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*This article presents a comprehensive case study of a four-year effort undertaken by the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater to redefine its faculty evaluation, promotion, and tenure procedures in an attempt to link faculty rewards to student learning outcomes and to promote faculty priorities more consonant with the institution's overall educational mission. Specifically, the article describes the process followed to bring about changes; the successes achieved to date; and, most importantly, the lessons learned in attempting to effect substantive change among a faculty, 67% of whom are tenured. The effort remains a work in progress.*

# **Mission, Values, and Effecting Change:**

## *A Case Study*

### **Introduction**

For the past four years, the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, like many other universities nationwide, has been absorbed in a comprehensive reexamination of its faculty evaluation methods. More specifically, the faculty and administration have been engaged in a process designed, ultimately, to link faculty rewards to student outcomes and to advance faculty priorities more consonant with the institution's overall educational mission.

This article presents a case study of the efforts undertaken to date by the campus to redefine its faculty evaluation, promotion, and tenure guidelines in an attempt to realign them with the institution's core mission and basic values. Specifically, the article describes the process followed to bring about these changes (a process that remains very much a work in progress); the successes achieved to date; and, most importantly, the lessons learned in attempt-

ing to effect change among a faculty, 67% of whom are tenured. The article concludes with a series of questions to be resolved as the campus attempts to implement the new system.

## **Background**

The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, one of 13 institutions in the University of Wisconsin System, is a regional comprehensive university serving approximately 10,400 students. The university, with 450 faculty (and a standard teaching load of twelve credits per semester), is comprised of 31 academic departments grouped into four colleges—Arts and Communication, Business and Economics, Education, and Letters and Sciences—that focus on liberal arts and sciences and professional programs at the undergraduate and masters level. Like hundreds of other such institutions, the university began as a normal school for preparing teachers; however, as the university evolved, so too have its mission and values.

For much of the institution's history, the faculty have assumed almost exclusive responsibility for establishing the policies and procedures related to their performance evaluations and rewards. In the mid-1980's, however, the campus administration began promoting the teacher/scholar model for its faculty. The basic assumption advanced by the administration at the time contended that success in the classroom is dependent upon research activity and that teaching and research are mutually supportive activities, provided that research is not overemphasized. Expectations for scholarly activity appeared to increase but were not clearly articulated. Few written standards or guidelines existed for making critical decisions. Processes for performance evaluations and subsequent rewards—including hiring, reappointment, tenure, promotion, merit, and post-tenure review—were fragmented and often inconsonant. What appeared to be valued for one process was not always valued for the others. Candidates for each process prepared credentials in formats seemingly unrelated to those required for others and there were no assurances that meeting the expectations for reappointment each year would lead to tenure. As a result, confusion abounded, appeals of decisions were common, and collegiality suffered.

More importantly, the various performance evaluation processes and rewards systems were discordant with the university's mission and goals. While the university's bulletin states that "the first and foremost responsibility of UW-Whitewater is quality teaching within a dynamic learning community," peer evaluation of teaching often was relegated to comparing numerical averages of student evaluations of their instructors. Likewise, the evaluation of service often involved no more than counting the number of committees on

which candidates served. Because research results (e.g., refereed journal articles) were usually externally peer reviewed, the evaluation of teaching and service frequently defaulted to the evaluation of research, and decisions were made primarily on the latter.

### **Developing the Framework for Change**

In 1992, the chancellor accepted the new provost's recommendation to appoint a blue ribbon faculty task force to define the roles and responsibilities of the teacher/scholar at the university. An important part of the chancellor's charge to the group was to determine the kinds of activities on which faculty were spending their time and the extent to which these activities were commensurate with the mission and values of the campus. Fourteen members were selected from all disciplines, ranks, and various stages of careers; all were acknowledged by their colleagues as being productive and respected teacher/scholars.

In consultation with the provost, the teacher/scholar task force proceeded to review the external literature on faculty roles and rewards (e.g. Fairweather, 1993; Boyer, Booth, 1988; 1987; Cook, Kinnetz, and Owens-Misner, 1990; ), as well as campus policies and procedures.

Selected comprehensive universities that had attained national recognition for their excellence in education were surveyed. In addition, a faculty member in sociology surveyed the university's faculty to determine their values, attitudes, and priorities and to compare the campus results with any national norms.

