Visions of the possible: Models for campus support of the scholarship of teaching and learning

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Abstract:
Based on comments made at meetings during November and December, 1999.

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This paper draws on comments made by Dr. Shulman at meetings during November and December, 1999, bringing together research university faculty and administrators interested in the advancement of teaching and the scholarship of teaching. The meetings were sponsored by the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL), which works with campuses of all types through the Teaching Academy Campus Program, coordinated by CASTL's partner, the American Association for Higher Education. The models presented in this paper are, as suggested by its title, possibilities—which campuses will adapt, refine, and add to based on local circumstances.

The problem I wish to address in what follows is an old one. In 1906—the same year The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching got its charter—the Association of American Universities (then a simple group of twelve institutions) met in the San Francisco Bay area, devoting one whole day of their discussions to the question: should professors at research universities be required to teach? God's punishment for asking that question was the big earthquake a month later. Today, we're still trying to put the pieces back together: How can teaching find a right and dignified place in the research university setting?

What I've been asked to do, in response to this question, is to spin out several visions of what it would look like if we created organizational entities on our campuses that would support, preserve, and enhance the scholarly work of teaching and learning. I will refer to these entities as "teaching academies," and I think of them as a combination of support structures and sanctuaries: places where faculty whose scholarly interests include teaching and learning can find safety and even colleagueship for doing good work. Within this general vision, I would propose four possible models.

Model I: The Teaching Academy as an Interdisciplinary Center

My first model is an interdisciplinary one. It draws together faculty members whose scholarly interests include teaching and learning but who may not find a sufficient group of colleagues for this work within their own academic departments and professional schools; the idea behind this model is to overcome intellectual isolation by creating a new, multidisciplinary community of shared interests and work.

Think, in this regard, of women's studies centers, and how such centers have provided a kind of intellectual home for scholars from a variety of fields-history, economics, literature, and other areas-making possible important new work and the development of a new field. Historically, such centers made it possible to engage with important issues, to build knowledge, and to create new outlets for the work. The journal Signs, for instance, developed out of the women's studies center at Stanford, and remains one of the primary scholarly journals in the field. At first these centers had a shaky sort of existence (publication in Signs was not held in high regard in its early days), but over time more stable, secure entities evolved. Stanford now houses the Institute for the Study of Women and Gender because part of what happened was that the work done in these centers becomes more and more legitimate in the departmental and professional school homes from which scholars originally migrated to find more hospitable settings. This kind of evolution is one of the things we would want for centers dedicated to the scholarship of teaching and learning, as well. In the best cases, scholars retain dual citizenship in both disciplinary department and center—and we would also hope for this for faculty affiliated with centers for the scholarship of teaching.

Or think of area studies and the centers for, say, African, or Asian studies that began to emerge a couple decades ago. Philanthropic foundations were extremely important in helping develop area studies. Here again was a phenomenon in which in any given department you were likely the only Africanist. But, if you could develop an African studies center, you might gather together fifteen people on the campus, along with graduate students, and begin to find colleagues and to establish a kind of intellectual gravitas. You remained both historian (or geologist) and African scholar. Happily, universities and foundations found reasons jointly to support these efforts, which have in turn influenced the work and shape of many fields.

Now, it should be said in reference to this first model that interdisciplinary structures entail both strengths and potential weaknesses. My colleague Larry Cuban recently completed a study of teaching and research at Stanford over the last 100 years-entitled How Scholars Trum ped Teachers-and one of his themes is that at Stanford interdisciplinary entities were far more likely to innovate in teaching and curriculum than entities that were located in a single department. How does this happen? Many departments treat teaching the same way they treat research. That is, I wouldn't dream of telling my departmental colleague what she should investigate in her research. Neither, in most departments, would I dream of telling her what she should teach. Most departments in most research universities support a conception of academic freedom in which all aspects of the faculty member's intellectual work is fully under her or his control. Curricula thus reflect the tastes of faculty members rather than a more superordinate conception of what and how students might best learn the field. But, as Larry Cuban shows, when you move to an interdisciplinary center, you leave behind some of these predispositions; making an active choice to join such a center, faculty are choosing to do something new. At Stanford an example would be the human biology curriculum which cuts across several schools and many departments, and which allows new and different work both in the research that faculty conduct and in their teaching and curriculum development.

