



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

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Faculty Responses

Thank God someone finally spoke up for this side, and Dick Bruce did it very well. But how many of the scientists who do a lot of research teach a 12-hour load like the humanists (and many other proletariat) do? Has anyone done a study of teaching load *vis a vis* research productivity?

an unidentified humanist (not necessarily secular, though)

Thanks for sharing with us the thoughts of Richard Bruce. I think he is correct in stating the need for research at our university, or any university. He is also apparently correct in recognizing the need to restate this position. The anti-research sentiments expressed in the **Faculty Forum** and elsewhere on campus are not shared by all the faculty. To what extent they are shared is difficult to determine and probably not worth speculating on, except where the effects can be felt, such as in the lack of support for research.

I do not resent the **Forum** statements and agree that teaching deserves publicity; I try to remember that the **Faculty Forum** is published in the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence. Scholarship in the form of research enjoys a natural outlet in our professional literature, and teaching excellence does not often have the same outlet. We have provided a publication to do so and in this way we have added to the dimensions of scholarship.

It is my opinion that research is essential for the quality of teaching and I appreciate Richard Bruce's contribution to the dialogue.

Dale Carpenter, Human Services

Dick Bruce correctly indicates that the **Faculty Forum** gives the impression that the University values teaching above all else. However, conversations with colleagues associated with the tenure and promotion process leads me to a quite different conclusion about the reality of the situation. The "grapevine" has it that minimally competent teaching coupled with a good research record usually leads to tenure, whereas good, even outstanding teaching without a research program leads ultimately to either the Chronicle "want ads" or permanent associate professor status. Thus, while we pay lip service to the holy trinity of Teaching, Research, and Service, Research is the most highly rewarded, assuming that one has passable teaching skills.

Is it time to acknowledge that college faculty have different abilities and interests? I find research a major source of personal satisfaction, but some of my colleagues, superb teachers, do not share my enthusiasm for the "paper chase." Some colleges and universities are establishing flexible work loads so that faculty members who find research rewarding can contract to produce a certain number of papers, grant proposals, etc. in a given academic year in trade for reduced course loads. Similarly, faculty who find research a drudge can teach more rather than grinding out articles simply because it is a requirement

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for tenure and promotion. Given the multiple missions of the University, the glut of meaningless and trivial "scholarly" papers, and the surprisingly low relationship between publication rates and teacher evaluations, perhaps we should consider a more flexible faculty evaluation system so that people are rewarded for what they do best.

Hal Herzog, Psychology

What a shame that so many regard the "terminal degree" as indeed terminal! As one of the faculty that has yet to achieve the doctorate, I know that my research and study will not terminate with the hood and sheepskin of the Ph.D or the tenure track position in a college or university. I would be less of a teacher if I were to sit back and rest after the dissertation rather than to embark on some new, bold adventure in search of more knowledge in or out of my specialization. However, there are some who need an after-research hiatus, a break from the rigors of scholarship, and these people need the change of pace that can be found in the challenges of the classroom, allowing new experiences and communications to have a field day and make furrows in cogitative soil. When they are ready to sow a new crop of inquiry, there will be fresh nitrogen to fuel the task. I defend both--the researcher for continuing the quest and the instructor for gathering energy from the vital community of students. There is room for both of us.

anonymous

I think the definition of what constitutes "research" is often too narrowly defined by a large number of people, including, in some cases, people who sit on Tenure and Promotion Committees or in other administrative positions. The common definition of "research" would appear in many cases to be limited to work done outside the classroom which leads to publication. Perhaps the problem is that not all kinds of research are easily documentable.

I am a designer and "constructor" of scenery and lighting for theatrical productions as well as being a teacher of these processes. Tremendous amounts of time are spent in studying the text of a play, researching the historical period and/or geographical locale, studying the architecture, considering the psychological aspects of the intended performance, and selecting materials and colors for every production that is mounted. Is this "research"? It resembles much of what is done by other people as research but I have no product to show as a result except for a line in a program or photographs of my work. And how can someone in a far different field know how to evaluate the research that went into my work? I suspect that much the same situation occurs in the Art Department. The curator of an exhibit spends a great deal of time planning an exhibit, selecting the works to be included, assembling them, etc., but is that "research"? How about the musician who spends hours planning his performance--considering correct technique, tone coloring, or phrasing? Is that research?

I would say that it is. But how can it be documented in a form that is comparable to and understood by the traditional researcher/scholar? I would suggest that the only possible solution is to consider carefully what "research" means. If it only means activity leading to traditional publication then we have to consider what impact that definition has on the institution as a whole. I am a designer, but I have the skills to do "traditional" research. I don't do much of it because I spend my research time creating theatre. If this sort of activity is not valued in our community, I can do other things, but I would suggest that in my case (and I suspect in that of many others) my teaching would suffer as a result and so would our community as a whole.

Richard S. Beam, Speech and Theatre Arts