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The Faculty Reward System and Accreditation

As universities increasingly broaden their knowledge application and dissemination functions, the faculty reward system requires transformation as well. This article purports that universities need to link the faculty reward system directly to the institution's mission. Furthermore, universities need to utilize more effectively the accreditation process of self-study and review as a means of ensuring that faculty are more equitably rewarded for teaching and other forms of scholarly activity. A framework for effecting that linkage is presented, followed by a discussion of the documentation and evaluation of these various forms of scholarly work.

Higher education institutions, particularly metropolitan universities, are undertaking many new tasks and, to varying degrees, undergoing significant transformation as they enter the twenty-first century. Numerous societal and structural changes present universities with many formidable challenges, including: formulating new pedagogical techniques for effectively dealing with diverse student bodies; creating new forms of outreach to enhance linkages between the university and the multiple sectors of society it serves; and developing means for incorporating the use of educational technology and telecommunications into the university. At the same time, metropolitan universities are confronted with new demands to contribute to the economic and social development of their respective communities, states, and regions. Accordingly, they need to be creative in engaging in knowledge transfer that involves a host of activities, including applied research and technical assistance. Together, these new demands, changes, and responsive activities by the institution imply a more expanded mission for much of academe and, as such, expanded responsibilities for faculty.

The faculty reward system, however, has not kept pace with recent systemic and programmatic changes. Indeed, one of the bastions of the academic enterprise is the faculty reward structure. It remains one of, if not the most ensconced, traditions in academe. Generations of faculty have come and gone, yet, for the most part, the system for rewarding faculty performance has remained intact. That this structure has withstood change implies neither a high degree of effectiveness nor the lack of need for improvement. Longevity should not be equated

with effectiveness. Indeed, a critical assessment of our prevailing faculty reward structure reveals that it is far less functional than assumed and not adequately serving academe's or society's needs. Faculty are not equitably rewarded for teaching and various kinds of professional work other than traditional scholarship. With few exceptions, the faculty reward structure in our universities today is not responsive to variations in types of faculty activity.

The present faculty reward structure does not effectively serve our universities. This is because of the increasing diversity in the kind of professional work faculty engage in and because of their present work load. That this structure has evaded overhaul despite its increasingly being the object of much criticism, scrutiny, and debate, is perplexing.

Efforts to institutionalize new means and approaches for rewarding faculty for teaching and other forms of professional work, other than traditional scholarship, often have gone awry. Perhaps the reward system has been impervious to change, because it has not been grounded sufficiently in the mission of the institution and too often is treated as tangential to, rather than as an integral part of, the overall functioning of the university.

As more and more metropolitan universities find themselves trying to meet society's complex needs for applied knowledge, they will be taking on new tasks and responsibilities in recognition of the notion that scholarship has newer and broader meanings. The new notion of scholarship is indeed more encompassing and embraces both knowledge acquisition and communication.

The institution should begin by defining its expectations with regard to faculty activities, priorities, and rewards within the framework of institutional objectives and the institution's commitment to the realization of the new concept of scholarship.

The faculty reward system cannot be viewed or allowed to function as a separate, discrete, isolated process. Rather, the faculty reward system should be seen as inextricably linked to, and reflective of, the mission of the institution and as an ideal mechanism for reaffirming and reinforcing its goals. Then, efforts to institutionalize new means and approaches for rewarding faculty for teaching and other forms of professional work would be considered and undertaken as part of an overall process to maximize the effective attainment of institutional objectives. This would be consonant with, and reflect, the commitment to meeting society's needs. The efforts no longer would be perceived as being radical, revolutionary, and antithetical to the fundamental tenets that underlie the culture of academe, as has been the case when attempts to alter the faculty reward structure occur in a vacuum.

The institution needs to question whether the faculty reward system indeed encourages, evaluates, and rewards activities essential to its mis-

sion and objectives. The evaluation of teaching and, even more so, other forms of professional work that is not traditional scholarship, is too often given short shrift.