The handicap of such interdisciplinary programs is that the reward structure continues to go through the department. You can't get tenure in women's studies, or area studies, or human biology, but only in economics, or history, or biology. I'm not unhappy about that. Centers and institutes are intended to be more flexible and adaptive than their more conservative departmental godparents. But we must recognize that there is an essential tension between these structures, which would have to be dealt with if we took certain views of what teaching academies might look like.

In any event, the notion of an interdisciplinary teaching academy somewhat patterned after earlier models in women's studies, or area studies, or other such entities, is one model for the teaching academy. And if this model makes sense, it might also make sense to ask: what are the two best examples of new entities in my university setting that were invented in this fashion and had a certain persistence over time, that have gained credibility and support both internally and externally, and that remain viable centers for important scholarly work. And why have they survived when a dozen others may have come and gone? This should tell you something about the most promising form for an interdisciplinary teaching academy on your campus.

Model II: The Teaching Academy as an Aspect of Graduate Education

My thinking about this second model is illustrated by work underway at Princeton University, where—at least as I understood it when I visited a year ago—a decision has been made to locate the teaching academy in the graduate school. The idea is to focus first efforts on an aspect of work that is already central to the research university culture: preparing doctoral students for their work as scholars. This model can build on developments in the Preparing Future Faculty Project (sponsored by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, and funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts), and especially on the notion that we need to go beyond "TA training" to address in a much more proactive way the need to prepare graduate students for the full range of scholarships associated with the discipline or professional field-including the scholarship of teaching and learning. An assumption behind this model and some will find this an odd way to put it is that the Ph.D. is after all a professional degree.

One implication of linking the teaching academy to graduate education is that the focus is not directly on faculty as the target population. Some might see this as a limitation. But campuses that move in the direction of this second model understand that you can't reshape graduate education without involving
Model III: The Teaching Academy Organized around Technology

The impetus for this third model is much in evidence on many campuses today, and will surely grow in the next decade or so. My vision here is of a teaching academy whose reason for existence is connected to rapid developments in the use of technology in higher education. Whether you like it or hate it, a remarkable opportunity exists in the scholarship of teaching and learning. Many faculty members are asking serious questions about the role of technology in teaching and learning: How do we know these new technologies are effective in fostering student learning? Under what conditions? What's the difference between the kind of learning that occurs in traditional venues and the kind that occurs in technologically mediated settings? So the first advantage of this model of the teaching academy is that it takes advantage of the fact that just about everybody agrees that teaching, learning and technology pose serious research questions that must be addressed. Most universities have already committed significant resources to the uses of technology. And, since technology is not something you simply plug in, such research questions spawn a much larger set of inquiries about the curriculum, the design of instruction, and assessment, and thereby encourage a more general spirit of inquiry about teaching and learning.

There's a second advantage as well. As noted in much of the literature related to the Carnegie Foundation for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, to call something scholarship is to claim that it's public rather than private, that it's susceptible to peer review and criticism, and that it's something that can be built upon by others. What technology has done in much of our pedagogy is to make the private public-through course Web sites, through the posting of syllabi online, through electronic resources such as the Crossroads Project developed by Randy Bass (a faculty member from Georgetown University) for the American Studies Association-not coincidentally, perhaps, an interdisciplinary field. On Randy's site you can see syllabi from American Studies courses around the country and also read annotations of these syllabi both by the people who created them and by others who bring relevant experience as reviewers. You can read case studies by the faculty whose syllabi you've just looked at, in which they report on the challenges they had to face in using technology to redesign courses they had been teaching for years. My point is that through resources like those of Crossroads we have moved a good distance toward a public and exchangeable discourse about teaching and learning-which is a key ingredient in transforming conversations about teaching and learning into a scholarship of teaching and learning that occupies a central role in a discipline or interdisciplinary.

