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Scholarship: Shout About It

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Scholarship: Shout About It

Abstract

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Good Work Is Not Enough

It's time to shout about your accomplishments.

Extension professionals can no longer just "do good work." Our supporters and funding resources demand more from us, in terms of reach, relevance, and efficiency. Land-grant universities need our leadership as they embrace the concept of engagement.

We need to more thoroughly adopt a long-recognized and accepted method of "shouting about our work" in university circles: scholarship. Scholarship can be defined in a number of ways. Boyer (1990) identified the steps as Discovery, Integration, Application and Teaching in *Scholarship Reconsidered*.

Elements of scholarship in the Boyer model that particularly relate to Extension include:

- Developing a program, project, or team effort
- Implementing that effort
- Evaluating, revising and refining that effort
- Sharing what you have learned in a peer-review process

As Boyer taught, scholarship is not just about publishing or presenting. It's about engagement and sharing with colleagues. It's about raising the bar and going beyond simply delivering a good program to local clientele.

Delivering a successful, targeted program in a county can help hundreds or possibly thousands of local clientele. Now it is our responsibility to take that program and make it national by sharing our success with countless others. One approach to doing this could be a *JOE* article. What a great benefit to society and taxpayers. What a great benefit to the nationwide network of Extension services.

Examples of Extension Scholarship

We can all think of great examples of scholarship in Extension, or of when a great concept has been shared and then adopted nationwide.

One that comes to mind is a collaborative effort among Lydia Medeiros from Ohio State University, Virginia Hillers of Washington State University, and Patricia Kendall of Colorado State University. This team came together and developed a project to improve food safety education. The information distributed has since become the national standard for the safe handling and preparation of foods.

Another example comes from Sue Donaldson at the University of Nevada, who developed a wide-reaching curriculum for agricultural educators focused on growing plants and animals on small-

acreage farms in areas of environmental sensitivity. In its beginning stage, the project trained 50 educators in eight western states, and since that time Sue has sent out over 900 CD-ROMs of the program to various locations throughout the country.

A third example is that of Mike Boehm, an Ohio State University Extension and Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center faculty member, who was assigned to the Biological Defense Research Directorate at the Naval Medical Research Center while serving on active duty. He and his team were responsible for the development and implementation of biological weapons (BW) detection, testing, and training effort for forward-deployed Navy units. By the end of his tour of duty, Boehm's team had reached every Navy unit, ship or shore, that had the potential for action in the Gulf to train them to use tests meant for routine air screening and other suspicious samples. Larger ships were also trained on DNA testing, among other, more sophisticated testing.

Numbers Aren't Enough, Either

Nobody's better than Extension professionals at developing and implementing strong programs. We do, however, need to improve in how we evaluate and share our successes.

We need to think of scholarship in terms of documenting quality. Glassick, Maeroff, and Huber's (1997) book *Scholarship Assessed* challenges us to look not at how many publications written or how many presentations delivered, but at the characteristics of quality work and how it is documented. Scholarship demands that we evaluate our work.

First, we must clearly identify the needs of the people we serve. Once our programming is in place, evaluation is imperative to determine if we've reached the needs, or if additional thought should be given to how we're approaching the issue. Once evaluations show what we're doing is meeting the needs of our clientele and that we're successful, it's time to shout!

Shouting About It

We must define Extension work and university engagement as a part of the core of the university. Engagement is about teaching, research, and service. It is that aspect of the trilogy where the walls of the campus are invisible. As universities grapple to adopt engagement as a key goal, Extension has a clear role in the process through scholarship. And who is more experienced and developed in engagement than Extension?

When we define our work in the same terms as other faculty across campus, we are seen as equal partners. This can be accomplished through scholarship. In doing so, we provide a network for "closet" Extension people in other colleges, those who are Extension people at heart. Thus, Extension helps to elevate the university's ability to engage with the community in a broader way.

If Extension is going to be a part of the university engagement movement, we must embrace, exemplify, and advocate for teamwork. By partnering across campus, we can meet local community needs more effectively, maximize our impact in communities, and expand our scholarship opportunities. The richness of programming and depth of thought expands when you bring disciplines together. All parties learn and grow from the experience.

As more colleges in our universities expand their engagement efforts, they need to see Extension as a partner. They can learn from us, and we can learn from them. Many of these colleges have long histories of community involvement and social activism. Their perspective can enrich what we do. That's a fundamental aspect of scholarship.

As an example, the College of the Arts at OSU has a long history of engaging with the community through performances and visual arts exhibits. These performances and exhibits provide a valuable learning experience for students, enhance the arts opportunities for citizens, and serve to foster thought, learning, and expression in the community. The College of Arts' involvement in teacher workshops and industrial partnerships (focused on design) affect selected communities and enhance the quality of their on-campus efforts.

By combining the College of the Arts' commitment for community involvement and their knowledge of the arts with Extension's integration into local communities and awareness of local needs, the potential for affecting even more communities is broadly enhanced. By working together, we can enrich the opportunities for youth to engage in the arts through new types of 4-H programs. Through our community development work, we can help villages and towns develop sustainable strategic plans, and by partnering with College of the Arts, we can assist these communities in implementing efforts that focus on enhancing the arts aspect of their community.

Scholarship Challenges

- Embrace evaluation more fully to show the impact of your work.
- Share your work with colleagues through presentations and papers.
- Partner with others across campus to share the Extension method of engagement and to learn from others.

The *Journal of Extension* provides all of us with a tool to embrace scholarship. To celebrate the 10th anniversary of *JOE* going electronic and the 40th anniversary of this peer-reviewed journal's start, make this the year that you embrace scholarship in the fullest sense of the word. Share your work. You owe it to your colleagues.

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Discussion