J. Dan Pittillo is a retired professor, WCU Department of Biology



That's great! I just hope that won't start the perennial city vs. rural living debate. One precision: Mary Jane wrote I commute every day, driving 2 hours. I would have never accepted the job if I had to commute from Asheville every day. I typically come to campus once or twice a week to teach my courses! That's it. I do my office hours at UNCA, 5 minutes away from my home. Thanks again for offering a great discussion platform though The Forum.

*Best regards,
Marie Line Germain, Assistant Professor, Human Resources and Leadership*



I am putting together for a faculty search packet and would like to include this article. Any chance of getting hard copies?

Mickey Randolph



Great article! This should be used for recruiting new faculty. I can tell that you understand why Sarah and I are keeping our home here as a mountain retreat from southeastern NC. Later, when we retire, we'll spend a significant amount of our time in the mountains.

All the best,

kc

*Kyle R. Carter
Provost and Sr. Vice Chancellor*

A Note From The Editor:

We urge you to add your comments to Faculty Forum articles. It enriches the faculty dialogue about these many issues that concern us all. Comment to this article by clicking on this link then select the article under What's Hot on the top right: <https://media.wcu.edu/groups/facultyforum/>. The command requires you to use your email username and password to access the article. The Faculty Forum is a publication by and for WCU faculty, so this is our method of limiting access. To access the article as a PDF, please select the article link at the following URL: <http://www.wcu.edu/24987.asp>.

The direct link to the main Faculty Forum Webpage is: <http://www.wcu.edu/7480.asp>.

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