The other healthy albeit frightening thing about technology is that it represents a substantial investment for institutions. Therefore, it is increasingly difficult to ask about teaching in these new ways without asking about evidence for learning, though we rarely make this demand of more conventional teaching. We refer to the scholarship of teaching when we are at least as concerned about the scholarship of learning. Of course you've noticed that CASTL is an acronym that includes both teaching and learning. It's hard for me to imagine a viable scholarship of teaching that does not ask about learning and about the kind and quality of learning that occurs in the presence of, say, some new technology.

I would also point out that it is perfectly possible--as those of us in psychology can attest--to spend generations studying learning without any reference to teaching at all. I recently gave the Howard Bowen Lecture at Claremont Graduate University. Bowen was an eminent economist of higher education who wrote a wonderful book in the 1970s, Investments in Learning. In preparing my talk, I looked up “learning” in the index of this book and found scores of entries; when I looked up “teaching,” I found an entry saying “see learning.” And so I would argue that there's a reason to keep both teaching and learning explicit in the picture, because a focus on teaching will necessarily include learning, but the reverse is not necessarily true. Adding technology as the third component, and creating teaching academies at the intersection of teaching, learning, and technology, may be just the right strategic idea at this point in time. I see lots of evidence that technology may turn out, in this next decade, to be the hardest hitting and fastest developing context for the creation and work of teaching academies.

Model IV: The Distributed Teaching Academy

The fourth example I would give is what I'd call a distributed teaching academy. My thinking here is influenced by a meeting I had with Rebecca Chopp just after she had been appointed provost at Emory. Rebecca had previously chaired Emory's all-university committee on teaching, and her punishment was to be named provost. She told me that on her campus (no doubt on many others as well) centralized offices are distrusted, and that the challenge was, therefore, how the provost's office could provide centralized support for teaching while protecting the effort (or efforts) in programs, schools, or departments. It's like the old mantra of the environmental movement: think globally but act locally. Here it's “fund and support institutionally but act departmentally.” The insight here is that one possibility for a teaching academy is that you don't create an entity; rather, you build capacity in various quarters where the work can best be done. These more local efforts, in turn, support initiatives that may grow into sources of strength for the whole institution.

This distributed model reflects a reality that on many campuses we find some departments or schools that already have extraordinary potential for doing the scholarly work of teaching and learning. At Stanford for instance: when people ask me where they can find the best examples of research in education, I will-though I'm a professor of mechanical engineering--often send them to our department of mechanical engineering, where Sheri Sheppard, Larry Leifer, and their colleagues have been doing magnificent research on the teaching and learning of design in engineering-research that meets all the standards of traditional forms of scholarship.

Similarly, when I was at Michigan State, I was a professor of educational psychology and medical education, and one of my homes was an academic department called the Office of Medical Education, Research, and Development (OMERAD). My colleagues and I did what might be considered clinical work-applied work--as we invented a new medical school: curriculum development, evaluation design, the preparation of faculty to teach in the program.... We were drawn from medicine, education, sociology, nursing, and other fields. But at the same time, my colleague Arthur Elstein and I were doing fundamental research on the psychology of medical decision making and diagnosis, work that was making an impact on cognitive psychology as well as on medical education. The departmental unit thus served other units of the university and the field as it developed capacity.

