

The scholarship of engagement in nursing

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Abstract:

We propose the time is right for the Scholarship of Engagement to serve as a model of scholarship in schools of nursing given the shift towards community- based research and the emphasis of community- based research in the recently published National Institutes of Health (NIH) roadmap initiative. Thus, this article addresses the need of nursing academe to embrace a broader paradigm of scholarship, the Scholarship of Engagement, in order to expand knowledge development via implementation of the NIH roadmap. The need for implementation of a broader paradigm of nursing science within the context of nursing academics' roles is discussed.

Knowledge breeds knowledge; the more knowledge we need, the more we are stimulated and challenged to further develop an understanding of phenomena.”¹ Hence, the development and utilization of knowledge is requisite to the survival and growth of a profession. To date, the paradigm guiding the development of knowledge in nursing science has encouraged individual programs of research by promoting the tradition of solo principal investigators.² Through its various funding mechanisms, with an emphasis on the RO' (traditional NIH grant funding mechanism), the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have been instrumental in facilitating this type of valuable scholarship. However, recently, the NIH “rolled out” a roadmap that implies an expansion of ways in which knowledge- generation will occur through research. “The Roadmap purpose is to move science forward in a synergistic, different way than in the past—not business as usual, but business as usual plus.”²

Implementation of this roadmap will require a shift to a paradigm that emphasizes clinical and translational research by “developing new partnerships of research with organized patient communities, community-based physicians, and academic researchers.”² Yet, old habits, barriers, and structures must be overcome in order to stimulate and increase these new collaborative activities.² Most nursing academics are already familiar with the Boyer’s model of scholarship, which is built upon the scholarship of discovery, integration, application and teaching.³ Yet, the demands of today’s health care arena, and the partnerships it mandates, as well as the needs of broader society, demand a new form of scholarship: the Scholarship of Engagement. This new scholarship could be the guiding paradigm for knowledge-development in nursing in the future and, thus, be a useful way to operationalize and implement the roadmap via research models in the academic setting. This new paradigm extends Boyer’s definition of scholarship.²⁻⁶ Thus, the Scholarship of Engagement emphasizes true collaboration between

academe and the community, going much further than what has been traditionally termed outreach and service or research in the community versus research with the community.^{2,3}

BACKGROUND

Nursing schools have thus far served as centers for nursing knowledge development and have typically been at the forefront of knowledge necessary for nursing practice. The National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) has noted that successful implementation of the roadmap will require attention to making structural and other adjustments to decrease barriers to change, such as altering reward systems to “forge partnerships needed for change.”² To ensure success, the changes must occur in nursing academic institutions as they embrace the roadmap.

One barrier to new collaborative models of research is the current climate in many schools of nursing. Collegiate-based nursing scholars generate the preponderance of nursing knowledge. However, Meleis notes “nursing education has a long history of squelching curiosity and replacing it with conformity and a non-questioning attitude.”¹ Nursing education’s tendency to silence conversations which embrace scholarly curiosity and reinforce the notion that conformity and non-questioning behaviors are valued norms is an issue of critical importance to the perpetuation of nursing science. The utilization of the NIH roadmap will dramatically change the way nurse scientists approach the generation of science. For example, not only will an interdisciplinary approach to research be required, but approaches that bridge settings and incorporate nontraditional co-investigators (eg, lay persons) will be necessary. Nurse scientists have, unlike some in other disciplines, been pursuing interdisciplinary research all along. NINR notes that an interdisciplinary approach is a strength of nursing research and places nursing in a position to lead in accomplishing the NIH roadmap initiative.⁶ Due to the interdisciplinary nature of nursing practice, nurse scientists often find the experience of collaboration with other scientists less challenging than those scientists in other disciplines who are less experienced with this approach. In addition, institutions must extend and revise their criteria for evaluation of scholarship, as well as valuing investigators’ efforts and successes at reaching out to community and minority members to actively participate in the design of the research.²

We propose that successful implementation of the NIH Roadmap, which we operationalize as the Scholarship of Engagement, is pivotal to the current system’s acknowledgement and reward of participating faculty. How can this occur in a nursing academic environment which currently acknowledges and rewards faculty performance based primarily on the current paradigm of the scholarship of discovery? For example, the philosophy that sole and primary authorship is considered more important than collaborative co-authored papers, or the role of solo principal investigator is more valued than the collaborative research role.

