Balancing Professional Work: Teaching, Research, and Service

Abstract: In “Balancing Professional Work: Teaching, Research, and Service,” we argue that the happiest, most successful academics are those who blend professional tasks. Although the responsibilities of contingent positions are often time-consuming and poorly compensated, seeking ways to merge personal research interests with traditional academic responsibilities can alleviate burnout and help teacher–scholars envision ways to fully capture and document the work they may already be doing. In this chapter, we offer profiles and models for integrating teaching, research, and service and suggest ways to fully capture and document the work we do. By viewing interests through the lens of institutional mission statements and goals, teacher–scholars find opportunities for engaging in personally satisfying work that also meet institutional initiatives and mandates.

Keywords: Boyer; civic engagement; community; course design; teaching, scholarship, and service

In *Scholarship Reconsidered*, the Ernest Boyer Commission asks, “Can America’s colleges and universities, with all the richness of their resources, be of greater service to the nation and world? Can we define scholarship in ways that respond more adequately to the urgent new realities both within the academy and beyond?” (3). Boyer, who served as the President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching from 1979 to 1995, discovered a need for change in traditional scholarship among college and university professors. Up to that point, scholarship (publication) had been the general goal for many in higher education, and teaching, occupying a much lower level of significance—in many cases one of no significance at all—had become something many did simply because they were required to. In attempting to change these trends with the goals of improving the undergraduate experience and the ways in which teaching is valued, Boyer created a four-pronged approach to scholarship. Today, the Boyer model lies at the heart of expectations for faculty work and mission statements for most colleges and universities; it is also frequently cited by scholars investigating teacher–research. Within the pages of this report, the Boyer Commission calls teachers and administrators to break down traditional barriers between academic ivory towers and local communities and asks institutions to carefully redefine not only their missions but also concepts of “scholarship” (13). However, contingent faculty members—those who are responsible for teaching core undergraduate courses and who are often responsible for teaching large course loads without adequate compensation—do not necessarily benefit from the nationally heralded Commission Report. Building on the essence of the Boyer Report, we believe not only that students and local communities benefit from revising institutional goals to include concerns about the welfare of contingent faculty members, but also that the happiest, most successful academics are those who blend required professional tasks. In this chapter, we offer advice for finding these opportunities along with anecdotes from professionals who merge the academic triumvirate of teaching, research, and service. We also suggest ways to capture and document blended work that occurs in a variety of settings.

Although the emphasis on teaching, service, and research varies from institution to institution, the triumvirate itself doesn’t shift much among schools; these three categories are the means by which faculty are evaluated to varying degrees at every school and among various academic