I note these examples to make two points. First, we need critical mass. The kind of work I'm pointing to could not be done by just one person in engineering or in medical education. The program has to have the resources to establish a community of scholars. But the second point is sort of the flip side: the big effort to undertake this kind of work in programs, departments, or schools is that the big effort to undertake this kind of work in programs, departments, or schools is that whatever we initiate has to be available equally to everybody. On the contrary, I would say that insisting from the outset that the scholarship of teaching and learning must be done across the board is a formula for failure. Especially in these early years, it may make perfectly good sense to shape an approach that does not presume to be “institutionalized” in the usual sense of the word but that takes advantage of pockets of interest and potential. There is good reason why the word for a universal cure-panacea has become a term of derision.

Other Possibilities

These, then, are four "visions of the possible" for supporting and advancing the scholarship of teaching and learning: the interdisciplinary academy for teaching and learning, the academy focused on preparing graduate students, the technology-centered academy, and the distributed academy. I'm sure there are many more. Indeed, one can easily imagine useful cross-fertilization among them. For instance, how does the 4th model fit into the 3rd model? And what would be the example of the first model in an academy that brings together faculty across fields to do work in common. But, in addition, the Sheridan Center works extensively with graduate students. Indeed, when I was on the Brown campus several years ago for the Center's inauguration (it had been around for some time but was then being reconstituted in the name of the late and much beloved dean, Harriet Sheridan), I saw Randy Bass (who has just established a new center at Georgetown if I understand it correctly--on the third model above). When I asked Randy what brought him to the event, he told me that he had been a graduate student at Brown and developed his interests working extensively through the Center on issues of teaching and learning in his field.

The point here is that we at The Carnegie Foundation and the American Association for Higher Education (CASTL's partner in working with campuses) have absolutely no desire to propose a canonical form for teaching academies. Indeed, when we talk about the possibility, three or four years from now, of a network of CASTL teaching academies, we don't want them to look like identical siblings. Higher education will be much better off if there's lots of Darwinian variation; if the academies (and whatever else we end up calling these efforts) respond in different ways to local contingencies and
One aspect of local circumstances which I have been asked about is the extent to which the teaching academy (especially perhaps the first model above) should be a broadening and elaboration of the functions of an existing center for teaching and learning you might already have on your campus. There are very different opinions about this. Some folks tell me that linking the teaching academy to such a center won't work because too many centers are seen as emergency rooms for teachers in pedagogic arrest, as it were—whereas the core idea of a proper teaching academy is as a place for scholarly work. But others tell me that their center for teaching is already moving in the direction of supporting inquiry, fostering intellectual collegialship around teaching and learning, and that the teaching academy is a further embodiment of an existing vision. What I would say is that these are local questions requiring local judgments. And I would also say that where the central purposes are technical assistance and faculty development important as those are—the entity is not a teaching academy in the sense that I am describing today.

**Teaching Academies as Foundations for Scholarly Communities**

I must emphasize the importance of work that has the capacity to be more than local. Indeed, scholarship is by definition more than local, and if teaching academies are to contribute to a real scholarship of teaching and learning they cannot work in isolation; they must be connected, linked, in communication, building on one another's work. How might this happen?

One answer is faculty exchanges. Tom Banchoff, a faculty member in math from Brown, who is one of the Carnegie Scholars working with us in CASTL and also the president of the Mathematical Association of America, recently spent a semester at Yale to pursue his scholarship of teaching in a new venue. Might not research universities with teaching academies develop a system of faculty exchanges of this kind?

Another possibility is the residential fellowship. I think here of the Stanford Humanities Center, where half the fellowships go to faculty on the campus and the other half to those from elsewhere, with both groups selected through a competitive process. The Stanford Center only invites fellows who do traditional scholarship, but this is just the kind of arrangement that teaching academies might sponsor. Indeed, fund raising to make this sort of thing possible would be a great job for presidents and provosts committed to the scholarship of teaching and learning.