Evaluation of faculty performance is an ongoing departmental and institutional activity. How, then, can teaching and certain professional activities, such as technical assistance, policy analysis, and instruction beyond the campus classroom, dissemination of public information and work that involves the application, utilization, and dissemination of knowledge, be equitably rewarded? How can teaching and professional work that does not fall under the traditional categories of scholarship, be given the same degree of legitimacy and be validated within the reward structure?

Faculty Performance and the Accreditation Process

Regional Accreditation in the United States

The purpose of this article is to illustrate how the accreditation process, given its legitimacy and credibility and aim of institutional self-improvement, provides an effective and natural means for establishing mechanisms for more equitably rewarding faculty work. The basic premise here is that the more firmly grounded the faculty reward system is in the accreditation process, the more likely needed structural changes in that system will occur.

The role of accreditation in the United States has two fundamental purposes: "to assure the quality of the institution or program and to assist in the improvement of the institution or program" (NEAS&C 1983, 1). The accreditation process, as practiced in this country, requires an institution to undergo intensive self-study. That self-study requires an institution to identify what it does well, determine the areas in which improvement is needed, and develop plans to address needed improvements. Institutions are evaluated in terms of the accrediting bodies' qualitative criteria in the measurement of institutional effectiveness. These criteria are referred to as standards for accreditation. All six of the regional accrediting bodies in the U.S. have among their standards a separate one on faculty. While the bodies assess and make a determination about the effectiveness of an institution as a whole, serious weaknesses in any one area of an institution's operation may threaten the institution's accreditation.

The accreditation process employs a clearly articulated set of criteria against which universities are evaluated, namely, standards for accreditation. To maintain, and initially be granted, accreditation, institutions of higher education must demonstrate that these criteria have been met adequately (NEAS&C 1983, 5).

The extent to which institutions meet these criteria is validated period-

ically as part of a comprehensive or focused evaluation conducted by appropriate regional accreditation bodies. The accreditation agencies have established qualitative criteria for measuring institutional effectiveness. Separate standards have been developed for the principal areas of institutional activity and responsibility. Among these standards is one on faculty.

While the standards of accreditation vary in explicitness from one regional accrediting body to another, the critical importance of policies and procedures that affect appointment, promotion, and retention is evident across the country. Accordingly, the issue of faculty evaluation is either explicitly referred to in the standard on faculty, or identified in the subset of questions included as guidelines for addressing the standard in the self-study. For instance, in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' standard on faculty, there is currently no explicit reference to the evaluation of faculty per se; however, specific reference is made to evaluation in the series of questions following the standard. These include: What criteria are used in the evaluation of individual faculty performance? How is the evaluation accomplished? How often does such evaluation occur (NEAS&C 1983, 43)? Such questions indicate the concern for evaluating and appropriately rewarding faculty for various forms of professional work. What is missing here, however, is the question: Are these criteria consistent with the institution's mission? Accrediting bodies need to think more about linking mission to the faculty reward system.

Are criteria for individual faculty performance consistent with the institution's mission?

The self-study, which must be prepared by every institution as part of their comprehensive evaluation, serves as the basis from which the evaluation team seeks to determine the institutional effectiveness of the university under review. The self-study should incorporate a detailed explanation of the policies and procedures that the institution has in place for evaluating and rewarding faculty for their professional work. It is the responsibility of the evaluation team, comprised of administrators and faculty, to validate or invalidate what is presented as factual in the self-study. This validation process involves intensive inquiry by deans, vice-presidents of academic affairs, and faculty from peer institutions, all of whom seek to determine whether there are any discrepancies, incompatibilities, or contradictions between what is professed to be reality in the self-study and what is actually practiced at the institution. The findings of the evaluation team are included in a formal report submitted to the president of the institution and the respective accreditation body. The findings can serve as a powerful means for enhancing either the initiation or implementation of structural changes that may be needed to ensure that faculty are more equitably

evaluated, and ultimately rewarded, for their teaching and other forms of professional work.