The survey revealed the existence of two informal subcultures at the university, self-identified as "teachers only" and "teaching scholars." "Teachers only" were often hired before 1970, were less likely to hold terminal degrees, spent more time on committee work than research, and reported working fewer total hours per week. "Teaching scholars" were often hired after 1980, held terminal degrees, preferred to spend time on research rather than service, reported working more total hours per week, published more frequently, and felt that their scholarly activities enhanced their teaching.

In reviewing the literature, the task force spent considerable time examining Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered* (Boyer, 1990), Eugene Rice's *The New American Scholar* (Rice, 1992), Syracuse University's "Focus on Teaching Project" (Diamond, 1991; Diamond, Gray, and Roberts, 1991; Gray, Froh, and Diamond, 1992) and the literature on applying TQM principles in higher education. Eugene Rice and Parker Palmer had previously addressed the faculty on campus and, for that reason, their writings were particularly influential.

After a year's work and periodic progress reports to both the provost and

faculty senate, the task force issued a comprehensive report that, in retrospect, was bold and anticipated much of the national discussion of faculty roles and rewards. The report recommended moving from the teacher/scholar to a *teaching scholar* model, the attributes of which are described in the figure below.

### Attributes of the Teaching Scholar

A teaching scholar has a *purpose*, which is accompanied by a passion which undergirds action. One does not become a teaching scholar through mere acquisition of technical skill and proficiency in one's subject, although teaching scholars are highly skilled in their fields. A teaching scholar's expertise is oriented towards the professional rather than the technical, focused on the fundamental issues and principles of related disciplines. In that sense, a teaching scholar makes a choice to profess and to exercise professional judgment, realizing that knowledge is neither neutral nor impersonal.

A teaching scholar is an *exemplar*. In the classroom, the teaching scholar serves as a model of dynamic intellectual activity by solving problems, revealing thought processes, and most importantly, acknowledging what is not known by posing significant questions. Outside the classroom, the teaching scholar seeks the pursuit of intellectual work through reading, discussion with colleagues and students, reflection, reconsideration of previous positions, and discovery of new knowledge. The teaching scholar is an avid learner who does research as a means of learning that which has not yet been discovered.

A teaching scholar understands that students must accumulate knowledge, but is much more interested in the *transformation* of thinking brought about by a vibrant intellectual atmosphere. To that extent, the teaching scholar encourages students to engage in meaningful and critical work enhanced by the depth of understanding, currency of ideas, and contagious intellectual curiosity the teaching scholar brings to the classroom from immersion in scholarly endeavors.

The teaching scholar regards the various facets of professional responsibilities as part of an *integrated whole* rather than as separate and discrete functions. Teaching is an occasion for scholarship as much as a vehicle for the dissemination of scholarly work. Scholarship may take root in the challenge of communicating the perplexities of the discipline to students. Service is . . . [the application of] . . . knowledge. . . [on behalf] of the department, the profession at large, the community, and the university.

Although recognition programs for quality work and incentives for achievement are important, teaching scholars are driven by *personal goals and standards*. Contact with the work of respected colleagues on campus and in the broad scholarly community plays a vital role in the development of criteria for judging one's own work.

The most precious opportunity for teaching scholars is the freedom to *set the direction* for their work, to determine what is important and be given the resources and support to pursue that agenda. This is not to say that teaching scholars act only on narrow self-interests, ignoring the common good for their individual pursuits. When the interests and expertise of the teaching scholar are also used to serve the collective good, a balance is achieved between the personal agenda and the obligations to contribute to meeting the mission and goals of the university.

While advocating the teaching scholar model, the task force was also mindful of a UW System requirement that faculty be evaluated in the traditional categories of teaching, research, and service. For this reason, the task force recommended that the latter three activities be more broadly defined to include aspects of the Carnegie Foundation model (i.e., the discovery, dissemination, application, and integration of knowledge).

To implement the model, the task force recommended that the provost, in consultation with college deans, should set biennial productivity targets—both quantitative and qualitative—in terms of teaching, research, and service for each of the colleges and should allocate/reallocate resources requisite for achieving those targets. Deans in turn should do the same for each of the disciplinary units within their colleges. The disciplinary units (most often departments) should, however, have the autonomy to decide how best to achieve their targets. Flexible faculty assignments could be matched with individual talents, interests, and career objectives.

