

## **The Influence of Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered* in Promotion and Tenure Policies: Research Brief**

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### **Abstract:**

This research brief presents findings and analysis of the presence of Ernest Boyer's writings in *Scholarship Reconsidered* in promotion and tenure policy at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). These findings are part of a much larger and more comprehensive research study that examined how one U.S. research university integrated recognition of community-engaged scholarship into the promotion and tenure policies of 59 departments, seven units, and the university policy.

**Keywords:** promotion and tenure | University of North Carolina at Greensboro | UNCG | community-engaged scholarship

### **Research Brief:**

**\*\*\*Note: Full text of article below**



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### *Abstract*

This research brief presents findings and analysis of the presence of Ernest Boyer's writings in *Scholarship Reconsidered* in promotion and tenure policy at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). These findings are part of a much larger and more comprehensive research study that examined how one U.S. research university integrated recognition of community-engaged scholarship into the promotion and tenure policies of 59 departments, seven units, and the university policy.

Analysis of promotion and tenure policies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) suggests that many units were likely influenced by Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (1990). His work argued for expanding notions of faculty research by identifying four overlapping but distinct categories of scholarship, what he labeled Discovery (basic research), Application (applied research), Integration (interdisciplinary research) and the Scholarship of Teaching (research on teaching to improve practice, later to be known as the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, or SOTL). In 2016, he further expanded on the *Scholarship of Engagement*. Boyer's goal was to broaden what it meant to be a research scholar beyond what was traditionally valued in the university (basic and applied research) and to elevate teaching as an area of scholarly inquiry as a way of improving undergraduate education.

Boyer's main argument, made in *Scholarship Reconsidered*, had a significant impact on institutions of higher education in the decade of the 1990s, which used his categories to revise promotion and tenure guidelines to both encourage and fairly reward a broad range of faculty research activity (Lazerson, et al 2000; O'Meara, 2015). Boyer's ideas were particularly influential in the sector of higher education where most undergraduates were enrolled in pursuit of a bachelor's degree – the state, public colleges and universities (Braxton, 2015). It was on these campuses that teaching was highly valued and rewarded, even as research priorities rose in prominence. Campuses like UNCG likely found Boyer's categories appealing in the 1990s as a way of supporting and rewarding a range of scholarly research and at the same time highlighting the importance of teaching and learning. In the revised policy documents, we found remnants of Boyer's prior influence, as well as a continued importance placed on teaching and learning as essential to what it means to be a scholar at this state, public, research university. This was framed in many of the documents as a "scholar-teacher-participant model of faculty responsibility."

## Analysis

Across all documents coded, there were 27 instances of Boyer's categories, either using explicit Boyer terminology or using similar language. There were two instances of Boyer being used specifically in regards to community-engaged scholarship. Looking across the units, we found Boyer's categories referenced in relation to general scholarship in the University-wide policy, and in six of the seven College/School level policies. For some Schools/Colleges, Boyer's categories did not translate down to the department policies. While all of the departments in the School of Health and Human Services echoed Boyer, only five of the 21 departments in the College of Arts and Sciences indicated Boyer's influence.

It was difficult to interpret whether the allusions to Boyer in the policy documents and the seemingly ritual assertions of the scholar-teacher-practitioner model were cultural remnants of an earlier era less pressured by prestige seeking and rankings, or whether these remain central to the current faculty culture at UNCG.

Boyer-like language appeared in the revised university-level policies, as well as in some college and some department-level policies. In the university-level policy, there is the statement "research and creative activities include all forms of discovery and integration of knowledge." The policy for the Department of Interior Architecture reads "integrative, applied, or pedagogical scholarship will be clearly based in and informed by the candidate's original research." In these cases there are clear echoes of Boyer. In other cases those echoes are more explicit. For example, in the Department of Peace Studies, "evaluation of faculty members' work is done within the context of their choice of an academic profile (Scholarship of Discovery, Application, or Teaching)." In the School of Health and Human Services policy, there are "three academic profiles described..., Profile I: "The Scholarship of Discovery," Profile II: "The Scholarship of Application," and Profile III: "The Scholarship of Teaching." In two cases, the Department of

Interior Architecture and in the Department of Public Health, were the Boyer categories linked to community-engaged scholarship: “Community-engaged scholarship may make contributions to all areas of scholarship: discovery, application, integration, and education.” Inferences to the Boyer categories of scholarship appear in the institution level policy, in five of the college/school policies, and in four departments’ policies.

In some cases, departments used Boyer’s categories in a hierarchical way, making the Scholarship of Discovery the norm, reinforcing the primacy of basic research, exactly what Boyer was trying to counter. For example, in the Department of Nutrition, the guidelines assert “the expectation to conduct either basic or translational research, Profile I (“The Scholarship of Discovery”),...is normally to be followed by the candidate...In traditionally following Profile I, the main emphasis is establishing and/or maintaining a sound research program.” In the Department of Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies (CARS), there is the framing that the Scholarship of Discovery is “the more “common” profile for promotion and tenure decisions in CARS.” Cases like these suggest that the policies may be opening up space for emerging forms of scholarship, but the culture of narrowing conceived scientific research may still dominate.

### **Implications for Practice**

For campuses that are revising their promotion and tenure guidelines, it will be important to write policies that clearly create space for valuing emerging forms of scholarship and the kinds of products that emerge from that scholarship. In other words, it is not enough to insert language about community-engaged scholarship – and then prioritize established norms of scholarship for promotion and tenure.

### **Implications for Scholarship**

Keeping in mind that the revised University policies make it clear that “research is not synonymous with scholarship,” policies will signal the kinds of research as well as the kinds of teaching and learning that is encouraged and valued. Regarding research, clear language about community engagement as a form of research will open space for scholars to pursue approaches like community-based participatory action research (CBPR) and a range of research products that it can produce. Regarding teaching and learning as a form of faculty scholarly work, community-engaged teaching and learning embraces the backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences of students and off-campus partners along with the expertise of faculty. In this learner-centered, asset-based form of education, students contribute significantly to the learning process and diverse forms of knowledge and experience helps shape the learning that collectively takes place.

### **Further Questions**

The significance of the influence of Boyer’s *Scholarship of Engagement* for the current study of revised promotion and tenure guidelines is that it may be that the groundwork was laid

in the 1990s for opening up space for creative and innovative scholarly research to be rewarded through faculty reward policy. This may have established a faculty culture that was open to further expansion of categories of scholarship to include emerging forms like community engaged scholarship.

For campuses considering revision to promotion and tenure guidelines, it may be that it will be important to assess the cultural foundations that have been developed on campus for embracing emerging forms of scholarship. This raises the question of readiness for culture change. At UNCG that culture change readiness had been shaped, to some extent, and particularly in the School of Health and Human Sciences, by the adoption of Boyer's reconsideration of scholarship, and this may have been essential for the further revisions that took place in 2010 and after. Said differently, it may be much more of a challenge to successfully undertake a revision process to embed community-engaged scholarship in faculty reward policies when there has not been prior efforts at shifting the culture on campus in regards to expanding the kinds of scholarly work that is rewarded through promotion and tenure policies.

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