Reviewing The Faculty Reward System

The self-study and accreditation process is a particularly appropriate vehicle for reexamining the appropriateness of existing structures for rewarding various kinds of faculty scholarly work, because in the accreditation process, institutions are measured against themselves. The appraisal of the quality of institutional effectiveness with respect to each of the standards is done in terms of where the institution is at a given point in time, relative to the last time it underwent review. Thus, the status of an institution is not determined vis-à-vis another institution, but rather in terms of its own progress or lack thereof. The mission and objectives of the institution serve as critical reference points for assessing how well an institution is doing in various areas.

The fundamental questions that underlie the accreditation process are:

- What are the institution's objectives, and what objectives does it recognize?
- Are all of its programs and activities designed to achieve these objectives?
- What evidence exists to show that these objectives are being achieved?

If, indeed, a metropolitan university claims that its philosophical underpinning is that "it accepts its relationship to the surrounding metropolitan region as its essential rationale, its reason for being" then it, too, must accept that it is going to reward faculty for engaging in teaching and other kinds of professional work that serve that metropolitan region (Hathaway, Mulhollan, and White 1990, 13). Proceeding on the assumption that metropolitan universities seek to honor that commitment, what guidelines might they follow?

The first step an institution needs to think about in terms of its faculty, then, is what the institution considers to be the duties and responsibilities of the individual faculty member, and second, what written policies exist describing the institution's expectations of the faculty.

Faculty members need to know at the time they are hired, and prior to their entering into a contractual agreement, precisely what kinds of scholarly activities they are expected to engage in and how their work in these various kinds of professional work will be evaluated and rewarded. If academe really wants faculty to engage in quality teaching, as well as in a variety of professional activities, institutions must have a well-articulated process for evaluation and rewards. These new types of scholarly activities allow the institution to meet more fully society's needs for applied knowledge and competent individuals.

Types of Scholarly Activity

As the knowledge-related function of universities changes and expands, it follows that concomitantly there should be a broadening of the definition of professional practice and of the role of faculty members. All aspects of the broadened range of scholarship and professional services required by contemporary society deserve to be accorded parity of esteem, as well as reward. This is because they are clearly of comparable importance and, perhaps even more so, because they are intellectually as challenging as much of traditional scholarship.

The kind of professional activity that is being referred to here is by no means an all-inclusive concept. On the contrary, professional activity that warrants academic reward consists of the application of high-level expertise that relates the results of basic research to their intended application and utilization. As such, the scholarly activity can range from applied research, which is virtually indistinguishable from the traditional mode of basic research, to activity closely resembling traditional teaching. In addition, there are a variety of activities including:

- directed or contracted research;
- consultation, technical assistance, policy analysis, technology assessment, and program evaluation;
- targeted briefing and other didactic activities; and
- informational and explanatory activities aimed at a general audience, an area of growing importance given the unsystematic proliferation of information in our society.

Directed or contracted research exists in virtually every discipline. Its defining characteristic is its focus on immediate problems and attempts to provide results within a reasonable period of time. It is present, rather than future-oriented. Such research can consist of developing and testing new materials, of carrying out ecological, meteorological, or other environmental studies, of conducting market and opinion research and other kinds of social science surveys, of applying ethical and moral criteria to complex situations, or perhaps designing various modes of assessment. Essentially, such research is carried out under contract or in response to a request for a proposal and, thereby, is initiated by the potential user of the research results.

Technical assistance, consultation, policy analysis, and program evaluation very well may constitute the most valuable and yet most underestimated form of professional activity in which faculty can engage. These activities afford business and industry, government, nonprofit organizations, and community agencies needed expertise and solutions to a vast range of policy-related problems in a fairly short, sometimes immediate, time frame.

Given the rapid rate of technological development, university faculty can assist public agencies and private enterprises to absorb new technologies and other innovations and provide them with both technical expertise and, even more importantly, assistance in dealing with concomitant human relations, financial, and organizational problems. Moreover, there are a variety of ways in which faculty can assist local, state, and federal agencies and commissions in dealing with urgent problems.

Faculty expertise will be utilized increasingly in the vast area of professional activity.