To promote cohesiveness and collaboration within units in meeting their targets, and hence the mission and goals of the institution, it was recommended that annual base pay merit awards to individuals be replaced by biennial group bonus awards tied to targets and shared equally by the individuals comprising the units. Although the merit awards were often minuscule and distinguished little between individuals, the system of awarding them was perceived as a divisive zero-sum game within units that served as a disincentive for hiring talented colleagues.

It was recommended that individual accomplishments be rewarded instead via the promotion process, with a provision for promotion to “ranks” beyond that of full professor. One would need to serve in each rank a minimum of three years before being eligible for promotion to the next rank, but would receive a meaningful base salary increment if successful.

The task force further recommended that each disciplinary unit establish standards for promotion to each rank, subject to the guidelines that standards should clearly articulate expectations in teaching, research, and service; meet or exceed the national norms for the discipline; be consistent with the mission and goals of the institution and unit; allow for some flexibility in the predetermined relative importance assigned to teaching, research, and service for given performance periods; and be assessed on measures that include peer review and measurable outcomes. To ensure equity, fairness, and consistency with university-wide norms, it was recommended that the disciplinary-unit standards be reviewed and approved by deans, the provost, and the chancellor, as well as by a university-wide committee and the faculty senate. It was recognized that differences between disciplinary or departmental standards and those

for the university as a whole would need to be reconciled, most likely through the process of negotiation.

Regarding other performance evaluations, the task force recommended that the criteria for tenure be the same as that for promotion to the rank of associate professor, that meeting expectations for reappointment clearly will lead to tenure, and that post-tenure review will be linked to promotion to the rank of full professor and beyond. It further recommended a common university-wide format for all evaluations, with activities to be consistently classified as teaching, research, and service.

After the task force had reported out to the provost, the report was shared with all faculty and a campuswide meeting was held to discuss it. Members of the task force led the discussion.

While there was general support for the report, there also was, not surprisingly, strong resistance to changing the status quo. "It's always been done this way" and "if it's not broke, don't fix it" were not uncommon responses. To a campus unaccustomed to significant transformation, the proposed changes seemed radical both to some faculty and to some administrators. Being held to high standards was a welcome challenge for some, a direct threat to others. Replacing time on task (e.g., class meetings and committee membership) with the production of significant outcomes (e.g., student learning) meant additional accountability. "Why do this to ourselves?" Some even argued that peer review of teaching infringed on academic freedom. Moreover, the apparent contradiction between the proposed group rewards for collaborative work and the traditional incentives for individual accomplishments were problematic.

### **Widening the Circle of Support**

During the following year, two new task forces continued to study the issues related to changing the reward process. Then two years later, approximately twenty faculty members (including some members of the teacher/scholar task force) and administrators attended the 1994 Midwest Conference on Faculty Roles and Rewards cosponsored by AAHE. Participants from campus were impressed to learn that the very ideas proposed locally were part of a national movement on redefining faculty roles and rewards. Inspirational addresses by Ernest Boyer, Lee Shulman, and others also validated the previously proposed recommendations, and the interest in reforming the campus systems for evaluating and rewarding faculty performance was rekindled.

Following the conference, it was determined that the breadth of change recommended by the teacher/scholar task force had been overwhelming for many faculty and administrators. It was then decided that the scope of proposed change needed to be focused on a single element. Rather than attempting

a comprehensive reform of all faculty evaluation and reward systems, the focus would be only on promotions. The chair of the faculty senate and the provost, both of whom attended the Midwest Conference, jointly proposed a shared governance team approach. A committee subsequently was formed to make recommendations on the promotion process. Some members were elected by the senate, others were appointed by the provost.

The new promotions task force quickly embraced the ideas of the former teacher/scholar task force, including clearly articulated, predetermined, and disciplinary-specific expectations for promotion. It also proposed a list of faculty activities to be valued for promotion and classified each in accordance with UW System policy within the triad of teaching, research and service. A performance portfolio of selected evidence was proposed for documenting the quality of one's work, while an online activity reporting system was proposed for reporting the quantity of one's accomplishments. Unfortunately, like the teacher/scholar task force before it, the promotions task force struggled with incorporating the scholarship of discovery, dissemination, application, and integration categories within the mandated triad.

