

The Civically Engaged Teacher-Scholar: Council on Civic Engagement Position Statement

Mission statements constantly remind us of who we are and what we are about. They are designed to guide our pedagogical discussions, our curricular initiatives, our innovations, and our sense of direction. Mission statements define our values and should be reflected in our policies for rewarding members of our community.

Elon's mission statement clearly articulates the institution's values to "nurture a rich intellectual community characterized by active student engagement with a faculty dedicated to excellent teaching and scholarly accomplishment." It also states that Elon is committed to engaged learning – putting knowledge into practice – in order to prepare our students to be "global citizens and informed leaders motivated by concern for the common good" and to fostering "an ethic of work and service." Elon's strategic plan, *The Elon Commitment. Engaged minds. Inspired leaders. Global citizens* (2009), reaffirms our dedication to this mission: "Strong civic engagement and service learning programs are the hallmark of an Elon education. We will partner with local, regional, national and global communities to create innovative solutions to society's most pressing problems at home and around the world" (p. 3). Accomplishing this mission will require holistic and intentional efforts both to engage the university's resources (including the broad range of human knowledge) and to nurture a university culture of faculty engagement where faculty can flourish as teacher-scholars while addressing some of our greatest and most persistent societal challenges.

The Task Force on Scholarship (2007) reports, "If faculty are to serve as scholarly models for their students, they must be much more active as researchers, scholars, and creative artists in their own disciplines" (p. 2). The Council would argue that this is also true of scholarship involving community and civic engagement. If we want our students to become leaders motivated by the common good, then they must have role models. Just as "student scholarship of high quality is dependent on models of high quality scholarship" (p. 7), student leaders motivated by the common good must have equally high quality experiences with faculty engaged in important, intellectual civic engagement work. Facilitating these experiences requires that students work closely with faculty to (1) become educated in the problems of society, (2) experience and understand, first hand, social issues in the local, national and international communities, and (3) attain the knowledge, experience, and skills to act on these problems. For Elon to become "*the* leader of the national conversation on engaged, experiential education" (The Elon Commitment, 2009, p. 5), the same support that the task force report suggests for other forms of scholarship must be provided for those who choose to participate in the scholarship of engagement.

The National Review Board for the Scholarship of Engagement (2009) defines the scholarship of engagement as scholarship in the areas of teaching, research, and/or service that simultaneously meets campus missions and goals *and* community needs. "Engagement is a scholarly agenda that incorporates community issues and which can be within or integrative across teaching, research and service. In this definition, community is broadly defined to include audiences external to the campus that are part of a collaborative process to contribute to the public good" (§. 2).

Criteria for the scholarship of engagement must be clearly defined. The Council suggests that the scholarship of engagement includes service that directly relates to one's field of knowledge, expertise, and teaching goals. It supports the university's distinctive mission and challenges students to engage in high levels of critical analysis. It addresses larger questions within a specific context, focusing on critical social, economic, educational, environmental, and/or political challenges. In meeting these criteria, the scholar formulates clearly articulated project goals, plans of action, and assessable outcomes. The scholar also establishes reciprocal relationships with community partners. For the scholarship of engagement to be seen as serious intellectual work, it must additionally generate products that are valued by the institution's faculty reward system, including:

- Professional presentations

- Peer-reviewed publications in appropriate venues
- Grants
- Philanthropic support

A university's promotion and tenure policies and criteria for faculty evaluation reflect what is most valued by the university. Currently, many untenured faculty at Elon find they must choose between doing the work that would contribute to career advancement and doing the work of the institution in linking with communities and educating students. Elon must be intentional about ensuring that its reward system recognizes a full range of scholarly activities, including the scholarship of engagement, so that *all* faculty are presented with "multiple models of success" (Boyer, 1990). Faculty who are rewarded for a wide range of creative, intellectual activities will remain energized and will help the university thrive.

The time has come . . . to step back and reflect on the variety of functions academics are expected to perform. It's time to ask how priorities of the professoriate relate to the faculty reward system, as well as to the missions of America's higher learning institutions. Such an inquiry into the work of faculty is essential if students are to be well served, if the creativity of all faculty is to be fully tapped, and if the goals of every college and university are to be appropriately defined. (Boyer, 1990, p. 2)

The Council on Civic Engagement believes that the scholarship of engagement is a valuable tool for preparing students for lives of civic engagement and social responsibility. Elon University is uniquely positioned to help address pressing issues within our local communities, our nation, and our world through a broad, creative view of scholarship. Our belief is that collaboration with the community enriches civic life and liberal education.

The Presidential Task Force on Scholarship (2007) acknowledges that "scholarly activity and the character of the faculty role are fundamental matters in the life of any university" (p. 6). The Task Force also recognizes that "its report will be only one contributing element to what is a much broader, ongoing process of institutional evaluation and change" (p. 6). The Council on Civic Engagement position statement regarding the scholarship of engagement is meant to enlarge the conversation on scholarship in order to more fully address the mission of the university. To prepare our students wisely and well for democratic citizenship, we must expand our view of scholarship to truly embrace a civically engaged teacher-scholar model.

In an effort to support faculty and staff who conduct scholarship in the areas of civic engagement and community based research, the following statement was developed by the Council on Civic Engagement on the Civically Engaged Scholar at Elon University.

References

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