Examples are economic analysis of the impact of alternative tax proposals, or the application of operations research to traffic control or the location of new correctional facilities. Such professional activity could also involve evaluating programs or testing for pollution in targeted areas. Given the increase in problems of infrastructure that our urban areas in particular are experiencing, the likelihood that faculty expertise will be utilized increasingly in this vast area of professional activity is highly probable.

Another category of professional activity involves faculty providing a range of information and briefing material to targeted groups. University centers or institutes at some universities hold regularly scheduled sessions for newly elected national, state, and local government officials. At these events, participants discuss prepared background papers and are briefed on current issues. Such centers and institutes organize seminars and panel discussions on topics ranging from educational-reform initiatives to the cleanup of urban harbors.

As we seek to understand better the complexities and intricacies of the vast array of local, national, and international issues that affect domestic and foreign policy outcomes, there is a great opportunity for university faculty members to help the public at large better understand the various complex issues that confront it. Through cable television programs, newspaper articles, and feature stories that draw on the expertise of faculty, knowledge can be disseminated efficiently and usefully. Faculty can provide expert information for local newspapers and local radio, television, and cable stations. Moreover, faculty can offer courses, seminars, and lectures for adult schools, community organizations, and the general public.

New Challenges in Teaching

In addition to the opportunities posed by this range of scholarly activities, faculty increasingly are facing pedagogical challenges. The diversity of higher education's clientele and the widening differences among students in their level of appropriate preparation for lower- and upper-division courses calls for the utilization of various modes and delivery of instruction. As

universities enroll a higher proportion of students who require enhancement of their developmental skills, foreign-born nationals for whom English is a second language, and adult learners who bring years of experiential learning to the college classroom, traditional means of transmitting knowledge from the instructor to the student through the primary use of lectures is becoming dysfunctional, if not, in some cases, obsolete. Faculty need to learn how to incorporate new means and methods of instruction to accommodate the range of learning capacities and differing degrees of academic preparedness. In addition, faculty face the challenges of maximizing, as creatively as possible, the use of various educational technologies that can both facilitate and enhance learning experiences for students.

As research findings reveal more about how students learn and what approaches and devices tend to heighten students' capacity to learn how to learn and engage in critical thinking, faculty are presented with more options regarding what techniques to employ in the classroom. They are not, however, necessarily given more concrete guidelines and didactic information about how actually to do so. Thus, faculty may need to engage in instructional activities in which they have the opportunity to enhance their own pedagogical skills for transmitting knowledge in learning settings.

Faculty and Institutional Choices

Clearly, different institutions will choose to focus on different emphases of faculty activity. While some universities may seek to focus a good deal of time and energy on engaging in such forms of outreach as technical assistance and the dissemination of public information, others may opt for concentrating on the development of techniques and modes of instruction that enhance classroom teaching.

As stated earlier, it is critically important for faculty to know, at the time they are hired, precisely what types of scholarly activity are expected of them and how this and other professional activities will be evaluated and rewarded. Unless the evaluation and reward process is clearly articulated, metropolitan universities cannot expect faculty to undertake professional activities of the kind described earlier.

Furthermore, in order to assure faculty that no one will be expected to engage in all types of professional activities, institutions can institute an annual or biannual review of individual faculty work loads. At the University of Louisville, for example, where such reviews have been implemented, individual faculty and their respective deans or provost enter into periodic reciprocal agreements regarding assignments and expectations, with a clear understanding that these can be modified at subsequent reviews, depending on external needs, internal priorities, and personal circumstances. It is important to note that the extent to which a faculty member

engages in teaching and other professional activities, as opposed to traditional scholarship, will and should vary from one faculty member to another. Moreover, it is not only likely, but desirable, that faculty members shift from engaging primarily in one kind of professional activity to another. That a faculty member chooses to engage in consultation and technical assistance and the dissemination of public information in addition to his/her teaching for a certain number of years, should by no means preclude his/her intensively pursuing basic research for several years thereafter.

What is critical is not the degree to which a faculty member pursues professional activities other than teaching and traditional scholarship, but rather that (1) the opportunity and option to do so exists and is encouraged, and (2) that such work is viewed as legitimate and as valid as teaching and traditional scholarship—and appropriately rewarded.