A solution to this conundrum was discovered the following summer. A proposal was funded to support a faculty team of six to attend the 1995 Bush Summer Institute. The Institute provided a week in a retreat-type setting for the team to work on a project involving the assessment of teaching, while at the same time being able to review the current literature and consult with the Institute's core faculty experts and teams from other institutions working on similar projects. The project proposed was to create a model for assessing teaching for promotion. The team was comprised of three members from the promotions task force plus three who had not previously been involved in the transformation. One of the latter three was the chair of the university's promotions committee and had firsthand knowledge of the problems with the existing system. Thus the circle of faculty empowered to propose change grew by three.

The solution proposed by the team was to assess teaching, research, and service all as forms of scholarship. Using a model proposed by the Carnegie Foundation, all faculty work would be judged by the extent to which it demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the field; clear goals and objectives; appropriate methods, procedures, and resources; good communication; and significant results. This model would elevate teaching to the status held by research and shift the focus from the process of teaching to the significance of student learning. The promotions task force accepted the model as part of its report.

## Bring on the Experts

This time, rather than have the promotions task force present its report, Charles Glassick, Acting President of the Carnegie Foundation, was invited to address the faculty during a fall convocation. The model being proposed by the task force was to be included in the Foundation's report, titled *Scholarship Assessed*, and Dr. Glassick's address provided the external validation necessary for the model to have credibility on campus.

Subsequently, the task force's report was issued to the campus community and college-level meetings were held to provide constructive input. After some enhancement, the report was accepted by the faculty senate, an existing faculty committee was charged with revising the faculty personnel rules to incorporate the principles from the report, and disciplinary units were directed to develop criteria for promotion. Moreover, there was agreement that, once the criteria were in place for promotion, all other performance evaluations and rewards would be integrated for consistency with those for promotion.

Momentum was sustained this time by sending an even larger campus contingency to the Fall 1995 Wisconsin Conference on Faculty Roles and Rewards, again cosponsored by AAHE.

Moreover, a faculty team presented the campus model at one of the sessions. Later that year, a second team presented the model at the AAHE Conference on Faculty Roles and Rewards. Each time, more faculty became advocates for the model, while at the same time becoming aware of a larger national context and the research related to the movement.

Back on campus, Tim Riordan from neighboring Alverno College in Milwaukee conducted a winter workshop for department chairs on setting disciplinary-specific criteria for promotion and tenure. In 1996, Robert Diamond, Director of the National Project on Institutional Priorities and Faculty Rewards, conducted two workshops on the use of performance portfolios. One was to assist faculty preparing for promotion and tenure to learn how best to document the quality and significance of their work. The other was to assist members of promotion and tenure committees in knowing how to assess such documentation in order to accurately evaluate teaching, research, and service as forms of scholarship.

In each case, the outside expert was carefully selected to support the campus initiative. Each was briefed prior to arriving on campus and each independently reviewed the proposed plan to help refine it. As the 1995-96 academic year came to an end, everything seemed on track.

## Politics as Usual

During the process of revising the faculty personnel rules to accommodate the new model, the faculty group charged with the task polarized. Members of this senate-selected committee seemed to equally represent both of the aforementioned faculty subcultures. The primary debate centered on control. One faction saw a role for college deans, the provost, and the chancellor in setting standards for promotions and ensuring that those recommended for promotions met those standards. They were willing to abdicate some decision-making tasks, while holding those with delegated responsibility accountable, in order to free faculty time to meet the predetermined expectations in the three areas of scholarship. The other faction saw this as a radical departure from the current rules by which it is the faculty who primarily govern the university.

As the debate intensified, some key faculty leaders became discouraged and disengaged from the debate. Fortunately, others who had previously been silent came forward with sound resolve. The issues were eventually resolved in shared governance fashion. After the senate adopted a draft of the revised rules and before the chancellor gave final approval, the chancellor and provost met with those charged with rewriting the rules. Collectively, these parties resolved any differences and refined the rules.