Since the Carnegie Foundation’s publication of Boyer’s “Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities for the Professoriate,” the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) has called for “a broader definition of scholarship” that includes “multiple dimensions of scholarly excellence.”^{3,4} Boyer’s definition of scholarship included the scholarship of teaching, application (practice), integration, and discovery, which was later adopted by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.³ Another aspect of scholarship is what the AAHE later termed “the Scholarship of Engagement.” The Scholarship of Engagement, which could be considered an extension of the Boyer’s model of scholarship, emphasizes true collaboration between academe and the

community, going much further than what has been traditionally termed outreach and service or research in the community (versus research with the community).^{2,3}

We propose the time is right for the Scholarship of Engagement to serve as a model of scholarship in schools of nursing, given the shift towards community-based research and the emphasis on community-based research in the recently published National Institutes of Health (NIH) roadmap initiative.^{6,7} As stated in the NIH Roadmap Overview, “at the core of this vision is the need to develop new partnerships of research with organized patient communities, community-based physicians, and academic researchers.”⁶ Thus, NIH’s perspective is a much broader, all-inclusive, practice-related, translational research-focused vision that offers clear direction for the implementation of a model of Scholarship of Engagement.

OVERVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP OF ENGAGEMENT

The Scholarship of Engagement, based on David Schon’s “reflexive practitioner,” challenges traditional epistemology that places theory above practice in the hierarchy of knowledge production.⁴ The parity of theory and practice are evidenced through the 3 components of the Scholarship of Engagement: engaged pedagogy, community-based research, and collaborative practice.⁴ Engaged pedagogy is a new method of teaching and learning that moves students into the community for active learning experiences, within the social context of the community. Over the past few years, service-learning and learning community models have been incorporated into a number of baccalaureate nursing programs.

Another focus in the Scholarship of Engagement, according to the AAHE, is community-based research.⁴ Community-based research “is the emphasis on the participation and influence of nonacademic researchers in the process of creating knowledge.”⁸ Community-based research, while not a new concept, is research that has its context within the local community, and is research that benefits that community first and foremost.⁴ Community-based research must value community members as the experts on the local problems and faculty members as collaborators to help solve problems identified as priorities by members of the community.

A final component of the Scholarship of Engagement is collaborative practice. Collaborative practice is practice in the community by faculty with students to benefit communities. Currently, the AAHE is planning “to choose discrete problem areas where interdisciplinary groups of faculty and students can collaborate with community representatives in addressing concrete, protracted community-based issues.⁹ Reciprocity and shared responsibility will be the hallmarks of these efforts.”⁹ The AAHE has developed a project called “The Engaged Campus in a Diverse Democracy: Student Learning and Faculty Work” which is aimed at incorporating collaborative practice and education on several participating campuses.⁹

This approach to scholarship will require nursing academics to change traditional views of scholarship from an inward focus on faculty-derived research/practice interests to those outwardly focused on research/practice benefiting the community. Thus, barriers toward full partici-

Table 1. Principles of Good Practice: Supporting Early-Career Faculty

Practices that Support Early-Career Faculty:

- 1 communicate expectations for performance
- 2 give feedback on progress
- 3 enhance collegial review processes
- 4 create flexible timelines for tenure
- 5 encourage mentoring by senior faculty
- 6 extend mentoring and feedback to graduate students who aspire to be faculty members
- 7 recognize the department chair as a career sponsor
- 8 support teaching, particularly at the undergraduate level
- 9 support scholarly development
- 10 foster a balance between professional and personal life

pation in a Scholarship of Engagement should be anticipated.

