

The Boyer Model of Scholarship

In "Enlarging the Perspective," the second chapter, Boyer outlines four "separate but overlapping functions of scholarship which constitute the primary work of the professoriate: discovery, integration, application and teaching. These constitute "the Boyer Model" of scholarship....

Boyer takes issue with the assumptions we make about what constitutes "scholarship. People assume a linear cause-and-effect relationship between scholarship that moves from research, to publication, to application to teaching. It's as though the latter are not considered part of scholarship at all, but "grow out of it" (15). Boyer contests: "The arrow of causality can, and frequently does, point in both directions. Theory surely leads to practice. But practice also leads to theory. Teaching, at its best, shapes both research and practice".

Thus begins Boyer's mission to parse out the four levels of scholarship into the following model. All four elements "dynamically interact, forming an interdependent whole".

DISCOVERY: This element of scholarship is purely investigative, in search of new information. At the core of scholarship, it is "what contributes not only to the stock of human knowledge but also to the intellectual climate of a college or university" and Boyer considers investigation and research "at the very heart of academic life". These scholars ask, "What is to be known? What is yet to be found?"

INTEGRATION: This element of scholarship is what happens when scholars put isolated facts into perspective, "making connections across the disciplines, placing the specialties in larger context, illuminating data in a revealing way" -- work that "seeks to interpret, draw together, and bring new insight to bear on original research". Closely related to discovery, integration draws connections and examines contexts often in an interdisciplinary and interpretive way. Boyer sees integration as growing trend in universities, where disciplines are converging and the boundaries between fields is becoming blurry. These scholars ask "What do the findings mean? Is it possible to interpret what's been discovered in ways that provide a larger, more comprehensive understanding?"

APPLICATION: This element of scholarship is the most practical in that it seeks out ways in which knowledge can solve problems and serve both the community and the campus. As opposed to merely "citizenship," Boyer argues that "to be considered scholarship, service activities must be tied directly to one's special field of knowledge and relate to, and flow directly out of, this professional activity". He importantly notes that knowledge is not necessarily first "discovered" and then later "applied" -- "new intellectual understandings," Boyer writes, "can arise out of the very act of application...theory and practice vitally interact and one renews the other". These scholars ask "How can knowledge be responsibly applied to problems? How can it be helpful to people and institutions?"

TEACHING: This element of scholarship recognizes the work that goes into mastery of knowledge as well as the presentation of information so that others might understand it. "Teaching, at its best, means not only transmitting knowledge, but transforming and extending it as well" -- and by interacting with students, professors themselves are pushed in creative new directions. These scholars ask "How can knowledge best be transmitted to others and best learned?"

Boyer, Ernest L., 1990. Scholarship reconsidered: priorities of the professoriate, A special report. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Princeton University Press, 151 p.