## Lessons Learned

Reflecting back, there were some key elements that helped to make a significant transformation in an environment unaccustomed to change. First, there had to be a *shared vision*. In the above case, the vision was provided by the teacher/scholar task force and a new provost.

Second, *external validation* was required. This was provided by bringing experts to campus and sending faculty/administrator teams to conferences.

Third, *empowered participation* was the key. The teacher/scholar task force was initially empowered with proposing change. The circle was widened as advocates were added to refine and implement ideas. Ultimately all faculty became involved as they developed the criteria for promotion for their respective disciplines.

Fourth, there had to be a *tenacious champion* for the vision. There were many times during the process that momentum seemed lost. Each time, a vigilant advocate with a constancy of purpose optimized opportunities to rekindle the transformation. However, it was not always effective for the champion to be highly visible. It was sometimes better to “lead from behind” and to orchestrate the change by empowering those with a vested interest and then trusting that their collective wisdom would prevail. Egos needed to be set aside

and patience was essential.

Finally, there had to be a **team approach**. It was not until both faculty and administrators collaborated that a shared vision was realized.

### **Questions to be Resolved**

As the faculty and administration of the campus confront the task of actually implementing the revised system of faculty roles and rewards, there are a number of fundamental questions that will need to be addressed, the most important of which include the following.

Since the campus is first and foremost a teaching institution, the question of how best to evaluate teaching effectiveness must be examined. Presently, the departments administer, on a regular basis, various forms of student course/teacher evaluation of the faculty the results of which, as noted earlier, carry the most weight in faculty evaluation processes. While some informal peer review (mostly in the form of class visitations) is conducted, these observations have relatively little impact compared to student evaluations. It is quite clear that in order to fulfill the teaching mission of our campus, the faculty and administrators will need to consider a variety of systematic procedures, other than student evaluations alone, to assess the effectiveness of faculty instruction. Among the variables of instructor effectiveness that will need to be assessed are inventive and labor-intensive course improvements to facilitate active learning; the growing incorporation of technology in courses; increased faculty scholarship that features student involvement; the quality of student advising; increased development of student service and internship projects; and creation of better mechanisms for showcasing student achievement.

Since preparing students for productive lives is the main objective of all efforts, it will be necessary to find strategies within the reward system to encourage faculty to allocate their time and talents in ways that translate more directly into student achievement. For example, there must be mechanisms to reward faculty for devoting time to research, internship, and service projects that challenge students to discover their best and that efficiently help to transform the students' critical thinking and learning processes.

Lastly, a reward system that currently emphasizes the discreteness of the teaching, research, and service roles performed by the faculty must be addressed. At UW-Whitewater, like many other institutions, the academic culture tends to reinforce the conflict between and not the mutuality of teaching, research, and service. If there is to be success in linking faculty activities and rewards directly to the university's mission, the faculty will need to articulate and then embrace a common understanding and mutually reinforcing purpose (which will, undoubtedly, focus on student achievement) for these three criti-

cal roles.

In an effort to formulate answers to these and other related questions, the campus, over the past two years has sent teams of faculty, widely representative of the disciplines of study at the university, to the annual AAHE Conference on Faculty Roles and Rewards and to related regional meetings. These teams, in addition to attending conference presentations, gathered together, both at the conferences and back on campus, to examine various ideas and issues related to improving the faculty priorities and reward systems at the university. The teams, which periodically conduct forums for the faculty on campus, also have studied various AAHE publications, including *From Idea to Prototype: The Peer Review of Teaching* (1995); *The Teaching Portfolio: Capturing the Scholarship in Teaching* (Edgerton, Hutchings, and Quinlan, 1991); *The Collaborative Department: How Five Campuses Are Inching Toward Cultures of Collective Responsibility* (Wergin, 1994); *Making the Case for Professional Service* (Lynton, 1995); and *The Disciplines Speak: Rewarding the Scholarly, Professional, and Creative Work of Faculty* (Diamond and Adam, 1995). Collectively, these activities have stimulated an essential campus-wide discussion that should result in faculty owned evaluation and reward systems that reflect the institution's commitment to positioning student learning as the paramount focus of its programs and services.

### ***Suggested Readings***

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