And the last possibility I'll mention entails documentation. The work done in and through teaching academies will be truly useful and consequential if it leaves behind an artifact or product that others can learn from and build on. Now it happens that higher education is very good at preserving what we learn: think of libraries, museums, and laboratories; and think of the conventions established over decades whereby scholars learn (in different ways in different fields) to document, compress, organize and display their work to one another. (I say compress because although I may do a study that takes several years, I'm well aware that it cannot take several years for others to understand and learn from my study.) Carnegie is now creating something we call the Knowledge Media Laboratory to facilitate these same kinds of things for the scholarship of teaching. We see the Lab as a kind of interactive museum or laboratory, as a library collection, and even an investment bank, where Carnegie Scholars doing the scholarship of teaching under our auspices will leave a "deposit" so that others can make "withdrawals." What I'm imagining increasingly is that campus-based teaching academies might establish their own Knowledge Media Laboratories; their own mechanisms for preserving, making available, and exchanging the scholarship of teaching and learning—and that these would be linked and connected in ways that maximize the impact of the work being done in various settings.

You will of course think of other ways to link and connect your campus-based activities and entities and teaching academies. And meanwhile, as noted in the CASTL booklet, the next levels of work in the Campus Program are explicitly dedicated to promoting such links and networking. The point here is that teaching and scholarly work on teaching should not be a purely local activity.

**Conclusion: The Intellectual and Moral Imperative**

I want to conclude these comments with a point that Pat Hutchings and I raise in our September/October 1999 article in Change magazine—that campuses need to reframe the demand for accountability in ways that move our responsibilities as educational institutions. As things now stand, higher education's response to the increasing policy demand that we be accountable for what we do is mostly defensive and often cast in terms of efficiencies: how many student credit hours we squeeze out of faculty members, for instance. But the questions we should be concerning ourselves with are questions about quality—and particularly about the quality of what our students come to understand, believe, and do on our watch. That's the kind of accountability we should be insisting on, and we need to be able to do the kind of scholarship that can help answer such questions in every discipline, as well as institutionally across programs. What do our students who have studied history now understand that they might not have understood without us? What about those in chemistry, management, and French? And what can we claim more generally about the intelligence, skills, wisdom, and character of those whom we have educated?

These questions are not (or should not be) crisis driven any more than those of traditional research are. We don't do traditional research because we have failed in doing it before; we do it because we have done it well and now we want to learn even more.

Nor are they questions that can be taken up by offices of institutional research as they typically function; they are not questions that can be asked from the top. They can be facilitated, funded, encouraged, reported, and rewarded from the top, but the investigations must be conducted at the level of the individual school or program.

And here I would propose a vision of the research university as an institution that puts investigation at the very center of its existence. (My inspiration here is William Rainey Harper, the first president of the University of Chicago—though no doubt others have said similar things.) What it means to be a research university is that everything is a proper subject of investigation, and that there can be no political correctness that makes certain kinds of questions out of bounds. Harper held a vision of the research university as an institution that did not limit the objects of investigation to those matters outside of itself. Indeed, it was critical that a research university treat itself as a proper subject for investigation and its own work as an ongoing experiment for such investigation. The university must be constantly and critically asking about its own work, its own efficacy, its own role, vis a vis its students, its community, and its society.

This vision of the university is also the vision behind the scholarship of teaching and learning. We can hardly be a moral community with mission statements that talk about the central place of teaching and learning if we are not also places that investigate those processes and place them at the center of the scholarship in which we properly take such pride.

Doing so will require a true sea change in how we do our work. But I'm more optimistic than ever that it just might happen.

“The rigorous investigation of student learning, with the purpose of developing novel teaching methodologies and practices that can lead to the measurable enhancement of student learning. The results of the investigation are made public through quality scholarly outlets and widely-accepted conferences and general or discipline-specific journals.” Peggy Maki, an expert on assessment in higher education, gave a keynote address on the topic of SoTL during DePaul's Fall Forum on Teaching and Learning in 2013. This definition makes clear that SoTL is ultimately about improving student learning. Investigating what and how students ...