REALIZATION OF THE SCHOLARSHIP OF ENGAGEMENT

The Scholarship of Engagement should be encouraged for all faculty, particularly early-career faculty, because this approach will lead to greater and more relevant knowledge-generation in the future. Department chairs, deans, and directors who create environments that value academic citizenship and community-based teaching, research, and practice, can do much to help accomplish this. Community-based research, collaborative practice, and engaged pedagogy should be incorporated into undergraduate and graduate nursing education. Obviously, accrediting agencies would need to establish accreditation standards that address successful integration of Scholarship of Engagement into the curriculum, which would support the needed cultural shift towards embracing the values of Scholarship of Engagement.

Ideally, the Scholarship of Engagement should be integrated early in an individual's academic career. The question arises as to the implementation, documentation, and evaluation of this integration, as well as the successes stemming from attempts at involvement in the Scholarship of Engagement. Because of their own philosophy or program of research, some faculty may not have interest in the Scholarship of Engagement and cannot embrace it. However, the broader nature of the Scholarship of Engagement provides opportunities for success for all faculty. Few could resist by being involved in some aspect of scholarly engagement, giving value to both teaching and research within one paradigm. As a result, the rigid hierarchical boundaries that define our current nursing academic paradigm— research versus teaching—could become more flexible. This flexibility would then allow for a broader base on which to determine the necessary criteria for faculty evaluation and promotion.

How can early-career faculty incorporate the Scholarship of Engagement into their academic careers? How can more seasoned faculty shift their scholarship from a more traditional definition of scholarship to a Scholarship of Engagement? How can seasoned faculty mentors and administrators support and promote the Scholarship of Engagement?

Results from several recent studies suggest several strategies.¹⁰⁻¹⁴ Tierney and Bensimon recommend faculty-development programs that “create environments that honor collaboration rather than individuation” and improve mentoring for teaching using nontraditional models of teaching such as critical or feminist pedagogies.¹⁴ Boice advocates the use of structured faculty-development programs that include group mentoring.¹⁰ Sorcinelli describes 10 principles of how to support early-career faculty. One of these (#9) is specifically geared toward supporting scholarly development by encouraging “a more integrated view of ‘scholarly’ work to encompass both a scholarship of teaching and a scholarship that responds to community needs and demands for applied research and public service” (See Table 1).¹⁵

Using Sorcinelli’s principles as a guide to provide tangible methods to achieve this change, additional or revised program objectives could be added to baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral curricula specific to the components of Scholarship of Engagement. An emphasis on mentoring relationships among faculty and students in all degree programs would be a key ingredient in the successful implementation of Scholarship of Engagement. One guiding principle for objective development specific to Scholarship of Engagement could be one of faculty- student collaborative teaching and research activities. These activities would include involvement with organized patient communities, community-based physicians, and academic researchers, all of which are consistent with the NIH Roadmap.

CONCLUSION

Potential benefits of the Scholarship of Engagement are twofold. First, the university benefits due to an enhanced ability of its faculty to meet the tripartite mission of service, scholarship and research brought about by addressing the barriers encountered by faculty in accomplishing that mission. Also, the value of faculty practice, education and research endeavors in the community is enhanced since these endeavors offer strategic opportunities to stimulate scholar-community collaboration. Such collaboration can result in the design and implementation of research, dissemination of subsequent findings, and application of these findings to address specific community needs or concerns. Second, faculty are empowered to attain goals to accomplish the university mission via a structure of scholarship that embraces and recognizes all faculty contributions.

We assert that embracing the Scholarship of Engagement while being vigilant of existing and potential barriers will aid in the attainment of scholarly and professional goals of nurse faculty and non-academic partners such as groups of patients and practice-focused nurses. Thus, our contributions as scholars will be more substantial and meaningful to communities and nursing practice, and the utilization of knowledge will result in more timely and useful interventions.

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