In addition, institutions need to rethink and redefine, in many cases, what is meant by work load. At the outset, the guiding principle needs to be that work load does not equal course load. As long as faculty or administrators equate the two, all the professional activities other than teaching and traditional scholarship will never be rewarded adequately and equitably.

In order for the evaluation of faculty to result in fair and tangible recognition of faculty effectiveness, as determined by that evaluation, it is imperative that professional work be documented adequately for two essential reasons. First, the structural mechanisms for evaluating the quality level of professional activity must be the same as, or at the very least, compatible with the mechanisms for evaluating teaching and research. Second, only by providing adequate documentation of professional work can it actually be appropriately evaluated. That it may be more difficult at this juncture to document and evaluate various forms of professional activity is only true inasmuch as there is not established precedence for doing so.

Systematic methods must be developed for determining relevant information regarding performance of academic work. Documentation of traditional scholarship is usually straightforward—the documentation is synonymous with the product. For the most part, books and articles constitute both the outcomes and documentation of traditional scholarship. Appropriate and objective documentation necessary for evaluating teaching is less straightforward. Course schedules, syllabi, administrative records, and student evaluations serve as documentation for evaluating teaching. These kinds of documentation are not considered optimal forms for evaluating teaching, which is partly why the issue of evaluating classroom teaching has become the object of serious scrutiny over the last few years. The effectiveness of these forms of documentation

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for teaching notwithstanding, they have served as credible and tangible means for evaluating teaching.

The challenge is for academics to be creative in formulating concrete means for evaluating professional work, regardless of whether or not the client requests such information. Forms of documentation already exist, but usually are not designed or utilized effectively. It is essential that all documentation developed during the period of time that a faculty member engages in professional activity be as comprehensive and definitive as possible.

Contractual agreements, memoranda of understanding, or letters of communication between faculty members and contractors, are formal means of documentation that can be used in the evaluation process. If such documents do not exist, faculty members should insist on some form of documentation that describes the nature of the work that he/she will be doing, its context and duration.

Given that the various kinds of professional work mentioned herein may not result in a published piece of work, such as a journal article, monograph, or position paper, it is important that the faculty member maintains progress reports on the work that he/she is performing. These progress reports will vary depending on the nature and duration of the professional activity that is being undertaken. Documentation of professional activities should include information on: when and where the work was performed; the nature of the task; the audiences served—both targeted and projected; the objectives of the activity; the outcomes/solutions identified; any proposed follow-up activity; and opportunity for feedback and reaction from audiences served, as well as from the client.

These progress reports should follow a precise format, and care should be taken to produce a meticulous, thorough, and comprehensible document. The accreditation process calls for documentation. Faculty need to insist on it in the area of evaluating professional work. Promotion and tenure committees cannot evaluate what is not before them. Promotion and tenure evaluations are not based on oral communiques. Their validation or invalidation is based on the authenticity of paper trails. The framework, then, for implementing mechanisms for more equitably rewarding faculty for professional work, has been set forth. Now, academic leaders need to translate the guiding principles of that framework into reality.

In Conclusion

Linking the faculty reward system directly to the mission of the institution will enable academic leaders more effectively to encourage, evaluate, and reward faculty for teaching and, even more so, for various kinds of scholarly activity other than traditional scholarship.

The accreditation process is a means of ensuring that the faculty reward system is, indeed, consistent with the mission of the institution. Hence, the more effectively it is used in institutions, the more likely there will be greater compatibility between the institutions' expectations and goals and those of their faculty.

In essence, the more explicit accrediting bodies are about their standards for faculty evaluation and reward systems, and the more institutions are encouraged to make better use of those accreditation standards, the more those institutions are likely to develop faculty evaluation and reward systems that truly encourage the scholarly work of teaching and other professional activity of the highest quality. Such activities are essential to the mission of metropolitan universities.

Suggested Readings

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The author wishes to note that the views contained herein are her own and do not necessarily represent those of NEAS&C.